The zINe-Between: A Creative Practice Exploration of Health, Liminality, Lived Experience and the Zines in Wellcome Collection

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy by Practice as Research in

Text, Practice as Research

School of English

University of Kent

April 2024

Word Count: 47,111

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I can't thank my supervisors at Kent, Stella Bolaki and Carolyn Pedwell, enough. Just great, 10/10, no notes (but thank you for the many notes you offered me). Thank you also to my supervisory team at Wellcome Collection, Elma Brenner, Mel Grant, and Nicola Cook, for their support and enthusiasm. I am particularly grateful for the work of Mel, Nic and Loesja Vigour in setting up and continuing to develop the zine collection at Wellcome. I want to express thanks to the staff at Kent, especially Felicity Clifford and Angela Whiffen for helping me navigate the university. Acknowledgements are also due to CHASE for funding this project.

Thank you to Catherine, Mad comrade, friend and rigorous editor, and Jenny, sorry for being such a terrible postal correspondent over the last three years, I hope the occasional zine has made up for it. My friends have put up with me becoming increasingly boring (or infinitely more interesting, depending on how much they like zines) in the last few years, so thank you. Thanks also to my family, Bill and Max, and Abi's family, Louise, Bill, Steve and Fran, for being so forgiving of all the times I've been busy working, and for sending the occasional book, postcard or kilogram of fizzy vegan sweets.

Thank you to everyone who supported me to apply in the first place, and to my zine PhD cohort, particularly Tamsin, for the space to vent, scheme and the zines. I am infinitely grateful to Kirsty, who has supported this PhD from the moment I messaged to ask a 'silly question' when putting together my research proposal, and who introduced me to the 'Shut up and Write' group which eased me into my first year of postgraduate research. Thank you to readers of The PostBag, who so often reciprocated with zines, newsletters, snacks and, once, a Royal Mail post bag.

Thank you to the zine makers and readers, zine librarians and zine and DIY organisers, and especially everyone at Edinburgh Zine Library and Edinburgh Zine Festival. Thanks to Tassos and Panayiota at The Athens Zine Bibliotheque, and Mae and Nicola at Glasgow Women's Library, for hosting me on placements. Thanks to the Print Studio staff at Dundee Contemporary Arts, where I printed many of the zines on their Risograph, and to the folks at Sunday's Print in Glasgow where other zines were printed and assembled.

My deepest gratitude to my collaborator in zines and in life, my wife. Abi. Thank you for supporting me whilst also being quite busy training to be a nurse. I appreciate every time you forced me to leave the house and go for a little walk to look at the sea. I'm so thankful for our creative partnership, and I can't wait to make zines (for fun!) with you again. Thank you to my mum, Troy, for your unfaltering support now, to live the life I want, and then, when living at all didn't seem possible. Finally, thank you to Doreen (Nana), Joyce, and Ina (Nan); so much of this leads back to you, one way or another.

Abstract

Wellcome Collection, a museum and library in London, UK, has intentionally collected zines around health, medicine and the human condition since 2016. The outcome of a Collaborative Doctoral Award with Wellcome Collection, this creative practice thesis explores some of these 1000+ zines, alongside selected zines outside the collection, grouped around three themes: zines made in, from or about beds; zines which involve becoming disabled; and zines created during the COVID-19 pandemic. This exploration moves between physical and digital zines, feeling out both their distinct qualities and the space between them as a route into contemporary zine (re)production, cultures and communities.

This project is composed of two interwoven parts: a collection of original zines created over its duration and an accompanying critical thesis. Through a creative methodology which brings together zine making, autoethnographic and phenomenological approaches to zines, and semi-structured interviews with librarians at Wellcome, I argue that the concept of liminality offers a productive framework for examining material, cultural and political aspects of contemporary zines' content, production and communities of practice. In turn, the thesis contributes to a reconceptualisation of liminality, beyond the carefully managed processes of transition described in ethnographic accounts, as ongoing, affective, embodied, messy, and non-linear.

Both drawing on and extending interdisciplinary theories of liminality, the thesis focuses on zines made from and about spaces (sickbeds), experiences (becoming disabled) and times (the COVID-19 pandemic) that are in-between, transitional, or transformative.

Whilst narrative approaches and approaches that prioritise the usefulness of lived experience to medicine, research or policy often treat liminality as a period of chaos, nonsense or absence, these zines made of and from the in-between offer insight into these periods of liminality in experiences of health, illness and disability. They hold space for the episodic, fragmented and non-linear, engage in affective sense-making, (re)produce third-space knowledges and prioritise the uses of lived experience for peers.

Within the original set of zines created alongside this thesis are zines which directly addresses the concerns of chapters, zines which involve and document wider practices of reproduction, distribution, and collection, as well as those which challenge or disrupt conventions of academic research. Zine making, as a practice-based research method, offers a generative approach to both an archival collection which is proximal, intimate, living, and liminal, and to archival objects which are visual-material-textual, records of practices and processes, and traces of communities of practice as much as products. Produced from the liminal positionality of doctoral research, these zines echo the ways that the zines in Wellcome Collection document and inhabit liminal experiences, spaces and times.

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Introduction: Finding our way through zines

The Reading Room at Wellcome Collection is an odd space. Though it is on the second floor of Wellcome's imposing central London home, it is not behind the automatic barriers of Wellcome Library, which take up the remainder of this level and require a membership card to pass. On Wellcome Collection's website, the Reading Room is described as 'a hybrid of library and museum'.[1] The room itself encourages sitting (including on beanbags), conversation and an informality at odds with the grand windowed gallery setting.[2] But there is no eating or drinking in the space, objects remain mostly behind glass and the framed pictures on the wall are accompanied by information cards. The Reading Room has a feeling, then, of being in-between: not unrestricted public space, but also not the restricted space of the formal museum or the research library. Although there are zines there, propped up alongside other magazines and ephemera on a magazine display stand, Wellcome's zine collection itself stays in the closed stores, only available on the other side of the barriers of Wellcome Library, by request. Still, it was the Reading Room that sparked the key idea behind this thesis, which is that liminality offers a productive, albeit non-linear, route to thinking in new ways about zines, health, and Wellcome's zine collection.

Wellcome has intentionally collected zines since 2016, although the collection was prompted in part by the presence of zine, or zine adjacent, material already in the

[1] 'The Reading Room', Wellcome Collection, n.d. <https://wellcomecollection.org/pages/Wvlk4yAAAB8A3ufp> [accessed 27 August 2023].
[2] 'Wellcome Collection: A world first, opened by a world famous scientist', Wellcome Collection, n.d. <https://wellcomecollection.org/pages/Wuw0uiIAACZd3SPq> [accessed 27 August 2023].

archive.[3] On 29 September 2018 the collection was launched with a pop-up zine library in Wellcome's Viewing Room. It was at this event that this Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) was conceived: a collaboration between academics at the University of Kent and the librarians behind the zine collection at Wellcome Collection, with a specific focus on Wellcome's zines.[4] Assembling my research proposal as the UK moved into the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, I kept returning to the spaces of Wellcome: how the Reading Room's feeling of in-betweenness felt relevant to the zines at Wellcome, and potentially to zines more broadly. This in-betweenness also felt pertinent to the time I was preparing my research proposal in. In response to the intensification of the COVID-19 pandemic, zine makers were turning to the digital to continue community events and produce and distribute zines where previous methods were unavailable, as well as making zines from and about lockdown and quarantine. This feeling prompted the two key research questions that underpin this project: How might liminality be a productive lens for studying zines and zine collections? And, what can zines offer to interdisciplinary understandings of liminality, particularly in relationship to disability, health, and lived experiences of in-betweenness?

It isn't surprising that it was a space like Wellcome's Reading Room that prompted me to start thinking about zines in relation to liminality. Liminality is often recognisable through spaces. The spatial language around liminality is of hallways, bridges, shorelines, or borderlands – spaces that are thresholds, both/and, spaces of transition.

[3] Though Wellcome Library was previously a distinct entity, through a series of restructures it is now fully integrated with Wellcome Collection – a move connected to Museum Accreditation. Throughout this thesis I use 'Wellcome' to refer to Wellcome Collection, which includes Wellcome Library. Where I occasionally refer to Wellcome Trust, the funding organisation that is also often shortened to Wellcome, I'll make this clear; Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, June 30 2023).
[4] This project was supervised by Dr Stella Bolaki and Professor Carolyn Pedwell at the University of Kent, and a team led by Mel Grant, Collections Development Librarian, at Wellcome Collection.

However, liminality as a concept in anthropology is social more than the spatial.[5] Glasgow born anthropologist Victor Turner, building on the work of Dutch-German-French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep, used liminality to denote the middle or in-between period of a social transition.[6] These in-between states had a set of qualities that Turner argued could be extrapolated from the Ndembu tribe of his fieldwork, who live in villages across what is now North West Zambia, to other social contexts. In Chapter Two: Zines from the In-between, I discuss both the productive elements and the limits of Turner's colonial anthropological project. Faced with these, I turn to feminist, post-colonial, trans, queer and crip accounts of in-betweenness. These perspectives have also explored the messy processes of change, transition and transformation and the lived experience of being in-between, offering, I suggest, a more generative theoretical framework for thinking through liminality. Crucially, they offer a consideration of liminality's embodied, affective, emotional and political dimensions. With this theoretical foundation, the thesis turns to zines themselves to consider both what thinking about zines through liminality might offer to the study of these DIY publications, and what zines themselves offer to understandings of in-betweenness, and particularly the liminal experiences, times and spaces of sickness, disability and the COVID-19 pandemic.

A focus on periods of in-betweenness has clear relevance to experiences of health and illness – indeed Turner noted the transition between good and bad health in his original formulation.[7] Alongside the transition from well to sick (and back again) and from health

[5] Although in these accounts spaces and the movements between them creep in, suggesting some of the impossibility of disentangling the two.
[6] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Cornell Press, 1967); Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (The University of Chicago Press, 1960).
[7] Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*.

to death, are less straightforward transitions and more enduring liminal states: disability and becoming (more) disabled; periods of diagnostic uncertainty or being in what anthropologist Sarah Lochlann Jain terms 'prognosis time'; chronic pain or illness; madness; dying or gender transition.[8] Experiences of liminality are, by their nature, difficult to structure into narrative. A privileging of narrative as the form lived experience takes in research, policy and medical pedagogy means they are often absent or overlooked. Within the medical humanities, liminal experiences risk being treated as a black box, as chaos, resistant to representation or communication, with the resulting absence of accounts from people whose lived experience isn't easily arranged into a coherent story.[9] I examine these dynamics in more depth in Chapter One: What Would a Zine Maker Do?, when I discuss the uses of zines in research. Throughout this thesis, I explore how zines hold space for the episodic, fragmented and non-linear, for accounts and expressions that are non-narrative, narrative resistant or beyond narrative and how zines engage in affective (rather than narrative) sense-making.

Like liminality, zines are often articulated in spatial terms: they are 'marginal'; they are *sub*-cultural, part of a 'strange subterranean world'; they emerge from 'fissures' or are produced on the 'fringes'.[10] These spatial metaphors are used to situate zines as being in relationship to the centrally established or mainstream media, culture or discourse.

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[8] Sarah Lochlann Jain, 'Living in Prognosis: Toward an Elegiac Politics', *Representations*, 97.1 (2007), pp. 77-92, doi:10.1525/rep.2007.98.1.77.

[9] Angela Woods, 'The limits of narrative: provocations for the medical humanities', *Medical Humanities,* 37.2 (2011), pp. 73-78, doi:10.1136/medhum-2011-010045; Sara Wasson, 'Before narrative: episodic reading and representations of chronic pain', *Medical Humanities,* 44.2 (2018), pp. 106-112, doi:10.1136/medhum-2017-011223.

[10] Anita Harris, 'GURL Scenes and Grrrl Zines: The Regulation and Resistance of Girls in Late Modernity', *Feminist Review*, 75.1 (2003), pp. 38–56 (p. 39), doi: 10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400116; Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Verso, 1997), p. 16; Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (NYU Press, 2009), p. 190; Red Chidgey, 'Developing Communities of Resistance? Maker Pedagogies, Do-It-Yourself Feminism and DIY Citizenship', in *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media*, ed. by Matt Rotto and Megan Boler (MIT Press, 2014), pp. 101-113 (p. 101).

This makes sense; a significant part of the history of zines is fanzines, which themselves developed in relationship to a canonical media.[11] The margin is a site intentionally occupied by zine makers, as well as a location ascribed to zine making practices, communities, and zine collections. Zines are described as 'assembled in the margins' and existing in 'marginal spaces', and many zines are still made in relation to a centre – whether this is the canon of popular cultural forms like Star Trek, or dominant discourses, like those around reproductive rights in the US.[12] These zines use the margin as a location for critique, subversion and change, as described by Black feminist writers such as bell hooks. In Chapter Two I discuss further the significance of the margin as a location, and specifically hooks' work *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*. [13] In this, hooks describes the importance of identifying the location from which we write and revise hegemonic discourse, with specific reference to the location of Black women on the margins of American society and feminist theory. However, within twenty first century media cultures, methods of cultural production have become more diffuse, the authority of the printed page contested, and digital platforms blur boundaries between producers and consumers. In this context, marginality has limits as a frame for understanding how some zine makers engage critically and creatively with dominant discourses, as well as the relationship of zines to more mainstream media or to archives. In Chapter Five: Covid Zines, I discuss how during the UK's COVID-19 lockdowns Wellcome Collection stopped much of its collection activities, except for zines which were small and cheap enough to be sent to a cataloguer's home address.

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[11] Gavin Hogg and Hamish Ironside, *We Peaked at Paper: An Oral History of British Zines* (Boatwhistle Books 2022); Izabeau Legendre, 'Margins in Motion: Towards a Political History of Zine Culture' (PhD Thesis, Queen's University, 2023) <https://hdl.handle.net/1974/32679> [accessed 16 April 2024].
[12] Duncombe, *Notes from Underground,* p. 7; Harris, 'GURL Scenes', p. 45.
[13] bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre,* 2nd edn (Pluto Press, 2000).

Marginality feels like it can't fully account for zines at Wellcome when these DIY publications became the majority of what they collected for months.

Moving beyond marginality as an orienting lens, this thesis examines what happens when zines are framed as liminal. In doing so, it first considers those moments where zines are already characterised (explicitly or implicitly) through in-betweenness or liminality, as opposed to marginality. This includes where in bridging manuscripts and printed books zines 'occupy a rather uneasy place between the public and private', and how the Zine Librarians Unconference, an informal approximately bi-annual gathering of zine librarians across occupied Turtle Island, situates itself metaphorically in the *hallways* of traditional conference settings.[14] Writer, artist and interdisciplinary feminist scholar, Adela C. Licona explicitly characterises the zines that she studies in her work as 'third space' or 'borderland'. [15] My discussion moves beyond these examples to consider material, cultural and political aspects of contemporary zines' content, production and communities of practice in terms of liminality, with a focus on zines made from or about spaces (sickbeds), experiences (becoming disabled) and times (the COVID-19 pandemic) that are in-between. Throughout this thesis I explore how zines engage with periods of transition and are created from sites of multiple in-betweenness. Instead of focusing on a relationship between margin and centre, I consider the zines at Wellcome as the stuff of in-betweenness. Instead of turning inwards towards a centre, I

[14] Joshua Barton and Patrick Olson, 'Cite First, Ask Questions Later? Toward an Ethic of Zines and Zinesters in Libraries and Research', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 113.2 (2019), pp. 205–216 (p. 207), doi:abs/10.1086/703341; Jenna Freedman, *Unconference Sessions* (2020) <http://zinelibraries.info/wiki/zluc2020/unconference-sessions/> [Accessed 13 Nov. 2020].
[15] Adela C. Licona, *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric* (State University of New York Press, 2012).

consider what else zines might be orientated towards and the futures that zines imagine. A focus on liminality allows a focus on this future.

Zine Making as Practice-Based Method

In some sense I first came to zines because of the ways that narrative approaches felt lacking in my own life. In 2016, I was in the pipeline of long-term mental health service user to Peer Support Worker (PSW) at my local NHS trust. In the PSW training, imported from a US organisation, there was an emphasis on 'Telling My Story': on producing an account of my experiences that met the generic demands of the 'Recovery Narrative' that would form the basis of our professional practice.[16] I found the training deeply frustrating. I struggled to arrange my experiences into a coherent story and found some experiences impossible to put into words. I was expected to stay in the lane of my personal experience rather than engaging with theory, but at the same time I didn't feel there was room for the complex emotions at play - the anger I felt towards mental health services or the ambivalence I felt about potentially returning to work in them. More fundamentally, I felt in a space in-between mad and sane, not sick enough for mental health services but not well enough to look back and write a convincing story (and not feeling like I was heading there). Zines offered me something in this space that the narrative expected of me in PSW training didn't: the zines I read gave me resources to navigate my own experiences and feelings of in-betweenness, and making my own zines provided a medium in which I could creatively process these experiences and feelings, and offer resources to others. Rather than being expected to treat personal experiences as distinct from theory, in zines I was able to explore the relevance of queer theory, the

[16] Angela Woods, Akiko Hart, and Hel Spandler, 'The Recovery Narrative: Politics and Possibilities of a Genre', *Cult Med Psychiatry*, 46.2 (2019), pp. 221-247, doi:10.1007/s11013-019-09623-y.

social model of disability, Mad studies, or the neurodivergence paradigm to my everyday experiences – all of which also provide vital conceptual resources for the present research.

In the same way I turned to zine making because the narrative approaches of PSW training felt lacking, I turned to zine making within this PhD project because of the ways that more traditional academic research practices felt limited in their capacity to understand and respond to zines, and Wellcome's zine collection in particular. This creative practice research project is composed of two interwoven parts: a collection of fourteen original zines created over its duration and this accompanying critical thesis. This thesis is just one trace of both research practices (reading, academic writing, autoethnography) and zine practices (reading, zine writing and assembling, reproduction and distribution). The fourteen zines offer another, different, trace of these same zine and research practices. They are presented as an intentionally curated collection, analogous to a poetry collection, titled *Holding Title.* A full portfolio can be found in Appendix 4.[17] Together the two parts of the project explore liminality and trouble easy distinctions between theory and practice – enacting many of the same third-space knowledge practices as the zines I encounter in this research.

These entwined zine and research practices explore some of the 1500+ zines in Wellcome Collection, alongside selected zines outside the collection, grouped around three themes: zines made in, from or about beds; zines which involve becoming disabled; and zines created during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the original set of zines I created alongside this thesis are zines which directly address the same themes

[17] For the digital version of *Holding Title,* see: www.zinejam.com/holdingtitle.

as the chapters of the thesis. *Making the Bed, Zine Makers Do It in Bed* and *Bed Bound* connect explicitly with Chapter Three: Bed Bound's concerns with the relationship between zine making and beds.[18] *Making the Bed* blends autoethnographic writing of beds and bedrooms with the beds of Wellcome Collection, where *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* and *Bed Bound* take the form of prompt zines inviting the reader to explore their own relationships to beds. Other zines involve wider practices of dissemination, reproduction and distribution, such as *The Postbag (Collected),* which collects the newsletters I sent out to a mailing list of subscribers between September 2020 and the submission of this thesis in April 2024.[19] Others still are concerned with the conventions of academic research: *Ph-Meme* collects every meme I made over the duration of this project and uses these to explore questions that emerge throughout this research.[20] In *Ph-Meme* I document digital objects (memes) in a paper zine. Throughout making zines in this project, I move between digital and analogue practices, for example digitizing hand-drawn comix like *Constellations/Up the Moorhens* and Risoprinting physical collages (a method of printmaking which requires first digitising the collage to then print it again) like *In the Zine House*.[21] The resulting collection has both a paper and digital version. In parallel, the exploration of zines within the thesis moves between paper and digital zines, feeling out (through 'trans(affective)mediation') both their

[18] Lea Cooper, *Making the Bed* (Self-published, 2024); Lea Cooper, *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* (Self-published, 2022); Lea Cooper, *Bed Bound* (Self-published, 2022).
[19] Lea Cooper, *The PostBag (Collected)* (Self-published, 2024).
[20] Lea Cooper, *Ph-Meme* (Self-published, 2024).
[21] Lea Cooper, *Constellations/Up the Moorhens* (Self-published, 2024); Lea Cooper, *In the Zine House* (Self-published, 2023).

distinct qualities and the space between them as a route into contemporary zine (re)production, cultures and communities.[22]

Wellcome Collection's zines

Wellcome Library made their first explicit zine acquisition in late 2016 after a conversation between Nicola Cook and Loesja Vigour (Librarians in the Collections and Research department) and Mel Grant (Collections Development Librarian) about the journal/zine *Doll Hospital*.[23] They began collecting zines to capture 'a perzine zeitgeist' – an increase in the visibility of perzines and zines related to mental health and self-care.[24] 'Perzine' is a contraction of 'Personal Zine' and refers to zines which are predominately autobiographical and deal with the personal life of their makers. Cook and Vigour describe how zines 'fit naturally into what [they] already do' in terms of collecting ephemera and pamphlets, including single issue comics, and graphic medicine. Indeed, when Cook describes the advent of the zine collection at Wellcome, she links it to existing zine-adjacent materials already in the archive – what she calls 'pockets of interesting stuff' in other archives like hospital magazines and photocopied materials in the journal collection.[25] However, the zine collection 'has a different set of acquisition needs to other collections' and 'a different set of practical and ethical needs too'.[26] As of January 2024, there are over 1500 catalogued zines in Wellcome Library's collection. The zines focus 'very broadly around themes of health (both physical and

[22] Daniel C. Brouwer and Adela C. Licona, 'Trans(affective)mediation: feeling our way from paper to digitized zines and back again', *Critical Studies in Media Communication,* 33.1 (2016), pp. 70-83 (p. 78), doi:10.1080/15295036.2015.1129062.
[23] Nicola Cook and Loesja Vigour, 'Zines at the Wellcome Library: an interview with Nicola Cook and Loesja Vigour', *Art Libraries Journal*, 43.2 (2018), pp. 94–100 (p. 94), doi:10.1017/alj.2018.8.
[24] Ibid., p. 95.
[25] Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, June 30 2023), L9-14.
[26] Cook and Vigour, 'Zines at the Wellcome Library', p. 94.

mental), medicine and the human condition and can range from personal experiences to informative resources'.[27] Within this are accounts of experiences in-between health and illness, between diagnosis and recovery, between diagnosis and an unclear final destination, as well as accounts of transition and transformation, all of which link to this thesis' focus on liminality.

The zines at Wellcome Collection are part of Wellcome's longer history, briefly accounted for both on Wellcome Collection's website and in its Collection Development Policy.[28] In 1936, pharmaceutical business owner Henry Wellcome died, leaving a substantial legacy to form what became Wellcome Trust. [29] Wellcome Trust was responsible, in part, for managing the large collection of medical objects and library that he assembled in his lifetime. Whilst significant parts of it were dispersed or distributed to other museums, Henry Wellcome's collection and library remains at the core of the contemporary Wellcome Collection's holdings. The building at 183 Euston Road which Wellcome Collection currently occupies was constructed by Henry Wellcome in 1932, with the intention of housing his collection and laboratories. Wellcome has sought to redress the colonial history of objects it holds, and in November 2022 its long-standing permanent exhibition 'Medicine Man', which showcased parts of Henry Wellcome's collection, closed as part of a project 'to

[27] Cook and Vigour, 'Zines at Wellcome Library', p. 94.
[28] 'The history and context of our collections', Wellcome Collection, n.d., <https://wellcomecollection.org/pages/YLnuVRAAACMAftOt> [accessed 03 December 2023]; Wellcome Collection, 'Collections Development Policy 2018-2023', March 2018 <https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/wellcomecollection%2F6438039a-7787-4fcb-9a09-8774b1d7e808_wellcome+collection_collections+development+policy_march+2018.pdf> [accessed 03 December 2023].
[29] Wellcome Trust is the charitable organisation which funds Wellcome Collection. Despite efforts to differentiate between them, they are inextricably linked. This is perhaps most visible in their physical locations; the two organisations are neighbours on Euston Road, with numerous interior routes between the two.

transform how our collections are presented'.[30] Though Wellcome Collection is actively engaged in this project, Wellcome Trust was identified by its own 2022 evaluation as 'institutionally racist' having failed to make sufficient progress on its 2020 commitments to anti-racism. [31] This offers important context for the zines in Wellcome, and connects to zine makers' broader ambivalence towards institutional collecting – explored in depth in zine maker and DIY cultural scholar Kirsty Fife's article 'Not for you? Ethical implications of archiving zines'.[32] As well as connecting to the ethics of zine collecting, this connects to the ethics of zine research with this collection, and I discuss this further in both Chapter One, and in Chapter Five: Covid Zines.

This context also suggests some of the ways that liminality might offer a productive lens for considering the zines at Wellcome Collection, and potentially zine collections in gallery, library, archive and museum (GLAM) contexts more broadly. Returning to Wellcome's Reading Room, what stood out to me was a feeling of in-betweenness resulting from Wellcome's attempts to transition from a traditional museum and research library to something else: a hybrid museum-library. Wellcome's zine collection was established during a restructure: as Cook describes, 'we had a massive transformation and restructure, and that posed a really good opportunity to just sneak something in'.[33] Wellcome Collection has pivoted to a focus on 'the human' and lived experience. My research is concerned then not just with zines as text-objects of (or

[30] 'Medicine Man', Wellcome Collection, n.d. <https://wellcomecollection.org/exhibitions/Weoe4SQAAKJwjcDC> [accessed 03 December 2023].
[31] '"Insufficient progress" on anti-racism at Wellcome, evaluation finds', Wellcome Collection, 10 August 2022 <https://wellcome.org/news/insufficient-progress-anti-racism-wellcome-evaluation-finds> [accessed 03 December 2023].
[32] Kirsty Fife, 'Not for you? Ethical implications of archiving zines', *Punk & Post-Punk,* 8.2 (2019), pp. 227-242, doi:10.1386/punk.8.2.227_1.
[33] Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, June 30 2023), L25-26.

from) liminal experiences, but also with how zines might act on or within Wellcome Collection; how the collection might result from or materialise some of the shifts Wellcome Collection as an organisation, or members of staff, are attempting to enact across its activities, as well as the risks of the zine collection 'becoming a damaging appropriation of the history and culture represented within the collection rather than a diversification and rebalancing of the narratives that the Institution holds'.[34] This CDA itself is also implicated in this dynamic within Wellcome Collection, in the ways, for example, that the project reflects a desire to look critically at learning from the zine collection, or the ways that a CDA offers the basis for a different relationship between archive and researcher. The librarians at Wellcome, particularly Mel Grant and Nicola Cook, were active parts of this research, and so I was not discovering anything on a dusty shelf. To better understand the history and relationship of Wellcome's zines to Wellcome Collection more broadly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Grant and Cook. Full transcripts of these are in Appendix 1 and 2. These interviews also suggest a different relationship to archival research, one where the librarians working on the zine collection are also visible.

The zines at Wellcome are a distinct collection, and so require the librarians responsible to differentiate between zines and other self-published materials. Here, Wellcome considers both the self-definitions of creators as well as the storage and conservation needs of the materials. Throughout this thesis, I draw on interviews with

[34] Anna Sexton, 'Mainstream institutional collecting of anti-institutional archives: opportunities and challenges' in *Community, Archives and New Collaborative Practices,* ed by Simon Popple, Andrew Prescott and Daniel H. Mutibwa (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 167-180.

Cook and Grant, as well as existing documentation of the zine collection, to understand the history, present day and possible futures of zines at Wellcome.

A fixed definition of zines is neither desirable, nor particularly necessary for this research, and zines resist one anyway. Definitions in research articles, books or chapters tend towards offering a brief introduction to zines for readers not familiar with them, rather than tangling out any of the complexity of what is, or isn't, a zine. Rather than placing DIY publications on a linear spectrum (between 'not a zine' and 'zine'), I borrow from contemporary visualisations of the autistic spectrum. Rather than a linear spectrum (from 'not autistic' to 'autistic'), these visualisations use a colour wheel to convey what it means to be 'on the spectrum', with different qualities, characteristics or experiences reflected in the different colours. A zine spectrum, similarly, assigns qualities, values and characteristics to the colours of the spectrum (e.g. visible authorship, reproducible, handmade), meaning different DIY publications have different profiles on the spectrum.[35] The advantage of this is there isn't a clear threshold between when something is or isn't a zine, which more accurately reflects my own experience of reading, and working with, zines and other DIY publications. Self-identifying as a zine, which is crucial to Wellcome's definition, is just one feature. [36]

The focus of my research is not zines as a whole, or even health zines broadly, but zines at Wellcome Collection. At its centre is an encounter between the zine(s) and myself as reader-maker-researcher. There is an imagined encounter between researcher and archival object in popular culture and in academic writing. This rarely reflects the

[35] For more on the zine spectrum see: Lea Cooper, 'Zines 101', Zine Jam, 7 October 2022 <https://zinejam.com/blog-1/zines-101> [accessed 13 April 2024].
[36] Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom 30 July 2023), L129-130.

complexity of archival research, or the real-life labour of archivists – for example, the story that objects are 'discovered' in archives by historians. [37] In my own imagination, the encounter between researcher and archival object came from the 2009 film adaptation of Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons,* where Dr Robert Langdon (a fictional symbologist) encounters an original book of Galileo's.[38] Through the physical object, Langdon discovers something essential to his mission (something inextricably linked to the materiality of the object). The archive has been impossible to access up to this point, now his access is heavily disciplined (in the form of a guard with a gun) and this disciplining is experienced as frustrating to the task at hand (so much so that eventually Langdon's companion tears the necessary pages from the book). The archive is a seat of power, but our heroes weigh what is at stake in the present over preservation for a future. Where does reality, where it is rarely the life of the future Pope at stake, diverge from this popular cultural fantasy, and where does it align? In Chapter One, I discuss further what encounters with zines in Wellcome's archive means in practice for this research.

The site of this research – Wellcome Collection's zines – also helps set its scope. Though zines are global and self-identified zine making has stretched back into the twentieth century, Wellcome's zine collection is predominately contemporary, anglophone zines. It is difficult to assess the geographical spread of Wellcome's collecting because this information is often not explicitly recorded on the covers of zines, and therefore not in the catalogue records. It extends across the UK partly

[37] Sian Collins, 'Dirt, Dust and Dodgy Joists, or, Memoirs of a Determined Archivist', Cambridge University Library Special Collections, 16 May 2018 <https://specialcollections-blog.lib.cam.ac.uk/?p=16230> [accessed 24 March 2024].
[38] *Angels & Demons,* dir. by Ron Howard (USA, 2009).

because of Wellcome's active collecting at zine fairs and festivals and the zine librarian's use of social media. Where I have extended beyond Wellcome's collection – an effort to resist the ways the archive risks isolating zines from their wider context and a response to the practical restrictions of the Covid pandemic – it has also been into contemporary and anglophone zines drawn from other libraries (Edinburgh Zine Library and Sherwood Forest Virtual Zine Library) and collections (including my personal zine collection and zine collections of friends). This scope means it isn't possible to say that trends in Wellcome's collection reflect zines as a whole; instead, this research focuses on what trends in Wellcome's collection say about Wellcome itself, about the mechanisms of the archive, and cautions against allowing institutional collecting, and 'Zine Studies', to create a canon of zines.

As well as considering the complexities of encountering the zine collection in the present day, I explore the imagined future of zines in libraries and archives. This imagined future is most explicitly discussed in Chapter Five's discussion of collecting Covid zines, but the question of a future user permeates this whole project. Wellcome Collection collects for posterity. Faced with the overwhelming task of imagining all future people, I turned to a more archaic meaning of posterity: the descendants of any person.[39] I imagined a time 100 years from now and wondered about my own descendants in the archive, and particularly the future researchers who will encounter these zines. To feel out some of the tensions and potentials of zines in the collection, to imagine this future use and understand its relationship to the present day of Wellcome Collection, I wanted to perform as a 'researcher' within the archive. This meant that

[39] Entry 'posterity', *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, n.d. <https://www.oed.com/> [24 March 2024].

whilst other research on zines has used interviews with zine makers to explore zines and feminism, or 'MadZines'[40], and whilst my own networks would offer easier access to the zine makers themselves, I decided from the outset of this project that I was interested in the zines in Wellcome Library as archival objects.[41] Rather than making explicit use of the living, extra-textual voices of zine makers, I wanted to ground this research in an encounter with the zines as archival objects, and feel out what it might mean to work with Wellcome's zines when the living voices of its zine makers are no longer available.

At the same time, I was imagining a future from the present. In this present, my conduct with Wellcome's zines models (good) practice and affects Wellcome's relationship with zine makers. I was concerned with behaving ethically *now*. All of this informed the ethical choices and methodology of this project, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter One: A Zine Methodology. Zine collections are growing across different GLAM contexts, and whilst there are in-community guiding documents discussing best practices for zine librarianship, when I started this research there were not equivalent discussions for researchers making use of these zine collections.[42] I compiled the zine *A Zine Researchers' Code of Ethics* between 2021 and 2024, assembling documentation from conversations and workshops, and offering a series of provocations for zine researchers. The need for a focus on ethical research with zines in GLAM was a further

[40] MadZines are those which are 'usually created by people with lived experience of mental ill-health, neurodiversity, psychosocial disability and/or other conditions that have been psychiatrised. With content that includes critical or challenging insights about mental health'. 'MadZines', MadZine Research, n.d. <https://madzines.org/madzines/> [accessed 24 March 2024].

[41] Examples of research using interviews with zine makers includes: Michelle Kempson, '"My Version of Feminism": Subjectivity, DIY and the Feminist Zine', *Social Movement Studies*, 14.4 (2015), pp. 459-472, doi: 10.1080/14742837.2014.945157.

[42] Heidy Berthoud et al, *Zine Librarians Code of Ethics* (Self-Published, 2015).

driving force behind choosing to interact with the zines at Wellcome as an archival collection, and, in this thesis, I argue that zines invite different ways of working with 'lived experience' that have implications for other research in the medical humanities and beyond, and contribute to discussions in the critical medical humanities around consent, ambivalence, and absence.[43] Though my discussions of researcher and archive are uniquely shaped by the specifics of the zine collection at Wellcome, they contribute to wider discussions on the complexities of archival research. The zines made alongside this thesis suggest the potential of creative practice-based responses to archives and archival objects.

My path through the collection

Though I would argue liminality offers a productive lens to consider all the zines in Wellcome Collection, this thesis documents just one route through it and discusses a small percentage of its overall collection. Wellcome Library's zine collection is large and continues to grow: from 1000 catalogued zines in May 2022, to over 1500 zines in Wellcome's online catalogue as of January 2024.[44] Faced with a large number of zines on a diversity of subjects, I had to consider how I would navigate myself in the collection: how I would choose which zines I would read and write about, and which ones would become the research material of this thesis. The zines in Wellcome Collection are connected both via visible cataloguing structures that group them by a

[43] These discussions include: William Viney, Felicity Callard and Angela Woods, 'Critical medical humanities: embracing entanglement, taking risks', *Medical Humanities* 41.1 (2015), pp.2-7, doi:10.1136/medhum-2015-010692; *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities,* ed. by Anne Whitehead and Angela Woods (Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

[44] Nicola Cook (@nic_o_la), 'Remember when I said this? WELL IT HAPPENED! We made it to 1000 catalogued zines @ExploreWellcome and this is the milestone zine by @transcancerzine Please come and visit and read some zines in the library soon!', Twitter, 10 May 2022 <https://twitter.com/nic_o_la/status/1523973288396996609> [accessed 15 April 2024].

controlled vocabulary of subject headings and by invisible (or only faintly visible) social networks, in which I am also implicated.

My main interaction with the zines at Wellcome was through the online catalogue where zines could be requested for viewing prior to a visit. This has a filter for types/techniques that includes ‘zines’ and ‘perzines’. Though I could scroll through the increasing number of pages of catalogue entries, each entry only offers a title, maker and date. Clicking through, the full catalogue record offers: a description of the zine – often drawn from the zine itself; a physical description; and the subject headings that it has been catalogued under. These subject headings are more or less useful, using the same controlled vocabulary as the rest of Wellcome Collection. Some of the difficulties as a researcher navigating the catalogue and attempting any kind of comprehensive or systematic reading can be illustrated through my own zines in the collection which are variously attributed to Lea Cooper, Lilith Cooper, Lilith Joyce Cooper, L. Cooper, Fae the Firth, or without an Author on account of my own inconsistencies when naming myself as author on the zines themselves. I decided against attempting to follow particular makers through the collection. Wellcome structures its zines by type, particularly differentiating perzines, but I wasn’t interested solely in self-consciously autobiographical zines. Instead, I worked thematically, using search terms, asking for suggestions from Cook or more widely through social media, reading around, and relying not just on access to zines at Wellcome but also other means of reading the same zines – whether that was finding copies in other zine collections, finding digitized copies, or purchasing zines directly from makers. It also involved coming across zines unexpectedly. This is part of the serendipitous nature of zine reading: what zine researcher and proprietor of BOOKS

Peckham Peter Willis characterises in his PhD research on zines as 'luck as method'.[45] Though I was concerned with the Wellcome Collection's zines, it was also important to place these in the much wider landscape of zine making – so throughout the chapters to follow I discuss zines within Wellcome's collection and some outwith. I account for the location of the zines I read variously in the thesis text, and in the table included in Appendix 3.

I describe my methodological approach to these zines as a 'zine methodology' in part to foreground my angle of arrival to this research: as a zine maker first. This zine methodology makes use of phenomenology as an interpretative framework because of its focus on lived experience and starting point of the body. The research methods, particularly zine making and autoethnography, are particularly equipped to explore positionality and proximity. In the 'Research Info' that I offered zine makers when contacting them to get consent to write about their zines (reproduced in *A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics*) I describe: 'I don't treat the zines I write about in my thesis as objects that I analyse, instead I treat them as sources of knowledge equal to any academic texts I might cite from'.[46] What I do analyse is my own relationship to these zines, as reader, maker and researcher, and the relationship of Wellcome Collection to these zines (and vice versa), which I discuss in more depth in Chapter One: What Would a Zine Maker Do?

I characterise my movement through the networked zine collection as following 'desire lines'. Desire lines, a concept originally from urban planning but applied by queer

[45] Peter Willis, email to the author, 14 February 2024.
[46] Lea Cooper, *A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics* (Self-published, 2023), npn.

feminist philosophers like Sara Ahmed in her discussions of orientation, are formed through erosion caused by human or non-human use and often represent the quickest or easiest way to navigate a route (irrespective of the intentions of planners).[47] Sometimes these lines form new paths between two places, and sometimes they just shortcut a curve in a pavement. Either way, desire lines form when the existing environment or infrastructure does not meet the needs (or wants) of its users. Where engaging with other collections (or research pursuing a more systematic review of Wellcome's zines) might benefit from an approach ordered by chronology, geography, or another structuring parameter applied to the archive, following desire felt consistent with how I move through zines outside of Wellcome, outside of research – attending zine fairs, visiting zine libraries, reading and making zines. At the 2022 Zines ASSEMBLE, an online symposium I co-organised bringing together zine makers, researchers and librarians, with support from Wellcome Collection, a fellow PhD researcher described feeling guilty about flicking through zines in the archive in search of particular topics.[48] Instead, I want to embrace skimming, flicking, or scanning as a potentially generative form of selecting, reading and interacting with zines. Humanities research often values the close read, but fleeting impressions or fragmented readings offer valuable affective and embodied knowledge about an archival collection. This formalises a resistance to neurotypical norms about how things *should* be read, or written about, about how topics should be chosen. Zine collections are assembled in these ways, are fundamentally sympathetic to meandering, to distractions, to disorientation. Kate

[47] Sara Ahmed, 'Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* 12.4 (2006), pp. 543-574, doi:10.1215/10642684-2006-002.
[48] Lauren Cooper, 'Looking for Theory: Reflections on Researching Autotheoretical Zines', unpublished paper delivered at the symposium 'Zines ASSEMBLE' (Online, September 2022).

Eichorn, a culture and media scholar who has written about the movement of Riot Grrl[49] zines into archives as part of a wider archival turn in feminism, describes this as a queer route. Ahmed frames desire lines as 'queer use' – where a queer use is an unauthorised or unintended use. [50] To queer use is not just to take shortcuts, it is to linger in spaces you are supposed to pass through quickly – like those liminal spaces of transition that are the focus of this thesis.

I would go further to suggest that neuroqueer, a concept which emerged from the work of Nick Walker, Athena Lynn Michaels-Fillon and Remi Yergeau, and which recurs throughout this thesis, better captures the deviation from straight and neurotypical paths.[51] Neuroqueer brings together neurodivergence and queerness, offering a framework where neurotypical norms structure the world in a similar way to how heteronormativity does. Rather than focusing on neurodivergence as a biological deviation, neuroqueer theory focuses on the ways neurodivergence disrupts or subverts neuronormativity. Neuroqueerness and liminality connect in the ways that neurodivergence often involves deviation from neuronormative life paths, periods of sustained liminality, different rites of passage, and transitions. It is also important to acknowledge the ways that the concept of neuroqueer use or paths through the archive is sympathetic to my ways of thinking, working and sensing as a neurodivergent researcher.

[49] Riot Grrl refers to a feminist movement in the 1990s and 2000s, connected to a music scene that grew out of Portland, Oregon, with bands such as Bikini Kill, Le Tigre, and Heavens to Betsy. Many Riot Grrls made zines.
[50] Kate Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013); Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Duke University Press, 2019).
[51] Nick Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm and Postnormal Possibilities* (Autonomous Press, 2021).

Following desire paths offers a meandering route, a neuroqueer path through the archive. Researchers are often advised to avoid straying from the central path of their research.[52] However, taking a more rhizomatic route is not unprecedented, especially in zines. Kate Eichhorn describes her own 'often meandering methodology' in her archival work.[53] She suggests that archives are 'informed and structured by unexpected proximities and by the connections such unexpected proximities offer', an insight that resonated with my own approach to Wellcome Collection.[54]

I wrote this thesis within a community of other PhD researchers working within zines, archiving or DIY cultures. The ubiquity of "The Chart" (from the noughties lesbian tv show *The L Word*) in many of our early ideas of community mapping became a punchline of jokes. The community mapping that takes place in *The L Word* maps desire, with the lines between names signifying sexual encounters. Absent, then, from this map are undesirables which, given *The L Word*'s well documented problems with race, transness, fatness, disability, and class[55], results in a map that makes most visible white cis lesbians and their desires (usually other white cis lesbians). Desire, then, should not be used uncritically or unreflexively as guide. Nonetheless, desire orientates me in the collection: towards certain zines, and away from others; towards certain ways of reading, using and responding to these zines, and away from others. Perhaps this is best demonstrated in Chapter Five: Covid Zines, where, despite acknowledging the

[52] Ainslie Yardley, 'Piecing Together – A Methodological Bricolage', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* 9.2 (2008), doi:10.17169/fqs-9.2.416.
[53] Eichorn, *The Archival Turn,* p. 57.
[54] Ibid., p.56.
[55] The QTPOC Speakeasy, 'On Blackness and "The L Word: Generation Q', Autostraddle, 14 October 2021 <https://www.autostraddle.com/on-blackness-and-the-l-word-generation-q/> [accessed 04 January 2023].

possibilities of a study of quaranzines, [56] I found myself turned towards those zines that troubled existing temporalities of the Coronavirus pandemic.

However, my path through the Wellcome Collection's zines was not one of unrestrained desire, or even particularly fluid movement: there was a tension between how I wanted to navigate the zine collection and how I was allowed to. Moving through the zine collection often felt frustrated: by the on-going impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; by the archival structures; by moments of unexpected proximity to zines in the collection (suddenly recognising a name); and by the limitations of my own body-mind. In other zine collections I've been able to pull zines from the shelves, from the stacks or out of archival boxes. Precautions around COVID-19, and the resulting lockdowns, fundamentally shaped my interactions with Wellcome Collection's zines, along with the library's clear remit as a research library, with an eye always turned towards a future user. Access to the zines illuminates some of the dynamics at play within the collection, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Five. Cook and Vigour describe a tension between wanting the collection to be 'fully and freely accessible to the public on the open shelves' and 'collecting for posterity'.[57] As a result, though the zine collection was launched with a pop-up open access zine reading event in September 2018, the zines themselves live in the archival store, waiting to be requested and accessed by registered library users.

The restrictions of COVID-19 (Wellcome Collection was completely closed between April 2020 and October 2020, and my first visit to the library was in September 2021, a

[56] A portmanteau of zine and quarantine that popped up in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, without a clear single point of origin.
[57] Cook and Vigour, 'Zines at Wellcome', pp.96-97.

full year after I started this research) might have presented insurmountable challenges for traditional archival research or to a different form of creative practice, but zines offered unique solutions which also opened starting points for considering some of the questions or themes within this research: many zine makers responded to the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions on normal methods of distribution by digitising their zines; I already owned many of the zines in Wellcome Collection; I was familiar with working, and with making zines, from bed. Zine networks are as much virtual as they are physical. Still, as Chapter Five explores more fully, this creative project is a Covid thesis. Its concerns, methods and methodology were all fundamentally shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges of this period invited a clearer articulation of the material conditions in which research is produced, and I wonder if I would have been able to so explicitly articulate the barriers to access at Wellcome as a disabled researcher without the physical closure of the collection to anchor these discussions onto.

Outline of Chapters

In Chapter One: What Would a Zine Maker Do? I establish the zine methodology of this project: a methodology where, when facing choices as a researcher, I first ask what would a zine maker do?[58] I examine and develop upon the answers to this question in response to different needs of this research, outlining how (neuroqueer) phenomenology offers a research framework, and establishing zine making, autoethnography and archival research as overlapping methods. I pay particular attention to *Holding Title,* the zine collection that accompanies this thesis which constitutes the practice component of this research. Woven through this chapter are

[58] Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley, *Creative Arts Research: Narratives of Methodologies and Practices* (Brill, 2009), p. 5.

the ethical considerations of this research, the ways I negotiate these in practice, and broader questions about the ethics of zine research in archives and libraries.

In Chapter Two: Zines from the In-between I establish the theoretical foundations for this thesis' discussion of liminality and zines. I locate liminality in the specific twentieth century anthropological school of ethnography in which it developed, before exploring approaches to liminality which foreground lived experience, embodiment, affect, and cultural and political change. I establish what it has meant to describe zines as marginal, and address the limits of this description, particularly with relation to the digital, the archive and contemporary zine making practices, and the ways that liminality may offer an alternative and generative mode of conceptualization, with particular attention to the zine *Disgender: a zine about being trans // nonbinary & disabled // chronically ill issue #2*.[59] The aim of this chapter is to establish the potential of liminality to illuminate the specific and multiple in-betweenness of the zines in Wellcome Collection and, simultaneously, the ways zines more broadly offer a productive site for studying and understanding liminality.

The questions of access and location that I've touched on in this introduction gave me my first path through the zine collection at Wellcome. Chapter Three: Bed Bound, considers the mutually constitutive relationship between zines and beds, exploring the different ways that crip, disabled, sick, mad and queer zine makers make their beds. In doing so, I explore how these zines offer a neuroqueer phenomenology of horizontality. The chapter culminates in a consideration of being bed bound as orientation – a

[59] *Disgender: a zine about being trans // nonbinary & disabled // chronically ill issue #2,* ed. by Raz (Self-published, 2018).

movement towards bed which disrupts linear ideas of liminality and invites a reflection on what it means to be turned toward bed. I focus on zines that are made from sick beds; zines that assemble and locate writing, art, photography from sick beds in a wider cultural landscape; zines made from hospital beds; and consider how the chapter's themes connect to existing scholarship on zines made from prison. The work of this chapter is explicitly paralleled in the zines from the accompanying original collection *Making the Bed, Zinemakers Do It in Bed* and *Bed Bound*.[60]

Over the duration of this research, I have experienced both changes in my ability and a movement into crip, Mad and neuroqueer identities, and it was in the zines I sought out in relation to these transitions that I found my next route through Wellcome's collection. In Chapter Four, I consider the zines at Wellcome that, in different ways, birth disability. After Stacey Milbern Park's notion of a 'Crip Doula' I consider how zines doula the rites of passage of becoming disabled, using the zine *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* as a framework for this discussion.[61] I consider doulaing as knowledge sharing through reading zines about benefits alongside other welfare and benefits material in Wellcome's collection. I explore doulaing as forming disabled or crip identities through a close reading of *The Ring of Fire Anthology* connecting this to the concept of 'liminal affective technologies' in social psychology, which involve 'the creation of liminal experiences in order to facilitate, accompany, or engender relevant social transitions and associated personal transformations'.[62] Through the zines *Sore Loser: A chronic*

[60] Cooper, *Making the Bed*; Cooper, *Zinemakers Do It in Bed;* Cooper, *Bed Bound.*
[61] Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018); WWHIVDD, *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* (Self-published, 2020).
[62] E. T. Russian, *The Ring of Fire Anthology* (Left Bank Books, 2014); Paul Stenner and Monica Greco. 'On the Magic Mountain: The novel as liminal affective technology', *International Political Anthropology,* 11.1 (2018), pp. 43-60 (p. 4), <https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/23561/3/On%20The%20Magic%20Mountain.pdf> [accessed 07 April 2024].

pain and illness zine on queer disabled grief and *CRUMPLE ZINE*, I consider zines as holding space for grief and bad feelings.[63] Finally, through a discussion of Lu William's *Archiving Joy,* alongside *The Ring of Fire Anthology*, I figure doulaing as the work of imagining pasts and archiving futures, and consider how liminality orientates us towards the futures that zines are crafting.[64] I extend this through the zine *AfterBirth,* part of *Holding Title.*[65]

Finally, Chapter Five: Covid Zines addresses the immediate present of Wellcome Collection, looking at the broad category of 'Covid zines'. I examine the move by libraries and archives, including Wellcome, to collect Covid zines as part of a broader historical project. Cautioning against subsuming all Covid zines into the category of 'quaranzine', I explore zines which trouble a temporality of Covid where the pandemic was an unprecedented blip between two stable states. I read for time in these zines and propose that they offer other understandings of liminal temporalities. Through Wellcome Zine Club's *Contagion* zine, Sarah Shay Mirk's *This is Not Our First Pandemic,* and Mad Covid's *Quaranzine: a zine about isolation, connectedness & survival in dark times,* I trouble constructions of COVID-19 as an all-encompassing societal liminality we entered from a state of 'normal'.[66] Whilst through *Long Covid Symptom Tracker* and *The Covid Logs* I trouble constructions of COVID-19 as a liminal period we have emerged from to a 'new normal'.[67] Through a discussion of *The Covid Logs* in

[63] Sandra Alland and Etzali Hernández, *Sore Loser: a chronic pain and illness zine on queer disabled grief* (Self-published, 2021); Flannery O'kafka, *CRUMPLE ZINE* (Self-published, 2022).
[64] *Archiving Joy,* ed. by Lu Williams (Self-published, 2022).
[65] Lea Cooper, *AfterBirth* (Self-published, 2024).
[66] Wellcome Zine Club, *Contagion* (Self-published, 2019); Sarah Shay Mirk, *This is Not Our First Pandemic* (Self-published, 2020); *Quaranzine! : a zine about isolation, connectedness & survival in dark times,* ed. by Mad Covid (Self-published, 2020).
[67] ASC for Healthy Communities, *Long Covid Symptom Tracker: a self-care tracker* (Self-published, 2020); *The Covid Logs,* ed. by Michelle Dawn and Katrina Dreamer (Self-published, 2024).

conversation with *Sore Loser,* I consider Covid time as Grief Time (after disability writer and scholar Ellen Samuels 'Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time') and argue that these Covid zines offer a valuable site to understand the temporalities of eugenics.[68] I end by returning to the ethical questions of zine research, and Wellcome's zine collection.

In the final chapter I lay out the contributions of this research to zine studies and to the study of liminality. I expand on the contributions the project makes to the medical humanities, graphic medicine and creative practice-based research approaches, and to the transdisciplinary study of liminality. I offer a critical reflection on the paths not taken through Wellcome's zine collection, considering the potential of these for future research which both expands on the contributions of this thesis and moves in new directions. I place this research within the context of a wider set of on-going work in contemporary zine studies – both within and outwith academia. I end with a reflection on the differences between finishing a thesis and finishing a zine, and a consideration of some of the in-between spaces of this research – between bed and Wellcome Collection, between digital and paper zines, between starting this project and completion.

[68] Ellen Samuels, 'Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time', *Disability Studies Quarterly,* 37.3 (2017), < https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/5824/4684> [accessed 15 April 2024].

Chapter One: What Would a Zine Maker Do?

Introduction

Through this chapter, I establish the zine methodology of this project. This zine methodology connects the 'contextual framework' of the research explicitly to zine and DIY practices and values: it is a methodology in which, when facing choices as a researcher, I first ask what would a zine maker do?[1] I examine and develop upon the answers to this question in response to different needs of this research, outlining how (neuroqueer) phenomenology offers a research framework, and establishing zine making and autoethnography as overlapping and interconnected methods. Woven through this chapter are the ethical considerations of this research, the ways I negotiated these in practice, and broader questions about the ethics of zine research in archives and libraries.

The development of this methodology has been iterative: as I have progressed, I have come to new understandings of what zines can do, which have informed the unfolding epistemological approach and methods employed in this project. It has also been recursive and characterized by cycles of return to Wellcome Collection, and the application of these research methods to the zines that result from this project: zines about zines about zines. This chapter focuses on a process of assembling a methodology that has spanned the four years I've spent doing this PhD, and that is

[1] Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley, *Creative Arts Research: Narratives of Methodologies and Practices* (Brill, 2009), p.5.

grounded in practices of zine making, organizing, and archiving that precede (and extend beyond) this research project.

The Needs of this Research

The needs of this research are shaped by its central questions: how liminality might be a productive lens for studying zines and zine collections and, simultaneously, what zines can offer to understandings of liminality. Liminality, although it has its origins in anthropology, is a transdisciplinary concept which has multiple dimensions that aren't fully accounted for in a single approach or discipline. Engaging with liminality, as I expand on in more depth in the following chapter, requires working in ways that exceed disciplinary boundaries. It also requires different ways of knowing, engaging with lived experience, sensory and affective knowledges, and using sources beyond academic literature.

Zines need a mode of reading that accounts for the material text, the words in relationship with the material zine or, after book studies scholar Anne Royston, the 'nonsemantic'.[2] Zines are a media where text is explicitly in relationship to and inextricable from visual, material and sensory elements. Zine scholars have variously accounted for reading the material zine: through developing interpretive strategies like 'autographics' – reading 'the presentation of text and images, layout and photocopying quality and how they effect, interact with, contradict of interrupt the narrative' – or reading the 'sculptural' or 'architectural' elements of zines.[3] These strategies of reading

[2]Anne M. Royston, *Material Noise: Reading Theory as Artist's Book* (MIT Press, 2019).
[3] Anna Poletti, 'Auto/Assemblage: Reading the Zine', *Biography,* 31.1 (2008), pp. 85-102 (p. 88), doi:10.1353/bio.0.0008; Alison Piepmeier, 'Why Zines Matter: Materiality and the Creation of Embodied Community', *American Periodicals,* 18. 2 (2008), pp. 213-238 (p. 214), doi:10.1353/amp.0.0004; Daniel C. Brouwer and Adela C. Licona, 'Trans(affective)mediation: feeling our way from paper to digitized zines and

zines are echoed in descriptions of reading artists' books and connect to ongoing work on materiality in book studies.[4]

Reading the material zine does not mean exclusively reading paper zines – not only did the COVID-19 pandemic mean many zines were only accessible as digitized versions, but there has been an increase in born-digital zines. Both in terms of the practical needs of this project, and its interest in contemporary zines, this research needs to read digital zines. The focus of zine studies has so far been on the paper zine, often placed in contrast to digital media.[5] In order to engage with contemporary zine making, zine studies needs to acknowledge the emotional, affective and material differences between reading/making paper and digital zines. Building on rhetoric scholar Daniel C. Brouwer and Adela C. Licona's work on digitized zines, which treats 'print zines and digital zines as distinct and distinctly affective domains with dis/similar affective possibilities and constraints, coherences and incoherences and intensities', zine studies needs to engage with trans(affective)mediation in zine (re)production, as well as in distribution and archiving.[6] In taking a 'reflexive stance of ambivalence', zine studies can engage with paper and digital zines in a non-hierarchical way which also doesn't reinforce a false binary between paper and digital.[7] Indeed, the blurred boundaries between these different forms of zines makes characterizing them in opposition to each

back again', *Critical Studies in Media Communication,* 33.1 (2016), pp. 70-83 (p. 78) doi:10.1080/15295036.2015.1129062.

[4] Joanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists Books* (Granary Books, 1995); Stella Bolaki, *Illness as Many Narratives: Arts, Medicine and Culture* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Stefan Kilma, *Artists Books: A Critical Survey of the Literature* (Granary Books, 1998).

[5] For example: Miloš Hroch, 'Not Out of Date, but Out of Time: The Materiality of Zines and Post-digital Memory', *Forum Historiae,* 14.1 (2020), pp.17-27, doi:10.31577/forhist.2020.14.1.2; Alison Piepmeier, 'Why Zines Matter'.

[6] Brouwer and Licona, 'Trans(affective)mediation', p.78.

[7] Brouwer and Licona, 'Trans(affective)mediation', p.70.

other difficult. I've settled on 'paper' zines as the most appropriate shorthand for those zines that you read on paper – because to characterize these as 'physical' zines against digital ones wrongly suggests that digital zines don't have a physical presence, a materiality; or to characterize these as 'print' zines against digital ones wrongly suggests that we can't consider digital print practices, or that many methods of printing don't involve digitization, or indeed that handwritten zines constitute 'print'.

Alison Piepmeier suggests that the physical acts of both zine making and zine reading locate zine maker and reader in their bodies, as 'a site of care and pleasure'.[8] To read the material zine, paper or digital, needs an embodied reader. An attention to embodiment is also necessary given the importance of the site of zine reading to this research: not just in bed, at home, but in Wellcome Collection's Rare Materials Room. Gillian Rose, a British geographer particularly concerned with visual cultures, describes how one of the effects of the archive is to produce 'despite itself, an embodied researcher'; 'the instructions', in her case in the V&A's Print Room, 'constitute the researcher as a body dangerously threatening the photographs with all these dirty needs'.[9] Finally, an embodied reader connects to an ethical need when working specifically with the zines at Wellcome Collection around health and illness. Writing about her photographic practice, intimately tied to her experience of breast cancer, artist Jo Spence describes how 'I was equally sick of academics within my own discourse who wrote theories of the representation of bodies, without in any way seeming to inhabit their own'.[10] I need to

[8] Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (NYU Press, 2009), p. 230.
[9] Gillian Rose, 'Practising photography: an archive, a study, some photographs and a researcher', *Journal of Historical Geography,* 26.4 (2000), pp. 555-571 (p. 561), doi:10.1006/jhge.2000.0247.
[10] Jo Spence, *Cultural Sniping: The Art of Transgression* (Routledge, 1995), p. 130.

read zines as an embodied reader in response to the ways zine makers themselves inhabit their bodies.

There is a meme of two stills side by side from the film *Knives* Out, with actor Daniel Craig playing detective Benoit Blanc.[11] On the left, Craig has his hands up in exasperation, face grimacing. Text reads 'It makes no damn sense'. On the right still, his face has relaxed. Text reads: 'Compels me though'. I include this meme in workshops I run on zines and zine making – asking participants to consider the importance of being moved by zines that you don't understand. I invite a reflection on the way that, although a zine may initially feel like it doesn't make sense, if we expand our idea of sense-making beyond looking for narrative, we can start to make meaning from the affective and sensory. This reading beyond narrative is particularly important in the context of this research's focus on liminality. Liminality is often absent from narrative approaches – treated as absence, non-sense or chaos. As critical medical humanities scholar Angela Woods argues, in privileging particular forms of narrative as *the* form communications of lived experience of illness takes, we privilege certain subjectivities and models of self that can fit into that shape.[12] We also privilege particular stages or experiences. Arthur Frank, perhaps best known for his work on illness narratives *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics,* describes as 'chaos' those periods that resist narrative: 'those living in chaos are least able to tell a story, because they lack any sense of a viable future. Life is reduced to a series of present-tense assaults. If a narrative involves temporal progression, chaos is anti-narrative.'[13] Within his own narrative he

[11] *Knives Out,* dir. by Rian Johnson (USA, 2019)
[12] Angela Woods, 'The limits of narrative: provocations for the medical humanities', Medical Humanities, 37 (2011), pp. 73-78, doi:10.1136/medhum-2011-010045.
[13] Arthur Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics,* 2nd edn (University of Chicago Press, 2013), xv.

characterizes periods of diagnostic uncertainty as chaos. What of people who don't experience diagnostic certainty, treatment or resolution, who don't experience the shift in temporality required to construct Frank's more desirable 'quest narrative'? Frank argues that 'stories have to repair the damage that illness has done to the ill person's sense of where she is in life', what of those of us who can't fulfil the moral imperative to share our illness stories?[14] As liminality, periods of in-betweenness or apparent chaos, are often absent from narrative approaches, a focus on narrative may not be particularly effective when approaching liminal subjectivities and selves, and experiences of enduring liminality.

Feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed's discussion of use and its relationship to form are particularly illuminating when considering relationships between zines and narrative, the uses of zines within both Wellcome Collection and the field of medical humanities.[15] In focusing on lived experience in zines and what this offers to understandings of liminality, it is important to distinguish this lived experience from 'Lived Experience' as it is mobilised across mainstream academic research, medical pedagogy, and Wellcome Collection. These contexts shape the forms lived experience takes. Angela Woods, Akiko Hart and Hel Spandler's work on 'The Recovery Narrative' as 'a particular kind of story produced within specific sites' with generic demands informs this category of Lived Experience.[16] Lived Experience, then, is lived experience made useful within specific sites. It typically: is a narrative form (or narrativized for example via an explanatory label that tells the story of a piece of artwork); values a perceived

[14] Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller,* p. 53.
[15] Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Duke University Press, 2019).
[16] Angela Woods, Akiko Hart, and Hel Spandler, 'The Recovery Narrative: Politics and Possibilities of a Genre', *Cult Med Psychiatry*, 46.2 (2019), pp. 221-247, doi:10.1007/s11013-019-09623-y.

authenticity or naivety (uncorrupted by academic theory); and has the primary purpose of communicating experience to an outsider audience, often one that either holds a view informed by dominant media discourse (the 'public') or which has privileged professional or academic knowledge. These characteristics are central to understanding the zines at Wellcome Collection, as they are recruited into Wellcome's reorientation from a history of medicine toward 'the human', and their value is articulated in terms of Lived Experience.[17] To understand how zines might resist this use, and to consider other uses of zines, this research needs to engage critically with this category of Lived Experience.

The zine *Up the Moorhens,* which is part of *Holding Title,* opens with a conversation after a visit to 'Out of Sight Out of Mind', an exhibition of artwork from 'people with experience of mental health issues' in which I showed a zine. The speakers ask (of each other, and of the reader): personal testimonies have been key to liberation movements, but are they a tool available to Mad people when we have such a strong history of case studies? The question extends to disability and Crip liberation and is asked in the context of the category of Lived Experience as it is mobilised in our lives. Though the zine begins as a more typical comic, the form of zines I first started making in response to my

[17] In her interview for this research, Mel Grant describes the zine collection as being guided by the collections development policy that sets out Wellcome's interest in lived experience, as well as being a 'natural fit' in this (Interview with Mel Grant, Collections Development Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, April 18 2023), L16).

experiences in Mental Health services, this form doesn't hold and transmutes to collage, producing a less stable narrative.

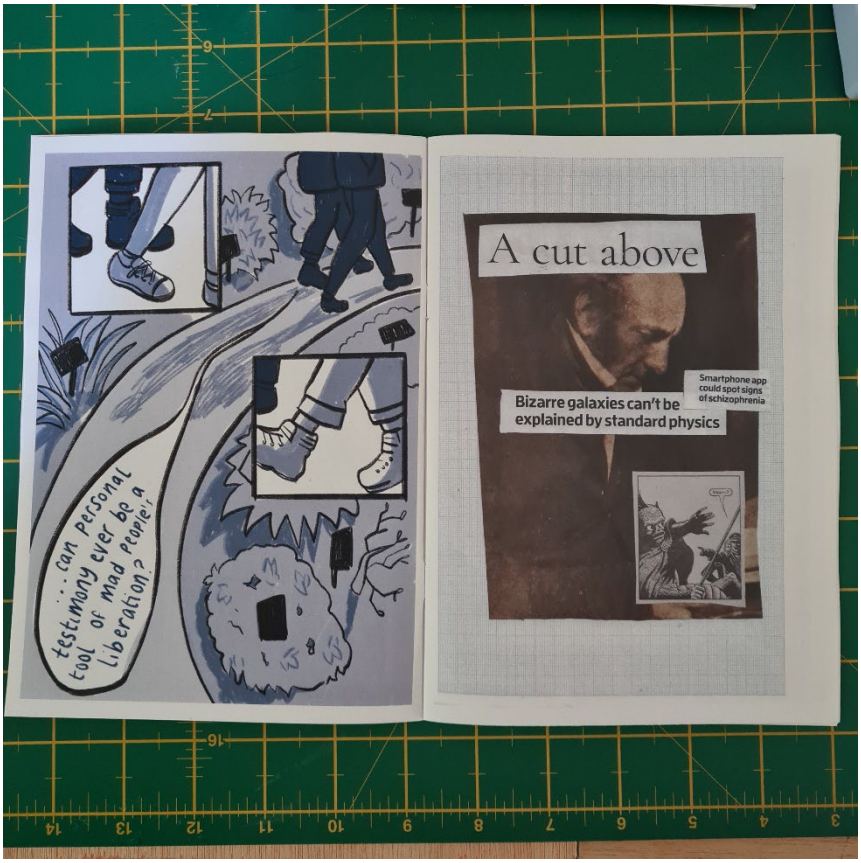

FIG. 1. Lea Cooper, spread from *Constellations/Up the Moorhens* (2024), digitally printed A5 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

Faced with these limits, this research needs to be able to respond to zines in ways that go beyond narrative. Some approaches, particularly within the medical humanities and in mainstream archival research, engage in narrativizing (telling stories about) non-narrative forms in order to make use of them within research.[18] How can I make sense of, be compelled by, the zines in this research without relying solely on narrative sense-making which risks, in a focus on using zines and other creative expressions of health

[18] See both: Claire Charlotte McKechnie, 'Anxieties of communication: the limits of narrative in the medical humanities' *Medical Humanities,* 40.2 (2014), pp. 119-24, doi:10.1136/medhum-2013-010466; Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester University Press, 2002).

and disability, reifying narrative as a mode of articulating experience, and missing other things that zines do.

Reading zines is not solely an encounter with a material object; Kate Eichorn describes how she began researching zines as a textual community to avoid the ethical complications of ethnographic methods, but rapidly found 'in sending away for zines, [she] had unintentionally initiated the process of negotiating access to a community'. [19] Zine reading isn't just about the textual or material dimensions of reading but implicates wider networks of production, circulation and communities of practice. This research needs to be able to hold multiple dimensions of zine reading. This is especially important as I am implicated in the networks at Wellcome Collection. Before this PhD, my zines were collected by Wellcome's librarians. This was my first contact with the idea of zines in libraries, which planted the seed that became the Edinburgh Zine Library, a DIY collection of contemporary zines I co-founded in 2017 and continue to collectively organize with.[20] Since 2022, I have also been an organizer at Edinburgh Zine Festival, offering further layers to my relationship with many of the zine makers in Wellcome's collection. I cannot offer any distance from the site of my research: the zine collection at Wellcome, or zine communities more broadly. This research needs a methodology that can accommodate this proximity, and that can make use of, rather than try to obscure, my personal links to the collection. Within this are ethical dimensions, as well as the ways my multiple positions in relationship to the collection – researcher, zine maker, zine librarian, psychiatric survivor, trans person – results in

[19] Kate Eichorn, 'Sites Unseen: Ethnographic research in a textual community', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 14.4 (2001), pp. 565-578 (p. 569) doi:10.1080/09518390110047075.
[20] For more information on Edinburgh Zine Library, see www.edinburghzinelibrary.com.

ambivalence, a feeling of being pulled in different directions that needs to be articulated rather than smoothed over.

An aspect of this ambivalence is about the nature of a CDA with Wellcome Collection itself. As a partner in the CDA, Wellcome laid out an agenda for the project: in the letter of support for the CHASE funding application, Wellcome linked the project to Wellcome Collection's strategic objectives 'to bring new research communities to engage with our unique and distinctive collections and to encourage new approaches that will transform our understandings of the social and cultural contexts of health in the past and present'.[21] As Wellcome Collection continued to collect zines over the duration of this project, and as the nature of this collection often involved direct contact with and relationships with zine makers, how I conducted myself in this research impacted Wellcome's ongoing relationships with zine communities and future collecting, if only by word of mouth. Many zine makers want researchers to behave in ways that are consistent with zine values and are vocal when this is not happening.[22] This research then needs to work with the zines, engage with the collection as required by Wellcome, whilst at the same time using the zines in a way that protects Wellcome's relationship with zine makers. Whilst sometimes experienced as a pull in different directions, these dynamics also presented an opportunity to suggest (and model) good practice for use of collections like the zine collection at Wellcome.

This research needs a methodology that can meet the specific ethical demands of this project. As zine librarians Joshua Barton and Partick Olsen describe 'assumptions made

[21] Stella Bolaki, email to author, 22 February 2024.
[22] An example of this is what Jessie Lymn names 'the Teal Triggs Affair', see: Jessie Lymn, 'Queering archives: the practices of zines' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Technology, Sydney, 2014), p. 49.

about the use of traditionally published material in libraries are not necessarily applicable or desirable in the case of zines'. [23] In order to interview Wellcome Collection librarians Mel Grant and Nicola Cook (both on my supervisory team at Wellcome) I had to complete a research ethics review process, but to read and write about Wellcome's zines in this thesis had no external ethics process I was accountable to, beyond questions of permission about including images of zine pages in the thesis.

Questions of ethics extend into the methodology itself. Wellcome's zines specifically, with their focus on perzines, health, illness and lived experience, are often made in relationship to wider systems and structures of power in which Wellcome is itself implicated. My own history as a psychiatric survivor, who made zines in part to resist the control I felt mental health services had over narratives of my life, means I am acutely aware of this dynamic and suspicious of any methodology that requires an analysis or interpretation that mirrored the same analysis or interpretation I explicitly made zines to resist, or that might replicate wider epistemic injustice or violence.[24]

These practical questions around ethics connect to other practical needs of the research. As of January 2024, Wellcome Collection have over 1500 catalogued zines in their collection. In my introduction, I gave an account of a path through this archive, orientated by desire. The project's methodology needs to account for and be attuned to these meandering routes. Further practical needs were created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant full closure of Wellcome Collection between March and October 2020, and by my location (living on the Fife Coast in Scotland, 450 miles away

[23] Joshua Barton and Patrick Olson. 'Cite First, Ask Questions Later? Toward an Ethic of Zines and Zinesters in Libraries and Research', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 113.2 (2019), pp. 205–216, doi:abs/10.1086/703341.
[24] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

from Wellcome Collection even when it was open). This project thus demands a methodology that can hold multiple different encounters with zines – in the Rare Materials Room at Wellcome, in my bedroom, on my laptop or phone.

A Zine Methodology

Zine studies is a small, but growing, area of research within which no single methodology or method has emerged. [25] This research methodology builds on other research – both within zine studies explicitly, and research characterised as 'zineic' after Cui Su: 'embodying the ethos of zine practices whether or not it uses zines directly'. [26] I describe my methodology as a 'zine methodology' to reference how the 'views, beliefs and values' that guide the choices I make as a researcher are informed by zine practices, values and ethics.[27] It reflects the close relationship between the zine practices and academic research practices I draw together and captures the importance of zine making itself as a method in this project. To connect my methodology to zine values and practices is not to suggest a single unified framework behind zines. As I described in my Introduction, zines resist an objective description: instead, they are characterized by practices and values. These connect to an ethics of zine making – articulated most clearly when people feel it has been violated. A zine methodology is then underpinned by practices including visible authorship; circulating

[25] Anne Hays, 'A Citation Analysis about Scholarship on Zines', *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication,* 8 (2020), doi:10.7710/2161-3309.2341; A.j. Michel, *From Staple to Spine* (Self-published, 2022).
[26] Cui Su, 'Printed Matter or, Towards a Zineic History of Reading', in *On Reading: Form, Fictionality, Friendship,* ed. by Jeremy Fernando (Atropos Press, 2012), pp. 423-458; Jill Anderson, *Reimagining Mental Health: Learning from what zines do,* <https://madzines.org/reimagining-mental-health-learning-from-what-zines-do-by-jill-anderson/> [accessed 30 March 2024]; Peter Willis, 'What might a 'zine studies' look like?', unpublished paper delivered at the symposium 'Zines ASSEMBLE' (Online, September 2022).
[27] Helen Kara, Creative Research Methods in the social sciences: A Practical Guide (Policy Press, 2015).

zines in different gift economies; amateurism; queery-ing[28]; third-space knowledge production and sharing. The choices I make in this research, about methods of interpretation, analysis or dissemination, and ethics, are made in a framework of zine values, practices and ethics. For example, in response to the question of how I navigate the zines in Wellcome Collection, as described in the Introduction, I turn to embodied modes of reading zines that zine makers engage in in other contexts: flicking, skimming, and being orientated by desire. In researching the zines at Wellcome I've worked thematically, in the same way I organize the zines at Edinburgh Zine Library, along lines of 'beds', 'covid', 'disability'. A zine methodology also articulates how I arrived at this research: as a zine maker first.

A zine methodology as a methodology which assembles multiple different frameworks, methods and other methodologies, is not novel, in the sense of researcher as bricoleur or queer, feminist and decolonial research approaches which adopt scavenger methodologies.[29] The ways scavenger methodologies 'refuse the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence' connects to zines' own approach to knowledge production, reflected in practices of citation and choices of source material, and both suit the messy, transdisciplinary nature of this project.[30] Within this research, engagement with academic literature from zine studies or around liminality was

[28] Defined by Licona as performing 'creative and critical inquiry and class-consciousness'. Adela C. Licona, *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric,* (State University of New York Press, 2012), p. 100.

[29] Norman K Denzin, 'Romancing the Text: The Qualitative Researcher-Writer-as-Bricoleur', *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education,* 122 (1994), pp. 15-30; Kate Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013); Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity,* (Duke University Press, 1998); Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Duke University Press, 2016); Sophie Marie Niang, 'in defence of what's there: notes on scavenging as methodology', *Feminist Review,* 136.1 (2024), pp. 52-66, doi:10.1177/01417789231222606.

[30] Halberstam, *Female Masculinity,* p. 13.

matched with engaging with zines themselves (both within and outwith Wellcome's collection), alongside twitter threads, oral histories, memes, signal conversations, playlists and workshops.

A zine methodology connects to the 'third-space knowledges' that zines (re)produce.[31] Jessie Lymn relates their own academic zine making practice to Jack Halberstam's 'death of the expert'.[32] These third-space practices in zines underpin a zine methodology's capacity to hold ambivalence and the multiple relationships I have to Wellcome's zine collection. In one of the zines contained within *This Zine is a Carrier Bag,* which addresses questions of methodology and method, I engage directly with Anna Poletti's observations that zines articulate the ambivalence of life writing through practices related to reproduction and visible editing, and explore the potential for zine practices and values to similarly engage with the ambivalence of this research.

Many of the zines I encounter in this research act as vessels or containers, assembling and constellating – acting as archives of feeling or holding mess, as Poletti describes, without 'attempt[ing] the imaginative or representational structuring of mess'.[33] This observed dimension of zines has an affinity with Ursula K. Le Guin's essay 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction' (which, to offer a more complete citation, I came upon via The White Pube review of Nadim Choufi's show at Jameel Arts Centre).[34] In her Carrier Bag theory, Le Guin proposes that whilst stories so often take the shape of a spear or an

[31] Licona, *Zines in Third Space.*

[32] Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York University Press, 2005), p. 162; Lymn, 'Queering Archives', p. 267.

[33] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Duke University Press, 2003); Anna Poletti, *Intimate Ephemera: Reading Young Lives in Australian Zine Culture* (Melbourne University Press, 2008), npn.

[34] Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (Ignota Books, 2019); Zarina Muhammad, 'Nadim Choufi @ Jameel Arts Centre', The White Pube, 14 March 2021 <https://thewhitepube.co.uk/art-reviews/nadimchoufi/> [accessed 30 March 2024].

arrow, a straight line heading dynamically to a final point, this is not necessarily the proper or best shape. Instead she proposes a carrier bag, in which she gathers the discrete and diverse elements of her stories and, in assembling them together, allows them to tell the story through their proximity with each other. This is a methodology of writing grounded in queer histories and queer approaches to archives which, as author and bookworker So Mayer describes, 'call attention to the non-linear and associative, to the connective, capacious and chaotic – to the kind of echoes and recursions, folds and detours that describe feminist and queer histories.[35]

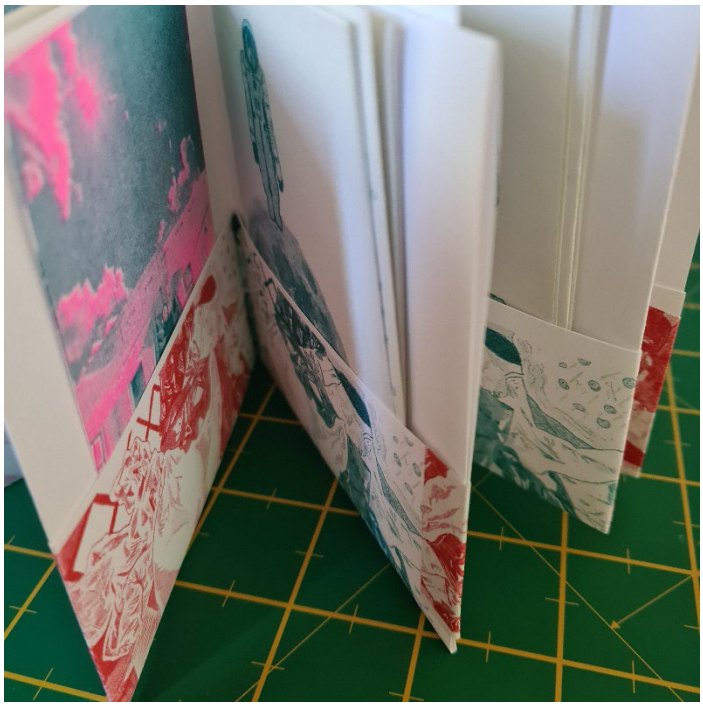

FIG. 2. Lea Cooper, *This Zine is a Carrier Bag* (2024), Risoprinted zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024). The zine uses an album fold to hold pocket zines and tarot cards.

In articulating the needs of this research, I described a need to go beyond an instrumentalising use of narrative – both in reading and responding to zines in this research. The idea of a zine methodology as a carrier bag methodology demonstrates

[35] So Mayer, *A Nazi Word for a Nazi Thing* (Peninsula Press, 2020), p. 27.

how drawing from zine practices and values offers alternative forms and methods, beyond linear narrative. Returning to *This Zine is a Carrier Bag*, I use the material paper form of the zine to explore this zine as vessel (see FIG 2. above).

(Neuroqueer) Phenomenology

Phenomenology, as a philosophy of sense, perception and lived experience, has offered a framework for reading in this project, and for conceptualising the relationship between artwork and viewer:

> the phenomenological theory of art lays full stress on the idea that, in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to the text.[36]

The characterisation of phenomenology as a '"turn toward" objects gives a further sense of why it offers a framework for the encounters with zines in this research.[37] Though cognizant of the 'founding fathers' of phenomenology (philosophers Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty) and its broad histories, in establishing a neuroqueer phenomenological framework I draw particularly from Ahmed's work on queer phenomenology. As Ahmed argues:

> Phenomenology can offer a resource for queer studies insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds.[38]

[36] Georges Poulet, 'Phenomenology of Reading', *New Literary History,* 1.1 (1969), pp. 53-68, doi:10.2307/468372; Jennifer Rowsell, 'Toward a phenomenology of contemporary reading', *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy,* 37 (2014), pp. 117-127, doi:10.1007/BF03651939; Wolfgang Iser, 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', *New Literary History,* 3. 1 (1972), pp. 279-299 (p. 299). doi:10.2307/468316.
[37] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Objects, Orientations, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006), p. 25.
[38] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* p. 2.

FIG. 3. Lea Cooper, page from *Constellations/Up the Moorhens* (2024), digital zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024), npn.

This is not to suggest, to paraphrase Ahmed, that phenomenology can be offered as a complete and stable whole to queer, or indeed zine, studies.[39] Instead phenomenology's concern with lived experience, nearness and habit informs, for example, the Introduction's discussion of orientations in the archive, Chapter Three's discussion of bed and horizontality and Chapter Five's discussion of temporalities of COVID-19. Phenomenology offers a mode of writing about zines that responds to the needs of this project: to capture the encounter with a paper or digital zine; to account for my positionality as embodied researcher; and to interrogate zines as 'objects' of phenomenological inquiry with an attention to the background. Zines themselves also act as a site of phenomenological inquiry, animating a method of phenomenology in

[39] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* p. 5.

their attention to lived experience, objects, orientations. I address this explicitly in the zine *Constellations* (part of *Holding Title*), and Chapter Three's discussion of zines that produce a phenomenology of horizontality. Zines offer ways of doing phenomenology differently: where Ahmed discusses the fantasy of a 'paperless' philosophy in the origins of phenomenology, the materiality of zines makes it impossible for modes, methods, or means of knowledge (re)production to be disappeared.[40]

Phenomenology starts with the body – in Husserl's phenomenology of embodiment, the lived and subjective body is at the centre of experience.[41] Phenomenology feels alienating to me as someone who has been psychiatrised, who has been taught not to trust my subjective experience, to consider my brain and body faulty or, at best, that it 'works in a different way' to everyone else. The concept of 'neuroqueer' has offered a resource to understand myself, brought into contact with phenomenology it offers possibilities of centring 'alternative, and multiple, corporealities', and invites the starting point of phenomenological inquiry to be the neuroqueer body.[42] Neuroqueer phenomenology, as an extension of Ahmed's queer phenomenology, follows creatively from critiques of 'how phenomenology might universalize from a specific bodily dwelling' that connect to gendered and racialized bodies.[43] 'Neuroqueer perspectives claim no such universality, instead offering plurality, specificity, possibility.'[44]

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[40] Ibid., p.34.
[41] Elizabeth Behnke, 'Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology of Embodiment', Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, n.d. <https://iep.utm.edu/husspemb> [accessed 07 April 2024].
[42] Robert McRuer, 'Composing Bodies; or De-Composition: Queer Theory, Disability Studies, and Alternative Corporealities', *JAC* 24.1 (2004), pp. 47-77 (p. 47) < http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866612> [accessed 07 April 2024]
[43] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* p. 2; Ibid*.,* p. 5.
[44] Francesa Lewis, 'The kaleidoscopic value of neuroqueer knowledges', The Polyphony, 18 July 2023 <https://thepolyphony.org/2023/07/18/neuroqueer-knowledges/> [accessed 30 March 2024].

Neuroqueer is broadly 'the practices of queering (subverting, defying, disrupting, liberating oneself from) neuronormativity and heteronormativity simultaneously…an extension of the way *queer* is used as a verb in Queer Theory'.[45] Neuroqueer theory understands neurodivergence as connected to social dynamics in terms of power, oppression and normativity, rather than individual neurological differences. My relationship to zines is itself explicitly a neuroqueer one: zines are a special interest. In the zine *My Job Is Just…Mission* which I made in 2023, I offer a neuroqueer reading of the Mission: Impossible film franchise and ask if zines offer the same structuring parameter to my relationships as missions do to the series' protagonist Ethan Hunt.[46] I expand on this further in *PhMeme* (in *Holding Title*) where a meme of Ken from the 2023 *Barbie Movie* prompts questions about zines, monotropism and special interests.[47]

In my day-to-day life, I use neuroqueerness and madness fluidly, often choosing one over the other to connect to particular histories or communities. Richard Ingram, a Canadian activist and scholar, describes Mad Studies as an 'in/discipline', a 'multi vocal praxis. It is not owned by anyone, it is evolving and no one defines its borders or has authority over the direction it may go in'.[48] Unpacking the relationships, tensions, and overlaps between Neuroqueer theory and Mad Studies is beyond the scope of this project. What the two share is that at their roots they are each informed by histories of service user, survivor activism, by neuroqueer and Mad lived experience.

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[45] Nick Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies* (Autonomous Press, 2021), p. 160.
[46] Lea Cooper, *My Job is Just…Mission* (Self-published, 2023).
[47] Lea Cooper, *PhMeme* (Self-published, 2024).
[48] Richard A. Ingram, 'Doing Mad Studies: Making (Non) sense Together', *Intersectionalities: A Global Journal of Social Work Analysis, Research, Policy and Practice,* 5.3 (2016), pp. 11-17, doi:10.48336/IJDPTS4720; Elaine Ballantyne, 'Doing Mad Studies: A Participatory Action Research Project to explore the experiences and impacts of being part of a Mad People's History and Identity course and the relationship between critical education, activism and emancipation' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen Margaret University Edinburgh, 2019), p. 30.

Neuroqueer is connected to liminality via several routes. Firstly, any paradigmatic shift involves a transitionary period, and neuroqueer zines, writing, and other cultural productions, are produced from and navigate this liminal period. They are created from the liminal, between the world constructed by the medical, deficit model, and the imagined 'neurocosmopolitan' future – indeed, these zine makers are often writing of this imagined future which is not a given, but instead something that must be produced.[49] Secondly, in terms of lived experience, neuroqueer implicates liminality because of the non-normative paths that neurodivergent and queer people take, for example in their relationship to 'successfully transitioning' to adulthood. Liminality then, a social state of in-betweenness, is a key site of intersection between neurodivergence and queerness and contributes to understanding neuroqueer subjectivities.

Returning to a phenomenology of reading zines in this research, the neuroqueer reader disrupts neuro- and hetero-normative expectations of readers, the 'somatic norm' that is the given of much phenomenological writing.[50] The multiplicity of neurodivergence and of queerness offers a plurality of reading orientations and practices, which returns to the necessity of a reading of zines that is sensory and material – where there are different ways of making meaning or sense, narrative and affective, read and felt, or indeed, as central to Mad Studies and referenced by Merleau-Ponty is his collection of phenomenological essays *Sense and Nonsense*, of making (non)sense.[51] Neuroqueer

[49] Ralph James Savarese, 'From neurodiversity to neurocosmopolitanism: Beyond mere acceptance and inclusion', in *Ethics and Neurodiversity,* ed. by C. D. Herrera and Alexandra Perry (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp.191-205; Nick Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies.*
[50] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* p.61.
[51] Ingram, 'Doing Mad Studies'; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Nonsense,* Reprint edn (Northwestern University Press, 1964).

phenomenology thus situates this research in 'a growing movement of neuroqueer scholarship calling for neurodivergent experiences to be treated as valuable ways of knowing.'[52]

A neuroqueer phenomenological framework opens up alternative stances, modes or methods of reading zines. Medical humanities scholar Sara Wasson's proposes 'episodic reading' as an alternative reading stance in response to those experiencing chronic pain and calls on Ahmed to conceptualise this: where Ahmed describes 'reading for narrative is reading for the direction of its point', Wasson proposes reading episodically, orientated to and in 'the emergent present'.[53] Wasson draws on affect theory to 'augment the available critical vocabulary for the textual representation of protagonists' temporal orientation within illness experience, identifying a language for the emergent present that resists a narrative form'.[54] This feels particularly relevant as an approach to reading zines addressing experiences of liminality or in-betweenness; it is the liminality of those with chronic pain that Wasson identifies as disruptive to narrative readings/tellings.

Zine Making as Method

In describing a zine methodology as one where I first ask, 'what would a zine maker do?', the answer 'make a zine' seems an obvious response. Though I am not aware of another practice-led PhD centred on zine making, several zine researchers have drawn on zine making in their research (beyond a creative research method with participants). Lymn

[52] Lewis, 'The kaleidoscopic value'.
[53] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Duke University Press, 2010), p. 236: Sara Wasson, 'Before narrative: episodic reading and representations of chronic pain', *Medical Humanities,* 44.2 (2018), pp. 106-112, doi:10.1136/medhum-2017-011223.
[54] Wasson, 'Before narrative…', p. 106.

includes various ‘zine interruptions’ in her 2014 PhD thesis which she mobilises to produce different forms of knowledge. [55] Lymn argues that including reproductions of these zines demonstrates zine practices (giving the reader a sense of what zines could be) in ways that speak directly to topics of the various chapters, while also foregrounding key issues around zine anthologies, a genre she argues the thesis constitutes. [56] Paula Cameron’s thesis on zines and mad knowledge contains a 39-page zine titled ‘seamfulness’ alongside zines made by three other women during her research. [57] Similarly to Lymn, Cameron uses zines as a research method to connect to other ways of knowing, and as a way to make herself ‘present and vulnerable’ in her thesis. [58] This use of zines is echoed in the zine making research project ‘Researcher’s Don’t Cry?! Locating, articulating, navigating and doing emotion in the field’ [59] which was run by Mindy Ptolomey, Nughmana Mirza, and Lisa Bradley, and explored zines as a way to articulate and centre researcher emotions in the research process.

Engaging in zine making as method in this research, it felt insufficient to present the resulting zines subsumed within the body of this thesis; incorporating them into this word document as photos or scans would flatten them, offering only one way of reading. Choosing a practice-based PhD programme, which divides this research into thesis (theory) and zine collection (practice) makes this project more intelligible, to readers and other zine makers. In part, this reflects the inability of more traditional PhD

[55] Lymn, ‘Queering Archives’, p. 429.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Paula Cameron, ‘seamfulness: Nova Scotian Women Witness Depression Through Zines’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2012), < https://hdl.handle.net/1807/33944> [accessed 15 April 2024].
[58] Ibid., p. 220.
[59] ‘What’s this all about?’, Researchers Don’t Cry, n.d. <https://researchersdontcry.wordpress.com/> [accessed 25 March 2024].

research to hold zines without needing to distinguish between theory and practice. At the same time, it offers a more assertive epistemological statement: zines as a form of knowledge weighted equally with more typical academic research and analysis. A clearly articulated zine making practice in this research allowed a greater emphasis on the zines created during this project. These zines respond to the needs articulated at the start of this chapter for an embodied zine reader, engage in phenomenological inquiry, invite methods beyond narrativization, and are distributed outside of typical lines of research dissemination. Zines offer a method for a reflexive research practice that makes use of proximity and my multiple relationships with Wellcome's zines.

The practicalities of submitting zines as a 'text-based practice' reflect some of the qualities of zines as DIY publications. Requirements for this PhD programme (Text, Practice as Research) are not limiting in form: encouraging intersections between writing and other media. The practice should result in 'an original work of the standard length for the genre, written to a potentially publishable standard'.[60] This is a very reasonable brief for a single zine, which are often short and by their self-published and amateur nature, publishable at any standard. But the focus of this research is specifically zines at Wellcome Collection and zine practices involve collection and curation. So, where Lymn presents her zines as an anthology within the thesis, which offers a different route to understanding her argument for zine anthologies as an archival genre, my research practice element is presented as a collection of zines, in both a digital and paper form – both with intentional methods of display: the digital

[60] 'Code of Practice for Quality Assurance (Research Students): Approval of New Research Programmes', University of Kent, n.d. <https://www.kent.ac.uk/courses/specifications/2023-2024/phd-text-practice-research.docx> [accessed 16 April 2024]

collection is hosted on my website, the paper collection is presented in a handmade fabric bag, with 6 of these constructed from a Royal Mail post bag that a regular reader of *The PostBag* sent as a gift in 2021.[61]

FIG. 4. Lea Cooper, *Holding Title* (2024), zine collection presented in a fabric bag created out of a Royal Mail Post Bag.

FIG. 5. Lea Cooper, *A Place of Honour* (2024), Risoprinted A5 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

[61] Lymn, 'Queering Archives'; Find the digital collection online at: www.zinejam.com/holdingtitle.

Below are brief descriptions of the fourteen zines I made that are curated in the collection *Holding Title,* a fuller portfolio of the work can be found in Appendix 4.:

A Place of Honour is a 12-page, A5 risoprinted zine, created from two sheets of A3 paper, one of which folds out from the centre fold of the zine as a poster.[62] This zine connects to discussions of zines and grief in Chapter Four and Chapter Five: Covid Zines. It explores the fantasy of a Mad memorial or monument, and points to zines' capacity to offer alternative forms of memory-making in response to trauma, connected via a quote on the back cover to Ann Cvetkovich's 'archive of feelings'.[63]

FIG. 6. Lea Cooper, *AfterBirth* (2024), Risoprinted zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

AfterBirth follows Chapter Four's discussion of zines as crip doulas and considers some of the implications of framing coming into disability, madness and transness as a birth.[64] In its form, it further explores the idea of folded time, and these as spaces to inhabit rather than transition through.

[62] Lea Cooper, *A Place of Honour* (Self-published, 2024).
[63] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings.*
[64] Lea Cooper, *Afterbirth* (Self-published, 2024).

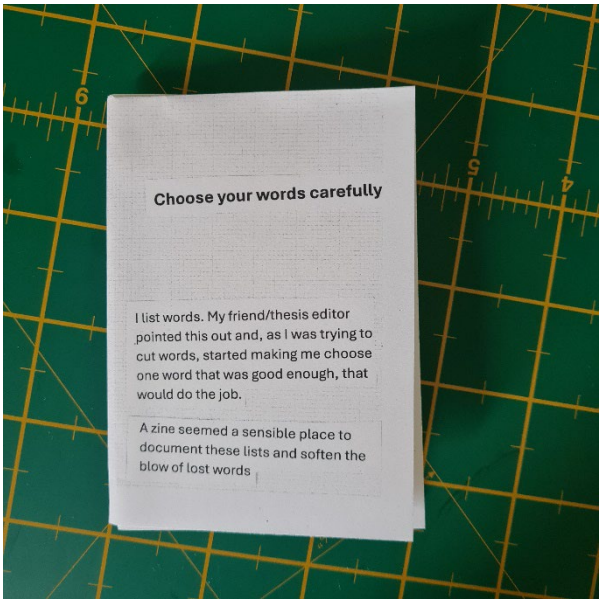

FIG. 7. Lea Cooper, *Choose Your Words Carefully* (2024), A7 photocopied zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

Choose your words carefully is an 8-page, A7 photocopied black and white zine.[65] Whilst editing my thesis, a friend observed a habit I have of listing words with similar, overlapping meanings. As we edited together, she would make me choose one from the list of synonyms. This zine contains every list of words – ordered by chapter, with an asterisk marking the word that I chose.

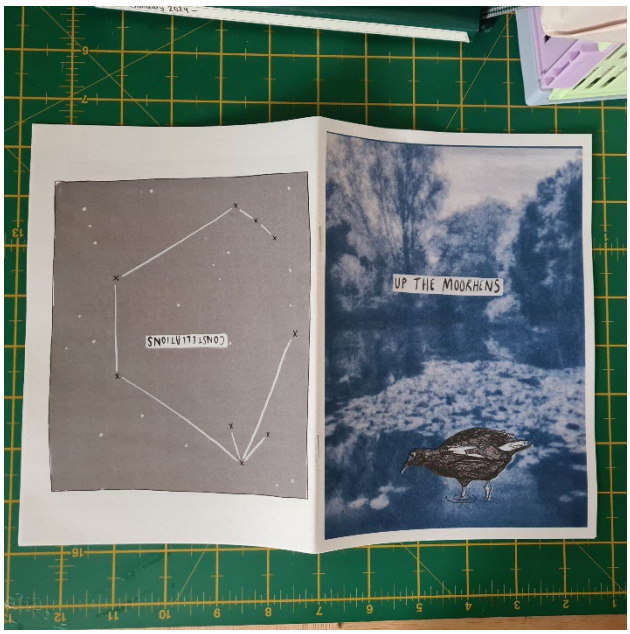

FIG. 8. Lea Cooper, *Constellations / Up the Moorhens* (2024), digitally printed A5 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

[65] Lea Cooper, *Choose Your Words Carefully* (Self-published, 2024).

Constellations/Up the Moorhens is a comics zine split into two parts.[66] The first, created during recovery from a surgery on my knee, uses the comic to interrogate zines as phenomenology. The second, created towards the end of this research, begins with a comic before dissolving into collage and connects questions of personal testimony, case studies and Mad liberation.

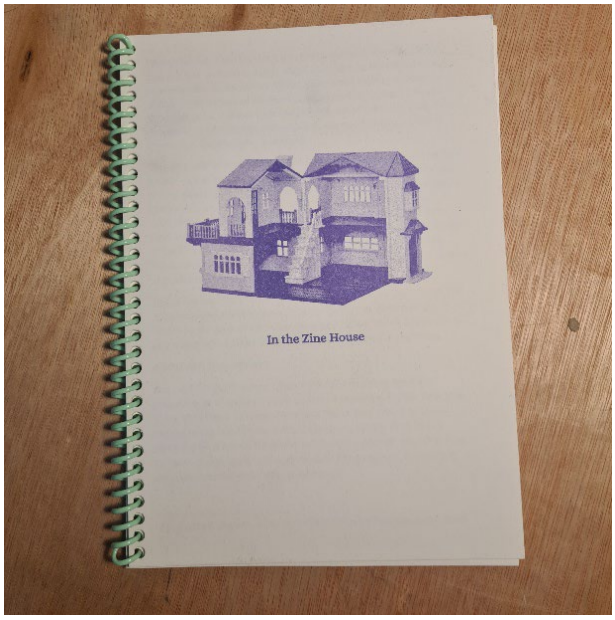

FIG. 9. Lea Cooper, *In the Zine House* (2023), spiral bound A5 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

In the Zine House is a 56-page, wire bound A5 zine, with pages of laser printed text, and Risoprinted inserts of collages.[67] It compiles a set of articles I wrote for the online medical humanities platform The Polyphony between October 2022 and January 2023.[68]

This Zine is a Carrier Bag was created for the DIY Methods 2023 zine-based conference, held virtually via the post.[69] Through it, I explore more adventurous material forms still

[66] Lea Cooper, *Constellations/Up the Moorhens* (Self-published, 2024).
[67] Lea Cooper, *In the Zine House* (Self-published, 2023).
[68] Lea Cooper, 'In the Zine House' (Series), The Polyphony, October 2022-January 2023 <https://thepolyphony.org/tag/in-the-zine-house/> [accessed: 15 April 2024]
[69] Lea Cooper, *This Zine is a Carrier Bag* (Self-published, 2023).

grounded in zine values that prioritize ease and cost of reproduction and assembly. The zine is four individual 8-page A-7 pocket zines, created through folding A4 sheets of paper, four tarot cards, and an explanatory insert for the tarot, all held by a zine form folded from a single sheet of A3 thick paper printed on one side, and bound with PVA glue and thin paper Risoprint scraps. The concerns of this zine overlap with this chapter – exploring a zine methodology, zine making as method, and explicitly, zines as carrier bags.

FIG. 10. Lea Cooper, *This Zine is a Carrier Bag* (2023), Risoprinted zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

FIG. 11. Lea Cooper, *Making the Bed* (2024), digitally printed A5 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

Making the Bed is a 32-page, A5 digitally colour printed, staple bound zine which combines autoethnographic writing from the various beds I occupied during this research with images from Wellcome Collection and my own photos, connecting these with other beds: beds I inhabited in childhood, in hospitals and in police stations, and

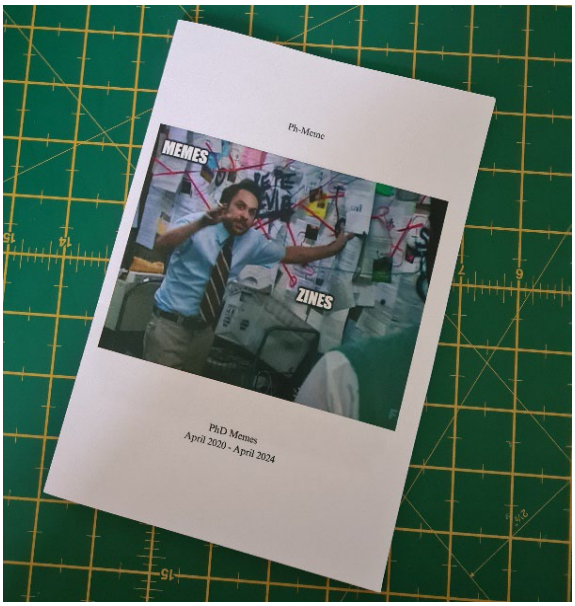

FIG. 12. Lea Cooper, *Ph-Meme* (2024), digitally printed zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

beds in Wellcome Collection's archives.[70] It links explicitly with Chapter Three and with this chapter's discussion of the overlap between zine making and autoethnographic methods.

PhMeme is an A5 digitally printed zine that collects all the memes I created over the duration of this PhD.[71] I often make and use memes to explore and talk about aspects of my research. Each meme is accompanied by a short piece of text discussing some of the themes they touch on.

[70] Lea Cooper, *Making the Bed* (Self-published, 2024).
[71] Lea Cooper, *PhMeme* (Self-published, 2024).

FIG. 13. Lea Cooper, *The PostBag (Collected),* collected Risoprinted newsletters, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

The PostBag (Collected) is a collected set of the newsletter zines I sent to a list of subscribers over the duration of my PhD.[72] *The PostBag* is mirrored by other zines or writing practices that are zines or zineic, created by my contemporaries in zines studies, particularly: Kirsty Fife's *Adventures in Academia*; Cassidy Ferrari's *Pretty Huge Decision;* and Peter Willis' column in Sticky Fingers' publishing newsletter. These writings are autoethnographic, in their content and the ways that they locate their creators in the 'field', and engage in practices of reflection and formative dissemination.

404 is two versions of the same zine: one is an A5 paper zine and the other is a digital zine which doesn't attempt to directly replicate the paper zine.[73] Both offer a defence of digital zines, but in their distinct differences in their forms they invite a consideration of the movement between the two formats.

[72] Lea Cooper, *The PostBag (Collected)* (Self-published, 2024).
[73] Lea Cooper, *404* (Self-published, 2024).

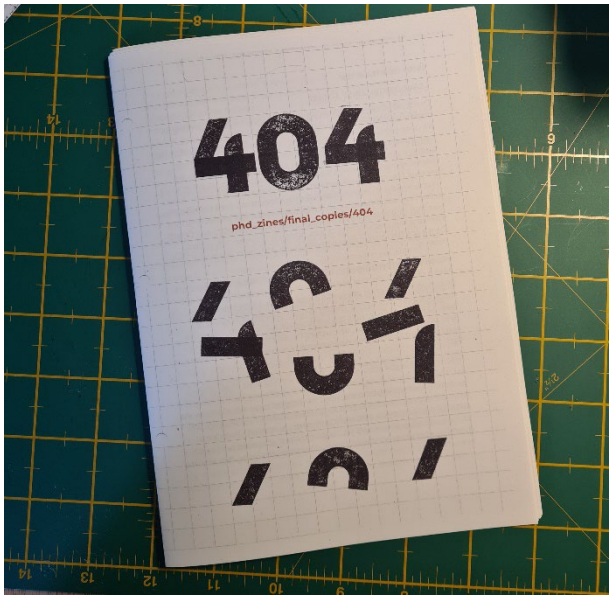

FIG. 14. Lea Cooper, *404* (2024), digitally printed A5 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

Organising COVID Safer Zine Fests is a 32-page, A6, black and white staple bound zine.[74] It shares the learning around COVID mitigation at zine fests from my experience co-organising Edinburgh Zine Festival 2022-2024, and directly responds to some of the ethical challenges raised in Chapter Five.

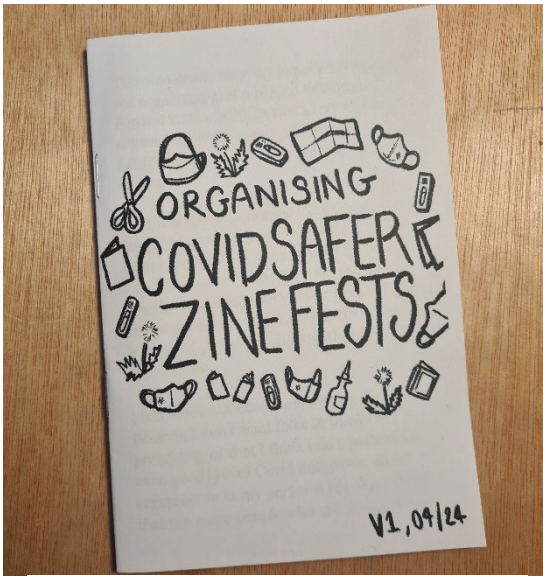

FIG. 15. Lea Cooper, *Organising COVID Safer Zine Fests* (2024), digitally printed A6 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

[74] Lea Cooper, *Organising COVD Safer Zine Fests* (Self-published, 2024).

A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics collects together writing, the products of two informal workshops, notes from a two-day workshop *Ethics, Responsibility and Accountability* organized by Veronika Schuchter (15-16 December 2022), a failed funding application and an initial proposal to form a provocation and set of resources

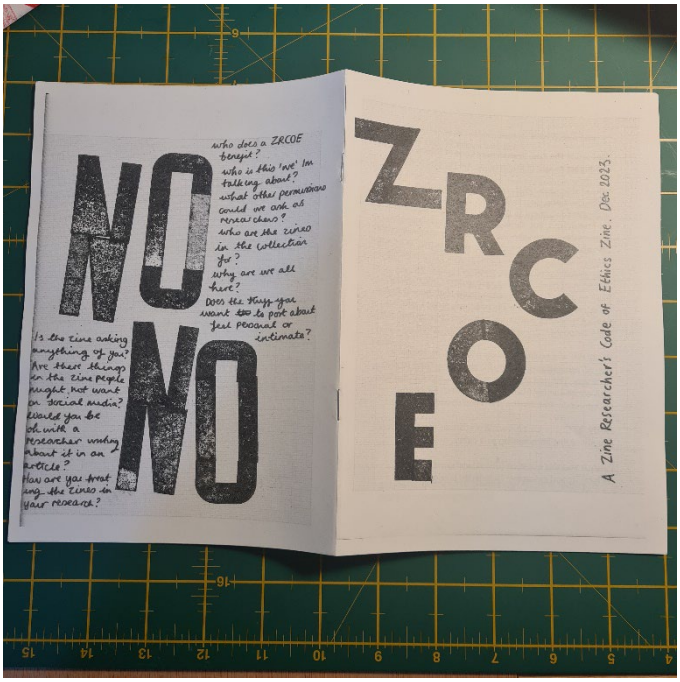

FIG. 16. Lea Cooper, *A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics* (2023), digitally printed A5 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

for zine researchers to consider what an equivalent to a Zine Librarian's Code of Ethics for researchers might look like.[75]

Zine Makers Do It in Bed is an 8-page, A7 zine created from a single sheet of paper.[76] Originally a digital zine created for a workshop based on my PhD research, its paper version is risoprinted in two colours, layering the text with collaged depictions of beds – many originally from Wellcome Collection. *Bed Bound* is in the same form as *Zine Makers Do It in Bed,* and extends the prompts to focus on crip kink and sexuality.

[75] Lea Cooper, *A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics* (Self-published, 2023).
[76] Lea Cooper, *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* (Self-published, 2022).

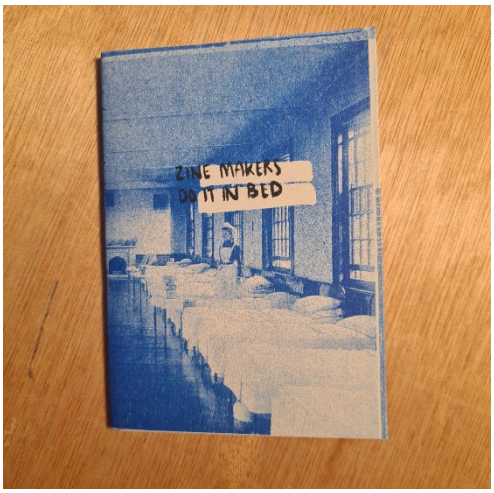

FIG. 17. Lea Cooper, *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* (2022), Risoprinted A7 zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

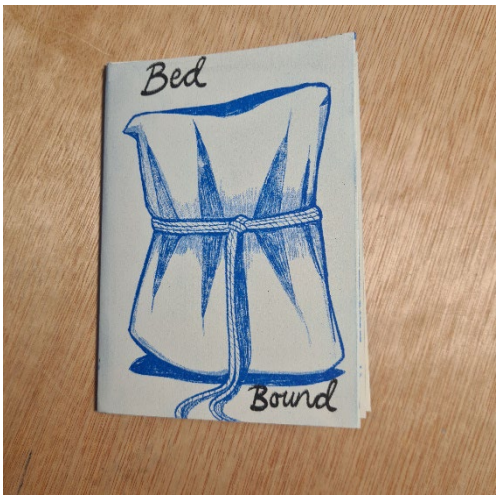

FIG. 18. Lea Cooper, *Bed Bound* (2022), Risoprinted A7 Zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024).

Zine making as a practice method demonstrates what zine making can offer to researchers, both in terms of zine making explicitly but also in terms of zineic research: Cameron describes how her thesis 'engages visual and verbal strategies to disrupt epistemic and aesthetic conventions for academic texts'.[77] As Lymn describes, practice-based research also directly engages you, the reader, in practices of embodied, affective and tactile zine reading (and, if you follow the prompts of *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* or *Bed Bound,* in making them).[78]

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a broad set of methods which centre 'the use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience'.[79] Autoethnography works in relationship to ethnography – a tradition of social science research connected to liminality and discussed in the following chapter. The 'auto' of autoethnography is a

[77] Cameron, 'seamfulness', p. 11.
[78] Lymn, 'Queering archives'.
[79] *Handbook of Autoethnography,* ed. by Tony E. Adams, Stacy Holman Jones and Carolyn Ellis 2nd edn (Routledge, 2021), p. 22.

clear statement of the way that, regardless of strand (i.e. critical, evocative, analytic), autoethnography makes visible and articulates the self.

The overlaps between autoethnography and zines have already been identified, and autoethnography has been recruited as method in relationship to zines and in other relevant areas of research into DIY cultural production and self-publishing.[80] Overlaps between them have already been observed in zine studies.[81] Both zines and autoethnography connect personal experience with wider cultural, political and social contexts, commentary and theory. Writing becomes as much process as product. The methods of producing autoethnography that I undertake in this research are themselves zines. Of the zines that resulted from the practice of this project, *Making the Bed* is the most explicitly and self-articulated as autoethnographic, created from the 'field' of bed. *The PostBag* functions more like field notes. Autoethnographic writing underpins this thesis: my own 'feelings and experiences are incorporated into the story and considered as vital data for understanding the social world being observed'.[82]

Autoethnographic writing, like zine making, is also a method in situ: throughout this research I have patchworked writing and research spaces, transforming sofas, beds, dining tables, garden tables, zine fairs, and institutional and DIY archives into workspaces. Autoethnography as a method is tied closely to Gloria Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoria, an intervention in Western autobiographical forms, or the current

[80] Eleanor Affleck and Lilith Cooper, 'Burn After Reading: Intimate Practices of Queer Zine Making', *ZINES* 3 (2021), pp. 20-32; Kirsty Fife, 'Challenging Voices: Documenting and Archiving UK DIY Music Spaces' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University College London, 2021).
[81] Phiona Stanley, 'Writing the PhD Journey(s); An Autoethnography of Zine-Writing, Angst, Embodiment, and Backpacker Travels', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 44.2 (2014), doi:10.1177/089124161452870; Cooper and Affleck, 'Burn After Reading'; Lymn, 'Queering Archives'.
[82] Leon Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35.4 (2006), pp. 373-395 (p. 384), doi:10.1177/0891241605280449.

popular term 'autotheory'.[83] In this research, autoethnographic methods make visible the various sites, locations, communities central to my project, and its wider context.

As well as reading zines in the archive, I have read zines in bed, at the kitchen table, at zine fairs, and in other DIY and grassroots zine collections. Autoethnographic methods invite characterising a field. In this research that field is not uncomplicatedly zines at Wellcome Collection. The zines I request to read at Wellcome Collection each time arrive in individual Melinex sleeves, in an archive box. The sturdy clear plastic sleeves are slippery, and feel like they repel touch, not just from my hand, but contact between each zine. In combination with only being able to request 15 zines individually via the online catalogue, the processes of Wellcome Collection invited treating each zine as a singular, discrete physical artefact. But the multiple other interactions and connections I have with zines disrupted this effect; outside of the V&A print room, Rose reflects on the experience of looking at the same photos (reproduced as postcards) in her study, as 'connections forged in other spaces…may intersect in disruptive ways with the work of the archive'.[84] This relationship is further complicated when we consider how the zines I have at home are not reproductions of some original held by an archive, they are (and aren't) the original. As Eichorn describes in her ethnography of textual communities, the field of this autoethnographic research was sometimes (often) my home.

In the following chapter, I discuss the limits of anthropological ethnographic approaches to liminality, making clear the potential of autoethnography to articulate

[83] Gloria Anzaldúa, 'now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner works, public acts' in *The Gloria Anzaldúa reader*, ed. by AnaLouise Keating (Duke University Press, 2009)*;* Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (The MIT Press, 2022).
[84] Gillian Rose, 'Practising photography: an archive, a study, some photographs and a researcher', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26.4 (2000), pp. 555-571 (p.567), doi:10.1006/jhge.2000.0247.

embodied and affective dimensions often submerged in these accounts.

Autoethnography has its own limitations. It faces many of the same criticisms of self-involvement or navel-gazing that zine making does.[85] An attention on myself, as a white, anglophone zine maker, risks further centring whiteness in zines, and perpetuating the invisibility of global histories and practices of DIY publications, particularly those outside the UK and occupied Turtle Island. Critical perspectives emphasise the ways that zine organising, fairs, festivals and libraries and archives replicate whiteness.[86] But autoethnography invites an attention to the ways I am implicated in these dynamics rather than extracting myself from them. Balanced with a politics of citation, an attention to racialised zine makers and refusal of the idea of a singular zine community, it offers a way to critically engage with zines at Wellcome Collection without disappearing my own whiteness.[87] Autoethnography also demands a level of vulnerability on my part as researcher.[88] Navigating this vulnerability also mirrors zine making – something I felt well equipped for, but that at times was more uncomfortable than I expected.

[85] Nicholas L. Holt, 'Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography: An Autoethnographic Writing Story', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2.1 (2003), pp. 18-28, doi:10.1177/160940690300200102; Sara Delamont, 'The only honest thing: autoethnography, reflexivity and small crises in fieldwork', *Ethnography and Education,* 4.1 (2009), pp. 51-63, doi:10.1080/17457820802703507.

[86] See, for example: 'Zine Fairs, or a Blizzard on a trestle table', Written in Shadows, 15 April 2018 <https://writteninshadows.wordpress.com/2018/04/> [accessed 15 April 2024]; Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, 'Why Diverse Zines Matter: A Case Study of the People of Color Zines Project', *Pub Res Q*, 33 (2017), pp.215–228, doi:10.1007/s12109-017-9533-4.

[87] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017).

[88] Otso Harju, 'Vulnerability as best practice? 'Minority' autoethnography in hostile worlds', *Tiede & edistys*, 48. 1 (2023), pp. 28-42, doi:10.51809/te.126090; Gresilda A. Tilley-Lubbs, 'Critical Autoethnography and the Vulnerable Self as Researcher' in *Re-Telling Our Stories: Critical Autoethnographic Narratives,* ed. by Gresila A. Tilley-Lubbs and Silvia Bernard Calva (Sense Publishers, 2016), pp. 3-15.

The Ethics of Zine Research in Archives and Libraries

Woven throughout this chapter, and the thesis more broadly, are some of the ethical complications of this research: multiple positions and dual identities; expectations of zine makers; the specifics of zines at Wellcome; and wider concerns of epistemic injustice.[89] A key principle informing my project is approaching use of the zines through a framework of consent, complicating the usual frame of permission. In a nod to the ethics of zine research, the Zine Librarian Code of Ethics (ZLCoE) focuses on permission, and permission to use images (rather than write about zines in particular frames or contexts).[90] Zine makers in Wellcome will be making zines with different lived experience of non-consent, and there is a potential and precedent for research to replicate, or even inadvertently echo, these same experiences of losing control (of narrating your experiences) in a way that is potentially harmful. When zine makers agree to their zines going into Wellcome Collection, what are they consenting to? When Wellcome collected my zines in 2016 I didn't have a sense of what a research library or archive was, it never crossed my mind that my zines might be written about by researchers so it was important to me in this project to foreground a more robust understanding and practice of consent.

[89] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice.*
[90] Heidy Berthoud et al, *Zine Librarians Code of Ethics* (Self-Published, 2015).

In my contribution to the zine *A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics* I build on two zines in Wellcome's collection: Cindy Crabb's *Learning Good Consent* and *Aftercare* to develop a series of questions about consent: 'How might consent be a pleasurable part of the research process?; How might we learn better consent together?; What happens when people say no?; What happens when we get it wrong?; Can zines themselves offer consent?; What's the difference when we imagine an encounter with a zine as being consensual vs. non-consensual?'[91]

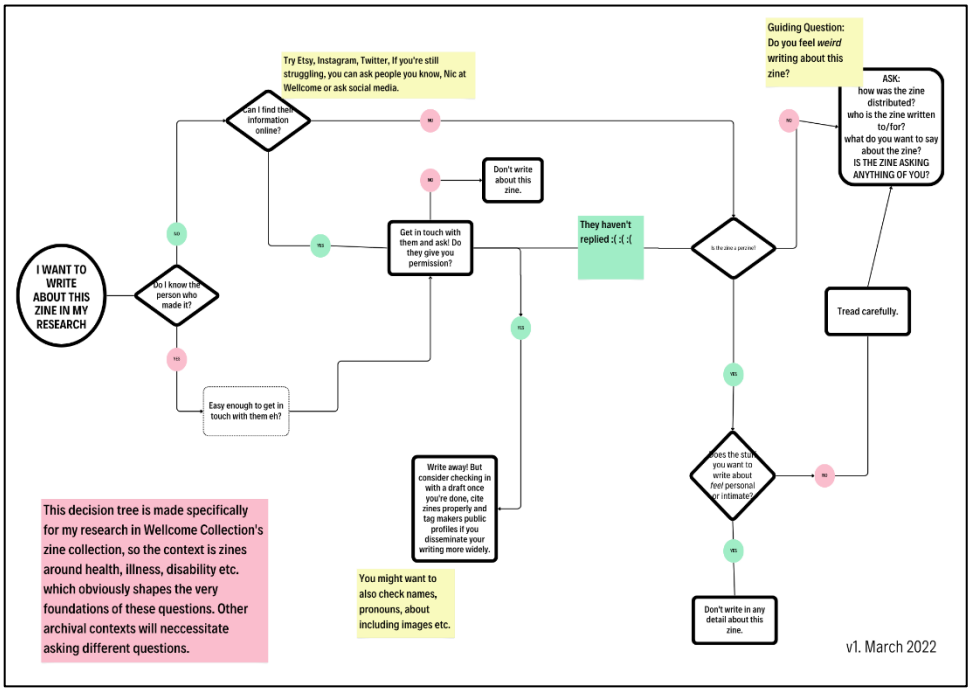

FIG.19. Lea Cooper, Spread showing flow chat from *A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics* (2023), Digital Zine, npn.

I have made an effort to contact every zine maker whose work appears in this thesis to initiate a process of consent – depending on how I have used the zine (the extent I have written about it, for example) this consent may have been negotiated around reading drafts, discussions of framing or a mutual exchange of zines. Sometimes this involved decisions not to write about certain zines in the collection beyond referencing their own

[91] Lea Cooper, *Zine Researchers Code of Ethics*, npn; Cindy Crabb, *Learning Good Consent* (Self-Published, 2008); Natalie Center, *Aftercare* (Self-published, 2017).

words. Occasionally, I have been unable to reach the zine maker. In my introduction, I described my interest in performing as a future researcher and by doing so, feeling out some of the tensions and ethical challenges of research with an archival collection of zines like Wellcome Collection. I used the flow chart above (Fig. 19) to articulate some of my decision making process when writing about zines where I wasn't able to reach their makers.

Part of my decision-making process was about reading the zine, considering how it invites being read, who it addresses, any explicit instructions it offers. An aspect of this is thinking in terms of distribution – where was this shared? How limited was the audience? It also addresses the context the zine was made – was this zine funded as part of an arts project? Part of this ethical process was about sitting with my own feelings of discomfort and interrogating these. It mattered how I was going to write about the zines. Nonetheless, valuing discomfort meant that I did not feel that a zine being in Wellcome Collection was permission to write about it in research. Partly this discomfort was an unresolved question of reciprocity. Zine making is, in many ways, reciprocal, reflected in zine swaps, participation through making, and the intimacy of gift and exchange. What do zine makers gain from being in Wellcome Collection, or being in this thesis? What can I offer? These were key epistemological and ethical questions that informed my research and practice throughout.

In the Introduction, I described how in this research I imagine myself as ancestor to some future user for whom the zines have been collected and preserved, and how, in the present, I am partly performing a kind of speculative future use of the zines. Wellcome's librarians describe collecting for posterity, but Wellcome Library is a

research library and though Wellcome Collection discuss expanding the category of research, the practices, policies and procedures for accessing their zine collection invite particular users (and dissuade others). I have a fear of this not changing, and so some of my work as an ancestor feels protective, preventative. I feel deeply mistrustful of my academic descendent in this archive, which seems reasonable enough as a white academic researcher, when I see how my Mad and crip ancestors are treated by archival researchers in the present, and when I come up against the ways that existing processes don't meet the ethical needs of the collection in the present (as I explore further in Chapter Five).

I feel ambivalent because I believe that it matters what is preserved in archives. Archivist Anna Sexton, in her ethnographic exploration of Wellcome Library's collecting of anti-institutional archives of mad people (namely Audrey Amiss' archive and the diaries of Pam Maudsley), describes: 'It matters then that individuals with lived experience of madness appear predominately as objects in the archive collections held by Wellcome Library. It matters that such individuals exist mainly in the case notes of medical professional, and in the columns of asylum admission registers'.[92] Sexton discusses the risk of further subjugation of mad knowledges through their inclusion in the archive, ironically through 'attempt[s] to shift the sociohistorical weight of the collections away from the 'psy' expert and the mental institution, towards archives in which survivors/consumers are representing themselves more autonomously'.[93] Underpinning the ethics of this research are the unresolved questions of bringing zines into the institution of Wellcome Collection, which Wellcome Collection's librarians are

[92] Sexton, 'Mainstream institutional collecting…', npn.
[93] Ibid.

also engaged with, once again linking the ethics of institutional zine archives and research within them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described how a zine methodology asks, what would a zine maker do? Where the answer isn't 'make a zine', this invited ways of thinking about the choices I make as a researcher through a framework of zine and DIY practices, values and ethics, and led to (neuroqueer) phenomenology as a research framework and zine making, autoethnography and archival research as overlapping methods. Crucially, this methodology meets the needs of this research in addressing the key research questions around zines and liminality, making use of proximity and articulating positionality, reading and responding to zines in multiple ways beyond narrative, and engaging with zines ethically in the context of Wellcome Collection's archives, in a way that proposes good practice for other research working with zines, and other forms of lived experience. In the following chapter I look more closely at liminality, addressing what liminality might offer to understanding zines and what zines might offer to understandings of liminality.

Chapter Two: Zines from the In-between

When I propose that liminality offers a generative lens for zines or, in turn, that zines contribute to a reconceptualisation of liminality, what do I mean by 'liminal'? More than just a fancier word for in-betweenness, liminality references a study of transitional experience that has expanded beyond its origins in anthropology to be developed across academic disciplines. Whilst liminality is sometimes presented as a bounded, linear and socially managed progression between stable states, this thesis conceptualises it as messy, fluid and multivalent.

I begin this chapter by unpacking the possibilities and limits of liminality as formulated through twentieth century (neo)colonial anthropology, focused on the tidy processes of ritual. I then turn to feminist, post-colonial, queer, trans and crip accounts of in-betweenness to construct a more expansive theoretical foundation for this project's exploration of liminality through zines. I discuss the limits of conceptualising contemporary zines as 'in the margins', and establish the gaps in understandings of zines, zine making and zine collections that the following chapters' attempt to fill. Moving beyond marginality as an orientating lens, I consider those moments where zines are already characterised (explicitly or implicitly) through in-betweenness as a foundation for this thesis' examination of what happens when zines are framed as liminal.

The Anthropological Origins of Liminality

The concept of liminality emerged from the work of anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in the early 1900s. Van Gennep, a Dutch-German-French ethnographer and folklorist,

considered that 'the life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another'. He defined 'rites de passage' as 'rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position, and age'.[1] Van Gennep's formulation of rites of passage divided these experiences of transition from one social state to another into three stages: separation – margin (or limen) – (re)aggregation.[2] But it wasn't until the 1960s when 'liminal', as the middle phase in a transition, entered the anthropological lexicon after van Gennep's work was translated into English and Victor Turner adopted the concept in his analysis of ritual processes, *The Forest of Symbols*.[3] Turner used rites of passage to frame his anthropological fieldwork on the Ndembu people, who live in villages across what is now North-Western Zambia. Whilst previous understandings of ritual, characterised by the work of the sociologist Emile Durkheim, considered it as providing 'social cohesion and personal consolation', Turner instead considered ritual as part of social transformation.[4]

Turner regarded the period of margin or 'liminality' (after van Gennep) as an 'interstructural situation' where a person is in between 'states' – a term he uses to refer to 'any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognised', for example being a child or an adult.[5] In contrast to these states Turner considers transitions between them to be 'a process, a becoming or... a transformation' with 'different cultural properties than those of a state'.[6] Turner asserts that rites of passage are

[1] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (The University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 2-3; Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphor: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 231.
[2] van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage.*
[3] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Cornell Press, 1967).
[4] Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media and the Arts* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 12.
[5] Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 93; Ibid., p. 94.
[6] Ibid., p. 94.

present in any change from one state to another, and though in later work he explores liminality in other contexts (such as sports events and pilgrimage), he characterises Ndembu rituals as having 'well-developed liminal periods'.[7]

In Turner's formulation, liminal subjects threaten the social order, and to manage this danger the person undergoing the passage becomes, in the liminal period, 'structurally, if not physically, "invisible"'.[8] This physical invisibility relates both to a spatial aspect in the rites of passage that van Gennep described, and to physical rites of separation.[9] The response to the liminal person, whether this is seclusion, relocation to a specific site or disguise in masks or costumes, points to the threat that they pose to social structure: 'liminal personae nearly always and everywhere are regarded as polluting' and this is because they 'transgress classificatory boundaries'.[10] Although Turner's work on process departs from Durkheim's structuralist view of ritual, in this later account of liminality he draws explicitly on the work of social anthropologist Mary Douglas, whose writing on dirt and pollution derives from Durkheim's work on classification, in its concern with 'matter out of place'.[11]

Rather than a social transition being about a person moving, unchanged, from one social position to another, Turner considers liminality as the process of an embodied, ontological transformation. To affect this ontological shift 'neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that

[7] Ibid., p. 95.
[8] Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 95.
[9] van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, p. 192; Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 98.
[10] Turner, *Drama, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 37.
[11] Jean E. Jackson, 'Stigma, liminality, and chronic pain: Mind–body borderlands', *American Ethnologist*, 32.3 (2005), pp. 332–353, doi:10.1525/ae.2005.32.3.332.

generate and sustain them'.[12] In contrast to a functionalist approach to ritual, Turner is open to the idea that rites of passage may not have just conserved existing structures but 'generated new thought and custom'.[13] However, although Turner describes the liminal as a 'realm of pure possibility', this freedom had narrow limits in the initiation rites he observed; it is controlled by 'ritual elders' and the culturally decided sacred or 'sacra' are unquestionable.[14]

The Limits of Liminality

Thinking about liminality in relation to Wellcome's zines means considering its relevance beyond the specific context of Ndembu ritual. Cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo locates the limits of Turner's work in an anthropological ethnographic tradition that focused on ritual where 'the qualities of fixed definition liberate such events from the untidiness of everyday life'.[15] Yet, within the messiness of everyday life are experiences of in-betweenness that merit focused attention. Turner's attempts to extend liminality beyond his direct field is restricted, in part, by a colonial temporality.[16] In later work he makes a clear distinction between the liminal in the Ndembu societies, and what he characterised as the 'liminoid' of larger scale, post-industrial societies.[17] The liminoid are those experiences that share characteristics of liminality but are not (explicitly) tied to social structures or result in a change of state – a secular playing at liminality which he observed in, for example, sports. This 'unduly arbitrary' distinction has continued to be negotiated in work on liminality in anthropology, history and across

[12] Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 105
[13] Ibid., p. 97.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Beacon Press, 1989), p. 12.
[16] Bjørn Thomassen, 'The Uses and Meaning of Liminality', International Political Anthropology, 2.2 (2009), pp. 5-27.
[17] Turner, *Drama, Fields and Metaphors*.

the social sciences.[18] The distinctions Turner makes between liminal and liminoid are part of broader primitivist discourses that underpin the colonial project of anthropological knowledge production. By describing the Ndembu as pre-industrial, and Western society as '*post*tribal', Turner places them on a Western timeline of progress and development – consigning them to history in the singular 'modernist grand narrative'.[19] Henry Wellcome's collecting can be situated in the same process of colonial knowledge production and narratives of development, amplifying the risk of falling into the same narratives when mobilising liminality in this research.

Re-examining liminality through postcolonial critiques of anthropology and work that considers the lived experience of liminal persons highlights the risk of uncritically using Turner's conceptualisation. Rosaldo emphasises: 'Turner defines the processual form of his case histories without reference to Ndembu cultural conceptions. In their own narratives, do the protagonists think of events as having climaxes, turning points or crises?'.[20] In describing ritual as social drama, Turner's liminality refigures what is at stake as social rather than spiritual. To take it at face value risks denying the possibility of multiple ontologies and flattening into metaphor the spiritual danger of the liminal – something Turner observed but couldn't fully articulate within the ethnographic tradition he worked in.[21] The need for caution when ascribing liminality relative to a dominant group without considering lived experience is demonstrated by historian Caroline Walker Bynum. She argues that, in the early modern period, whilst women are

[18] Sharon Rowe, 'Modern sports: Liminal ritual or liminoid leisure?', in *Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance,* ed. by Graham st. John (Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 127-148 (p. 94).
[19] Turner, *Drama, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 39, emphasis added; Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Sage, 2005), p. 14.
[20] Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth,* p. 141.
[21] Turner, *Drama, Fields and Metaphors,* pp. 31- 32.

liminal to men, liminality doesn't feature in accounts of their own experiences in this period.[22] This is also present in Dianne Dentice and Michelle Dietert's exploration of liminality and transgender experiences; they ask whether individuals who do not effectively pass[23] are still liminal 'even though they took all the steps to align with their gender of choice'.[24] Rosaldo argues 'social analysis must now grapple with the realisation that its objects of analysis are also analysing subjects who critically interrogate ethnographers, their writings, their ethics and their politics'.[25] This shift feels particularly relevant given the previous chapter's discussion of the ethics of this research, the significance of lived experience to this project, and zine makers' ability to write back to research.

In Turner's account, liminality was overwhelmingly positive and characterised as a space of potential. Although 'liminality involves a destruction of previous norms', through ritual this destruction is tied to processes of re-construction or reformation. [26] Without these liminality risks becoming 'pure danger'.[27] The framing of liminality as a fluid space of becoming has been criticised for excluding those who experience liminality as negative, for example those transgender people who never sufficiently pass and so experience a permanent and socially imposed liminality which can be experienced as vulnerability or insecurity.[28] The adoption of Turner's ideas in the US

[22] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality' in *Anthropology and the Study of Religion,* ed. by Robert L. Moore and Frank E. Reynolds (Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1984)*,* pp. 105-125.
[23] To pass is when a trans person is both perceived as their gender and not read as transgender.
[24] Dianne Dentice and Michelle Dietert, 'Liminal Spaces and the Transgender Experience', *Theory in Action*, 8 (2015), pp. 69–96 (p. 76), doi:10.3798/tia.1937-0237.15010.
[25] Ibid.*,* p. 22.
[26] Arpad Szakolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, *From Anthropology to Social Theory: Rethinking the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 184.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Dentice and Dietert, 'Liminal Spaces'.

from the 1960s onwards reflected a period where the break from tradition meant 'the dangerous, troubling, anxiety-generating aspects of uncertain periods of transition, conflict and crisis were simply ignored'.[29] Taking Turner's formulation of liminality as a conceptual whole risks replicating this, as well as amplifying the reduction of embodied experience and practices into social drama, turning liminal subjects into 'abstracted, deconstructive conceptual tools, or …a metaphor for liminality, while evacuating the fleshy material of real life.'[30] These risks are played out across disciplines, but are explicitly highlighted and reflexively grappled with in queer and postcolonial work: 'Trans scholarship points to the risk in uncritically emphasizing liminality, fluidity and becoming to the exclusion of trans subjects', whilst postcolonial scholarship highlights how liminal contexts such as borderlands (and specifically the US/Mexico borderlands) risk being 'flattened by a postmodern translation'.[31] In this thesis, I explore how these risks are mediated through accounts of liminality that are embodied, and grounded in lived experience: how zines might unflatten liminality.

In the introduction to this thesis, I described how liminality *felt* like a compelling concept for thinking about the zines at Wellcome, but emotional and affective dimensions of liminality aren't foregrounded in Turner's account: the ethnographic tradition that Turner's work is located in is one that is written to 'eliminate intense emotions'. [32] Rosaldo suggests that a new ethnography, one which cautiously dips into auto-ethnography, allows an approach which recognises the emotional and affective

[29] Szakolczai and Thomassen, *From Anthropology to Social Theory,* p. 184.
[30] Loren March, 'Queer and trans* geographies of liminality: A literature review', Progress in Human Geography, 45.3 (2021), pp. 455–471 (p. 461), doi:10.1177/0309132520913111.
[31] March, 'Queer and trans* geographies', p. 460; Adela C. Licona, *Zines in Third Space: Radical Co-operation and Borderlands Rhetoric* (State University of New York Press, 2012), p. 5.
[32] Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth*, p. 12.

dimensions of liminality, and which makes visible the researcher: for example he describes how his experience of bereavement allowed him to finally 'see' how anger drove the Inglot response to grief in the Philippines.

Liminality as a study of ritual processes continues a pattern of ethnographic research into bounded and delineated events, and faces challenges conceptualising larger-scale liminal periods, such as political revolutions.[33] In these contexts, as opposed to a clear way in and out of liminality, the future is unknown and there are no pre-established ritual elders to guide the process, as nobody has gone through the liminal period before. The formulation of liminality where ritual is a 'timeless, self-contained process' also faces challenges in the everyday.[34] In focusing on bounded ritual processes, and distinguishing between the liminal and liminoid, Turner arguably collapses liminality and ritual. Rosaldo's discussion of bereavement, where he describes how 'human beings mourn both in ritual settings and in the informal settings of everyday life', warns of the limits of social analysis which ignores the relationship, the blurred lines, between ritual and the everyday.[35]

By contrast, queer, trans, feminist and post-colonial approaches shift focus to the everyday lived experience of the liminal, outside of the clearly delineated process of ritual. In different ways, they address the risk in focusing uncritically on liminality as a productive becoming, on using it as an abstract conceptual tool, or of restricting it solely to discrete periods of ritual, and offer alternative formulations. Examining some

[33] Bjørn Thomassen, 'Thinking with Liminality: To the Boundaries of an Anthropological Concept' in *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality* ed. by Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen and Harald Wydra (Berghahn Books, 2014) pp. 39-61 (p. 41).
[34] Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth,* p. 15.
[35] Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth,* pp. 13-14.

of these approaches to liminality in more detail draws attention to 'what is at stake when it comes to spaces of ambiguity or lives lived illegibly', and develops a more textured account of liminality, one which foregrounds complex dynamics of embodiment and affect.[36] As I will discuss, these perspectives offer the foundation for understanding zines as liminal, and suggest ways that the zines at Wellcome Collection, alongside other zines around health, illness, madness and disability, can further develop or offer new understandings of liminality.

Living Liminality

Borderlands

The feminist activist and writer Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of in-betweeness developed from her experience of being of and from the borderlands. Anzaldúa uses the term 'Nepantla' to describe a liminal space:

> Nepantla is the Nahuatl word for an in-between state, an uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another, when changing from one class, race or sexual position to another, when traveling from the present identity into a new identity.[37]

Where Turner's description of liminality is tied to his study of neatly bounded ritual, Anzaldúa develops a theory of liminality grounded in lived experience, in the subjectivity of 'the new mestiza'. Anzaldúa describes this subjective experience in her 'autohistoria-teoria' *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* – an intervention into traditional western autobiographical forms that weaves together poetry, theory and autobiography

[36] March, 'Queer and trans* geographies', p. 456.
[37] *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* ed. by AnaLouise Keating (Duke University Press, 2009) p. 180.

and demonstrates an epistemology that values 'la facultad', an intuitive and embodied form of knowledge.[38]

Anzaldúa holds the spiritual alongside social, cultural and political dimensions to the nepantla. In later work, she identifies the spiritual as particularly at risk of being assimilated or ignored. Just as the spiritual aspects of the Ndembu ritual are written over in anthropology, academics and readers of Anzaldúa's work often silence the unwieldly parts of her description of the nepantla, assimilating it into a white Western ontology:

> The 'safe' elements in Borderlands are procreated and used, and the 'unsafe' elements are not talked about. One of the things that doesn't get talked about is the connection between body, mind and spirit – anything that has to do with the sacred, anything that has to do with the spirit.[39]

This ontological threat is vital to understanding liminality as it is lived. But Anzaldúa goes beyond a testimony of a lived experience on the border to draw attention to the relations of power that police the borderlands and to various acts of resistance. Like Turner, she identifies the ways that transgressing classificatory boundaries makes liminal subjects, and the communities they form, threatening.

Literary and cultural critic Homi K. Bhabha proposes a parallel theory of the cultural dynamics of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. Writing predominately of (post)colonial India, Bhabha draws on and appropriates Turner's liminality to develop Third Space Theory, seeking to explain those identities and spaces created at the intersection of cultures. Bhabha writes of how:

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[38] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987).
[39] Keating (ed), *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* p. 14.

> colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities and wandering peoples who will not be contained within the Heim of the national culture and its unisonant discourse … are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation.[40]

Where Turner's liminality was mostly apolitical, Bhabha is especially concerned with the negotiation of cultural differences in post-colonial spaces where one culture has more power than another.[41] He seeks to understand this dynamic as more than a straightforward process of subjugation or elimination, but rather as a process of hybridization, which is always unfolding and births new formulations.

Anzaldúa's and Bhabha's theories of in-betweeness are further developed in Adela C. Licona's *Zines In Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric,* which explicitly connects zines and liminality. In this study, Licona focuses on zines accessed mostly in the zine collection at the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and the Culture, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, at Duke University. She establishes third-space zines in terms of specific criteria she applies to the zine collection: zines from the 1980s/1990s which are made by feminist/a, anti-racist, of-colour zinesters.[42] Licona's 'third-space zines' are those 'where coalitional consciousness is explicit, activism is engaged and promoted, and community building, knowledge generating, grassroots literacies and information sharing are the articulated foci'.[43] She builds on Anzaldúa's writing to establish how the use of borderland rhetoric within these zines materializes third space, or liminal, sites and subjectivities. Where Anzaldúa has been described as focusing on the individual rather than considering the

[40] Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (Routledge, 1990), p. 315.
[41] Szakolczai and Thomassen, *From Anthropology to Social Theory,* p. 185.
[42] Zinester is another term for zine makers.
[43] Licona, *Zines in Third Space,* p. 22.

social mechanisms of resistance, Licona uses zines to explicitly explore how people in third space build coalitions and community.[44] Her focus is on the rhetorical in zines but suggests the potential to expand this approach to thinking about material, visual and social practices.

What Anzaldúa describes as 'la facultad', Licona identifies in zines as 'third space epistemologies'.[45] Licona describes how 'third-space zines demonstrate the different ways we can inform and be informed through affective or emotional understandings.'[46] In considering alternative approaches to understanding and formulating liminality 'zines exemplify alternatives to dis-embodied (knowledge) practices'.[47] Licona was born and raised on the Juarez/El Paso border and describes herself as 'of and from the border. I embody the border'.[48] In moving beyond the geographical Mexico/US borderlands that Anzaldúa's writing is situated in, she fears distracting from 'the tangible and material realities, inequities and injustices, or the regulatory power of the political technologies, that prevail in the Mexico/US borderlands'.[49] Licona heeds the cautions Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano has made against post-modern translations or abstractions of the borderlands that leaves them 'disembodied'. She balances this with Anne Dondaley's reading of Anzaldúa as herself addressing the multiplicity of the Borderland: Anzaldúa writes that the 'psychological borders, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest'.[50]

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[44] Maria Lugones, 'On Borderlands/La Frontera: An Interpretive Essay', *Hypatia*, 7.4 (1992), pp. 31–37, doi:0.1111/j.1527-2001.1992.tb00715.x.
[45] Licona, *Third Space Zines,* p.96.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.*,* p.97.
[48] Ibid., p.11.
[49] Ibid.*,* p.5.
[50] Licona, *Zines in Third Space,* pp. 4-5; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* p.19.

Licona differentiates third space zines from those she terms 'Duncombe-esque' after the author of *Notes from the Underground,* and conceptualises zines 'on a spectrum or spectrums of practices and transformational potentials'.[51] Stephen Duncombe's focus was predominately anglophone zines in the US, made by white, middle class 'losers'. Whilst Duncombe-esque zines might express political opinions, they are 'less interested [than third-space zines] in forging action-orientated alliances across differences'.[52] Licona's requirement for self-aware and articulated practices of activism and social justice excludes many of the zines at Wellcome from being third-space, although some (such as *Sore Loser, Power Makes Us Sick* or *Radical Transfeminism*) clearly fall into this category.[53] Licona's third-space zines offers one way of using liminality with its multiple qualities, and particularly the theoretical underpinnings of Anzaldúa's borderlands, as a lens to understand zines. But, as this research explores, this is not the only way.

Disgender a zine about being trans // nonbinary & disabled // chronically ill issue #2 is held in the Wellcome Collection and available online on magazine hosting platform Issuu.[54] It is a compilation zine, curated by Raz. Raz writes in the introduction that they want the zine to demonstrate 'the ways in which we as disabled people can … find ways to leverage our unique experiences to help us shape our lives & the world around us'.[55] Todd R. Ramlow brings the writing of Anzaldúa and queer artist, writer and activist David

[51] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Verso, 1997).
[52] Licona, *Zines in Third Space,* p. 21.
[53] Sandra Alland and Etzali Hernández, *Sore Loser: a chronic pain and illness zine on queer disabled grief* (Self-published, 2021); Power Makes Us Sick, *Power Makes Us Sick Zine Issue 2* (Self-published, 2017); *Radical Transfeminism Zine* (Self-published, 2017). I return to discuss *Sore Loser* in Chapters Four and Five.
[54] *Disgender: a zine about being trans // nonbinary & disabled // chronically ill issue #2,* ed. by Raz (Self-published, 2018)
[55] Raz (ed), *Disgender,* npn.

Wojnarowicz together through the conjunction of border theory, queer theory and disability studies to speak of a 'Crip-Queer-*Mestiza/o* subjectivity'.[56] In *Close to the Knives*, Wojnarowicz describes how:

> each public disclosure of a private reality becomes something of a magnet that can attract others with a similar frame of reference; thus each public disclosure of a fragment of private reality serves as a dismantling tool against the illusion of ONE-TRIBE NATION. [57]

Practices of compilation zine making, such as *Disgender Zine,* can demonstrate what Wojnarowicz describes about the potential of public disclosures of a private reality and the ways that these zines also engage in Licona's coalitions of difference.

Disgender Zine demonstrates the collective building and enacting of Ramlow's 'crip-queer-*mestiza/o'* subjectivity.[58] Nessi Alexander Barnes's contribution to *Disgender* begins: 'Everywhere, I am alien. / At home, this is not a problem. /At home I am merely a small strange alien who lives in my house. /So are my cats, so everything is fine'.[59] Barnes' description of being alien directly echoes Anzaldúa: 'I felt alien, I knew I was alien'.[60] Barnes writes how 'Queerness has always been the foundation for a community with as many differences as similarities (or more), forever shifting….' before expressing a desire for the coalitions of difference that Anzaldúa calls for, and that Licona argues are materialised in third-space zines: 'I hope we can learn to let difference connect us. / I hope that we can all be alien, / And that is okay'.[61]

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[56] Todd R. Ramlow, 'Bodies in the Borderlands: Gloria Anzaldúa's and David Wojnarowicz's Mobility Machines', *MELUS*, 31.3 (2006), pp. 169-187, < https://www.jstor.org/stable/30029656> [accessed 19 April 2024].
[57] David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (Vintage Books, 1991), p. 121.
[58] Ramlow, 'Bodies in the Borderlands', p. 175.
[59] Ibid., p. 11.
[60] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* p. 43.
[61] Raz (ed), *Disgender,* p. 12.

Liminal Bodies/ Liminal Times/ Liminal Spaces

In Turner's original formulation liminality is necessarily temporary, positioned between two stable states. Yet Anzaldúa's borderlands expand on the possibilities of liminality as an enduring state-space, and this acts as a foundation for Licona's exploration of third-space zines. In this section I consider the work of other writers and academics that complicate Turner's formulation, and reconceptualise liminality beyond straightforward temporalities, as embodied and as spatial.

In Chapter Four I explore zines as 'Crip Doulas': how zines concerned with disabled becoming(s) might birth disability in various ways. Superficially this might appear a discussion of the liminal state between the stable positions of 'not disabled' and 'disabled'. But this experience is rarely straightforward: it involves multiple becomings without a clear afterwards; movements along the ability spectrum; and the repeated birthing of new identities. Transition into disabled or crip identity is inherently embodied. When Anzaldúa identifies: 'we are taught that the body is an ignorant animal; intelligence dwells only in the head. But the body is smart', she argues the body is uniquely placed to know liminality, and this is because liminality is an embodied experience. In particular, bodies that resist or do not sufficiently transition (for example, disabled bodies which do not follow a linear narrative from sickness to health or trans bodies that do not sufficiently pass or are constantly 'engaged in the messy material practice of queer becomings') expand our understanding of the embodied dimensions of liminality. [62]

[62] Max J. Andrucki and Dana J. Kaplan, 'Trans objects: materializing queer time in US transmasculine homes', *Gender Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 25 (2018), pp. 781-798 (p. 794), doi:10.1080/0966369X.2018.1457014; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* p. 37.

Angie Beckles' contribution to *Disgender Zine* draws a parallel link to Ramlow's discussion of Anzaldúa and Wojnarowicz, connecting bodily difference and gender difference in observing 'it was having a mastectomy that made me realise that it's not that I'm a woman who's bad at being female, it's that I'm not a woman at all'.[63] Ramlow identifies shared connections between sexual and bodily differences and shared experiences of disability, illness and pain. Ramlow's proposed 'prosthetic subjectivity' specifically connects embodied experiences of liminality with the potential for 'new social and political coalitions' across difference.[64]

Jack Halberstam explicitly addresses embodiment and the queerness of Anzaldúa's border dweller.[65] He approaches the transgender body in transition in the same terms of home/homelessness as Anzaldúa uses. Halberstam argues that the ability to medically transition is a homecoming for some trans people that eclipses the experiences of those who remain outside of the proper position, suggesting the ways that the neat liminality of Turner's coming-of-age rituals potentially makes invisible the messy and enduring liminality of some trans people. [66] This sense of homelessness is not just about a social being out of place; gender dysphoria has been described as a 'kind of placelessness within oneself'.[67] Although Licona predominately analyses zines that address cisgender girls and women, she notes that 'zines are also addressing the differently configured body that refuses assumed conflations of gender, sexuality and anatomy'.[68] She offers a brief example of zinester Lauren Tabaks' neologism 'Brrl' which

[63] Raz (ed), *Disgender,* npn.
[64] Ramlow, 'Bodies in Borderland', p. 185
[65] Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Duke University Press Books, 1998).
[66] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* p, 20; Ibid.*,* p.xv; Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, p. 171.
[67] Jason Lim and Kath Browne, 'Senses of Gender', *Sociological Research Online,* 14.1 (2017), npn., doi:10.5153/sro.1859.
[68] Licona, *Zines in Third Space,* p. 95.

she describes as 'an example of borderlands rhetoric being deployed to represent the ambiguous whilst also functioning to subvert the normative'.[69] In the following chapters, I further demonstrate how zines, in engaging with the body as a source of knowledge and (after Piepmeier) locating readers and makers in their bodies, offer a key site for articulating liminality as embodied.

Birthing disability offers a temporal challenge to the neuro- and hetero-normative timelines that underpin Turner's liminality: visible in van Gennep's belief that 'the life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another'.[70] Queer and crip time disrupts these normative 'rhythms of life'.[71] Jack Halberstam uses 'queer time' to open time to the politics inherent in liminality and argues that 'normative narratives of time form the base of nearly every definition of the human in almost all of our modes of understanding'.[72] In *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* crip academic Alison Kafer articulates 'crip time', bringing these questions of temporality and futurity from queer theory into disability studies and asking how they can inform each other.[73] Where Turner's liminality – transitions between sickness and health (or health and death) – is orientated towards the final reaggregation, the resolution of the liminal period, disability troubles this orientation; within this model 'disability cannot appear as anything other than failure'.[74] Kafer draws on the work of anthropologist Sarah Lochlann Jain who explores how living in 'prognosis time' is 'a liminal temporality, a casting out of time; rather than a stable, steady progression

[69] Ibid., p. 104.
[70] van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* pp. 2-3.
[71] Szakolczai and Thomassen, *From Anthropology to Social Theory,* p. 23.
[72] Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (NYU Press, 2005), p. 162.
[73] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Indiana University Press, 2013).
[74] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* p. 29.

through the stages of life, time is arrested, stopped'.[75] These disruptions to the linear and bounded temporalities of Turner's liminality are also articulated by Beckles in *Disgender* zine, where they describe how 'becoming disabled has been half a lifetime's process'– eschewing the chronology of a before/after moment.[76]

The spatial is a key part of van Gennep's original description of rites of passage where 'the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares' is part of the social process of transition.[77] Research on liminality has explored literally in-between spaces, whilst writing about experiences of liminality recruits hallways, doorways or bridges.[78] Yet, some scholars caution against reducing liminality to the spatial metaphors used to describe it, as 'although the underlying metaphor is spatial, liminality is about process'.[79] Is the spatial only metaphor? In Chapter Three's exploration of zines and beds, I write about experiences of liminality intimately tied to a particular space; the state of sickness inextricable from the space of the sickbed. Licona references the 'recursive, and even intimate relationship, between place and self'; she describes how third-space zine makers 'speak of their contexts in spatialized terms'. [80] Anzaldúa's Borderlands are spiritual, sexual, social, but the borderlands are also geographic. Can liminality be removed from those in-between spaces, from these borderlands? Or, more specifically in the context

[75] Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, p. 36.
[76] Raz (ed), *Disgender,* npn.
[77] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* p. 192.
[78] Robert Preston-Whyte, 'The beach as liminal space' in *A companion to Tourism* ed. by Alan A. Lew, Michael Hall, Allan M. Williams, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), pp. 349-359; Wei-Jue Huang, Honggen Xiao, and Sha Wang, 'Airports as liminal space', *Annals of Tourism Research,* 70 (2018), pp. 1-13, doi:10.1016/j.annals.2018.02.003.
[79] Paul Stenner, *Liminality and Experience: A Transdisciplinary Approach to the Psychosocial* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); *Mapping Liminalities: Thresholds in Cultural and Literary Texts,* ed. by Lucy Kay, Zoe Kinsley, Terry Phillips, and Alan Roughley (Verlag Peter Lang, 2007), p. 8.
[80] Licona, *Zines in Third Space,* p.129; Ibid.*,* p. 9.

of this research, can I talk about the liminality of the sick bed without attention to the spaces of the bed itself?

FIG.20. Raz (ed), 'Not a Proper Place' from *Disgender: a zine about being trans // nonbinary & disabled // chronically ill* (2018), npn.

Within *Disgender* is a full A5 page drawing titled 'Not A Proper Place'.[81] The background is a psychedelic blur of colour, overlayed with a leaf shaped pattern. At the top the oversized silhouette of a cat sits on top of the silhouette of two viaducts. The cat's eyes glow bright white. Beneath, a white jumble of windowless buildings; at points the buildings are translucent and the coloured background leeches through. In the foreground, a figure crouches in darkness, under a desk with a mug and papers across it. Beside them a white naked winged figure with the face of an animal listens, head

[81] Raz (ed), *Disgender,* p. 12.

resting on hand. A black speech bubble branches from the darker figure. Speech, scratched in white, reads 'I like ANYWHERE That ISNT A PROPER PLACE. I like IN-BETWEENS'.[82]

This page – within a zine about the experience of being trans/non-binary and disabled/chronically ill – is not just using space as metaphor, and to suggest so is to again flatten the lived experience of liminality. This space summons the 'affective dimension of discomfort, estrangement and uncertainty [which] is foregrounded in a number of accounts of liminal landscapes'.[83] To establish liminal spaces as metaphor *and more*, I recruit the academic work of post-modern geographer Edward Soja and feminist geographer Doreen Massey. Through his theory of 'third-space' Soja advocates for 'viewing important ideas first and foremost from a spatial perspective' which offers up the potential of both seeing liminality as social *and* spatial, and the potential of understanding liminality through space first.[84] Thinking about liminality through spaces, like the space illustrated in 'Not a Proper Place', Chapter Three's discussion of sickbeds or in the zine *Making the Bed* (part of *Holding Title)*, foregrounds the knowledge that affective experience of these spaces offer and suggests new insights.[85] Doreen Massey describes space as 'a relational production' where 'space emerges through active material practices.'[86] This is the description of space that Licona uses 'to identify third spaces within what [she] is calling borderland rhetorics'.[87] Crucially, where space is sometimes considered to be contrary to seeing liminality as a process, in using

[82] Ibid.
[83] March, 'Queer and trans* geographies', p. 457.
[84] Christian Borch, 'Interview with Edward W. Soja: Thirdspace, Postmetropolis and Social Theory', *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journel of Social Theory*, 2.1 (2002), pp. 113 – 120 (p.119), doi:10.1080/1600910X.2002.9672816.
[85] Lea Cooper, *Making the Bed* (Self-published, 2024).
[86] Licona, *Zines in Third Space,* p. 11; Ibid.
[87] Ibid.*,* p. 12.

Massey's definition of space as in progress, as 'never complete, never finished', Licona describes a liminality that is both processual and spatial.[88]

The following chapters build on this work on liminal bodies, times and spaces, using zines to reconceptualise liminality through lived experience, outside of tidy and bounded ritual processes. Simultaneously, an understanding of liminality as enduring, embodied, and spatial offers a multiplicity of ways of thinking about zines through liminality.

Liminality and Marginality

This research proposes that liminality offers an alternative frame to marginality for thinking about zines. To understand how and why this might be the case means understanding the differences between liminality and marginality as positions. From the start, liminality has been linked to marginality, and although much has been made of the etymology of "liminality", Turner seems to suggest it was chosen mostly because "marginality" already occupied a different set of meanings within an anthropological context.[89] Untangling the relationship between margin and limen, specifically in the context of a theory of margins developed by bell hooks amongst others, demonstrates how liminality expands and builds on ideas of the margin as a site of resistance and a location of possibility and how this connects to framings of zines as marginal. It also illuminates the ways that reframing zines as liminal is productive of new understandings of what zines are and what they do.

[88] Kay et al., *Mapping Liminalities*; Ibid., p. 11.
[89] Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphor*, p. 36.

The margin has been a location consciously occupied by Black feminist writers as a practice of resistance. When bell hooks writes of choosing the margin, she explains: 'As a radical standpoint, perspective, position, "the politics of location" necessarily calls those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify the spaces where we begin the process of revision'.[90] In her theoretical and activist work, hooks uses the margin as a site of resistance, 'a location of radical openness and possibility'.[91]

There is much value to considering the ways that some zines actively use the margins to engage with the centre – both metaphorically and materially. Licona describes how third-space zines engage in the active practice of 'queery-ing' (performing 'creative and critical inquiry and class-consciousness').[92] *Dear GP* zine is a collection of satirical letters where patients assess their mental health professionals in the style of a clinical evaluation.[93] Several contributions to *Dear GP* repurpose clinical notes, and are designed to be read in relationship to the original clinical letters. Some zines want to be read in relation to a centre, using the margin as a powerful location for critique. Many zines (particularly riot grrl and third wave feminist zines) utilise the material separation between margin and text created by technologies of publishing. The printing press reinforced the margin as separate (and less than) the text since 'print establishes a radical separation between the handwritten note and the mechanical reproduction of

[90] bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (South End Press, 1989) p. 15.
[91] hooks, *Talking Back,* p. 23.
[92] Licona, *Zines in Third Space,* p. 100.
[93] *Dear GP Zine*, ed. by Dear GP Collective (Self-published, 2019).

text'.[94] By purposefully locating themselves in the material margins of the page, some zine makers are consciously adopting the location that bell hooks describes.

There are limits to marginality. Margins require a 'closed binary system where centre/margin deny, oppose or … interact'.[95] The margin's relation to the centre may not always be straightforward, for example in manuscripts from the Middle Ages where margins may be employed to enrich the text, or subvert it. Crucially, however, the margin is always understood in relation to this centre; it simply would not exist without it. [96] In the following section I consider the limits of considering zines as marginal, as always in relation to a centre, before exploring in the following chapters how using liminality as a lens can offer alternative understandings of the location zine makers occupy, and create from.

The margins have been used to characterise the location from which zine makers participate in cultural production. Piepmeier describes zines as 'participatory media' where 'individuals become creators rather than simply consumers of culture', a description with links to Halberstam's 'death of the expert', a blurring of boundaries between queer archivist and producer with obvious parallels to the blurring of reader/writer or consumer/maker within zines, and to contemporary scholarship on new media. [97] Media scholar Henry Jenkins has written extensively about 'participatory culture' where media users are understood as active participants rather than passive

[94] Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance and Philip Sutton, *Margins and Thresholds: An Enquiry into the Concept of Liminality in Text Studies* (The Gateway Press, 2000), p.3.
[95] Ibid*.,* pp. 8-9.
[96] Ibid*.,* p. 3.
[97] Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (NYU Press, 2009), p. 73; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time,* p. 162; Lymn, 'Queering Archives', p. 269.

consumers.[98] Jenkins' work develops from fan culture, itself tied to early anglophone zines in 1930s science fan fiction. In his classic 1992 text on fan culture *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* Jenkins describes fanzines as 'writing in the margins' of television shows.[99] In doing so he is arguing that the lack of a physical margin in newer media doesn't prevent consumers from becoming producers; just because zine makers aren't engaging with print media doesn't mean they aren't writing in or from the margins. But this is complicated by the evolving nature of 'Web 2.0' – also known as the 'participatory web' – where social media, blogs, and other forms of website or application invite (or, indeed, rely on) user-generated content.[100]

When I run zine workshops, especially with young people, I cannot rely on the dramatic effect of presenting the idea that we can make our own media; in the present- day context of social media and digital content creation, the blurred line between consumers and producers is not such a novel idea. If the majority of the media I consume day to day (via social media) is produced from people's bedrooms, to what extent can zines still be considered marginal? The idea of zines as participatory culture, and the extent to which such participation is an act of resistance is further complicated by the ways that Web 2.0 trades economically in content. This context calls into question the use of marginality as a frame for the relationship between zines and mainstream media, or as a way to understand how some zine makers engage creatively and critically with dominant discourses.

[98] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (Routledge, 1992).
[99] Jenkins, *Textual Poachers.*
[100] Entry 'Web 2.0', Wikipedia, 7 April 2024 <https://en.wikipedia.org/> [accessed: 07 April 2024].

Returning to the margin as a material site created by technologies of publishing, the increase in digital technologies of zine (re)production complicates the idea of contemporary zines as physically related to the margins. Zines are made with the tools at hand, and increasingly alongside sharpies, Pritt sticks and photocopiers, zine makers use InDesign, word processing, Canva and digital publishing platforms such as Issuu. This is not to say that zine makers don't continue to use these technologies to materialise the margins as a location, for example to reference the separation between text and annotation through handwriting versus printed text (even if this handwriting is a digitally generated font). But, to understand contemporary zines means expanding beyond zines as being mostly photocopied interventions in professional publishing. There have been some zine scholars who have explored the materiality of photocopied zines, or zines as materialising the margins, but few have meaningfully grappled with the effects and affects of digital modes of (re)production, and partly this is because marginality only offers so much to conceptualising these.[101]

Piepmeier focuses on the long-running third-wave feminist zine *Bitch* to explore how zines engage with popular culture.[102] She describes how 'for the first several issues, the back covers offered clever bricolages of feminine icons and feminist messages…like the image on the back of the second issue, which featured a woman with her hair in curlers, sitting under a big plastic hairdryer at a beauty parlour, calmly loading a shotgun'.[103] Piepmeier's use of the term bricolage connects to the work of Jacques Derrida, the Algerian-French philosopher whose analysis of Levi-Strauss' idea of the "bricoleur"

[101] Examples of work on photocopied zines are: Kate Eichorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century* (MIT Press, 2016); Anna Poletti, 'Auto/Assemblage: Reading The Zine', *Autographics* 31.1 (2008), pp. 85-102, doi:10.1353/bio.0.0008.
[102] Ibid., p.178.
[103] Ibid., p.176.

established the theory that no discourse is new, so much as a bricolage, collage or cut and paste of other discourses.[104] To what extent does a position of marginality push the critiques these zine makers construct into the cycle that Derrida describes, creating new discursive structures from the ruins of deconstructed ones?

Marginality also has limits in framing growing practices of institutional zine collecting and archiving, which is particularly relevant in this project's focus on Wellcome Collection's zines. Though collecting zines has always been part of zine cultures, zines have only relatively recently been collected in library and archive settings. The zines at Wellcome Collection are in relationship to both the other collections in the closed stores, and to those on the open shelves. This relationship has multiple dimensions: it is both a spatial relationship, to do with where the zines are physically in the building, and an imagined relationship, visible, for example, in how Wellcome's librarians talk about the zine collection. The zine collection is also in relationship to the wider world of zines (a relationship with the same multiple dimensions). The zine *Archiving the Underground #1* asks: 'Do you think archiving zines creates a zine canon? If so, do you think this is a positive or negative process?'.[105] Do Wellcome's institutional resources turn the zine collection into a centre that other zines are marginal to? In an interview for this research, Mel Grant describes how, with other collecting paused, 'zines were the thing [Wellcome Collection] collected most consistently through Covid and through lockdown period in particular'.[106] This troubles the extent that the zines can be framed as marginal to a central collection.

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[104] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 2nd edn (Routledge, 2001).
[105] *Archiving the Underground* #1, ed. by Jenna Brager and Jami Sailor (Self-published, 2011) in Lymn, 'Queering Archives', p. 319.
[106] Interview with Mel Grant, Collections Development Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, April 18 2023).

So what does liminality offer as an alternative? Where the margin is turned towards the centre, liminality is a reorientation outwards, and invites an exploration of contemporary zines, zine making and Wellcome's zine collection in terms of transition and in-betweenness. Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance and Philip Sutton, in their enquiry into liminality in text studies, choose to use limen (instead of margin) because it implies a space outside the boundary of the page, where the margin is the threshold – 'the term *limen* suggests that what from one side appear to be margins are, when viewed from the other side, places of transition and transformation'.[107] Liminality opens the closed binary system of margin/centre and imagines another side, reorientating not towards the centre but beyond the boundary of the page. This is also an orientation towards a future. In *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, Eichhorn writes about zine collections, amongst other feminist archives. She cautions that 'at stake [in these archives] are not the worlds these collections represent, but rather the worlds they invite us to imagine and even realize.'[108] This concern with imagined futures is woven throughout this thesis: in Chapter Three where bed is better understood as a liminal site of dreaming, of political production, rather than a site marginal to politics, public space or community; in Chapter Four where the afterwards of birthing disability is Disability Justice futures; and in Chapter Five where the world after COVID-19 isn't a stable destination, but instead a work in progress.

Conclusion

Rather than attempting to build something fixed out of the deconstruction of anthropological and ethnographic formulations of liminality, this thesis attempts a

[107] Aguirre, Quance and Sutton, *Margins and Thresholds,* p. 8.
[108] Kate Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism, Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013), p. 160.

bricolage of liminality – taking it apart and using its pieces, without needing to fix something in its place. With a recognition of the importance of the lived experience of the in-between, we can reapproach liminality from a place that reckons with the risks and absences of its anthropological conception. If we accept that the limits to the classical anthropological concept of liminality lies in its methodological foundations, in the specific ethnographic tradition it is situated in, we can also see how the methods and methodologies laid out in the previous chapter allow for a new formulation of liminality through zines. This includes moving beyond the bounded, ritual setting that liminality was first named in, to consider the messy reality of in-betweenness. Within this is an acknowledgement of the ways liminality's multivalence is a strength. This thesis approaches liminality as embodied, temporal and spatial, with attention to its political and cultural meanings. Zines, themselves grounded in lived experience, balance the risks of liminality becoming either abstract concept or always positive.

This thesis also proposes liminality as a reorientation, turning away from the centre to beyond the boundaries of the page. bell hooks describes the importance of identifying the location from which we write and revise hegemonic discourse, and so it is important to establish the space from which zine makers are practising, and the location from which this thesis is written. Whilst there is value to considering zines as marginal, the present-day media landscape, digital methods of (re)production, and the movement of zines into institutional collections suggests a different positioning might be useful. This chapter has established the liminal as an alternative location. March describes 'an ethical obligation to critically examine lived experiences of liminality in ways that

undermine oppressive pathologizing tendencies'.[109] The following chapters, which explore the Wellcome's zines through three themes – beds; birthing disability; and temporalities of COVID-19 – aim to do just this.

[109] March, 'Queer and trans* geographies', p. 466.

Chapter Three: Bed Bound

A Network of Beds

I am in bed. On average, I work from bed two days of the week. I've often worked in bed. I work in bed despite the articles suggesting the negative impacts of working from bed on health and productivity that punctuate my social media feed (and which peaked during the first COVID-19 lockdown). I work from bed when I can't face getting up, when my body hurts from period pain, fatigue or sensory overwhelm, when I want to feel safe, or when it's too cold to sit anywhere else.

I make zines in bed, either working on my computer or balancing pens, paper and paints, scissors, glue sticks and cut out images strewn around me. I read zines in bed, either on my computer or by bringing a stack upstairs with me, some still in their envelopes. Many of these zines also write of and from bed and bedrooms and I feel this intimate connection: like I'm tapping into a web of beds, one node on a sprawling grid, enmeshed in a mycorrhizal network like the kind that forms under the forest floor. I joked once with some fellow zine makers at an event which was dominated by small presses: 'You can tell they are small presses because they work out of their spare room, not their bedroom.' This isn't a universal rule of course. Rather it was a blunt observation of the ways that some of the differences between small presses and zines could be characterised through the site of production. Zines come from the bedroom and, unlike small presses which will often obscure domestic sites of production, zines embrace the beds and bedrooms they are made in, (re)produce them, and linger on their qualities, objects and affects.

I realised I wanted to write more explicitly about zines and beds, rather than bedrooms, after following @bed_zine on Instagram.[1] Alongside a compilation (or 'comp') zine[2] that publishes art and writing by disabled people about bed, the Instagram account collects images of and in beds across mediums, locating *Bed Zine* in a broader visual and cultural history of beds and, particularly, sickbeds. Reading a digital copy of *Bed Zine: Issue One* in my own bed in the autumn of 2021 evoked what editor Tash King describes as 'the messy feelings disabled people have about our beds'.[3] Lying prone, my laptop resting high on my chest, neck bent up at an odd angle, my body holding the fine line between comfort and pain, I experienced the sense of connection and isolation, of freedom and constriction, of altered temporalities, that the zine explores. The zine's collected accounts of medical intervention, community care, and working from bed offer something different than existing accounts of zines and bedrooms, which focus on the bedrooms of teenagers making zines. The focus on bed, rather than bedrooms, suggested something specific to crip, sick and disabled zine makers who don't just make zines from their bedrooms, but from bed specifically. It figured the bed, and particularly the sickbed, as a liminal space, and pointed to zines' potential to illuminate that space, not as one of absence, but instead as full and messy.

Though there are cautions against reducing liminality to spatial metaphors as outlined in the previous chapter, it is not so easy to divide the spatial and the social. The zines of this chapter develop our understanding of the affective dimensions of liminality and

[1] bed_zine, Instagram, n.d. <https://www.instagram.com/bed_zine/> [accessed: 11 April 2024].
[2] Barnard Zine Library defines 'Compilation Zines' via the practices of putting them together: 'for a compilation zine, a topic is chosen and a call for submissions is released, ideally with a deadline. After the submissions are in, the zine is cobbled together, tying up a single topic from multiple perspectives'. 'Zine Genres', Barnard Zine Library, n.d. <https://zines.barnard.edu/zine-genres> [accessed 24 February 2024].
[3] *Bed Zine Issue One,* ed. by Tash King (Self-Published, 2021), npn.

constitute bed as a site of community, where crip genealogies and new genealogies of zines themselves are constructed. In engaging in queer uses of the bed, I argue that these zines linger on the bed's qualities and offer insight into the liminal space of the sickbed.

Within all three issues of *Bed Zine*, bed is a liminal space of both/and. King describes the inspiration for the zine as the 'simple contradiction that I experience as a chronically ill person…that my bed functions as a soft space where I feel safe and protected and as a hard space where I feel miserable and confined. It is a place of extremes – of utmost comfort and abject discomfort'[4]. Bed, as constituted by the zines in this chapter, is both a space of safety, of rest and recovery, of communion and work, and a space which confines and constricts, a space of pain, suffering and solitude.

There is a further contradiction when thinking about beds and zines, which connects back to earlier chapters' discussions of the limits of narrative and the absence or invisibility of liminality in medical humanities scholarship. Emmett Shoemaker observes in their writing about Tracey Emin's *My Bed* that 'in order to create *My Bed,* Emin had to first rise from it (her bed).'[5] They continue: 'My Bed contains an insoluble riddle (one familiar to the bed-bound): the experiences invoked by the piece (depression, illness, isolation, addiction) are paralytic — hostile to language, representation, and reason. One can only gesture back, after the fact.'[6] Emin did have to rise from bed to create *My Bed*, a piece that could participate in the art world (and arts economies). Zine makers do not necessarily, or so completely. Shoemaker's stance highlights the tension

[4]King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue One,* npn.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

between zines as in-the-moment gestures from bed, and zines as gestures back, towards bed.

Like small presses, academic writing tends to hide any relationship to bed and bedrooms. Nonetheless, much of this thesis was written in bed, a location made possible in part by starting my PhD in September 2020, as the UK moved in increments towards a second COVID-19 lockdown. When reading research papers, books and articles I don't feel the same immediate sense of a network of bedrooms as when I read zines, but I know it's there, under the surface, submerged or purposefully obscured. I know that other academics were and are working, writing, and presenting from bed and bedrooms. Reading academic writing sometimes feels like watching someone present on Teams with their background blurred – the shapes of domestic space visible but not quite discernible. In their contribution to *Bed Zine Issue Three,* Phiroozeh Petigara describes tucking their pillow corners out of sight for a first video date – a gesture I recognise (and repeat) in every zoom preview video before a supervision, conference, or workshop that I'm attending from bed.[7] What does it mean to say that this chapter comes from (my) bed, and what does it mean to (attempt to) obscure that?

Establishing bed as a key site of this research, through this chapter and the zines *Making the Bed, Zine Makers Do It in Bed* and *Bed Bound,* is to make my bed(s) the (auto)ethnographic field.[8] Kate Eichorn draws on her research into zine communities to question the boundaries, the opposition, between home and field in ethnographic narratives. She suggests that 'understanding people's lives…may sometimes require

[7] *Bed Zine Issue Three,* ed. by Tash King (Self-Published, 2022), p. 29.
[8] Lea Cooper, *Making the Bed* (Self-published, 2024); Lea Cooper, *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* (Self-published, 2022); Lea Cooper, *Bed Bound* (Self-published, 2022).

ethnographers to do what the people they seek to study do, even if it necessitates staying at home'.[9] In this case, I suggest it also necessitates staying in bed, where bed is both home and field. In *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* I use the form of a prompt zine to invite the reader into a similar set of practices to consider themselves in relationship to bed. On the first page of instructions, the prompt is to 'lie down'.[10] In this chapter I both consider what bed zines offer to an understanding of horizontality as an orientation, and what a horizontal orientation offers to reading these zines and engaging with them in research.

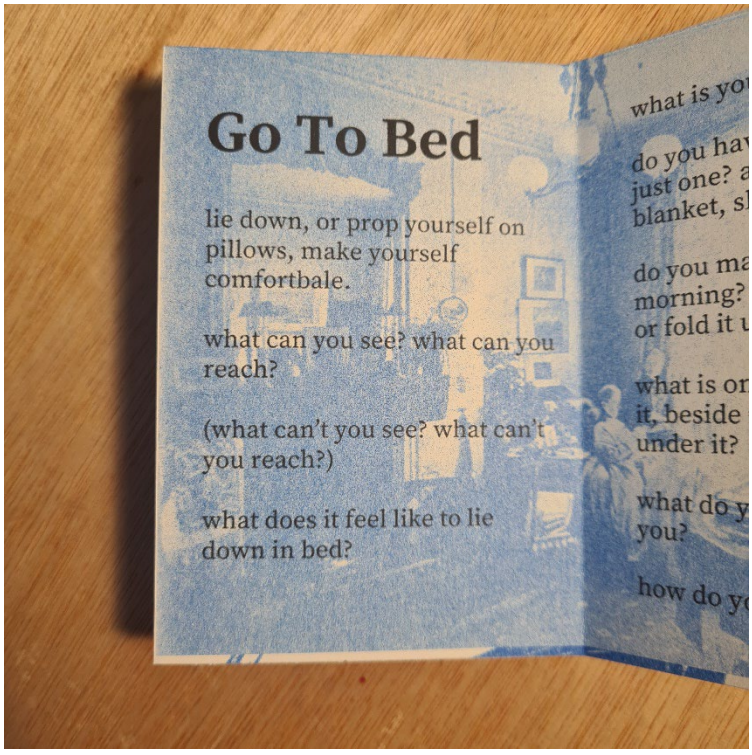

FIG. 21. Lea Cooper, page from *Zine Makers Do It in Bed* (2022), A7 Risoprinted zine, part of *Holding Title* (2024), npn.

Horizontality

Sick Days is a small, irregularly shaped zine. It is irregular in the sense that the regular shape of zines is the shape easiest to reproduce (typically A7, A6, A5, any number of

[9] Kate Eichorn, 'Sites Unseen: Ethnographic Research in a Textual Community', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14.4 (2001), pp. 565-578 (p. 566), doi:10.1080/09518390110047075.
[10] Cooper, *Zine Makers Do It,* npn.

complete folds of an A4 or A3 sheet).[11] Sitting at the long grey table in Wellcome's Rare Materials Reading Room, I hold it with an awareness that this zine must have taken time to compile. It is a third of the height of an A5 zine, but the same width: it is landscape, or horizontal. This horizontal feeling was heightened when I considered it amongst the other zines I had requested at Wellcome, which were all more typically orientated, mostly A5 upright booklets. *Sick Days* is bound in weighted brown card with white string. Between the sturdy brown card cover, thin cream paper pages alternate between black and white text, and a black and white illustration bounded by a rectangular window so it doesn't even take up the space of the small page. Taped to the back of the zine with blue washi tape is a piece of card: 'Part of a project illustrating the reality of invisible illness and its life implications. I'd love to know what you think, please get in touch!'[12] This was the first time I visited Wellcome Collection to read zines during my PhD research - due to the COVID-19 pandemic and various lockdowns, it had been a full year since I started. I was struck that the first zine I read, sitting upright in a chair in the Rare Materials Reading Room, returned me to the horizontal position I had occupied in bed for much of the previous year.

I opened the zine up on the grey archival table. In the first spread text on one page reads 'Can't move… I'm stuck/ Rest isn't always relaxing'. [13] Opposite this is a line illustration of an unshaded lightbulb hanging from the ceiling at an angle. The materiality of the zine and the perspective of the illustrations inside orient the reader lying in the same position as the zine maker Hollie Woodward: horizontal, in her bed. In *Little Single Bed*

[11] Hollie Woodward, *Sick Days* (Self-Published, 2019).
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

2017 we are also lying down with zine maker Amber Is Blue.[14] Though this zine is a more regular form, an A5 booklet, the felt-tip drawings reproduced inside locate the viewer either above or within the bed. Both *Sick Days* and *Little Single Bed* show how '[O]rientations of the body shape not just what objects are reachable, but also the "angle" on which they are reached'.[15] The visual and material effects of these zines orientate the reader horizontally too. Throughout these zines, Woodward and Amber Is Blue offer a phenomenology of lying in bed – with attention to their lived experience, to what is near or at hand, and 'the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds'[16]. But this is a not a straight phenomenology; the slant angle of the lightbulb in Woodward's opening spread evokes the slantness of Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology. Though Ahmed doesn't explicitly take up a horizontal position, perhaps the geometries of the sick bed offer the 'odd angle' at which crip and queer meet.[17] Ahmed connects the straightening effects of social relations to how bodies are orientated: queer moments in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology are those where objects appear slantwise (like Woodward's lightbulb), and the horizontal/vertical axis is out of line. These moments 'must be overcome…because they block bodily action: they inhibit the body such that it ceases to extend into phenomenological space'.[18] Inhabiting and lingering on, rather than overcoming, time spent horizontal in bed, is disruptive to a straight phenomenology, and troubles the invisibility of liminal persons.

[14] Amber Is Blue, *Little Single Bed 2017* (Self-published, 2017).
[15] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Objects, Orientations, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006), p. 67; Woodward, *Sick Days,* 2019; Amber Is Blue, *Little Single Bed,* 2017.
[16] Sara Ahmed, 'Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology', GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 12.4 (2006), pp. 543-574 (p. 544), doi:10.1215/10642684-2006-002.
[17] Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use,* (Duke University Press, 2019), p. 225.
[18] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* (Duke University Press, 2006), p. 66.

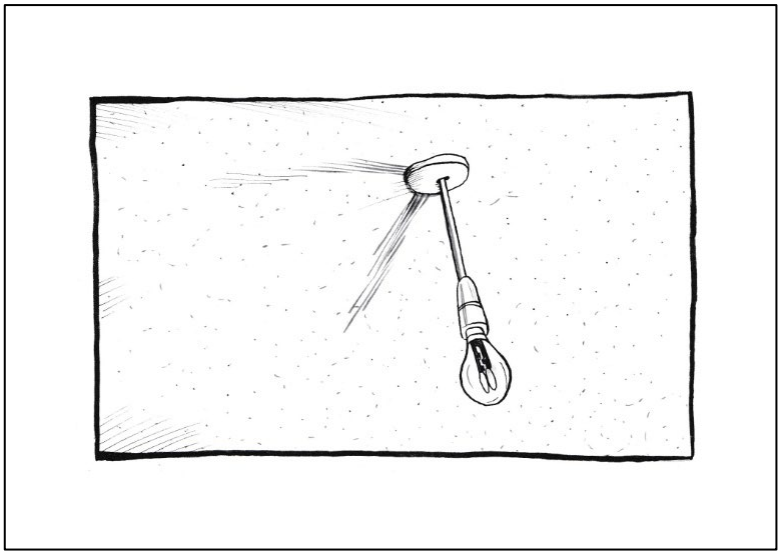

FIG. 22. Hollie Woodward, page from *Sick Days* (2019), zine, npn.

In *Bed Zine,* Shoemaker describes bed as 'a space/duration (horizontality)', an orientation of bodies in time and space, in contrast to 'the upright'.[19] Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero argues that the vertical figure that underpins Western philosophy (ethics, ontology and politics), one that is autonomous, rational, upright, limits the development of an altruistic ethics (an inclination towards others).[20] Lying down, as inclination or orientation, has long been the concern of those writing about illness: Virginia Woolf writes that in sickness 'we cease to become soldiers in the army of the upright'.[21] In a more contemporary account of lying down, Anne Boyer, writing of her experience of cancer, describes how when you are horizontal 'the increased area of airy intersection leads to a crisis of excessive imagining. All that horizontality invites a massive projecting of cognitive forms'.[22] In her article 'Epidemic Time: Thinking from the Sickbed', medical humanities scholar Felicity Callard considers the horizontal body to

[19] King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue One,* no page numbers.
[20] Adriana Cavarero, *Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude* (Stanford University Press, 2016); Viktoria Huegel, 'Review article on Adriana Cavarero's Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude for Contemporary Political Theory', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 17.4 (2017), pp. 185-188, doi:10.1057/s41296-017-0154-7.
[21] Virgina Woolf, *On Being Ill* (HetMoet, 2021), p. 32.
[22] Anne Boyer, 'The Sick Bed & Dr. Donne', Poetry Foundation, 18 January 2016 <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2016/01/the-sick-bed-dr-donne> [accessed 11 April 2024].

be ‘in a cognitively and affectively different place from that inhabited by vertical others’ and uses this to offer a new reading of epidemics.[23] Horizontality invites a different relationship to others and invites thinking and feeling differently.

In the introduction to this chapter, I described a concern with bed as an object. But throughout this chapter, lying down (or propped up) as a position, orientation or inclination recurs. As well as locating the zines discussed above amongst other work on beds, they speak to multimedia work in which ‘the acts of reclining, collapsing, reversing or lounging are deliberate and performative’.[24] The ‘die in’ as a protest – a durational performance – is a mass lying down. More than just symbolic of the actual dead, this gesture is an invocation for the upright viewer to care; returning to Cavarero’s notion that inclination informs ethics, to lie down can be an embodied ask for care from another.

Horizontality also returns us to the network of beds I described sensing in my introduction. As a means of conceptualising the relationships between zine makers, across time and space, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s metaphor of the rhizome is particularly compelling: ‘a spatialization (and to some degree temporalization) of thought that is multilineal, multidirectional, and multiple rather than binaristic, and horizontal rather than strictly vertical.’[25] But the metaphor of the rhizome obscures as

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[23] Felicity Callard, ‘Epidemic Time: Thinking from the Sickbed’, *Bull Hist Med,* 94.4 (2020), pp. 727-743 (p. 728), doi:10.1353/bhm.2020.0093.

[24] Nora Heidorn and Guilia Crispiani, ‘Laying Horizontal’, Nero Editions, 10 June 2022 <https://www.neroeditions.com/laying-horizontal> [accessed 24 February 2024]; Raquel Meseguer Zafe, *A Crash Course in Crowdspotting,* n.d., Audio Installation; Harold Offeh, *Lounging,* 2017-2020, Photographic Series.

[25] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Impacts, 2004); *Crip Genealogies,* ed. by Mel Y. Chen, Alison Kafer, Eunjung Kim and Julie Avril Minich (Duke University Press, 2023), p. 16.

well as reveals. In their introduction to the anthology *Crip Genealogies*, Mel Chen et al. ask:

> Does anyone really know how all kinds of rhizomes grow, and do they all simply evacuate dominance? What does horizontality actually mean? Horizontality can also be a site of violence and encroachment; horizontality can imply discreteness as much as connection....Even the rhizome can be colonial.[26]

In (re)making the bed as a site of cultural participation and reproduction, in suggesting that zines as gestures from bed offer a phenomenology of the liminal space of the sick bed, it is important still to acknowledge those beds from which no gesture or utterance is made, those beds from which nothing is produced, or at least where there is no trace of those gestures or productions. In this chapter's discussion of hospital beds, and in acknowledging prison beds, I hope to offer some caution about a homogenizing picture.

Zines and Bedrooms

Existing zine scholarship which touches on beds centres on the bedrooms of young people. It has a close relationship to wider work in feminist youth studies which recognizes bedrooms as sites of political participation and cultural production. It also brings us into contact with scholarship which considers the political 'work' of zines. Some of this is obscured, arguably, because 'our encrusted gender ideology often makes women's efforts at cultural change invisible'.[27] This has been readdressed by zine scholars Alison Piepmeier and Anna Poletti, whose field is contemporary life writing. Piepmeier argues for the political feminist work that zines do, following Anita Harris who describes how 'young women have new ways of taking on politics and culture that may not be recognizable under more traditional paradigms but deserve to be identified as

[26] Ibid.
[27] Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (NYU Press, 2009), p. 23.

socially engaged and potentially transformative nonetheless'.[28] Harris identifies the bedroom as a significant site of political engagement. Poletti locates their chapter on the bedroom as a site of zine production amongst studies from feminist youth culture which '(re)figure the bedroom as a vital site of young women's cultural participation'.[29]

Poletti grounds their writing on bedrooms in geographically specific histories of the development of the modern house and how the division of space has been shaped by ideologies of family and childhood.[30] The bedroom continues to be made and remade: the availability of smart phones, tablets and the development of social media means making media from your bedroom is commonplace (disrupting the notion of the bedroom as marginal to a central public media sphere); the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen space divided differently with homes turned into offices and workspaces; and the increase in house and flat sharing amongst people in their 20s-30s in the UK makes the bedroom a significant space not just for teenagers but for older people too.[31] The perzines by young people with which Poletti engages (mostly) constitute the bedroom in terms of privacy, safety and solitude and Poletti uses this to explore how these young zine makers negotiate public/private spheres. But this notion of the bedroom as private can be disrupted. In Poletti's discussion of the zine *Mute as Bottles*, zine maker Lou/Louise recounts a police raid in their bedroom that wakes her from bed – 'maybe if we just lie quiet in bed, hold each other still & wait they'll go

[28] *Next Wave Cultures,* ed. by Anita Harris (Routledge, 2007), p. 1.
[29] Anna Poletti, *Intimate Ephemera: Reading Young Lives in Australian Zine Culture* (Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. 105.
[30] Anna Poletti, *Intimate Ephemera*.
[31] Ash Watson, Deborah Lupton and Mike Michael, 'The COVID digital home assemblage: Transforming the home into a work space during the crisis', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies,* 27.5 (2021), pp. 236-250, doi:10.1177/13548565211030848; Sue Heath, Katherine Davies, Gemma Edwards and Rachael Scicluna, *Shared Housing, Shared Lived: Everyday Experiences Across the Lifecourse* (Routledge, 2017).

away'.[32] Here, the bedroom is not uncomplicatedly private. This intrusion of the state echoes this chapter's later discussions of medical intervention in sickbeds and hospital beds. Whilst these accounts and histories of zine making in young people's bedrooms have moments of resonance, they do not fully account for my own zine making practices or the zines in this chapter. These zines constitute bed in terms of community alongside solitude, threat as well as safety. The boundaries between public and private are also complicated by medical interventions, hospital and prison beds.

The sick bed is more than the material sick bed, but also the horizontal orientation of the person lying in it. Callard uses the term 'sickbed' throughout her essay 'both to refer to the material bed on which a sick person lies and to denote the condition of being in some way sick and therefore in some sense inhabiting a different world from those who feel themselves to be well'.[33] She emphasises the potential of this horizontal position when understanding epidemics. But, just as Adela C. Licona cautioned against abstracting the borderlands beyond the violently policed geographical borders she, and Gloria Anzaldúa, are located in, I also want to caution against abstracting the sickbed beyond the material bed. In arguing for the sickbed as a site of cultural production, political participation, as liminal, I do not want to ignore the sickbed as a site of violence, restriction, silence.

The Sick Bed

In Perrot's history of the bedroom, the deathbed 'took up the entire stage and was abundantly represented in medieval iconography', but medical progress (alongside

[32] Poletti, *Intimate Ephemera*, npn.
[33] Callard, 'Epidemic Time', p. 728.

other social and cultural changes) created the sickbed and 'gave the sickroom a much more pronounced material and literary existence'.[34] Perrot's narrative of the bedroom risks erasing the existence of disabled people pre-modern medicine. Representations of sick beds that currently exist in Wellcome's Collection include many early examples including a marble engraving of Asclepios by a sick bed from the 4th century B.C. These blur with ample representations of the deathbed and the bed as a site of childbirth. Nonetheless, the present-day sickbed has a distinct cultural existence. The sick bed continues to morph in contemporary media. Writer Mia Autumn Roe writes for online *Polyester* zine about the term 'Bed rotting': 'a term first coined on TikTok, [it] culminates in the mindset of reclaiming the time you spend in bed and embracing the art of barely existing' in response to the consumerist nature of self-care.[35] *Making the Bed,* part of the zine collection *Holding Title,* combines the public-domain images of sickbeds from Wellcome Collection with my own images and autoethnographic writing.

Whilst genealogies of zines often locate them as the descendants of political pamphlets, perhaps an alternative history can be found in the products of bedrooms and sickbeds. Perrot asserts 'many sick rooms are creative places'.[36] Zine makers making zines from bed create artistic lineages for themselves – although where Perrot references Marcel Proust, Georg Groddeck, and Joe Basquet, it is Frida Kahlo, Gloria Anzaldúa and Tracey Emin that zine makers draw connections with. In *Making the Bed* I share Perrot's interest in Alice James, sister of the psychoanalyst William James and

[34] Michelle Perrot, *The Bedroom: An Intimate History,* trans. by Lauren Elkin (Yale University Press, 2018), p. 199; Ibid.
[35] Mia Autumn Roe, 'Reframing Rot: How Laziness Became Commodified', Polyester Zine, n.d. <https://www.polyesterzine.com/features/reframing-rotnbsp-how-laziness-became-commodified#scroll_to_steady_paywall> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[36] Perrot, *The Bedroom,* p. 332.

writer Henry James.[37] In 'So Much Time Spent in Bed' writer, educator and Disability Justice activist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha writes to Anzaldúa from bed.[38] Though Piepzna-Samarasinha notes that Anzaldúa never described herself as disabled (in fact 'every inch of evidence [she] left resisted that label'), it is in 'the chronically ill sickbed heaped with pillows' where they meet, and it is 'this place of bodily difference' that allows them both to write.[39] Callard considers how the sickbed might be the locus for temporality as 'a mode of sensory receptivity that collates bodies in relations of affinity across space'.[40] She argues 'thinking from the sickbed brings contemporary bodies into affiliation with others – both with those who are falling into sickbeds for the first time, now, and those whose long sickness has long been unwitnessed by many eyes'.[41] In Turner's account of liminality, 'communitas' was the term he gave to the observed solidarity between those undergoing shared social transitions during the liminal period. The communitas formed across sickbeds is real, in the sense of people making from their beds together (like when my best friend and I video called each other from bed to make zines together during lockdown). It is also imagined, in terms of the connections that Callard proposes (a 'collective thinking from the sickbed'), the relationship between Piepzna-Samarasinha and Anzaldúa, or indeed the links that I make in my fantasies of Alice James' sickbed zines.[42] Bed Zine also produces this communitas. In curating the Instagram page, they go further to connect contemporary

[37] Cooper, *Making the Bed,* p. 19.
[38] Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018), p.182.
[39] Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work,* p. 182.
[40] Elizabeth Freeman, *Beside You in Time: Sense Methods and Queer Sociabilities in the American Nineteenth Century* (Duke University Press, 2019), p. 8.
[41] Callard, 'Epidemic Time', p. 742.
[42] Callard, 'Epidemic Time', p. 729.

work that features in their zine with other cultural products and crucially the people who produce them.

Making the (sick) bed

The deathbed is a well-established site of various and varied rituals, as a person transitions from life to death and seems, superficially at least, to embody the characterisation of liminality as a finite period of socially managed transition. Sickness, in this formulation, becomes a transition between health and death. But chronic sickness is an experience of its own, uneasily subsumed into linear formulations of liminality such as Turner's. Chronic illness and disability trouble the linear orientation of liminality towards a final reaggregation and create the sickbed as a site of its own.

The temporalities of the sick bed are explored in different ways across *Bed Zine*. In the poem 'In Death We Become Simple' in *Bed Zine Issue One,* Kyla Jamieson describes: 'In death, we become simple / to care for': in contrast to death, on-going sickness complicates care. The sick bed of Olivia Muenz's contribution is a sharp cornered rectangle created out of text that repeats 'o no o no o no'. Two rectangular pillows are formed of the same text. Within these are the words 'not' and 'now' in italics, one word in the centre of each. 'not now' offers multiple temporal readings: perhaps a desire to delay returning to bed; perhaps a response from the sick bed (i.e. 'can you come out?' 'not now'). The title of Jamieson's other poem in *Bed Zine Issue One*, 'Four Years Post Injury', offers a further sense of time – four years 'post' injury, but still inhabiting the sick bed. In their contribution 'Magnet', Jessica Williamson writes 'One summer has 92 days or 132,480 minutes…At night I would lay there and count each of the 7,948,800

seconds'.[43] These measures of time in the hundreds of thousands are contrasted with the double-digit spatial dimensions of the bed – 'a 60 by 80-inch queen bed'.

Many of the contributions to *Bed Zine* record the objects around the sickbed as much as the sickbed itself. In doing so, they create 'archives of feelings' that collect affective dimensions of the sickbed.[44] Like Emin presenting 'the *material* of her life, rather than an interpretation of it', the photos of beds that appear in *Bed Zine,* or on the back cover of *Little Single Bed* also present the material of the sick bed. [45] But in collaging, a particular form of 'making the bed' reproduced several times across *Bed Zine*'s three issues, they also go further, blending real and imagined material. In Charlie Fitz's collage 'How I sleep at night' in *Bed Zine Issue Three,* they present the objects of the sickbed: around a sprawled, Christ like figure wrapped in pink and blue sheets, is a spray bottle, a sleep mask, a jar of pills, a television, three marching ants and a sleeping dog.[46] The bed floats in deep space. Around it are strange mechanical objects and hands (with cannulas inserted) holding a cup of water. A pair of hands reach in from outside the bed: one is adjusting the pillow, the other is perhaps adjusting the sheet, perhaps reaching in for something else. Juan Sebastian Cassiani's contribution 'Habitus' also constructs the bed through collage – again the bed is located in space, with a swirling galaxy and rocket ship visible outside the window.[47] The objects around the bed include cardboard boxes as tables, a calendar, a tv with a roulette wheel on the screen, a packet of cigarettes, a

[43] King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue One,* npn.
[44] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Duke University Press, 2003).
[45] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, 'The Rumpled Bed of Autobiography: Extravagant Live, Extravagant Questions.' *Biography,* 24.1 (2001), pp. 1-14 (p. 4), doi:10.1353/bio.2001.0025
[46] King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue Three,* p. 27.
[47] King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue One*, npn.

cup of tea. There is an eye in the tea cup looking out, and a surveillance camera in the top left corner.

Poletti describes zines' capacity to hold the mess of the bedroom without needing to structure it, where '[m]ess is not a collection of objects but an entity unto itself'.[48] In *An Archive of Feelings* feminist and queer studies scholar Ann Cvetkovich's discusses the importance of objects to trauma archives*:* 'memories can cohere around objects in unpredictable ways'.[49] Liminality presents similar challenges as trauma to archival records and existing forms of archives. In offering a way of (re)constructing the material sick bed, zines offer a way to make it visible, produce it, and retain emotional or affective meaning/memories of it. Poletti suggests that the list making is 'one valid way to describe a mess' but 'robs mess of its power'.[50] In the contribution 'Migraine Day' by Kara Stanton, a coloured crayon illustration of a bed is accompanied by a handwritten list. Aside from my own affinity with list making as a neuroqueer form of writing, Stanton's listing the objects of her bed connects with practices of cataloguing. The bed is not an object in the list; instead the bullet pointed list beneath 'My bed' implies that these are the objects that make up the bed. These reconstructions of beds – both physically (like Emin), and through collage or drawing, act as archives of feeling – collecting and preserving and cataloguing, with the resources at hand, the objects of their sickbeds. The wider project of *Bed Zine* then also becomes an archival one.

In 'Migraine Day' there are two items listed as not pictured: a 'tiny pig' and 'me'. In making the sick bed, these zine makers also make the sick body in relation to it. In *Sick Days*, we don't see a body; in *Little Single Bed* we sometimes see the body in bed as if

[48] Poletti, *Intimate Ephemera,* npn.
[49] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling,* p. 242.
[50] Poletti*, Intimate Ephemera*, npn.

from above, and other times the perspective makes the legs the readers' own. The impression left by a body appears in several contributions to *Bed Zine*: in the sweat stain impression on the sheets of Bonnie Hancell's contribution 'sleep anxiety sweat angel', or the pill bottled filled impression of Gabby DaSilva's contribution 'Fatigue Bed'.[51] In Emmett Shoemaker's collage 'I spend all day here', a hooded body floats horizontally above a bed, and in its place is an arrangement of flowers, foliage and ferns.[52] Habit is not just (repeated) action; it is inaction, lying still, that has created these dents and impressions.

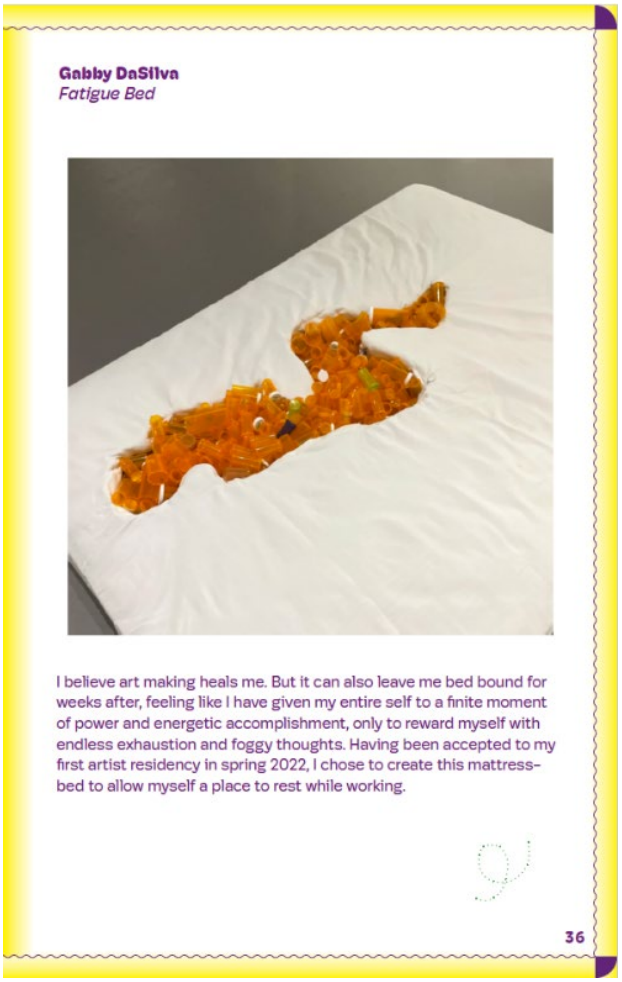

FIG. 23. Tash King (ed), page from *Bed Zine Issue Three* (2021), digital zine, p.36.

[51] King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue Three,* p. 16; *Bed Zine Issue Three,* p. 36.
[52] King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue One,* npn.

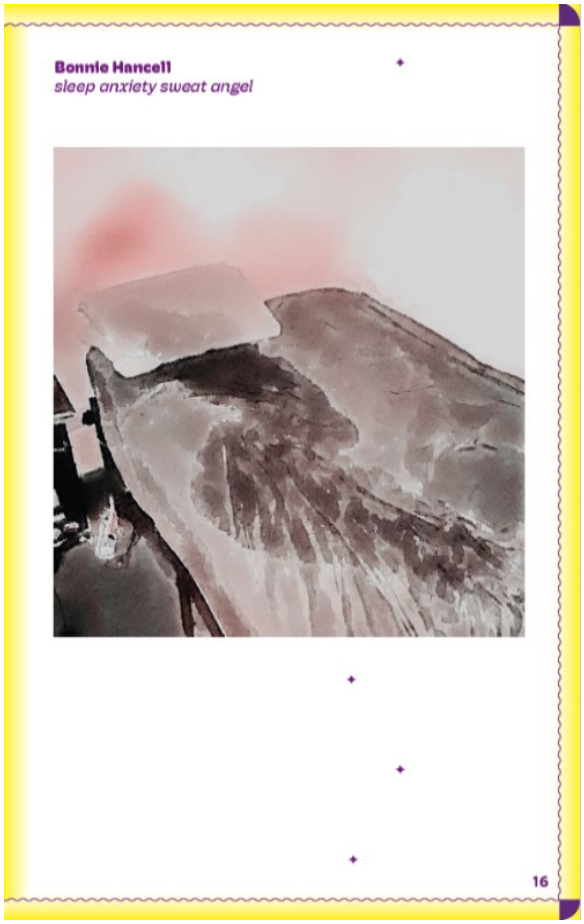

FIG. 24. Tash King (ed), page from *Bed Zine Issue Three* (2021), digital zine, p.16.

The sick bed in many of these zines is also defined by what or where it is not. In some zines, the bed is placed in relationship to the desk: a more typical site of production. The front cover of *Little Single Bed 2017* offers two locations via two side by side Instax pictures: the bed and the desk. A figure reclines on a single bed and looks away from the camera, which is at the foot of the bed. They are dressed in what appears to be a long white night gown and are clutching a soft toy; the gridded green bed cover is recognisable as the one reproduced in the inside pages. The other picture is of a desk, neatly organised with a pen pot, vinyl record player, books, photos taped to the wall and a shelf of ornaments. This cover is echoed in a spread from *Sick Days*, where across from a bordered illustration of a desk with pen pots, coffee cup and lamp, and pictures

taped to the wall, the text reads 'My desk looks so inviting/ would love to draw right now'.[53] These zines share a relationship to the desk as an object or place viewed from bed, but not the location of the zine making.

In other contributions to *Bed Zine,* the sick bed is made in relationship to windows – like 'Stuck in bed' by Dwayne McBoone, where a figure looks sorrowfully out, or Kelsey Drivinki's collaged contribution, where we look in at a figure in bed in a fish bowl. In *Bed Zine Issue One*, images from Hayley Cranberry's photo series 'Infused' brings medicine into the intimate space of the bed. The series 'depicts the artist at home receiving her bi-monthly medical infusion'.[54] Infusion suggests that the relationship between the private domestic space of the sick bed and medicine is more complicated than a simple binary of public/private, or even the intrusion of medicine into domestic spaces. Infused suggests a merging, blurring, or fusion. Mirroring 'Infused', in the photo series 'I'd Rather Be Here' by Rora Blue, the bed is brought into outdoor landscapes. 'I'd Rather Be Here' is 'a photo series depicting my bed in various outdoor landscapes', an intervention with visual echoes back to Mexican artist Frida Kahlo and Emin – both artists who moved their beds outside their homes.[55] There is something collage-like about this – through decontextualising the bed, taking it out of the bedroom and into the forest, for example, we look at it differently. Both contributions question the easy consignment of the sickbed to domestic privacy, and suggest the sickbed as a liminal space of both/and – both public and private, neither public nor private.

[53] Woodward, *Sick Days,* npn.
[54] King (ed), *Bed Zine Issue One*, npn.
[55] Ibid.

The Hospital Bed

In her account of the advent of the zine collection at Wellcome, Nic Cook describes how cataloguing other parts of the archive – particularly hospital magazines - prompted an interest in DIY publications, and eventually zines.[56] Hospital magazines, including the Glasgow Royal Hospital Magazines and magazines from the Crichton Royal Hospital, were variously produced by patients and staff with writing, news, announcements and recipes.[57] These offer a further genealogy for zines, alongside the products of domestic sickbeds, that disrupt the delineation between hospital and home, public and private, unsettle assumptions about where accounts of lived experience can be produced from, and connect to the political work of zines.

Shadow Song is a comics perzine I created in 2018. Alongside the lyrics of a song by indie American band The Mountain Goats, a wordless narrative sees a figure returning to bed after a walk, and then resuming a walk in a different landscape. The back page reads:

> This comic was inspired by a Mountain Goats song and a walk that took me past the closed Forth Park Hospital in Kirkcaldy. It's about loss, ownership and the spaces of our dreamscape. On my last admission a psychiatrist told me: 'Hospital is not a place to live' But you do live there. Sometimes for months or years. And then when they wipe your name from the whiteboard on the door of your room, you can't go back. It was never your room.[58]

Zine makers do not only make zines from their sick beds at home. The following examples – *Sonogram hospital diaries 2017* and *Sectioned: Locked Up in Lockdown* – trouble the idea of zines as gestures backwards. They challenge the idea that we can't

[56] Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, June 30 2023).
[57] London, Wellcome Collection, Hospital Magazines and Patient Writings, DGH1/7/1; London, Wellcome Collection, Glasgow Royal Hospital Magazines, HB13/2/235.
[58] Lea Cooper, *Shadow Song* (Self-published, 2018), npn.

create from the middle of experience, that chaos needs to be 'reflected on retrospectively'.[59] These zines use technologies of zine making to create from hospital beds, and in doing so reconfigure hospitals as sites of cultural production as opposed to places of absence or non-sense.

The interior pages of *Sonogram hospital diaries 2017* are thin paper sheets, some yellow, some peach. The cover is the same thickness of white paper, which is almost translucent. Grant Ionatán (aka htmlflowers), the zine's creator, describes on the interior page how the zine was '[b]egun during a 5 week hospital stay in 2016 that was so difficult i became certified to do my own injections so i could care for myself at home. Finished during a 5 week Hospital In The Home stretch in 2017, where i received minimal support from my medical team'.[60] The zine reproduces medical records, prescriptions, line illustrations, letters, photos, and screenshots of text written on a notes app on a phone. The first page after the inside cover is a screenshot of posting a photo to Instagram: the square photo of a healing wound sits above options to filter the image. The two options are 'Filter' and 'Edit'. This image reads as a visual metaphor for producing from liminal experience.

The zine makes use of the means of production available from a hospital bed. I immediately recognise Ionatán's practice of writing notes on his phone and screenshotting them for inclusion in the zine, in my own zine making. Phone notes as a means of production in the midst of medical settings recurs amongst both the zines I'm reading and in other accounts of sickness. In zine/artist publication *Precious Beauty*

[59] Arthur Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics*, 2nd edn (Chicago University Press, 2013), p. 98.
[60] Grant Ionatán (htmlflowers), *Sonogram hospital diaries 2017* (Self-published, 2017).

Therapy Emma Louise Rixhorn combines photographs of their time in hospital undergoing proton beam therapy with daily notes from their phone, meanwhile author Alice Hattrick describes the notes they write on their phone as 'a record for [their] future self'.[61] Recording in fragments, episodically, emerges as an alternative to narrative and phone notes offer a technology with which to record these fragments. Writing in the moment invites what Sara Wasson characterises in her proposal for episodic reading as 'the present moment as an emergent site'.[62] Wasson describes reading, in an account of chronic pain, an 'acute self-awareness of one's present performativity in the clinical encounter' – Hattrick describes how they don't use their notes for their future self 'like my lists of acceptable ways to describe my symptoms in medical contexts'.[63] Reading these phone notes for narrative is to be frustrated, reading episodically offers 'the affective complexity of moments of illness experience before narrative can emerge'.[64]

Sectioned: Locked Up in Lockdown is not in Wellcome collection.[65] It came through my letterbox via a tweet asking if anyone had any zines made in hospital. The majority of *Sectioned* was made by Nell in June/July 2020 'using only materials [she] could find on the ward'.[66] In their introduction, Nell, who was an active member of Mad Covid and one of the creators behind *Dear GP* zine, describes how, 'having spent time in hospital during non-Covid times, I felt like I wanted to document the experience'.[67] Zine making from hospital is an act of political and personal resistance. To be an NHS hospital

[61] Emma Louise Rixhorn, *Precious Beauty Therapy* (Self-published, 2023); Alice Hattrick, *Ill Feelings* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 74.
[62] Wasson, 'Before Narrative', p. 109.
[63] Ibid; Hattrick, *Ill Feelings,* p. 74.
[64] Wasson, 'Before Narrative', p. 110.
[65] Nell, *Sectioned: Locked up in Lockdown* (Self-published, 2020).
[66] Ibid., npn.
[67] Ibid.

patient is (sometimes) to be reduced to a bed. Producing zines from a hospital ward is a political act. It challenges, for example, the ways NHS trusts police and restrict the social media usage of psychiatric patients, whilst at the same time posting their own narratives to social media, and the invisibility of (psychiatric) hospital patients, particularly during COVID-19. [68]

In an Instagram post from Brighton Zine Network, Nell shares the DIY lightbox set up they created for zine making – making visible her resourcefulness and the ways that zines can be made from hospital because technologies of making them, and the DIY values underpinning them, are particularly suited to producing work from the midst of an admission.[69] It is a queer use of the hospital table to document the experiences of hospitalization in the moment, a misuse of a space you are not supposed to live in. Ahmed defines queer use as 'how things can be used in ways other than for which they were intended or by those other than for whom they were intended'.[70] An example of how zine practices can invoke queer use is the out of hours use of work photocopiers to reproduce zines. This is a queer use of the photocopier in that it is a use of the photocopier for a purpose other than which the photocopier is intended, and during a time when the photocopier is not meant to be in use (out of hours, after closing time, or during lunch breaks). But zine makers queer use of photocopiers goes beyond illicit and

[68] 'Psychiatric wards and social media', Sectioned, 18 January 2013 <https://sectioneduk.wordpress.com/2013/01/18/social-media/> [accessed 11 April 2024]; Hat Porter, Nell H and Zahra Motala, 'Stop Taking Our Picture: a statement on the practice of mental health providers publishing photos of patients on social media', NSUN, 13 December 2023 <https://www.nsun.org.uk/news/stop-taking-our-picture-a-statement-on-the-practice-of-mental-health-providers-publishing-photos-of-patients-on-social-media/> [accessed 11 April 2024]

[69]brightonzinenetwork, 'Don't forget, the 24 hour zine challenge is THIS weekend!', Instagam photo, 9 July 2020 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCb3yDEju_o/?igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D> [accessed 11 April 2024].

[70] Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Duke University Press, 2019), p. 198.

after-hours use of office equipment. As Ahmed suggests, 'to queer use can be to linger on the material qualities of that which you are supposed to pass over'.[71] When Poletti explores how the photocopier is not used to reproduce exact copies of an original, but instead to express ambivalence in writing life narratives, they explore a queer use of the photocopier. Eichhorn describes how photocopiers have been used in zines to trouble notions of authenticity. In zines the qualities of photocopies, which you are supposed to minimize in order to get as close to an exact copy as possible, are lingered on, explored, amplified, and exploited, to the extent that the material qualities of photocopies are an immediately recognizable part of contemporary zine aesthetics (even when the zines themselves aren't photocopied). Nell's *Sectioned* extends queer use to sites of zine making, which she captures both in the Instagram post, and in the zine itself: the back cover is a black and white photo of a fabric with the words 'hospital use only' repeated in a pattern.

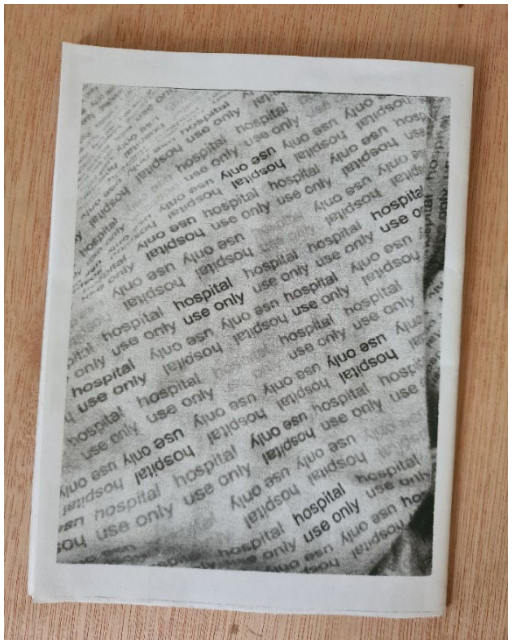

FIG. 25. Nell, *Sectioned* (2020), A6 zine, back cover of zine.

[71] Ibid., p. 201.

It would be remiss not to connect this discussion of zines as variously acts of resistance within the carceral structures of the psychiatric hospital, and this chapter's exploration of alternative genealogies of zines (products of sickbeds, hospital magazines), with prison zines. Wellcome's prison zines amount to several issues of long running prison zine *Tenacious,* several issues of *Sick of it!,* a Disability Inside/Outside project connecting disabled communities in an out of prison, and Tim Spock's *Imprisoned with COVID-19*, which has similar concerns to Nell's *Sectioned*. Reading through Wellcome's set of Tenacious zines, I encounter a prison bed: 'I'm writing this story to you laying on my prison bed (mattress $8.50 each, three inches high. They flatten out to about 1.5 inches). I'm relaxed with two pillows behind me…and a pillow wedge. I have two mattresses because I'm a golden girl (over age 55).'[72] Zines made from and in prisons disrupt the idealised metaphor of the rhizomatic network, as its walls and boundaries significantly affect the flow of information in and out, and may require different collecting strategies than Wellcome's librarians currently employ. Though this chapter makes no attempt at an account of zine making practices in prisons, this has been the focus of other research and, I would argue, is a crucial area in the future of zine studies.[73]

Bed Bound

The term "wheelchair bound" has fallen (or been pushed) out of use because of the significant difference between the description of being bound to a wheelchair, and the

[72] *Tenacious: art & writings by women in prison. Issue 31, Spring 2014* (Black Star Publishing, 2014), npn.
[73] Olivia Wright, 'Literary Vandals: American Women's Prison Zines as Collective Autobiography', *Women's Studies* 48.2 (2019), pp. 104-128; Austin Wonder, 'Abolition is Not Abstract: Zines and the Transmission of Revolutionary Cultural Capital' (MA Thesis, Loyola University Chicago, 2022) <https://www.proquest.com/openview/46c605edb35b4ce3047012089c7c665d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y> [accessed 01 April 2024].

experience of using one as a mobility aid. [74] "Bed bound" doesn't seem to have had the same critical eye on it, perhaps because we don't see beds as being enabling, being "used" in the same way as a wheelchair. Nonetheless, beds are constituted in the zines of this chapter as enabling access, a way of creating connections (both real and imagined), and as a tool for political and cultural participation.

As I have moved through this research, I have found myself returning again and again to the phrase 'bed bound', which is also the title of this chapter. One reason is the feeling or sensation of constriction, of being tied to bed, expressed in these zines and explored in this chapter, one half of the contradiction. Another is the implication of being tied to bed, and crip kink and sexuality. Though I don't discuss this explicitly in this chapter, this further reading of bed zines invites further research and I also invite zine making around this theme through the prompt zine *Bed Bound,* part of *Holding Title*. An additional reason I keep coming back to this concept of being 'bed bound' is the idea of being bound towards bed, where bed is an orientation. I have discussed horizontality as an orientation, the perspective and position of lying down. Closing the chapter, I want to consider what it is to be upright but orientated towards bed. When I leave bed, travel down to Wellcome Collection, read zines in the Rare Materials Room, when I spend time working at my desk or in my studio, I am always aware of the return to bed. I am heading there. That is the nature of being 'sick' for me. What does an orientation towards bed mean in this respect, and what would this orientation mean to those who have never, or not yet, been sick.

[74] 'Inclusive Language: words to use and avoid when writing about disability', GOV.UK, 15 March 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability> [accessed 11 April 2024].

In my introduction, I discussed Shoemaker's observed contradiction that to make work about bed, we first have to leave it. Shoemaker considers how these works gesture back, toward the bed we have left. I have discussed what it means for zines to be made in bed, as gestures from bed. I want to end by asking what it would mean to approach zines as gestures forward, toward bed. What does it mean to consider bed as a place we are moving towards? It is this orientation that leads to the next chapter, which examines how zines 'doula' disability.

Chapter Four: Zines as Crip Doulaing

"[T]he transition itself, of becoming disabled or moving along the ability spectrum, is frequently invisibilised, to the point that these changes do not even have a name"

– Stacey Milbern Park[1]

What Does a Doula Do?

This chapter offers a close reading of several zines that, in different ways, birth disability. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha records a conversation with queer Korean-American disability activist Stacey Park Milbern in which they explore 'crip doulaing' as 'naming disability as a space we can be born into, supported and welcomed by other disabled people' so that we are not 'left alone to figure out how to be . . . in this ableist world'.[2] Milbern's crip doula draws from a history of non-medical, community birthing, care at home, and knowledge transmitted outside of formal institutions.[3] Zines as doulaing is particularly appealing in a context like Wellcome Collection which has historically privileged the records, objects and ephemera of medicine. There is something significant about doulaing as a non-medical birthing of disability (or madness, or transness) in a context where the multiple transitions, rites of passages and life stages of disability are invisible in medical discourses, where disability can only be birthed by medicine. Milbern describes how the role of crip doula,

[1] Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018), p. 240.
[2] Ibid., p. 241; Ibid., p. 240.
[3] 'The Historical Significance of Doulas and Midwives', National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/historical-significance-doulas-and-midwives> [accessed 25 March 2024].

like Piepzna-Samarasinha's 'care work' (the work disabled and sick people do to support each other and which frames this discussion within her wider book), disproportionately falls to disabled people of colour, and their experiences of QTBIPOC (Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) community is central to their discussion.

As they reflect on crip doulaing in their conversation, both Piepzna-Samarasinha and Milbern consider how histories of organising, of care work, are often lost or forgotten because of white supremacy in disability history.[4] Yet, Milbern also describes zines as one material trace of the work of crip doulaship: 'we do this work of seeking ourselves out across time and planes, scribbling letters to each other in zines…'.[5] The zines in this chapter are traces that create genealogies and record practices of crip doulaship.

Crip doulaing addresses the 'life stages and rites of passage of becoming disabled', and involves a paradigmatic shift, to view 'coming into disability identity as a birth, not a death'.[6] It also involves a shift from traditional accounts of liminality; to be disabled or to be crip is an immanent process of becoming, and not a transition into a stable social state so much as something that is continually being (re)constituted. This chapter explores zines which doula these life stages and rites of passage of becoming disabled, considering what they might offer to understandings of liminality, and how crip zine makers might guide others through liminal experiences outside of the clearly defined role of 'ritual elder'. In doing so, it offers a new account of what zines *do* in relationship to liminality.

[4] Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work,* p. 242.
[5] Ibid., p. 243.
[6] Ibid., p. 241.

FIG. 26. What Would a HIV Doula Do?, *What does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* (2020), Digital zine.

What does a COVID-19 Doula Do? is not in Wellcome Collection; it is a digital zine, 'made to be distributed online' rather than printed off, and so outside of their current remit.[7] It was created by the WHAT WOULD AN HIV DOULA DO? (WWHIVDD) community, a collective formed 'in response to the ongoing AIDS crisis'.[8] Through thinking of HIV as a series of transitions, and the work of a doula as holding space through times of transition, the collective's work includes workshops, exhibitions, artworks, programmes of events, resources, and zines like this one – often framed around questions like what does a COVID-19 doula do? or what would an HIV-Informed Cultural Worker Do?

Although every page of the PDF of *What does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* has the same proportions of a horizontal A4 sheet (the same shape as an open spread of a typical A5

[7] WHAT WOULD AN HIV DOULA DO (WWHIVDD), *What does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* (Self-Published, 2020), p. 10.
[8] 'HIV DOULA WORK', n.d. <https://hivdoula.work/> [accessed 26 March 2024].

zine) and much of the text and contributions are formatted as if onto facing pages, the actual pages are numbered so each whole spread is one page. There's no pretence or performance of turning a page, which often accompanies digital zines on platforms such as Issuu or Heyzine, which I use for my digital zines. It feels more like scrolling a slide deck. The zine's background is a bright orange, brighter than possible if this was printed on anything other than the glossiest magazine paper, with headings in yellow, page numbers in purple and text in white, alongside reproduced photos, film stills and digital ephemera like screenshots of notes apps and Instagram stories.

In their conversation, Milbern and Piepzna-Samarasinha offer some ideas of what crip doulaing might mean: Milbern describes 'Crip mentorship/coaching/modelling at its best is "disability doulaship"'.[9] In this chapter, I turn explicitly to the WWHIVDD's zine, *What does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* to flesh out a broader framework for my consideration of what crip doulaing is and does, and how zines are and do these things.[10] In line with WWHIVDD's understanding of doulaing as something we do with ourselves, each other, institutions and culture, I consider doulaing as knowledge sharing, as forming crip identities and crip activist identities, as holding space for grief and bad feelings, and as time travel enfolding past/present/future. WWHIVDD use their work on HIV doulaing to inform other questions about holding spaces of transition – similarly in this chapter, I ask what other spaces zines might enable us to be born into, connecting crip doulaing with the birth of Mad and trans identities.

[9] Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work,* p. 240.
[10] WWHIVDD, *What does a COVID-19 doula do?*.

In this chapter, I engage in a close reading of zines that enact crip doulaing. The 'close' of close reading feels important in the context of reading zines that touch on, amongst other things, the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing. Indeed, closeness and proximity, with all their complications and tensions, reoccur in the contributions to *What Would a Covid-19 Doula Do?*. In capital letters, repeated throughout the zine, is the refrain: 'LET'S NOT BE AFRAID OF EACH OTHER'. [11] In April 2020, when it was still unclear how COVID-19 was transmitted, the intimacy of physical zines, the sensation of touch or 'embodied communities' they created, suddenly felt risky.[12] These zines feel 'close' in other senses too: every member of my household had COVID-19 at least once as I was writing this chapter; and zines have offered me personal resources to come into crip identity, and to grieve. Once again, an articulation of my positionality centres on proximity.

Doulaing as Knowledge Sharing

Zines are a form of community knowledge sharing.[13] In *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* Salonee Bhaman describes:

> We have insurgent and hard-won knowledge about how to make a legume last for a long time, how to take care, nourish, and to protect your body when your work is touching others, the work of the COVID-19 doula is to share this information, to connect these communities, and think about who falls through first when society cracks under outsize pressure.[14]

[11] WWHIVDD, *What does a COVID-19 doula do?*.
[12]Alison Piepmeier, 'Why Zines Matter: Materiality and the Creation of Embodied Community', *American Periodicals,* 18.2 (2008), pp. 213-238 (p. 214), doi:10.1353/amp.0.0004.
[13] Examples include: David Hemphill and Shari Leskowitz, 'DIY Activists: Communities of Practice, Cultural Dialogism and Radical Knowledge Sharing', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63.1 (2012), pp .57-77, doi:10.1177/0741713612442803; Kimberly Creasap, 'Zine-Making as Feminist Pedagogy', *Feminist Teacher,* 24.3 (2014), pp. 155-168, doi:10.5406/femteacher.24.3.0155.
[14] WWHIVDD, *What does a COVID-19 doula do?,* p. 54.

The recording and sharing of this kind of practical knowledge is key to the role of a crip doula. In particular, zines on welfare and disability benefits subvert existing genres of material designed around benefits and disabled people. As well as being practical resources, the knowledge that these zines share also make claims to the value of disabled lives and reject rhetoric of disability 'scroungers'.

Your Life is Not Over: A Book of Apocalypses and How to Survive Them is a A5 digitally printed zine which I bought from Edinburgh Zine Festival in February 2022 (where Wellcome zine librarian Nicola Cook also acquired a copy for the collection).[15] It was created in Canva Pro – an online platform with free or paid subscription options, which many zine makers (myself included) use to compile zines, since it is substantially cheaper and more user friendly than Adobe. The zine blends poetry with bullet pointed advice in sections including 'Rest', 'Doctors', and 'The Disability Community'. Creator Fiona Robertson describes her own experience of being doulaed:

> When I finally encountered disability activists who taught me about disability politics, I was close to the end of my life. I thought not getting better was my fault, and had internalised the stories about disability which doesn't improve – that you died. They showed me another path. A story I'd never heard before.[16]

Robertson goes on to describe how this is what she hopes this zine will also do. Though the zine 'has been in my head for a long time' she created it for 'the huge number of newly disabled people living with long covid who will be going through experiences similar to mine'.[17]

[15] Fiona Robertson, *Your Life is Not Over: A Book of Apocalypses and How to Survive Them* (Self-published, 2022).
[16] Ibid., p. 1.
[17] Ibid., p. 2.

Zines that share information about welfare and disability benefits sit in Wellcome Collection alongside more official material. Before one of my visits to Wellcome, I searched the online library catalogue for "benefits", "welfare benefits", "PIP", "DWP" and "Department for Work and Pensions". The results were predominantly leaflets and pamphlets created by a number of different organisations – government offices such as the Benefits Agency and the Central Office of Information, third-sector organisations such as Camden Welfare Rights Unit, companies like Boots and global organisations like the World Health Organisation (WHO). I requested a box labelled 'Disability Benefits Ephemera Box 1' hoping it would be productive to bring them into physical proximity with the zines I'd also requested.

The majority of leaflets in this box related to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and were produced by welfare rights organisations shortly after DLA was introduced in 1992. Though the informational tone of these leaflets remains fairly neutral, the front cover of a paper flyer, folded from a single sheet of bright yellow A4 paper and produced by the Lewisham Welfare Rights organisation shows a person walking with a tall stack of paperwork balanced in front of them, announcing: 'Here's my completed DLA form – All 28 pages of it!'. DLA began to be phased out in 2013, and was replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIP) as part of a wider UK government project of austerity.[18] Much of the rhetoric around this project connects to benefits 'cheats'. This is not a new concept, or one unique to the UK: Ronald Reagan's 'Welfare Queen', a title distributed along racialised lines, 'became shorthand for … the power of political messaging in

[18] Department for Work and Pensions, 'Consultation outcome: Disability Living Allowance reform', GOV.UK, 6 December 2010 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/disability-living-allowance-reform> [accessed 16 April 2024]

embedding and exploiting images of the undeserving poor to polarise and dismantle the welfare state'.[19] The UK government's messaging around 'benefit scroungers' has been linked to growing hate crimes and negative attitudes to disability.[20] Journalist and founder of the Disability Hate Crime Network Katherine Quarmby links this scrounger rhetoric to the paradigm that Piepzna-Samarasinha describes of disability as death:

> From the moment they are born, as the psychotherapist Valeria Sinason has said, eloquently, they are told that their lives are not worth living…They are told they should not have benefits wasted on them. That they should go into a home, or if they can't work have their benefits cut. If they can work they should also have their benefits cut, as they clearly don't require extra support.[21]

In doulaing disability, zines, such as *This is Not the End of the World,* instead share knowledge about benefits because of a rejection of this paradigm and an assertion of a fundamental right to state-provided support.

In a section of *This is Not the End of the World* entitled 'Faking Wellness', Robertson pays particular attention to the UK benefits system. Robertson addresses accusations of faking disability, countering 'When it comes to faking things, disabled people are much more commonly faking being well'.[22] Specifically, she argues that 'The UK Social Security system in particular is set up with the core assumption that everyone applying is committing fraud until proven otherwise, which has shaped how disability is understood in the rest of society'.[23] She goes on to offer concrete advice for filling out

[19] Martin Baekgaard, Pamela Herd and Donald P. Moynihan, 'Of "Welfare Queens" and "Poor Carinas": Social Construction, Deservingness Messaging and the Mental Health of Welfare Clients', *British Journal of Political Science,* 53.2 (2022), doi:10.2139/ssrn.4318516.
[20] Katherine Quarmby, *Scapegoat: Why We Are Failing Disabled People* (Granta Books, 2011).
[21] Katherine Quarmby, 'Scapegoat: why we are still failing disabled people', Katherine Quarmby Blog, 23 March 2016 <https://katharinequarmby.com/2016/03/23/scapegoat-why-we-are-still-failing-disabled-people/> [accessed 26 March 2024]
[22] Robertson, *Your Life*, p. 17.
[23] Ibid.

forms that are 'meant to catch you out': 'Make a mental health plan before filling out the form'; 'See if there are any services nearby to help you fill them out'; 'Do not be proud filling them in'; and 'Your right to support is not, or should not, be dependent on whether you've 'paid in' to the system enough'.[24] This final 'is not, or should not,' captures both the existing rhetoric around disability benefits and a statement about how things should be. The ways zine like *This is Not the End of the World* address anxiety and fear around disability benefits find a parallel in zine researcher Kin-long Tong's descriptions of how Hong Kong's Protest zines 'counteract the fear and insecurity generated by state violence'.[25]

Within Wellcome's zine collection, *My First PIP Assessment* offers an affective account of the zine maker HiddenInkChild's first assessment for PIP – photos (stuck in with what looks like surgical tape) document the feel of the space they were assessed in, for example through a photo of the expansive floor of the waiting room or a warning sticker for asbestos in the building.[26] The 'hard-won' knowledges that they share are not just practical, but affective and felt. This is mirrored in how Robertson's practically written prose is blended with poetry. The knowledges that both *My First PIP Assessment* and *This is Not…* share are also explicitly grounded in their own experiences. Alongside other zines in Wellcome's Collection such as the *Queer Guide to Disability Benefits*, they offer information about benefits that is specific to a time and place, sympathetic to zines' geographically and temporally limited distributions.[27] They challenge

[24] Robertson, *Your Life*, p. 17.
[25] Kin-long Tong, 'Overcoming Fear: The Representation of State Violence in Hong Kong's Protest Zines during the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement', in *Violence in Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Philosophy,* ed. by Darren M. Slade (Inara Publishing, 2022), pp. 175-188 (p. 1).
[26] HiddenInkChild, *My First PIP Assessment* (Self-published, 2018).
[27] Q and Y, *Queer Guide to Disability Benefits* (Self-published, 2017).

constructions of disability as a burden, of disabled people as scroungers, of disability as a personal moral failing, and in doing so doula disabled identities that are grounded in the right to support.

Zines as Disability Justice: Doulaing as naming the space to be born into

Although disability cannot be abstracted from the experience of illness, injury and/or impairment, it also cannot be reduced to this. Becoming disabled is also about what it means to claim or be offered 'disabled' or 'crip' as an identity, and how these identities are constituted or negotiated. As Robertson describes in her 2024 zine *Who Counts as Disabled?*: 'the disability justice movement uses self-declaration as the fundamental determinant of 'who is disabled?''.[28] This chapter is titled 'Zines as Crip Doulaing' (rather than zines as disability doulaing) because 'Crip' is the term Milbern uses, a reclamation of a slur which connects this particular set of becomings to disability justice, activism and to a wider critical reclaiming of the term in academic theory and praxis, notably in 'crip studies'. As Piepzna-Samarasinha describes: 'Crip doulaing is both an interpersonal dynamic and one that creates a new disability justice space'.[29] So this section explores how zine makers negotiate disability as identity, how they form crip identities and crip activist identities, and in what ways zine makers themselves understand their zines as disability justice or crip activist work.

Zines and identity construction has been explored by zine scholars, and the work of Jennifer Sinor, Anna Poletti, Red Chidgey and Inge Stockburger all contribute to an autobiographical studies that expands beyond conventionally published autobiography

[28] Fiona Robertson, *Who Counts as Disabled?* (Self-published, 2024), back cover.
[29] Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work,* p. 241.

to include more quotidian forms of life writing. [30] In their examination of feminist zines, Stockburger asks: 'how exactly do narratives provide opportunities for self-making? What are the mechanics and processes through which speakers create and project identities through narratives?' [31] I am interested, in the zines of this section, in exploring processes of self-identifying as disabled beyond narrative, in how zines engage in self-construction, and how they offer identities to others.

The Ring of Fire Anthology reproduces abridged versions of Issue 2 (1997) and 3 (1999) of Ring of Fire, a series of zines created by E. T. Russian (aka Hellery Homosex) from 1996 onwards as a teenager and young adult as they healed from a traumatic accident and 'embraced a cultural identity of disability'. [32] The anthology also offers new material written before the book's publication in 2014, which Russian had originally intended to use in a new issue of the zine before the anthology was proposed by not-for-profit publishing co-op Left Bank Books. *The Ring of Fire Anthology* is more accessible than most of the zines in Wellcome Collection – it sits on the open shelves of the library, rather than viewable only by request in the Rare Materials Room. In *The Ring of Fire Anthology* we are offered both the zine as record of Russian's transition into disability, and their later reflections on disability justice.

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[30] Jennifer Sinor, 'Another Form of Crying: Girl Zines as Life Writing', *Prose Studies,* 26.1-2 (2003), pp. 240-264, doi:10.1080/0144035032000235909; Inge Stockburger, 'Embedded Stories and the life story: Retellings in a memoir and perzine', *Narrative Inquiry,* 18.2 (2008), pp. 326-348, doi:10.1075/ni.18.2.08sto ; Red Chidgey, 'The resisting subject: Per-zines as life story data', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History,* 10 (2006), pp. 1-13; Anna Poletti, 'Self-publishing in the global and local: Situating life writing in zines', *Biography,* 28.1 (2005), pp. 183-192, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23541120> [accessed 16 April 2024].

[31] Inge Stockburger, 'Making zines, making selves: Identity Construction in DIY autobiography' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Georgetown University, 2011) <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/553163/stockburgerIngrid.pdf?sequence=1> [accessed 26 March 2023], p. 32.

[32] E. T. Russian, *The Ring of Fire Anthology* (Left Bank Books, 2014); Ibid.*,* back cover.

In exploring their relationship to other crip folks, and specifically other amputees, Russian blurs real and imagined interactions. In the previous chapter I discussed how the bed becomes a site of connection between crip makers – a genealogy of zines that positions them as the descendants of writing and cultural productions from beds and bedrooms. Again, in *Ring of Fire,* we find ourselves with Frida Kahlo. In the reproduction of Ring of Fire Issue 2 a single page presents a black and white line illustration of a naked Russian embracing a naked Kahlo.[33] The stumps of Russian's lower legs are sutured with string, loose threads on either end tendril out. Kahlo's right lower leg is similarly sutured – she had it amputated in 1953. Part of the page is cut away – visible in the faint line created when it was reproduced. What did Russian remove from the page (if anything)? Small handwritten text at the top of the page reads 'we were eighteen years old' – a reference to the age at which both Russian and Kahlo experienced their accidents. 'Frida. my sister. my soulmate. my inspiration. my lover. my mirror' is written in the top right corner of the page, and then, in more cursive writing beneath the drawing, 'let your hair down for me.' This request, given the relation of the two figures in the drawing where Russian has their arms wrapped around Kahlo, feels like a reference to Rapunzel; in the fairy tale it is the long hair of its eponymous imprisoned princess that allows both her captor, and eventually her lover (a handsome prince), to gain access to the tower in which she is held. Russian is asking for access, a route in, hair to climb.

In Ring of Fire Issue 3 Russian devotes four pages of handwritten text to their relationship to Kahlo.[34] Russian recreates two of Kahlo's paintings, the piece 'Self Portrait as a Tehuana' and the ex-voto 'to the Virgin of Sorrows for Frida Kahlo' depicting

[33] Russian, *Ring of Fire,* p. 21.
[34] Ibid., pp. 116-119.

Kahlo's traumatic and disabling accident, both in thick black pen. Russian considers their connection to Kahlo's work before their accident; they describe how they would be 'deeply affected by the emotion she put into her painting'.[35] But 'I'd never quite known how she felt until I got ran over'.[36] Though Russian refers to their lives as 'paralleling', the effect of their writing feels more like their stories are entangled: 'On September 14, 1996, I was run over by a train at the age of 18. On September 17, 1925 Frida was riding a bus that collided with a trolley. My legs were amputated. Her spine, pelvis, collarbone, ribs, and right leg and foot were all broken plus her left shoulder dislocated.'[37] This extends the meaning of Russian's all-caps realisation 'SHE WAS DISABLED' to both Kahlo's and their own identity.[38]

Russian complicates the timeline of this story in a way that could be read as a description of how Kahlo's art functioned for them as a liminal affective technology: 'In a way I feel like Frida's art helped me prepare for my train accident. The timing of the SF MOMA show returned her to the forefront of my mind right before I got run over'.[39] Liminal affective technologies are 'a cultural resource, tool, medium or technology that affords liminal experiences of a particular "self-created" kind…in order to facilitate, accompany, or engender relevant social transitions and associated personal transformations'.[40] Social psychologists Paul Stenner and Tania Zittoun distinguish between 'devised liminal experiences' and spontaneous liminal experiences, between

[35] Russian, *Ring of Fire,* p. 117.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Russian, *Ring of Fire,* p. 118.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Russian, *Ring of Fire,* p. 119.
[40] Paul Stenner and Monica Greco. 'On the Magic Mountain: The novel as liminal affective technology.' *International Political Anthropology,* 11.1 (2018), pp. 43-60 (p. 4), <https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/23561/3/On%20The%20Magic%20Mountain.pdf> [accessed 07 April 2024].

art and life. Where spontaneous liminal experiences happen to us and involve 'world rupture and subsequent transformation', devised liminal experiences are what 'we do to ourselves in a rarefied virtual space/time abstracted from daily practical reality': liminality in art or in song, a 'transition that is enacted virtually and mediated by a symbolic resource'.[41] They approach the connections between the two – the ways that 'art and life reciprocally interpenetrate one another' through liminal affective technologies – creating a lineage between ritual (the first liminal affective technology) and theatre or performance, literature, and films (amongst forms of cultural production) in which liminal experiences are created or summoned in order to 'facilitate, accompany, or engender relevant social transitions and associated personal transformations'.[42]

Bringing in Matuschka, an American-Ukrainian photographer, artist and activist, Russian writes: 'why I was so obsessed with radical mastectomy imagery + Frida's paintings I could not figure out, but now, after the accident, I wonder if they were preparing me for the loss of my legs'.[43] The work of these artists helped prepare Russian for their transition, to becoming disabled. But this is not a uni-directional relationship. When Russian names Kahlo as disabled they explain that 'no one had ever actually described her that way before, but that's exactly what she was'.[44] Disability births disability. Russian's reflections also suggest a wider audience to their zines than other disabled or crip people; their work may become, that is, a future resource for currently enabled,

[41] Paul Stenner & Tania Zittoun, 'On taking a leap of faith: Art, imagination, and liminal experiences', *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 40.4 (2020), pp. 240–263, doi:10.1037/teo0000148; Stenner and Zittoun, 'On taking a leap of faith', pp. 5-6; Stenner and Zittoun, 'On taking a leap of faith', p. 5.
[42] Stenner and Zittoun, 'On taking a leap of faith', p. 6; Stenner and Greco, 'On the Magic Mountain', p. 4.
[43] Russian, *Ring of Fire*, p. 119.
[44] Ibid., p. 118.

pre-disabled or temporarily able-bodied people, mirroring Russian's own encounters with Kahlo and Matuschka.

FIG. 27. Rachel Rowan-Olive, page from *Believing* (2021), digitally printed A5 zine, npn.

In her zine *Who Counts as Disabled?* Robertson describes self-identifying as disabled as fundamental to disability justice.[45] But this self-identification does not happen in a vacuum. *Believing,* a zine from Mad zine maker and artist Rachel Rowan-Olive is not currently in Wellcome Collection.[46] It is digitally printed, in colour, each page recreating a page of watercolour painting, textured with fine liner and handwritten text. In it, Rowan-Olive explores 'believing' as central to Mad community: 'This is friendship among the mad/we believe each other'.[47]

[45] Fiona Robertson, *Who Counts as Disabled?* (Self-published, 2024).
[46] Rachel Rowan-Olive, *Believing* (Self-published, 2021).
[47] Rowan-Olive, *Believing,* npn.

The zine opens with a quote from the poem 'Panopticon' by Ailbhe Darcy, which is written in the aftermath of the loss of Matthew, someone she loved, to 'Madness': 'Your friends expect to weigh forever/ what we could have given/ against what we could not change'.[48] Rowan-Olive describes creating this zine after writing a piece about bereavement by suicide and the grief of service user/survivor communities. Whilst the opening quote keeps the zine grounded in this context, it offers a complicated exploration of being in Mad community more broadly: 'how we love each other in a system that hurts us; how we try to move forward with our lives knowing that there might never be justice; how caring for each other does not mean it's ok that the mental health system fails us so badly'.[49] This final clause echoes Robertson's assertion in *This Is Not the End of the World…,*when discussing disability benefits, that things should be different.

The watercolours in *Believing* create strange landscapes, the pen lines feeling like lines that mark maps or that track the flow of water, and sometimes like stiches on a quilt. The colour palette subtly shifts across the pages: a bloody red on the page that reads 'We believe each other so hard we wear mouthguards to stop our teeth grinding in the night'; a bright yellow bursting through behind the text 'So I believe you I believe you I believe you'; the final four pages shifting from blues to green.

Belief and self-identification is a site where trans, Mad and crip identities meet and intersect with wider political forces. In my own zine *You Don't Need a Psychiatrist to Tell You You're Autistic,* I connect self-identifying as autistic with psychiatric abolition. It

[48] Ailbhe Darcy, 'Panopticon'*, The Courtland Review,* 37 (2007), <https://www.cortlandreview.org/issue/37/darcy.html> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[49] Rowan-Olive, *Believing,* npn.

feels impossible to talk about self-identification (particularly given Robertson's zine *Who Counts as Disabled?* reproduces a resource created by the SNP Disabled Members Group) without thinking of the fears around self-id for transgender people, which flared up during the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) reforms that began in Scotland in 2022 and were blocked by the UK government in January 2023.

Rowan-Olive ends by distinguishing what believing is not: 'But I need everyone to know that this is not forgiveness/ That there were people we couldn't believe back to living / That I'm tired'.[50] In the following section, I discuss doulaing as holding space for this tiredness and grief.

Doulaing as holding space for grief and bad feelings

Crip doulaing, as I have discussed, understands 'coming into disability identity as a birth, not a death', whereas ableist culture sees disability as death or a movement towards death.[51] However, this paradigmatic shift does not preclude loss, death or grief as part of the ongoing becomings of disability. A proximity to death, grief and rituals of mourning are all important aspects of what it is to be disabled. Milbern, so central to the ideas of this chapter, died on 19th May 2020 due to complications from a kidney surgery delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.[52] The work of a crip doula entails holding space for a multiplicity of grief. There is the grief of being in community with those who die and who are killed. There is the grief of (in)access, of losses of spaces and practices, of

[50] Rowan Olive, *Believing,* npn.
[51] Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work,* p. 241.
[52] 'Loving Stacey Park Milbern: A Remembrance', Disability Visibility Project, 19 May 2020 < https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2020/05/19/loving-stacey-milbern-a-rememberance/> [accessed 11 April 2024].

'realising we're not valued to the point of being disposable'. [53] There is also the complex grief that accompanies a shift in impairment or ability, superficially at odds with this chapter's central paradigm of disability as birth, rather than death.

In *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad* Hil Malatino cites Andrea Long Chu's New York Times opinion piece 'My New Vagina Won't Make Me Happy' on gender dysphoria: 'It feels like getting on an airplane to fly home, only to realize mid-flight that this is it: You're going to spend the rest of your life on an airplane. It feels like grieving. It feels like having nothing to grieve'.[54] The image of life mid-flight is particularly evocative of an enduring liminality. Though Chu is explicitly talking about gender transition, the significance of acknowledging 'the durability of negative affect in trans lives, before and beyond transition' is mirrored with respect to disabled lives. As Malatino examines, 'the genres of trans living are whittled down to just a few: hero worship, demonology, victimology.'[55] Disabled and crip folks face a similarly restricted discursive field. Malatino's book is an affirmative answer to the questions 'Is there a trans specificity to certain ways of feeling bad? Are there certain kinds of negative affect that tend to attend trans experience?'[56] Because they are written to and between crip and disabled people, zines allow an articulation of crip grief outside the restricted discursive field of mainstream media, and suggest crip ways of 'feeling bad'.

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[53] Sandra Alland and Etzali Hernández, *Sore Loser: A chronic pain and illness zine on queer disabled grief,* (Self-published, 2021), npn.
[54]Andrea Long Chu, 'My New Vagina Won't Make Me Happy', New York Times*,* 24 November 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/24/opinion/sunday/vaginoplasty-transgender-medicine.html> [accessed 11 April 2024] in Hil Malatino, *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad,* (University of Minnesota Press, 2022), p. 3.
[55] Malatino, *Side Affects,* p. 1.
[56] Ibid*.,* p. 3.

Sore Loser: a chronic pain and illness zine on queer disabled grief is the final part of artists' Sandra Alland and Etzali Hernández's Covid Commission 2021, published on the winter solstice.[57] The zine is in Wellcome Collection, and available online in several forms: a scanned version of the physically assembled copy, an audio version of the creators describing the zine and reading their work, and a downloadable PDF version with alt-text. The online zine also links to a full version of the Zoom transcript. *Sore Loser* uses technologies of zine making, in parallel to those zines made from hospital in the previous chapter, to have and record a conversation about qrip (queer crip) grief. Poetry is composed via Signal messages, quotes are collaged with images of laundry, plants, covid tests and redirected mail, and a Zoom conversation between Alland and Hernández is partially transcribed within the zine.[58]

Sore Loser asks: 'How do we envision an ideal qrip funeral? How do we ensure we're memorialised in the ways we want?'[59] Alland and Hernández discuss the practicalities of 'death rites and memorialisation of disabled, neurodivergent, Mad, ill or Deaf people'.[60] Their approach links back to the discussion of crip doulaing as involving knowledge sharing, offering a practical approach to death and funeral planning. Alland's sharing of resources about funeral planning for LGBTQIA+ people invites a parallel consideration about the death rites of disabled, neurodivergent, Mad, ill or Deaf people.[61] The first thing they address is resisting how 'someone's life is framed as

[57] Alland & Hernández, *Sore Loser.*
[58] The full transcript is available online.
[59] Alland & Hernández, *Sore Loser,* Back Cover.
[60] Alland & Hernández, *Sore Loser,* npn.
[61] Ibid.

tragedy and suffering "that has now finally ended"'[62] – animating the paradigmatic shift upon which crip doulaing is founded.

CRUMPLE ZINE, produced by artist and zine maker Flannery o'kafka, with layout by Andrew Beltran, suggests the potential of zines as a practice of crip grief and memorial that extends beyond the human. [63] *CRUMPLE* is an orange and hunter green risoprinted zine, made from a single sheet of A3. It is not in Wellcome Collection. It serves as a tribute to a 'wee disabled (non-flying) pet butterfly called Crumple' with photos, drawings, two poems and a playlist.[64] It folds out to a reproduction of a portrait of Crumple painted by Isobel Neviasky. The gesture of folding the zine back in on itself, collapsing the paper along the intended lines, feels like it does as much as the text to offer a tribute to Crumple, the butterfly. While Alland and Hernández close *Sore Loser*'s blurb with the question 'How do we document our grief, our resistance – and our joy?', *Crumple Zine* offers an answer, invoking zines as a space to document crip grief, alongside resistance and joy.[65]

Why are zines so sympathetic to grieving? And why, despite my efforts to think and talk about other crip bad feelings, does it keep coming back to grief? Since beginning this chapter, I've increasingly noticed the connections between zines and grief both in zine making around me and my own personal life. From November 2023, Tiny Tech Zines, a 'QTPOC-led zine collective centring how marginalised folk think about technology', have been exploring grief – through grief circles, grief zine making sessions, and a grief zine

[62] Ibid.
[63] Flannery O'kafka, *CRUMPLE ZINE* (Self-published, 2022).
[64] Ibid., npn.
[65] Alland and Hernández, *Sore Loser,* npn.

swap amongst other events.[66] When my wife Abi's nan Ina died in December 2023, Abi made a zine to put inside her coffin – when I've visited DCA's print studio to reproduce the zines for my PhD, I've snuck this zine in. In the zine (part of *Holding Title*) *A Place of Honour,* I discuss zines as memorials, as archives. Although I acknowledge grief (bereavement) and the many survivor and service user memorials, I articulate a desire for a memorial to being sectioned. I describe:

> It would be remiss of me not to at least make a brief reference to zines as memorial or archive, in this zine about memorials and archives. After all, I'm using this zine to mark the date, I'm using it to hold things, it is a fantasy, it is an offering.[67]

Alland and Hernández end their conversation with a reflection on qrip histories and intergenerational communication, an echo of some of the topics addressed in Milbern and Piepzna-Samarasinha's conversation in *Care Work.*[68] How do we hold onto, pass on, or archive, hard-won knowledge – knowledge not just about survival, about navigating benefits, but about grief, and forms of documentation or memorial. In the following section I consider how doulaing involves both connecting to crip genealogies, often through imagining pasts, and engaging in archival practices.

Doulaing as Time Travel

I have described in this chapter how crip doulaing is not about linear movement, and in the zines of this chapter, the liminality of disability is not the space between two stable states (not disabled/disabled). Crip and disabled identities are continually made and

[66] ttz.online, Instagram, n.d. <https://www.instagram.com/ttz.online/> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[67] Lea Cooper, *A Place of Honour* (Self-published, 2024), p. 9.
[68] Alland and Hernández, *Sore Loser,* p. 13.

remade, and crip doulaing embraces the potential of liminality as a space of future imagining, of making disabled futures. In doing so, it also destabilises the past, forming new connections and genealogies. Zines engage in archival practices, for example when they collect objects and transform them (through scanning, flattening, photocopying) for the purpose of preservation, or the forms of zines I discussed in the previous section that connect grief, memorial, and archive, or the ways that bed zines create archives of feelings I discussed in Chapter Three.[69] But, in thinking about archiving as a practice of crip doulaing, this is not a straightforward archiving of a static past for posterity. So Mayer connects dancer and scholar Julian Carter's work on 'folded time' to archives.[70] Carter proposes that 'rather than imagining transition as a linear progression, what would happen if we imagine transitions between genders, like choreographic transitions, as places in time in which numerous movements – forward, backward, sideways, tangential – are equally possible and can coexist?'.[71] Mayer discusses recovery work and queer relationships to archives through this notion of folded time, through the tense of the subjunctive, the conditional or speculative.

In their introduction to *What Would a COVID-19 doula do?*, Alexandra Juhasz reflects on bringing together and curating the show *Metanoia: Transformation through AIDS Archives and Activism*. They invite a step into the future – 'imagine a show like ours, in the future. An archival show of the representational life and objects of COVID, thirty years from now'.[72] They suggest that the zine *What Would a COVID-19 doula do?* calls

[69] Sarah Baker and Zelmarie Cantillon, 'Zines as Community Archive', *Archival Science,* 22 (2022), pp. 539-561, doi:10.1007/s10502-022-09388-1.
[70] So Mayer, *A Nazi Word for a Nazi Thing,* (London: Peninsula Press, 2020); Julian Carter, 'Embracing Transition, or Dancing in the Folds of Time' in *The Transgender Studies Reader Remix,* ed. by Susan Stryker and Dylan McCarthy Blackston (Routledge, 2023), pp. 130-144.
[71] Carter, 'Embracing Transition'.
[72] WWHIVDD, *What does a COVID-19 Doula Do?,* p. 7.

'for a future that will learn from all we did in this shared present'. In this 'the present does not merely cite the past…but is instead a rematerialisation of it'.[73] In this section, I consider how practices of speculative fiction, tied to zines' historical connections to science fiction, are used in zines to both imagine futures and create archives (or imagine archives and create futures), and how through these acts, past and future fold over on each other so instead of two distinct stable states divided by a liminal period, the present becomes, as characterised by Carter, 'transitional time'.[74]

Coming to Archives

In *What Would a COVID-19 Doula Do?* Nicholas D'Avella describes 'As an HIV and COVID doula, part of my practice involves rethinking the present through apocalyptic fantasy..... Speculative fiction is a tool through which foremother doulas like Octavia Butler and Ursula K Le Guin, or contemporary writers like Torrey Peters, work to rethink our reality'.[75] It would take a whole other thesis to unpack the tight relationships and multiple histories and presents of zines and science fiction, speculative fiction and fantasy. The 9 page story Assassin Bitches in Heat! in *Ring of Fire* Issue 2 (1997), written by Russian by hand, and illustrated with four black and white illustrations of people being spanked with different objects, suggests how some of the technologies of speculative fiction and fantasy connect to the ways crip doulaing involve imaging crip futures.[76] Assassin Bitches in Heat! is a piece of queer crip erotica. It opens with the lines: 'As the army tanks were coming, so was I. Me and my girlfriend had just bombed the White House and we were celebrating…'.[77] The speaker and their girlfriend Glory,

[73] Carter, 'Embracing Transition'.
[74] Ibid.
[75] WWHIVDD, *What does a COVID-19 Doula Do?,* p. 43.
[76] Russian, *Ring of Fire.*
[77] Ibid., p. 30.

members of a terrorist collective, are fucking after bombing the White House. As Glory is whipping the speaker, she turns on the TV:

> The nation was in pandemonium from the White House shock and every channel was covering the story in a special news bulletin: "The bombing appears to be the act of some sort of militant homosexual disabled person's terrorist group. Just outside the bombing wreckage was a message in red spraypaint which read "QUEER CRIPS SHALL PREVAIL UPON THE DEATH OF SOCIETY"...The neon glow from the t.v reflected on her face as she bitched about the government. And with that crop in her hand she looked like one scary ass bitch. MY DREAMGIRL !!![78]

This is erotica, clearly, and a work of speculative fiction – it is post-apocalyptic event, but where the apocalypse wrought is not upon the protagonist but upon someone else's world by the speaker. The erotics of the story depend upon delay, creating a space of suspension. In larger, more desperate, writing the final line of seventh page reads 'I thought I would burst. I still hadn't cum.'[79] It imagines a world-breaking event and anticipates the work of remaking: the final paragraph begins: 'The next morning we woke up and ate nails for breakfast. We had work to do.'[80] When I'm in zine workshops and talk about how zines imagine futures, I don't think many of my audience of third-sector organisations and public librarians are thinking it will involve a kink scene with two domestic terrorists fisting, but this is the queer crip future that Russian writes, and then returns to archive in the form of this zine anthology nearly 20 years later.

Mayer characterises a coming to archives, to recovery work, as a queer rite of passage: 'In a movement and community where still too few activists and artists survive to be elders, the real queer and trans coming of age is not coming out, but coming to recovery work: first as a viewer or reader finding themselves, then as a participant in the

[78] Ibid., pp. 31-32.
[79] Ibid., p. 33.
[80] Ibid., p. 34.

archives'.[81] Returning to Radway's 'afterlives' of zines, the fact that many zine makers move into zine librarianship and into archives is perhaps reflective of a coming-of-age shared by queer and crip zine makers. If coming to archives is a crip rite of passage, then to doula this rite of passage is to share knowledge of archiving, and create and explore alternative forms of archives.[82]

Archiving Joy is a zine created by Lu Williams and published by Williams' outfit Grrrl Zine Fair.[83] It is not currently in Wellcome's collection. A slim, perfect bound digitally printed A5 zine, the pages are divided into sections of light yellow (marking Williams' contributions) and lavender (marking the contributions of their invited collaborators: Elliot Gibbons, George Morl, Hava Carvajal, How Furber, Laura Love, Maz Murray and Merline Evans). The back page describes this as 'A story of Trancestory and reimagining of "the archive".'[84] Williams uses the zine to document their (great) Aunt Joy, Rosemary Joy Erskin, a transgender woman b. 1924-1996, alongside work on queer archives and from members of the queer community across Essex. Williams opens the zine with a discussion of the state of national archives and their relationship to LGBTQ+ histories, an unarticulated dissatisfaction with archival practice that 'thinks it's wrong to impose our terminology of those who wouldn't have had the choice to choose it in their own lifetime'.[85]

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[81] Mayer, *A Nazi Word,* p. 26.
[82] For zines on archiving see: Kirsty Fife*, archive it ourselves: strategies and tips for documenting and archiving diy histories* (Self-published, 2019); Emma Warren, *Document Your Culture: A Manual* (Self-published, 2020); Junie Latte, *Document it yourself: a zine about queer(ing) the archives* (Self-published, 2017); Mel Reeve, *It's Radical to Exist* (Self-published, 2020).
[83] *Archiving Joy,* ed. by Lu Williams (Grrl Zine Fair, 2022).
[84] Williams (ed), *Archiving Joy,* back cover.
[85] Williams (ed), *Archiving Joy,* p. 7.

In his contribution to *Archiving Joy*, "'OH BOY!": Working with and against the archive', Elliot Gibbons, a writer, researcher and curator with a particular interest in queer histories outside urban centres and during the AIDS crisis in Britain, proposes using a methodology aligned with writer and cultural historian Saidiya Hartman's 'critical fabulation' to work with and against archives such as the Lesbian and Gay News Media Archives at the Bishopsgate Institute in London, which he describes as haunted by the Sexual Offences Act and Section 28.[86] Hartman develops 'critical fabulation', using storytelling and imagining archival narratives, in response to the violent archival silences of Atlantic slavery. Hartman first uses the phrase in her essay 'Venus in Two Acts' where she manages the tensions of imagining a story where there is only silence and absence in the historical record, considering 'the relationship between history and the violence of the archive as well as its fiction and its elasticity'[87]

In this vein, Williams engages in their own practices of fictioning in *Archiving Joy*. They watch a video of a family wedding where Joy dashes in front of the camera and holds her handbag over her face, prompting Williams to ask 'Maybe Joy didn't want to be archived?'[88] The text on this page ends when 'The recording stops' and the opposite page assembles stills of the video described.[89] On the following page Williams offers a fictional account of a meeting with Joy, which is written in the present and begins as Wiliams looks up from their laptop. It feels like an interruption to the writing that precedes it, as if Joy has arrived to address Williams' fear that they crossed a boundary.

[86] Williams (ed), *Archiving Joy,* p. 20.
[87] 'Saidiya Hartman. Gallery 214: Critical Fabulations. 2021', n.d. <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/298/4088> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[88] Williams (ed), *Archiving Joy,* p. 35.
[89] Ibid.

This fictional encounter with Joy connects with the previous chapter's discussion of the potential for liminal and borderland spaces as a site of (real and imagined) meetings. In her discussion of the archival turn in feminism, Kate Eichhorn cautions that 'at stake [in feminist archives] are not the worlds these collections represent, but rather the worlds they invite us to imagine and even realize.'[90] *Archiving Joy* is as much an intervention into the present as it is a retrieval of the past. Piepzna-Samarasinha subtitles *Care Work* as 'dreaming disability justice'.[91] This is dreaming not as wishful thinking or hopeful imagining. This is dreaming as in the borderland, liminal space, a space of speculative imagining (about past and future), a reimagining of our present. Writing of illness and disability narratives, Alison Kafer asks:

> How do these kinds of stories rely on the straightness of linear time, the belief that becoming disabled is a single moment, tangible, identifiable, turning life into a solid, singular, static before-and-after? Can we tell crip tales, crip time tales, with multiple befores and afters, proliferating befores and afters, all making more crip presents possible?[92]

In the zines discussed in this section, where time is folded, archives are speculative, and futures are archived, crip presents become possible and even realised.

Conclusion

This chapter proposes that zines engage in practices of 'crip doulaing'. The frame of the doula offers both an alternative to medical perspectives on disability and becoming disabled, and an alternative to the pre-assigned 'ritual expert' of Turner's anthropological accounts of liminality. Becoming disabled is both a social and embodied becoming, and these zines offer resources in coming into a self-articulated

[90] Kate Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism, Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013), p. 160.
[91] Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work.*
[92] Alison Kafer, 'After Crip, Crip Afters', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120.2 (2021), pp. 415-434 (p.417), doi:10.1215/00382876-8916158.

crip identity. In approaching these practices of crip doulaing, I have expanded existing zine scholarship on knowledge sharing, identify formation, and transitions to archival practices. This has developed an understanding of what zines do in relationship to disability, where zines share affective as well as practical knowledge. In doing so, they offer alternative understandings of disability. Zines allow an articulation of crip identity and act as liminal affective technologies, hold space for grief, and are part of a coming to archives, imagining crip futures and creating crip presents. Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated how through being part of the on-going rites of passages and periods of transition in crip and disabled becomings, zines expand our understanding of liminality beyond the carefully managed linear transition between two fixed states that Turner described. This a new framing of what zines do in respect to disability. In the following chapter, I consider zines' relationship to Covid, and how this also expands our understanding of liminality.

Chapter Five: Covid Zines

> And so today I'm gonna try just
>
> Getting up, sitting down
> Going back to work
> Might not help, but still, it couldn't hurt
> I'm sitting down, writing jokes
> Singing silly songs
> I'm sorry I was gone
>
> But look, I made you some content[1]

This PhD is a Covid PhD. [2] In the Introduction to this thesis, I described how a feeling of in-betweenness during the first Covid UK lockdown in March 2020 informed my key research questions around zines and liminality. Although lockdown restrictions ended where I live in Scotland in August 2021, there is not a straightforwardly *after* Covid that this thesis could be written from. This project is inextricably linked to the Covid pandemic; its methodology is fundamentally shaped by more visible aspects, like the restrictions of lockdowns and access to Wellcome's zines and by less immediately visible aspects, like the enduring physical impact of my first Covid infection in the summer of 2022. The Covid pandemic cannot be contained in a single chapter, and has already emerged at other points in this thesis: in discussions of the practical navigation of Wellcome's zine archive shaped by the digital interface of the online catalogue; in the questions of access and my location at home in bed (rather than at Wellcome Collection); and in the ways WWHIVDD's zine, *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?,*

[1] *Bo Burnham: Inside,* dir. by Bo Burnham (Netflix, 2021) <https://www.netflix.com/title/81289483> [16 April 2024]

[2] For ease, in this chapter I use Covid (in lieu of Coronavirus or COVID-19), with the exception of when I am making specific reference to the virus itself where I use COVID-19.

informed the framework of my discussion of zines as crip doulas.[3] As this research progressed, the composition of Wellcome's zine collection shifted significantly with the ongoing collection of zines made during and about the Covid pandemic: a search for 'covid' on the Wellcome Collection's online catalogue of approximately 1,500 zines offers 94 results; a search for 'lockdown' yields 46.[4]

Given this context, Covid zines are particularly relevant to contemporary zine production and collection, and I began reading them intentionally within this research. At the outset, I treated 'Covid zines' as a broad category that included, but was not limited to: zines made between March 2020 and August 2021 that self-consciously document experiences of lockdown and quarantines; zines that engage in knowledge production and sharing around Covid; digital zines, where their means of (re)production and distribution are responses to lockdowns, quarantine and/or shielding; and zines that explore aspects of Covid, including gendered, classed and racialised experiences of the pandemic. In the winter of 2022/2023, I wrote a photo story for Wellcome's website, titled 'Quaranzines', to highlight some of the Covid zines in their collection.[5] During a series of email exchanges with several of the zine makers and the story's editor at Wellcome Collection, tensions emerged between different temporal framings of the pandemic. There was a risk of subsuming the distinct temporalities of the zines I wrote about in a universalising narrative where the experience of the Covid pandemic was reduced to certain people's experience of lockdowns: a risk of treating all Covid zines as quaranzines.

[3] WWHIVDD, *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* (Self-published, 2020).
[4] As of 5 January 2024.
[5] Lea Cooper, 'Quaranzines', Wellcome Collection, 6 June 2023 <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/ZH20uxAAACIA9bi6> [accessed 29 March 2024].

This chapter first offers a brief account of the phenomena of the quaranzine and Wellcome's zine collecting during the Covid pandemic. I consider this as part of broader move amongst libraries and archives to collect Covid zines, which is implicated in political temporalities of Covid and a framing of the Covid pandemic as a temporary liminal time between two stable states. This provides important context for the chapter's discussion of reading a set of Covid zines with attention to time, after Alison Kafer's notion of crip time, exploring how these zines construct and communicate the liminal times of the coronavirus pandemic, and their relationship to dominant political temporalities of Covid.[6] Kafer suggests that to crip time is to 'map the extent to which we conceptualise disability in temporal terms' and to speculate on 'how might disability affect one's orientation to time'.[7] In her work, to crip queer time is to both 'read queer temporality through the lens of disability' and 'to pinpoint places where disability seems to exceed queer time'.[8]

The zines explored in this chapter share temporalities that diverge from those where Covid is an unprecedented blip between two defined states. These zines illuminate multiple temporalities of liminality within the Covid pandemic, where Covid Time is, in my articulation, 'Extended' or 'Long,' 'Grief Time' and 'Eugenics Time'. A discussion of Wellcome Zine Club's 2019 zine *Contagion* opens up to other zines where the Covid pandemic is in different ways extended: Sarah Shay Mirk's *This is Not Our First Pandemic* connects queer Portlanders' memories of the early days of HIV to experiences of Covid, whilst the back cover of Mad Covid's *Quaranzine: a zine about*

[6] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* (Indiana University Press, 2013)
[7] Ibid., p. 25; Ibid., p. 26;
[8] Ibid., p. 28.

isolation, connectedness & survival in dark times explains 'we were mad before the world went Covid crazy'.[9] Further zines stretch Covid time out into the future. *The Covid Logs*, a 2024 compilation zine about the ongoing experiences of chronically ill and disabled people, offers alternatives to constructions of COVID-19 as a period of liminality that we were waiting to, and did, emerge from into a stable 'new normal'. Through *The Long Covid Symptom Tracker,* an interactive tracker, I explore Covid time as Long, connecting this to ongoing work on the temporalities of epidemics.[10] Returning to *Sore Loser,* previously discussed in Chapter Four, I further consider Covid Time as Grief Time, particularly in relation to the enduring grief of inaccessibility. [11] I propose that *The Covid Logs* and *Sore Loser* explore Covid Time as Eugenics time, considering these zines as a form of crip activism that resists the politics of eugenics and that raise questions about the ethics of Covid zine research and collecting. In the final part of this chapter, I return to the institutional dynamics of Wellcome's zine collection and argue that the temporalities of these zines evoke the responsibilities of libraries and archives not just to passively collect Covid zines, but to actively engage in the futures these zines work towards.

Liminality

Underpinning this chapter is a conceptualisation of the Covid pandemic as liminal: across personal, group and societal levels, and through the concept of 'pure liminality', which is the convergence of liminality across these different levels 'over extended

[9] Sarah Shay Mirk, *This is Not Our First Pandemic* (Self-published, 2020); *Quaranzine: a zine about isolation, connectedness & survival in dark times*, ed. by Mad Covid (Self-published, 2020).
[10] ASC, *Long Covid Symptom Tracker* (Self-published, 2020); *The Covid Logs* ed by Katrina Dreamer and Michelle Dawn (Self-published, 2024).
[11] Sandra Alland and Etzali Hernández, *Sore Loser: A chronic pain and illness zine on queer disabled grief* (Self-published, 2021).

periods of times or even within several spatial entities'.[12] It is important to be aware how characterising the Covid pandemic as 'liminal' might erase difference. Nonetheless, explorations of experiences of liminality for residents of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, for UK Supermarket workers, for disadvantaged young people in the UK, for students in the 'doctoral journey' or on a political level suggest that liminality offers the 'capacity to provide explanatory and interpretative accounts of seemingly unstructured situations' in ways that retain attention to nuance and diversity.[13] Social psychologists Paul Stenner and David Kaposi argue that that the Covid pandemic created a 'liminal hotspot'. They analyse the language of Queen Elizabeth II's April 2020 broadcast to the UK and Commonwealth[14] to unpack the conceptualisation of the Covid pandemic, and particularly 'lockdown', as a 'period of suspended normality' between a stable past and stable future.[15] Whilst the Queen's broadcast suggested both a stable past and the return of this stability in the future ('better days will return'), Stenner and Kaposi argue that this period destabilises both past and future, with transformative implications for the present. Though the conceptualisation of the Covid pandemic as liminal is foundational to this chapter, it is complicated by how the zines in this chapter disrupt

[12] Paul Stenner and David Kaposi, 'Virus ante portas: the Covid-19 pandemic as a liminal hotspot', Diecisiete, n.d. <https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot> [accessed 30 March 2024]; *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality,* ed. by Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen, and Harald Wydra (Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 3.

[13] Rachel Tough, 'Life and liminality during COVID-19: An ethnography of pandemic in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam' (PhD by publication, University of East Anglia, 2021) <https://pure.uea.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/202539615/Rachel_Tough_COVID_19_study.pdf> [accessed 02 April 2024]; Michael Atkinson et al, 'Illuminating the liminality of the doctoral journey: precarity, agency and COVID-19', *Higher Education Research & Development,* 41.6 (2022), doi:abs/10.1080/07294360.2021.1968354; Minjie Cai et al, '"It's Like a War Zone": Jay's Liminal Experience of Normal and Extreme Work in a UK Supermarket during the COVID-19 Pandemic', *Work, Employment and Society,* 35.2 (2020), doi:10.1177/0950017020966527; Arpad Szakolczai, 'The Permanentisation of Emergencies: COVID Understood through Liminality' in *Making Sense of Diseases and Disasters,* ed. by Lee Trepanier (Routledge, 2022), doi:10.4324/9781003197379-2; Horvath et al, *Breaking Boundaries,* p. 3.

[14] 'The Queen's broadcast to the UK and Commonwealth', Royal.uk, 5 April 2020 <https://www.royal.uk/queens-broadcast-uk-and-commonwealth> [accessed 30 March 2024].

[15] Stenner and Kaposi, 'Virus ante portas'.

ideas of Covid as an event that was out-of-the-ordinary, and offer alternative temporalities to Covid as a temporary liminality between two stable states.

I began this chapter with the lyrics from 'Content', the opening song to Bo Burnham's May 2021 Netflix musical comedy special *Bo Burnham: Inside*.[16] This song has offered my most consistent soundtrack to zine reading, making and thesis writing over the last three and a half years. Both Burnham and the zines of this chapter were engaged in making from the midst of liminal experience, and some zines were made in response to the same demand for content that Burnham references, albeit from a different source (libraries and archives). Returning to earlier chapters' discussion of the limits of narrative approaches in the medical humanities, I argue that here once again the need to be out of the period of chaos or uncertainty in order to 'tell a story' fails to account for the people creating from the midst, from liminality.

Quaranzines

In her discussion of health zines, sociologist of health and illness Deborah Lupton describes how 'zine making burgeoned during 2020'.[17] Though anecdotal (no one is counting zines), this rise in zine making was not an increase in any and all zine making. March 2020 onwards saw the rise of quaranzines, a particular kind of zine that directly related to the Coronavirus pandemic and the resultant lockdowns. This rise did not happen in isolation from library and archives' interest in quaranzines as a means of documenting the pandemic and collective memory making: almost from the outset of

[16] Burnham, *Bo Burnham: Inside.*
[17] Deborah Lupton, 'Health zines: Hand-made and heart-felt' in *Routledge Handbook of Health and Media* ed. by Lester D. Friedman and Therese Jones (Routledge, 2022), doi:10.4324/9781003007661-6.

the pandemic, these institutions were inviting zines documenting everyday experiences of lockdown. [18]

Culture and media researcher Red Chidgey advocates for adding the category of 'history zine' to Stephen Duncombe's zine taxonomy[19] to include 'zine publications written around public events and also per-zines which incorporate lifewriting and memory work'. She argues that 'zine writers themselves often act as protean historians, collecting testimony, organising data for publication and distribution, and engaging critically and analytically with their material'.[20] As Chidgey concludes, 'it would be an interesting task to monitor the zine community and see how the discussions of their own work, and their sense of historical consciousness, changes as it becomes part of a legitimated, and public, archive'.[21] Covid zines offer a site to examine this evolving relationship 10 years after Chidgey's observation; the collection of Covid zines by GLAM organisations was part of the drive of their production, and the impulse to create zines documenting lockdowns was connected not just to explicit zine making projects, but broader invocations to record experiences of lockdowns and quarantine.

In digital archivist and University records manager Eira Tansey's blog from June 2020, 'No one owes their trauma to archivists, or, the commodification of contemporaneous collecting', they describe how: 'As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, many institutional

[18] Gina Murrell, 'Libraries Collect COVID-19 Stories in Quaranzines', Library Journal, 01 June 2020 < https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/Libraries-Collect-COVID-19-Stories-Quaranzines> [accessed 11 April 2024]
[19] This otherwise includes fanzines, political zine, personal zines, scene zines, network zines, fringe culture zines, religious zine, vocational zine, health zines, sex zines, travel zines, comixs, literary zines, art zines, and 'the rest'.
[20] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Verso, 1997), p. 13-14; Red Chidgey 'The resisting subject: Per-zines as life story data', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History,* 10 (2006), pp. 1-13, p. 4.
[21] Chidgey, 'The resisting subject', p. 11.

archives publicly encouraged their community members to collect their own documentation…There are so many of these projects that there is now an 11-page document listing them'.[22] This included zine making: many libraries and archives ran quaranzine projects, whilst media outlets invited quaranzine making.[23] Covid zines offer a bountiful site to examine how zine makers responded to becoming part of legitimated collective memory projects. They also offer a site to interrogate the ethics of these requests by libraries and archives to record our present day and submit them to the archive. Finally, the move to collect and archive these zines – in the case of Wellcome, at least, as a central activity in their in-the-moment Covid collecting – brings us again to the limits of marginality in conceptualising zines.

Some of the interest in collecting zines came from their status as marginal media. Zines were perceived as a source for experiences that weren't being recorded in mainstream media around the Covid pandemic. Addressing their Covid zine collecting, Barnard Zine Librarian Jenna Freedman articulates a belief that 'people who make zines aren't the same people as the ones who are reporting on pandemic life on TV, in the newspaper, and in other outlets, and they have different stories to tell'.[24] Barnard's call out for Covid zines in April 2020 was titled 'Who Better to Document This Experience Than

[22] Eira Tansey, 'No one owes their trauma to archivists, or, the commodification of contemporaneous collecting', 5 June 2020 <https://eiratansey.com/2020/06/05/no-one-owes-their-trauma-to-archivists-or-the-commodification-of-contemporaneous-collecting/?fbclid=IwAR3vEQOqANWV-syWrW-Bix0EvE6UjKCAnj9_HO-k6uomh6ynpU5FSDTDlSc> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[23] 'Sheltered in place: COVID-19 zine diaries project', Library of Congress Center for the Book Washington, n.d. <https://www.washingtoncenterforthebook.org/covid-19zine/> [accessed 11 April 2024]; Malaka Gharib, 'How to Make a Mini-Zine About Life During the Pandemic', NPR, 28 May 2020 <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/28/863068957/how-to-make-a-mini-zine-about-life-during-the-pandemic> [accessed 11 April 2024]; Grace Dobush, 'Quaranzines: Pandemic Inspires Analog Zine Projects', Craft Industry Alliance, 2 November 2020 <https://craftindustryalliance.org/quaranzines-pandemic-inspires-analog-zine-projects/> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[24] Gina Murrell, 'Libraries Collect COVID-19 Stories'.

Everyone?'.[25] If zines are viewed as often 'fall[ing] outside of the mainstream collective memory', the drive to collect them seems a move to diversify records of the pandemic.[26] From the early days of the Covid pandemic, these libraries and archives were already concerned about COVID-19's record in history: 'I think having this will serve as a time capsule in the future', said Janelle Ortiz, a Library Associate at Arlington Public Library, VA, who was involved in a quaranzine project. This approach to quaranzines shaped zine maker's sense of purpose and intention. Rich Dana, Olson Graduate Research Assistant for Special Collections at the University of Iowa, described how 'people understand that their zines are part of the documentation of life under COVID-19'.[27]

Wellcome Collection also collected Covid zines, alongside other ephemera like anti-vaxx leaflets and greetings cards.[28] In an interview conducted for this research, Collections Development librarian Mel Grant describes how 'zines were the thing we collected most consistently through Covid and through lockdown period in particular'.[29] This was in part because the form of zines allowed for this collecting to continue with the Wellcome's buildings closed, and other collecting paused. Zines were sent to Librarian Nicola Cook's home '[B]ecause they were actually really small'.[30] Grant describes that this was a departure from usual practices, motivated by the perceived value of these zines as records of Covid and temporalities of the Covid pandemic:

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[25] 'Who Better to Document This Experience Than Everyone?', Barnard Zine Library, 3 April 2020 <https://zines.barnard.edu/news/who-better-document-experience-everyone> [accessed 24 April 2024].
[26] Jessie Lymn, 'The zine anthology as archive: archival genres and practices', *Archives and Manuscripts*, 41.1 (2013), pp. 44-57, doi:10.1080/01576895.2013.769861.
[27] Murrell, 'Libraries Collect COVID-19 Stories'.
[28] Christine Ro, 'Care, creativity and a connected world', Wellcome Collection, 11 February 2021 <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/YCQOsBIAACIAaMEN> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[29] Interview with Mel Grant, Collections Development Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, April 18 2023).
[30] Interview with Mel Grant, Collections Development Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, April 18 2023), L253.

> [W]e thought it was a risk worth taking because with the zines a lot of people quite quickly started making zines about COVID-19. We also recognised that covid fatigue was probably going to come our way, and there would come a point where people probably weren't going to be that interested in taking their covid zines to a zine fair when they finally could, maybe 2 years later.[31]

In an interview conducted for this research, Cook describes 'I really feel like the zine collection shone in that moment'.[32] This drive to collect Covid zines implies a belief in their value to the future (and specifically future researchers), and an opportunity to demonstrate the potential of the zine collection as part of in-the-moment collecting. This period of collecting poses a challenge to characterising the Wellcome's zine collection through marginality. In the Introduction to this thesis, I described how the zine collection emerged from a period of transitions and restructures within Wellcome Collection, in the context of a broader institutional pivot towards 'the human', turning away from 'Medicine Man' Henry Wellcome. Liminality better characterises the position and development of the zine collection during another period of significant transition and suspension of usual collecting activities.

Covid zine collecting has a separate but parallel temporality to Covid zines. There was a sense of the present moment, with an urgency created in part by not knowing when the pandemic would end: Katie Garth, on their project the Quarantine Public Library, describes thinking the pandemic could be over at any time and 'not wanting to miss the opportunity'.[33] For Wellcome's zine collection, this immediacy was not just about the importance of in-the-moment documentation, but an awareness of the limited period in

[31] Interview with Mel Grant, Collections Development Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, April 18 2023), L255-258.
[32] Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, June 30 2023), L345-346.
[33] Dobush, 'Quaranzines'.

which these quaranzines could be collected – visible in Grant's description above of a recognition of the potential for 'Covid fatigue'. There are different temporalities at play: the perceived immediacy of zine making meaning they were in-the-moment documentation, connected to a fantasy of authenticity; the concern about the lifespan of these zines as based on zine makers' interest in distributing them; a sense that 'after' Covid was a time where we could return to zine fairs. These temporalities of collecting go beyond Covid zines. In an interview for this research, Cook describes the necessity for speed when collecting zines, whilst also linking this to some of the challenges Tansey also poses to archivists in their article: 'with the nature of zines – they're ephemeral, its fast, stuff goes, so we didn't want to miss stuff, which falls into that obsessive collecting in some respects, like "we need everything"'.[34]

Whilst the broader question of monitoring the development of historical consciousness in zines is outside the scope of this research, the context of collecting offers a route to understanding the construction of Covid temporalities within Covid zines. Particularly visible in quaranzines, these temporalities are mutually constituted by wider discourses including those of the libraries and archives collecting around Covid. Libraries and archives didn't give zine makers the idea that they should document the Covid pandemic out of the blue, but they connected to existing practices, amplified a sense of historical consciousness and in doing so, invited zine makers to be recruited into projects of documenting the pandemic. Future research could, usefully, look in more detail at the phenomena of quaranzines and unpack this as a genre.

[34] Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, June 30 2023), L75-77.

Contagion

As I was reading zines in Wellcome's collection, orientating myself via this broad frame of Covid zines, I found myself feeling bored of quaranzines. Describing this feeling of boredom isn't to dismiss the value of these zines, their importance, or their unique qualities, and I read many quaranzines that I enjoyed. But tuning into this feeling was important to my method of navigating through the collection along desire lines, which I described in the Introduction to this thesis. During a visit to Wellcome Collection in April 2023, I requested a zine made during a Wellcome 'zine club'[35] in 2019 responding to the theme of contagion. Reading it, I felt alert to time; there was something exciting about reading a zine that shared so many of the concerns of the quaranzines I'd been reading, but out of time, a full year before the Covid pandemic started. I began to focus on reading zines that disrupted the generic temporalities of quaranzines. Throughout this thesis, I have been concerned with how zines might offer new understandings and conceptualisations of liminality. Rather than the bounded liminal time of quaranzines, with a 'before' and 'after' Covid, I turned toward zines which offer less straightforward liminal temporalities.

Contagion zine was created at Wellcome Collection's zine club in April 2019, 'as a collaborative response to the Contagious Cities project and in partnership with Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong'.[36] *Contagion* approaches the idea of contagion from various angles, and particularly 'celebrates the zine as a contagious medium of communication in

[35] For nearly three years prior to March 2020, Wellcome Collection ran monthly in-house zine making sessions open to the public. There are several zines in the collection that resulted from this zine club. During lockdown, these zine clubs moved onto Instagram Live, and have since resumed in-person.
[36] Wellcome Collection Zine Club, *Contagion zine* (Self-Published, 2019), npn.

various communities and at various points in history.'[37] It is not clear how many other copies circulate outside of Wellcome, where I first read it and which, unusually amongst the zines I discuss in this thesis, is the only space I have encountered it. The idea of contagion is addressed in this zine both in terms of theme and medium. The reference to zines as a contagious medium resonates with the ways receiving paper zines in the post acquired a different affective dimension during lockdown. In this context, where touch and physical contact felt threatening and risky, the ways the materiality of zines form what Piepmeier terms 'embodied communities' – the traces of touch left in the material text (smudged fingerprints, hand writing) - generated new feelings and meanings.[38]

FIG. 28. Wellcome Zine Club, page from *Contagion* (2019), A5 colour photocopied zine, npn.

Contagion is a photocopied full-colour, A5 paper zine which assembles different single page contributions from zine club participants. One page combines bright collage with

[37] Wellcome Collection Zine Club, *Contagion zine,* npn.
[38] Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (NYU Press, 2009).

felt tip handwriting, asking 'Who has come into contact with...Me...In the past 48 hrs?'.[39] This question evokes the mechanisms of the NHS Track and Trace in the early stages of the pandemic in the UK, which began in April 2020 and ended on 24 February 2022 with the announcement of a new strategy for England called 'Living with Covid'.[40] A date stamp on the back page of the zine indicates that it was made on 4 April 2019. *Contagion* then disrupts narratives of the Coronavirus pandemic as 'unprecedented' by placing it in a wider global context where many of its affective dimensions and temporalities (the 48 hours of incubation) precede the advent of COVID-19. This page demonstrates the potential of zines, as visual-textual-material media, to engage with temporalities in creative ways. The crowded page offers a snapshot of these 48 hours of social contacts, engaging in affective sense-making. Reading for time in zines invites drawing from work on temporalities in comics where comics are a medium where the crucial 'syntactical operation is to represent time as space', bringing in principles of sequence, simultaneity, and stasis.[41] The page eschews a linear list to crowd both felt tip labelled stick figures and collaged images of people. Rather than a chain of contacts everyone is present at once, simultaneously on the page.

An additional layer to the temporalities of *Contagion* zine is how the zine situates itself in time – the date and location stamp on the back feels intended to clearly locate the creation of the zine, as a document from the bounded time and place of Wellcome's

[39] Wellcome Collection Zine Club, *Contagion zine,* npn.
[40] 'Prime Minister sets out plan for living with COVID', GOV.UK*,* 21 February 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-sets-out-plan-for-living-with-covid> [accessed 30 March 2024].
[41] Hillary L. Chute and Marianne DeKoven, 'Introduction: Graphic Narrative', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies,* 52.4 (2006), pp. 767-782 (p. 769), doi:10.1353/mfs.2007.0002; Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Tundra Publishing, 1993); Henry Jenkins, *Comics and Stuff* (New York University Press, 2020); Scott Bukatman, 'Sculpture, Stasis, the Comics and Hellboy', *Critical Inquiry,* 40.3 (2014), pp. 104-117, doi:10.1086/677334.

April 2019 zine club. This suggests the ways that zines are used as documentation, visible also in the ways perzine authors often articulate the day and/or place they are writing from. This links to the ways zines engage in practices of collective memory making and DIY archiving, which quaranzine projects tapped into.

FIG. 29. Wellcome Zine Club, back page of *Contagion* (2019), A5 colour photocopied zine, npn.

This discussion of *Contagion* opens up Covid zines as a category to include those made before the apparent start of the pandemic, and invites Covid Time as Extended, into the past. This troubles constructions of the Covid pandemic as a period of liminality that we entered into from a state of 'normal' and the rhetoric of Covid as 'unprecedented'.

Covid Time as Extended Time and Long Time

In *This is not our first pandemic* Mirk addresses a long history of queer communities practising mutual aid, a temporality of COVID-19 that again disrupts the idea of it being a clean break from a fixed 'normal'. This connection between HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 is

drawn again by WWHIVDD. There's a distinct temporality to the title of *What does a COVID-19 doula do?* – in the collective's name and title of their other zine they ask what *would* a HIV doula do, but what *does* a covid doula do becomes no longer speculative but descriptive and immediate.

Mirk's title addresses the narrative of the Covid pandemic as 'unprecedented' – identifying themself amongst a group for whom this is not the first experience of a pandemic, and the zine centres the feeling of 'sickening familiarity' amongst queer Portlanders who experienced the early years of HIV. Other zines acknowledge that for some people, this is their first direct experience of a pandemic, lockdown or isolation, and link the liminal experience of lockdown to other experiences of isolation and restriction of movement in order to offer resources and advice. Such references to existing strategies emerge in *Quaranzine: A zine about isolation, connectedness & survival in dark times*, which was created by Nell on behalf of Mad Covid (Nell's zine *Sectioned* appeared in Chapter Three: Bed Bound). Mad Covid began in 2020 as a shared space for grassroots work by mental health survivors and service users that started during the coronavirus pandemic.[42] *Quaranzine* has both a physical and digital version. The zine in Wellcome's collection is a printout of the digital PDF. *Quaranzine* asks: what advice can people who have already had experiences of isolation and restriction of movement offer? The tagline on the zine's back page reflects a temporal sense of Covid as an extension of Mad time: 'We were mad before the world went Covid crazy'. Madness is a liminal state, or liminality is a mad one.

[42] 'Mad Covid', Mad Covid, n.d. <www.madcovid.wordpress.com> [accessed 11 April 2024]

Mad Covid's *Quaranzine* is, of course, a quaranzine, and so falls into some of the generic temporal elements that I described earlier, reproducing a sense of life before (and after) Covid. But not all the contributions to *Quaranzine* share the same temporalities around COVID-19, and the zine is framed through a connection between previous experiences and the present day of lockdown which disrupts the idea of the Covid lockdowns as out-of-the-ordinary. For example, Charlie's contribution to the zine draws from their experience detained on a psychiatric ward to offer advice on coping with isolation. This also connects to the practices of crip doulaing I explored in the previous chapter. The introduction to Mad Covid's *Quaranzine* describes a hope that 'it offers a different perspective on how we survive isolation in a way that other narratives on the pandemic may have missed'.[43]

Also connected to doulaing, some of the contributions to *Quaranzine* are orientated towards (different) futures, framing Covid as a time of potential. Human Bean Zines writes in their contribution:

> I hope there's a permanent shift, after all this, to making things more accessible. Online meet ups, flexible hours and working from home, more deliveries and click and collect options for shopping. These are things that many of us needed always, and they are only becoming the norm now non-disabled folk need them.

In their conceptualisation of Covid as a liminal hotspot, Stenner and Kaposi articulate that the unknown future, the other side of this liminal period, is one that they, and the field of social psychology are implicated in creating.[44] Their call suggests the responsibilities of libraries and archives not just to passively collect Covid zines, but to engage in the creation of the future. How many libraries and archives, Wellcome

[43] Mad Covid (ed), *Quaranzine,* npn.
[44] Stenner and Kaposi, 'Virus ante portas'.

Collection included, returned to business as usual after lockdowns, ending online programming, consigning their Covid zines to the historical record? Where *Contagion* invited Covid Time as extended backwards, to before the start of the Covid pandemic, the following zines extend Covid Time forward, into the present and future, and crucially beyond the apparent 'end' of the Covid pandemic. These zines, returning to Ortiz's idea that Covid zines will be a 'time capsule for the future', call into question this future.

The Covid Logs was created in 2024 by Katrina Dreamer and Michelle Dawn 'to provide space for chronically ill and disabled folks to express their feelings about living through an ongoing pandemic'.[45] It is not currently in Wellcome Collection, and I accessed a digital copy online. In their introduction, they describe wanting the zine to be 'exclusively for disabled and chronic illness communities because we've experienced time and again that people who are not currently sick or disabled have not been capable of holding our feelings in a meaningful way.'[46] They describe a dissatisfaction with current rhetoric around COVID-19: 'we didn't want stories about "how horrible lockdown was" or "the way we all came together". All of us who contributed to this volume know that there is an enormous chasm between these worldviews'.[47]

In her poetry contribution to *The Covid Logs*, 'when your sick friend nurses you through covid', mera kelley-yurdin describes the care a sick friend offers in nursing their non-sick friend through covid. She describes drawing on and offering sick knowledge. In the final stanza she articulates a dynamic of caring for the (otherwise) well:

> when you are up from your sickbed and return to your every day life,

[45] Dreamer and Dawn (eds), *The Covid Logs,* npn.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

she will still be snacking in bed.
and resting when she can.
and swallowing herbs and pills.
and bored of watching all the shows.
the wisdom I gave to you, is my every day life.
will you ever check on me?[48]

The idea that the knowledge a sick person shares in the context of Covid is their every day life, outside Covid, connects to Mad Covid's *Quaranzine* and the ways that mad, crip and sick knowledges of isolation, mutual aid, and sickness precedes the advent of Covid. The dynamic the poem describes in an interpersonal relationship parallels broader societal dynamics – a sense of a return (from the liminal space of the sickbed) for some but not all.

In their contribution to *The Covid Logs,* 'Covid Comic: Pandemic Ponderings…', Bug Cru opens with 'It's been 2 & a half years since Covid Era began & contrary 2 what you might expect… things make less & less sense as time goes on'.[49] Their comic ends with two panels side by side, in the left, against a background of melting smiley faces, a hand scrolls a phone, with 'Doom' repeated on the screen. In the right panel, a dandelion grows through the cracks of a pavement as people walk by. Text across the two panels reads: 'It's symptomatic of changing times the way crisis fatigue has pushed us… …into futurelessness & apathy / But we can fight it & step up…History & our Predecessors are watching, in hopes we can rise up against climate chaos, capitalism & Eugenics'.[50] Cru characterises Covid as an era, rather than a crisis. Like several other contributions (such as Kendall Dickinson's 'Last Will and Testament' or Kelly J. Drumright's greetings

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

cards) Cru makes a connection to nature and the environment in their reference to the future (in the right side panel) through the image of a dandelion, evoking plant (non-human) temporalities.

The Long Covid Symptom Tracker was created by Jenna Rae Rudolph under the name Advocacy and Self-Care for Healthy Communities. It is in Wellcome's collection. It is a small (approximately A6) 32-page zine, with enough pages for a month of symptom tracking. Each page of the symptom tracker has tolls for recording energy level, mood, and sleep. It has a rating system which ranges between poor and good for 'Balance' and 'GI Symptoms'. At the bottom are check-boxes for symptoms experienced, a list of: shortness of breath; rapid heart rate; cough; joint pain; eye pain; muscle pain; brain fog; headache; dizziness; blurry vision; fever; hives; chest pain/tightness; other.[51]

As the zine evidences, Long Covid was 'made and named by patients, many of whom were literally situated outside formal spaces of science, medicine and care.'[52] Though the *Long Covid Symptom Tracker* is a tool, it is also part of this making of Long Covid – created in 2020, at a time before Long Covid had any significant medical recognition, by someone caring for their disabled family member. In her essay on epidemic time, Felicity Callard describes how in naming Long Covid, 'side-stepping the use of 'chronic' and 'post-' challenged how the time of suffering is commonly mapped by epidemiology and medicine'.[53] Covid time as not only Extended, but Long time is a challenge to 'the temporal and spatial forms that are commonly used to narrate epidemics'.[54] Covid time

[51] ASC, *Long Covid Symptom Tracker*.
[52] Felicity Callard, 'Epidemic Time: Thinking from the Sickbed', *Bull Hist Med,* 94.4 (2020), p. 727-743 (p. 729), doi:10.1353/bhm.2020.0093.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

as Long also contrasts with the imperatives for quick collecting by libraries and archives, and the ways that the speed with which people can make zines made them appealing to collect because of their immediacy.

Covid zines instead offer a site to understand Long Covid from and through the people making it. Returning to ways zines can be made from the middle of experience, from the extended liminality of ongoing illness, from Long Covid, unlike illness narratives, zines do not require their makers to be post these experiences. In March 2024, finishing this chapter, I downloaded three zines from a project called 'Pan End It!'. One of these, *Signs & Symptoms of Long COVID Zine,* takes the form of a long list of signs and symptoms of Long Covid. The zine reads like an extension to the much shorter list of symptoms in *Long Covid Symptom Tracker,* as if these have continued to accumulate over the three and a half year interval between the two zines. Future work in the zine studies and the medical humanities could follow the development of Long Covid zines in the subsequent years.

Covid Time as Grief Time and Eugenics Time

In zeir poetry contribution to *The Covid Logs,* Madison Rubenstein expresses a sense of being left behind, that is shared with other contributions to *The Covid Logs*:

> One can only survive so long in liminal space
> The world continues to turn
> And i
> Stuck in place[55]

[55] Dreamer and Dawn (eds), *The Covid Logs,* npn.

The feelings of tiredness, disillusionment and loss conveyed in *The Covid Logs* contrast to Human Bean zines' 2020 contribution to Mad Covid's *Quaranzine* which voiced a 'hope for a permanent shift' towards access and disabled futures. *The Covid Logs* articulates multiple dimensions of grief around Covid. In their introduction to *Sore Loser*, Alland and Hernández also explore this multiplicity of qrip (queer crip) grief: 'There is the grief of a larger number of lost friends and family. There is the grief of distance, isolation. There is the grief of realising we're not valued to the point of being disposable'.[56] They ask: 'How do we begin to mourn such loss?' In this section, I expand from the previous chapter's discussions of Crip doulaing as holding space for the grief of losing people, to a wider sense of qrip (queer crip) grief, connecting this to temporalities of Covid through Samuel's description of Crip Time as Grief Time, and through an exploration of the temporalities of eugenics.[57]

Writing this chapter I have been keenly aware of the overlaps and intersections between forms of grief, and what it means to work in grief time. When my wife Abi's nan Ina died in December 2023, we observed that it was catching COVID-19 the previous summer that led to her rapid decline in health, although this was not reflected in her death certificate. Some of the grief has related to the ways her death was not inevitable, not the right time, too soon. As I worked on this chapter in the wake, I marked time off in my bullet journal, portioning out blocks from my day, and then marking these complete, or interrupted – often by Abi's grief, which demanded my attention.[58] To be attuned to time, in this chapter, is partly to attend to those unfilled gaps in the log of hours worked, the

[56] Alland and Hernández, *Sore Loser.*
[57] Ibid.
[58] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Duke University Press, 2006), p. 32.

array of symbols where I attempt to account for time not spent working – time spent grieving, or attending to another's grief.

Sore Loser includes cut and pasted and handwritten quotes, as well as a reading list given at the end, that connects the grief of bereavement and discussions of qrip funeral planning to other forms of qrip grief. A quote from Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, which has also been a key text in this research, on the first interior page of the zine describes how 'feelings of grief and trauma are not a distraction from the struggle'. Alland and Hernández articulate grief as part of the political work of disability justice. In the full transcript of the zoom conversation that is partially reproduced within the zine, Alland elaborates on grief in a social model of disability:

> As disabled people, we experience grief at the loss of public and social life, and loss of quality of life. But mainly because of the societies we live in, not so much because of impairments. Obviously that can be a factor, but more because of social disablement.'[59]

Their poem in *Sore Loser,* 'Ghost Poem: The Road Cuts Through Us' emphasises that this is not a new grief or one limited to the time of the Covid pandemic:

> "We've been over this,"
> I scream at my pretend-therapist.
> It was called the 90s!"[60]

Sore Loser also includes a quote from So Mayer's *A Nazi Word for A Nazi Thing* where Mayer discusses queer theorist Douglas Crimp's 'militant melancholia' in AIDs activism.[61] *Sore Loser* expresses a need for cultural forms that can hold unfinished grief,

[59] Alland and Hernández, *Sore Loser,* npn.
[60] Ibid.
[61] So Mayer, *A Nazi Word for a Nazi Thing* (Peninsula Press, 2020), p. 136.

without resolution. Alland and Hernández's question of 'How do we begin to mourn such loss?' suggests the difficulty of even starting mourning – in part, because we are not finished losing. In the zine *A Place of Honour,* part of *Holding Title,* I ask: 'what would it mean to create a memorial to being sectioned whilst people continue to be sectioned?'[62] *Sore Loser* demonstrates a need to explore the cultural expressions of grief beyond static memorial, closure, and the potential of zines for this.

In their online article 'Grief Belongs in Social Movements. Can We Embrace it?', offered as further reading at the end of *Sore Loser,* poet and media activist Malkia Devich-Cyril connects grief to the political state of 'interregnum', which returns to Stenner and Kaposi's framing of the Covid pandemic as a liminal hotspot. Devich-Cyril suggests that the 'capacity to grieve' is vital to the political work necessary in this interregnum to bring about social change, to create the futures that are not guaranteed in a liminality without a clear destination. *Sore Loser* points to how zines contribute to 'build[ing] a movement with the capacity to grieve'.[63] It demonstrates how zines can figure in the work of disability justice in finding ways to 'develop resilient adaptations that increase the elasticity of our responses to loss'.[64]

Alland and Hernández also articulate 'the grief of our desired erasure', which they name 'eugenics grief'.[65] In their poem contribution to *The Covid Logs* '23 April 20', H. Peeler describes 'fateful decisions / popped out by / administrations / and management' and how 'our lives are slammed on scales / with varying magical weights'. Many

[62] Lea Cooper, *A Place of Honour* (Self-published, 2024), p. 3.
[63] Malkia Devich-Cyril, 'Grief Belongs in Social Movements. Can we Embrace it?', In These Times, 28 July 2021 <https://inthesetimes.com/article/freedom-grief-healing-death-liberation-movements> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

contributions to *The Covid Logs* make explicit the connections between the Covid pandemic and eugenics – as Sarah Brannan pointedly writes in her poem 'Tell me your name isn't Francis Galton / himself'. The enduring grief of these zines, and their construction of Covid Time as Grief Time, resists temporal constructions of Covid that enable and legitimise eugenicist policies that we've seen enacted by governments throughout the pandemic. Instead, *Sore Loser* articulates the specific grief of 'realising we're not valued to the point of being disposable'.[66]

A key site from which to examine the temporalities of eugenics in Covid is the politics of memorial and commemoration. In David Tollerton's 2022 report 'COVID-19 Remembrance and Reflection: Lessons from the Past and Attitudes in the Present' he suggests that because of the unclear end to the Covid pandemic 'the time to consider how society best reflects upon the pandemic is therefore now'. Partly this is because of the links to personal bereavement – the effects of which 'can hardly be postponed until the aftermath of the pandemic'.[67] But, as *Sore Loser* explores, memorialising is not a neutral action. The UK government has started the mechanisms of memorialising Covid: the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration was formed in July 2022, and reported back to the UK government in September 2023. The language of the commission's report places it firmly in the rhetoric of remembrance mobilised around, for example, the First and Second World Wars: 'how to make sure the events of the

[66] Alland and Hernández, *Sore Loser,* npn.
[67] David Tollerton, 'COVID-19 Remembrance and Reflection: Lessons from the Past and Attitudes in the Present', March 2022 <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10871/128948/Tollerton%20AHRC%20report%20'COVID-19%20Remembrance%20and%20Reflection'.pdf?sequence=1> [accessed 11 April 2024]

pandemic and the experiences we all went through are not forgotten'; 'the sacrifices made by so many during the pandemic will be remembered for years to come'.[68]

In Aisha Mizra's 'fagony aunt' article about Covid and grief on gal-dem, included in *Sore Loser*'s further reading, they describe 'the lack of acknowledgment of grief is a tool of civil control used to gaslight the masses into believing there is nothing missing, but we know better'.[69] The UK Commission on Covid Commemoration is concerned both with remembering only certain parts of the Covid pandemic, and in 'remembering', creating a particular temporality of Covid which locates it in the past. The grief articulated by *Sore Loser* and *The Covid Logs* is powerful because it names what has been lost, what is missing, and refuses a smoothing over of these losses through memorial, or a temporality that locates those losses in the past, rather than ongoing.

In Ray J. Soller's poetry contribution to *The Covid Logs,* which responds to the death of their grandmother by COVID-19 in the Spring of 2022, they refuse a narrative of inevitability – troubling the claims to 'diligence' and 'competence' that was 'vital to British political discourse on this pandemic': [70]

> if covid kills me
> don't tell them
> it's okay-
> tell them it was
> *wrong*.

[68] 'Commission recommends how Covid pandemic should be remembered across the UK', GOV.UK, 18 September 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/commission-recommends-how-covid-pandemic-should-be-remembered-across-the-uk> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[69] Aisha Mirza, 'Queeries: everything is going back to normal but what do I do with all this grief?', Gal Dem, 24 July 2020 <https://gal-dem.com/queeries-everything-is-going-back-to-normal-but-what-do-i-do-with-all-this-grief/> [accessed 11 April 2024].
[70] Lee Jarvis, 'Covid-19 and the politics of temporality: constructing credibility in coronavirus discourse', *Critical Studies on Security* 9.1 (2021), pp. 72-75, doi:10.1080/21624887.2021.1904363.

we made a mistake.

it could have been different[71]

Reflecting on healing from eugenics grief, Hernández suggests the importance of conversations like those the zine documents: both the process of these conversations and the process of documenting these conversations.[72] The title of Soller's poem in *The Covid Logs,* 'if covid kills me', and its final bracketed instruction '(read this poem at my funeral)' feels resonant of David Wojnarowicz's 1988 leather jacket that read: 'If I die of aids – forget burial – just drop my body on the steps of the F. D. A.' and connects the contributions of *The Covid Logs* to other forms of crip activism and art that resists politics of eugenics. As Devich-Cyril describes, 'we need action to metabolize grief and transform our material and cultural conditions'.

At Edinburgh Zine Festival in February 2024, I was replenishing the boxes of masks at the front entrance when I overhead a group talking as they put masks on – 'it's like some kind of PTSD' one half-joked. I observed the tensions between different temporalities of Covid in this space, and reflected on work, including Callard's, on the temporalities of 'post-', including its colonial and racialised implications.[73] In this space, Covid time matters in the ways it translates to the material conditions around us. This is reflected in the zine *How and Why to Organise Covid Safer Zine Fests,* part of *Holding Title,* where I share my experience of organising Edinburgh Zine Festival between 2022 and 2024. In doing so I connect my own temporalities of Covid, with actions that organisers can take:

[71] Dreamer and Dawn (eds), *The Covid Logs,* npn.
[72] Alland and Hernández, *Sore Loser,* npn.
[73] Callard, 'Epidemic Time'; Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,* (Princeton University Press, 1995).

‘there is nothing radical about a zine fest that participates in the eugenicist project of “LIVING WITH COVID”’

Sore Loser is not a quaranzine. To describe it as such would be to locate it in a temporality of COVID-19 that denies experience of disabled people continuing to shield from the pandemic. As disabled, ill, queer and trans migrants who are also respectively POC and working poor, Hernández and Alland come from several of the most at-risk backgrounds. Their work seeks to highlight connections between those most affected by health injustice and eugenics, and embraces the ongoing need for safety mitigations.[74] These zines do not just refigure epidemic time, but offer alternative temporalities to those recruited in eugenicist political narratives, both making clear how Covid Time is Eugenics Time, and resisting this through crip temporalities. Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, zines such as *Sore Loser* offer a vital site to build on existing work on the political temporalities of eugenics, memorial and commemoration.[75]

The Ethics of Covid Zine Collecting and Research

The temporalities of Covid discussed in this chapter are not politically neutral. Following on from his analysis of the temporalities of political speeches during the first six months of the Covid pandemic, International Politics scholar Lee Jarvis invites scholars to pay further attention to how certain temporalities of Covid are constructed and used politically. Quaranzines don’t offer naïve first-hand sources of lockdowns and

[74] San Alland, email to the author, 9 April 2024.
[75] Examples of work related to temporalities of eugenics include: Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip;* Douglas C. Baynton, ‘”The Pushful Days”: Time and Disability in the Age of Eugenics’*, Health and History,* 13.2 (2011), pp. 43-64, doi:10.5401/healthhist.13.2.0043*;* Chris Renwick, ‘The task of Sisyphus? Biological and social temporality in Maurizio Meloni’s *Political Biology’, History of Human Sciences* 31.1 (2018), doi:10.1177/0952695117729119a.

quarantine. They offer a site to interrogate the production of this genre of zines, the relationships between zine makers and libraries, and how even zines as a purportedly radical, marginal media were implicated in producing politically useful temporalities of the pandemic.

Throughout this research, I have foregrounded attending to proximity and positionality as a key part of a zine methodology. I found this most difficult in this chapter. I am conscious of own temporal orientations to the coronavirus pandemic, and to the ways I do and don't enact disability justice in my day-to-day life. In my methodology I discussed how to respond to zines in a way that was ethical. I am left with a feeling that the ethical response as a researcher to many of the zines in this chapter (but particularly *The Covid Logs* and *Sore Loser*) is to engage in more Covid mitigations in my day-to-day life. I find myself wanting to describe the ways I engage in Covid safer practices in this chapter to justify writing about these zines. A discussion of Covid zines disrupts the assumption that zines are a straightforward form of collective memory in part because it disrupts assumptions about any homogenous zine community. Zine communities continue to replicate the same disabling structures as the wider social world. Many zine fairs in the UK no longer take any Covid precautions. To suggest that we are now in a period 'post' Covid is to write over the realities of zine makers who continue to shield, and to ignore the time I am writing in, right now, where COVID-19 continues to circulate amongst people I know, continues to disable and kill.

The very act of writing about 'Covid zines' suggests (or requires) an ethics. For example, the scope of Covid zines prompts a question that connects to this chapter's focus on temporalities of Covid: Is every zine made since March 2020 a Covid zine? Covid zines,

and reading for temporalities of Covid, is as much to read for the absence of Covid in some zines, and not others. An attention to time, and an understanding of temporalities as political, requires paying attention to the temporalities I construct and inhabit in writing this thesis and the accompanying zines. There is a way of writing about Covid that is ethical: for example, I have been careful to not shorthand the Covid pandemic to 'the pandemic' as if there could only be one I am referring to, or collapsing the period of lockdowns with the period of the Covid pandemic. This understanding of the ethics of writing about Covid has been hugely informed by the work of WWHIVDD on cultural production around HIV/AIDS – and in particular the texts *Twenty-One Questions to Consider When Embarking on AIDS-Related Cultural Production,* and the following *Twenty-Seven Questions for Writers and Journalists to Consider When Writing About Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS* .[76]

In their blog, Tansey explores how projects around documenting the everyday of COVID-19 are part of a broader pattern within archives. They raise some of the ethical issues at play in this type of collecting. Tansey considers the impulse to document COVID-19 alongside the impulse (or not) to document the Black Lives Matter protests amongst archivists and within GLAM institutions. The ethical dimensions of this in-the-moment collecting are further discussed in archivist Anna Sexton's essay 'Covid-19 Collecting: Is Ethics at the Table?'. Tansey asserts 'that we are entitled to people's trauma in the service of constructing a comprehensive historical record, despite the fact that few of us have any meaningful training in trauma-informed practice. This is incredibly fucked up'.[77] Tansey is concerned both with the traumatic nature of the Covid pandemic, and

[76] WWHIVDD, *What does a COVID-19 doula do?*.
[77] Tansey, 'No one owes their trauma'.

the fact that 'those who will be suffering the most from the pandemic…will have the least time, energy and ability to create a full documentary record of what's going on as it unfolds'.[78]

Wellcome Collection has actively engaged in many of these conversations on ethical collecting around Covid.[79] But there is a certain silence about the ethical implications of Covid collecting now. Rather than a neutral repository of zines with different temporalities of Covid, Wellcome is also implicated in temporal constructions of the pandemic. I have detailed in this chapter how the Covid zines in Wellcome's collection offer a valuable resource for future research on the phenomena of quaranzines, Long Covid, and temporalities of eugenics, but to do so ethically requires engaging further with questions of access, responsibility, and the ongoing nature of the Covid pandemic.

Conclusion

The Covid zines addressed in this chapter demonstrate liminality as a generative lens for zines: zines orientated to an uncertain future, rather than towards a stable centre; zines as becoming central (rather than marginal) to Wellcome's collecting during a period of liminality; and zines made from the ongoing liminality of Long Covid. They also develop understandings of liminality beyond a temporary experience between two established social states, suggesting answers to Bjørn Thomassen's question of 'What happens in liminal situations that unfold outside the spatial and temporal boundaries of

[78] Tansey, 'No one owes their trauma'.
[79] 'Collecting Ethically, Sustainably and Responsibly during COVID-19', Museums Association, 11 May 2020 <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/in-practice/2020/05/11052020-how-can-museums-collectingethically-sustainably-and-responsibly-during-covid-19/#> [accessed 11 April 2024].

expert-led ritual passages?'[80] Through the zines I discuss, this chapter explores a temporality of the Covid pandemic that isn't straightforwardly linear, that troubles constructions of the Covid pandemic as an all-encompassing period of societal liminality that we entered into from a state of 'normal' and have since emerged from into the state of the 'new normal'.

Writing this chapter, I kept worrying that maybe it is too soon to say anything about the Covid zines at Wellcome. Maybe we are still too close. But throughout this thesis, I have tried to understand and make use of proximity. Covid zines was a period of intense collecting activity for Wellcome, and served to demonstrate to certain external and internal audiences some of the value of collecting zines. This chapter is, in part, a test of this value (or a challenge to it): what do zines offer to an understanding of the temporal experience of the pandemic beyond reinforcing dominant temporalities? I have interrogated the assumption that Covid zines are reducible to quaranzines, and that these represent a collective memory of being 'in it together.' Instead, my analysis has examined how one of the values of zines as a form to record the ongoing reality of the Covid pandemic is in their capacity to foreground temporal, affective and socio-political differences. It has also highlighted some of the ethical tensions when institutions collect Covid zines. If Wellcome Collection is to avoid the subjugation of qrip knowledges of Covid, which diverge from the eugenicist, politically useful temporalities of Covid as a discrete and distinct period of liminality that we collectively entered from 'normal', and emerged from into a 'new normal', then it needs to consider the ways it is

[80]Bjørn Thomassen, 'Thinking with Liminality: To the Boundaries of an Anthropological Concept' in *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality*, ed. by Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen and Harald Wydra (Berghahn Books, 2014) pp. 39-61 (p. 41).

implicated in constructing temporalities of Covid across its activities – the ways Covid might be present in its collection but absent, for example, in its consideration of access to its gallery and library spaces.[81]

[81] As of April 2024, there is no information related to Covid on the Accessibility section of Wellcome Collection's Visit Us section of its website ('Accessibility', Wellcome Collection, n.d. <https://wellcomecollection.org/pages/Wvm2uiAAAIYQ4FHP> [accessed 11 April 2024]).

Conclusion

Reader, a confession: I make zines because I'm not good at finishing things. In the same way that I struggle to recognise and name internal sensations or feelings (like hunger, or anger), I have a suspicion that there is a feeling of being 'done' that other people might use as a metric for endings, but I cannot. Zines are accommodating of this. They don't demand full stops. The ways I finish a zine, in the sense of getting to the point of distribution, vary but never rely on when it feels 'done'. Instead, I might make a zine in a single sitting and call it finished when I can't stay awake any longer. I might work on it across several weeks until boredom pushes the button and I print it. I might work on it erratically across several months until the impending deadline of a zine fair forces my hand and I assemble the scraps and false starts into one place, print it and spend the night before folding and binding until my fingers are sore.[1] Even when printed, bound and distributed, there isn't a finality to a zine. I can make edits and amendments in between printings. These might be visible, for example by titling a zine 'Version 2', making edits to printed text with a pen, or acknowledging it in the text (as in *You Don't Need a Psychiatrist* where I note returning to the zine to edit and reprint it).[2] They also might be invisible, as digital methods of zine production allow me to seamlessly incorporate edits until there are multiple iterations of the same zine circulating.

Finishing a zine feels lower stakes than a practice-based research project such as this one both because of the dynamics outlined above, and because when a zine feels

[1] There are also the zines that remain unfinished, lingering in google docs, pages half assembled in a folder in my filing cabinet.
[2] Lea Cooper, *You Don't Need a Psychiatrist to Tell You You're Autistic* (Self-published, 2023).

irredeemable, when I feel so far from the person that wrote it that it feels uncomfortable or 'cringy', I stop distributing it, confident that it will slowly disappear from the world[3]. Unfortunately, this thesis is not a zine, and I face the unnerving idea that I cannot, once done and deposited, intervene with a sharpie in any meaningful way. Whilst it is likely that this thesis will be read by far fewer people than even the limited networks I distribute my zines in, it will still be there, in University of Kent's repository, available indefinitely to readers.

In this short concluding chapter, I first lay out what contributions this research has made: to zine studies, to the transdisciplinary study of liminality, to the medical humanities, to research that uses archives like Wellcome Collection's, and to Wellcome Collection itself. I then discuss paths not taken through the collection and the ways that the carrier bag methodology this project utilises invites beginnings, rather than endings.

Where have I been?

Beyond my own difficulties with finishing, this research is unlikely to feel done because of countless possible routes to take through Wellcome's zine collection. In this creative-critical project I have not attempted any kind of comprehensive review of Wellcome's zines. Instead, I have moved through the collection along lines of desire, orientated by my interest, location and the central thread of this research: the relationship between liminality and zines. Responding to the zines I encountered has involved both close reading and skimming, flicking and browsing, autoethnography, neuroqueer

[3] Although the assumption that a zine will gradually disappear is complicated when zines are collected and preserved in collections like Wellcome's.

phenomenology and assembling these in the ‘carrier bag’ of this thesis. This is a zine methodology that has been underpinned by the question: what would a zine maker do?

Central to this research was Wellcome’s zine collection. Started in 2016 with a focus on mental health perzines, the collection has expanded to include over 1500 zines, with the same concerns as Wellcome Collection as a whole: health and the human. I have also worked with zines not in Wellcome Collection. This was either because they aren’t in its current collecting remit (for example, born digital zines that aren’t designed to be printed), because they haven’t yet been collected, or because the zine maker doesn’t want to be included in Wellcome’s collection. Each chapter collects these zines, from within and outwith Wellcome’s collection, with other zines and wider media (tweets, songs, memes, films), as well as critical, creative and academic texts, and the original zines that I created as part of the practice-based element of this research. In constellating these together I offer both a sense of what is generative about these specific zines coming into relation to each other within Wellcome’s Collection, and the wider contexts and networks that form the archive that I’m working with.

I started this research in bed, and this location guided my first route through the collection: reading zines made from and about bed, and considering bed as a liminal space that sick, disabled, mad and chronically ill zine makers inhabit, make queer use of, and (re)produce in their zines. Where zine studies has tended towards a focus on the bedrooms of teenagers, this chapter offered a discussion of sick beds and hospital beds as key sites of zine practices. It proposed alternative genealogies of zines in the cultural products of sickrooms, and in hospital and prison newsletters. Writing about zines made in bed was as much writing about an orientation as a location. This work

then builds on and develops existing work on horizontality. Exploring bed as a shared site of making, reading and research offered insights into the imagined communities of crip beds, into sick beds not just as individual, personal or private liminal spaces, but as liminal spaces that invite real and imagined connections across space and time.

Of course, I did eventually have to get out of bed to visit Wellcome Collection when the library reopened to researchers in 2021. The movement back and forth into the archive prompted questions of ambivalence, embodiment, and access. In the same book where I read about Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's intimate connection to Gloria Anzaldúa via their sick beds, I read her discussion with Stacey Park Milbern about Crip doulaing.[4] As I considered and navigated my own ongoing movement into Crip, Mad and neuroqueer identities, I considered the zines I turned to in my personal life, and began following a parallel line through the archive that explored how zines enact Crip doulaing. I established the ways exploring what these zines 'do' contributes to a better understanding of Crip doulaing as a practice, and more broadly contributes to understanding what creative forms and media offers to liminal experiences – why we continue to make zines about experiences of transformation, transition, becoming and in-betweenness. This discussion of Crip doulaing contributes to understandings of liminality beyond the linear movement between two stable states, and instead considers birthing disability as a series of on-going becomings. In turn, reading these zines through a frame of liminality contributes to zine studies' understandings of why some people make zines, and what some zines can do for their readers. Though the chapter explicitly dealt with crip doulaing and disabled becomings, these merge with

[4] Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018).

Mad and Trans becomings offering 'doulaing' as a broader framework for zines and liminality.

I described in my introduction how this project's central questions around liminality developed partly in response to writing the research proposal during the first nationwide Covid lockdown in the UK. The Covid pandemic permeates this research. In Chapter Five, I discussed Covid zines explicitly, cautioning against subsuming all Covid zines under quaranzines. In exploring alternative temporalities of Covid in these zines (Covid time as Extended and Long, as Grief Time and as Eugenics Time), I demonstrated how these zines contribute to a conceptualisation of liminal time as more than a straightforwardly linear movement between two static states. This chapter emphasised the importance of not treating zines as a uniform whole, a single zine community or culture, something zine studies perpetually risks falling into. This discussion of Covid zines also brought to the forefront the ethics of zine research and collecting, and both the potentials of Wellcome's zine collection and the ways that Wellcome Collection is more than a neutral repository of zines, but is also implicated in producing temporalities of the Covid pandemic.

As well as the contributions this project makes to understanding liminality and to zine studies through following these paths through the archive, as a Collaborative Doctoral Award this research makes distinctive contributions to Wellcome Collection itself, including contributing to a history of Wellcome's zine collection, engaging in discussions of ethical use of Wellcome's collections now and in the future (and modelling good practice), making recommendations for the future of Wellcome's zines, and exploring how liminality offers a frame for understanding the zine collection. To

demonstrate that liminality is generative is not to say that it is the only frame, and this research has also felt out some of the limits of liminality, for example, throwing the weight of Wellcome's substantial resources behind preserving a core (canonical) collection of them in London creates a feeling of periphery and centre that is perhaps more productively framed through marginality.

Like zines, Wellcome Collection is not a smooth monolith, and this research has engaged with the various dimensions of Wellcome: the zine collection itself, Wellcome's frontline staff, Wellcome's librarians (who also supervised the project from Wellcome's side and were subject to the same seemingly constant institutional restructures as my academic supervisors at Kent) and Wellcome Collection as an organisation. These dimensions were illuminated in part by returning to my own positionality – both inside the archive (my zines have been part of Wellcome's collection since 2016), and far away from it (Wellcome Collection is in London, 450+ miles away from where I live). As this project was a Collaborative Doctoral Award, I was not fully absorbed into Wellcome Collection, and liminality has offered something generative to characterising this movement in and out of the archive, to my own position as a doctoral researcher, and to the feeling of having one foot in the door of Wellcome.

This location of one foot in the door of Wellcome, is behind a central contribution of this research to discussions concerning the ethical use of zines. These ethical considerations extend to other creative forms of lived experience in Wellcome Collection. Ethical use of the zine collection goes beyond practical issues of permission and consent, although these are central themes, to consider how to ethically read or use zines in research, how narrative can limit our ability to meet these ethical demands,

and other forms of response within research beyond interpretation, analysis, or narrativizing these creative forms. This contribution is addressed explicitly in the original zine I created, *A Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics*, and materialised in both this thesis and the accompanying zine collection. When talking about the zine collection, Mel Grant, Collections Development Librarian described how in 100 years, the zine collection would not have the same set of ethical considerations as it does in the present and would instead share the ethical considerations of other historic collections already in Wellcome Collection. Instead, this thesis extends the ethical concerns of the zine collection in the present to Wellcome's historical collections – offering new ways of looking at how these are used (within Wellcome Collection and by researchers).

The collection of zines that make up the practice-based element of this project, which I have foregrounded at different points and to different ends throughout this thesis, offer a different way of working with lived experience in archival collections. Some of these zines speak directly to the concerns of different chapters, whilst other speak less explicitly to the chapters and instead act as creative method, implicating practices of reproduction, distribution and indeed, collecting and archiving. These zines offer a further contribution to zine studies in exploring and documenting zines as a practice-research method. In exploring zine making as method, I offer to other zine makers ways they might be able to intentionally use their practice as research method, in both academic and non-academic contexts. I am less interested in suggesting to researchers that they could make zines, and much more interested in suggesting to zine makers that they could do research, particularly with collections of zines and DIY publications.

Throughout the four years of this research project, Wellcome's librarians continued to collect zines. Sometimes working with the collection felt like approaching the edge of the universe, only to find it expanding constantly ahead of me.[5] This ongoing collecting reflects the continuing production of zines and is key to the final chapter's discussion of Covid zines. It is a critical dimension of this research – zine makers whose zines are in the collection see in real time what zines could or would be used for in the collection. The ways in which I conduct myself as a researcher have the potential to impact the collection and the relationships between Wellcome's zine librarians and zine makers. Zine makers will be quick to note when a researcher or organisation has behaved in ways that are extractive or out of line with DIY values, and zine makers can, unusually for Wellcome Collection, request their zines be removed at any time. Wellcome's zine librarians value the trust they have built with zine makers and communities. But my ethical obligations aren't solely connected to Wellcome's ongoing relationship with zine makers and zine communities. I have an obligation tied to my own membership of zine communities, my own zine making, and my position as a psychiatric survivor, and as a mad, crip and queer person. These discussions have extended into other work connected to, but not the core body, of this research, like writing about Wellcome's zines for their online 'Stories' feature.

Where am I going?

In *Ill Feelings,* writer and art producer Alice Hattrick describes how 'Carrier-bag books are "full of beginnings without ends", holding initiations and losses, transformations and translations'.[6] In that spirit, the concluding section of this thesis isn't an ending, but

[5] Interview with Nicola Cook, Collections Information Librarian, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, 30 June 2023).
[6] Alice Hattrick, *Ill Feelings* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 321.

rather a further set of beginnings. Some of these beginnings are briefly addressed in or emerge directly from chapters of this thesis: What other beds, or domestic spaces like kitchen tables, can be (re)made through zines? What other experiences of 'becoming' can zines doula? What can the study of quaranzines offer to understanding political temporalities of Covid? What will Long Covid zines offer in the future? How can zines contribute to a study of 'eugenics time'? The relationship between paper and digital zines is present throughout this thesis: How might an exploration of the digital practices of zine making, digital technologies of zine making and the aesthetics of Canva offer insights into contemporary autobiographical productions? How do zine makers use digital technologies to engage with access?

In this research, liminality has offered a generative alternative to marginality in understanding the zines at Wellcome Collection – what some of these zines do, why people made them, and their relationship to politics and cultures of health and disability. The focus of this research has been zines around health, illness and disability, central has been the zines in Wellcome Collection. What further zines could be (re)examined through this lens? The scope of this research has also been limited to anglophone zines, mostly made in the UK or US. What might liminality offer to a geographically or linguistically broader study of DIY publications?

I have also demonstrated that zines offer much to the study of liminality, and particularly experiences of in-betweenness outside of bounded and ritually managed periods of transition between stable social states. In this thesis, I have used zines to reconceptualise and extend critical interdisciplinary thinking around liminality. The zines discussed in this thesis, as material texts, as traces of practices, and as archival

objects, (re)produce liminal spaces and temporalities, doula liminal experiences, and create from the midst, making visible what narrative often treats as chaos or absence and resisting the linear narrative form of Lived Experience. What other moments of our lives can zines illuminate?

I have been working on this research amongst wider communities and networks of researchers working with contemporary zines, zine makers and zine librarians, working together in ways grounded in zine and DIY practices – from thesis chapter drafts distributed at zine fairs, to writing research papers by post, to care packages in response to slightly self-pitying issues of *The PostBag*. Though it is impossible to properly reflect the collaborative nature of this work in a solo-authored academic thesis, it feels the least I can do is to end with an acknowledgement that the collective work of zine studies is ongoing, that this research is not the work of a single person, and so this is not an ending: I cannot, in fact, finish it.

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Appendix 1: Interview with Mel Grant, Librarian, Collections Development, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, April 18 2023)

Lea: I thought we'd just start by talking about what you can remember of the start of the zine collection at Wellcome? So, roughly, when it started and how it started I guess?

Mel: It began in 2016. And when it began it actually came from a proposal that was brought to the Collections Development team and that was Nic Cook that brought the proposal to myself and, at that time, the other collections development librarian Elizabeth Graham. So she [Nic] had some experience with zines and had collected some zines, so wanted to suggest us beginning to collect them. We came up with kind of an initial plan that, the idea would be presented at a Collections Development meeting. Every fortnight we have collections development meetings where staff can propose ideas for new acquisitions. That could be a single item, a whole collection, it can be really varied. The zines were taken to one of those meetings as an idea. It got a lot of support. People were really interested in them. So then, initially, we started collecting them quite informally at first. We didn't initially catalogue them fully, we didn't put them into our library management system, because we wanted to gather a set of material that we could look at and then help us think through a lot of the issues around zines: thinking about things like ethics, thinking about how we might catalogue them, how we might address lots of different kind of issues around them. That's really how it began. It seemed to me from the beginning like a very natural fit for us because we collect around health, we were looking to collect lived experience, and zines, and particularly perzines, fitted really nicely into that, because it was also thinking about bringing marginalised voices into the collections, and again that just seemed to fit really nicely. It felt like at the beginning it developed quite organically once the initial proposal had come through.

Lea: In that early stage did you have a sense of what you considered a zine? Were you fairly definite you would collect things that were only zines? How did you decide what would be included in that as opposed to where it would normally sit in another collection?

Mel: We'd found kind of definitions for zines and we'd also looked at things like the Zine Librarian's Code of Ethics [ZLCoE] so we had a sense of what a zine was. What was also interesting about that

was we realised that some other zines had already made it into the collections without us actively pursuing them or knowing quite what they were from the past. It was definitely something where it opened our eyes when we started thinking about actually what a zine is. I think also what it made us realise is there are some blurry lines between zines and other things as well, so I'd previously done quite a lot of collecting around graphic medicine and comics, and also Artists' Books, and it felt like there was some sort of blurred lines at the edges of each of those. And those things that sit on the borderlines of those we still talk about now when they come in because we do have to think: 'Actually which collection should this go into: is it a zine? Is it a pamphlet? Is it a comic? Where should it go?' And one thing I've noticed more recently is the increased use of zines, the word Zines for published material, and so that's another one that we have to actually sit and think about: 'What is a zine?' Usually we try and go with if the author has designated it a zine, then that means it is a zine and who are we to argue against that. But I have noticed recently that's become a bit more tricky for us with quite glossy, mass-produced publications being called zines. [laughter] So yeah, I think it was the ZLCoE and it was things like that that we'd researched online that that initial definition did come from.

Lea: Can I ask a bit more about those kind of conversations you have as a team when stuff comes in, because I think it's interesting, what tends to be stuff that comes up in those conversations as factors in deciding or things that you are kind of discussing or taking into account?

Mel: Sometimes the size of something, as in number of pages, can be a factor. How it's been actually constructed can be a factor as well, when we are thinking about what collection it goes into. Sometimes zines are really identifiable as like a folded piece of paper that's been put through a photocopier and then it feels very clear, but sometimes you'll find people have put more money into things and they've not necessarily made it themselves, they've sent it off to a printers and then you get into more of a grey area. Certainly when things have an ISSN or an ISBN, we will tend to not put those in the zine collection but sometimes they are called zines so I think what is difficult about that

is when we catalogue something in the zine collection, but something else called a zine is sitting outside of it, if someone wanted to see all of the zines that we had, that other thing would definitely be excluded from that list unless you just did a kind of general search. So it can create a divide between those things. This is why we try and have these conversations about where we should actually put something in the collections. Sometimes when things are more like art publications and can be larger in format, more complex constructions, and then we might want to think about: is it actually an artists' book, rather than a zine? And other factors, like even how much something costs, might be something we think about when we are making those decisions because some artists' publications look like zines but can be more expensive, can be higher production value, so in those cases it might be that they need a different kind of management to the zine collection and should actually sit with the artists' books collection.

Lea: I was wondering about, you mentioned how you felt like retrospectively that there were some things already in the collection that were zines but in other collections. I had two strands of thought around that: do you, would you go back to those objects and identify them as zines or connect them to the zine collection in anyway and if stuff comes in as part of a different collection, like you're collecting all the stuff from a particular project say, but it included zines, would you keep the zines within the kind of project archive, or would you bring them into the zine collection based on their form?

Mel: It depends. If something is part of an archive, this is definitely where we know zines have come into the collections without us necessarily actively collecting zines, because they've come in as part of an archive, with the archive it's about maintaining the integrity of that archive so we would keep them mostly with the archive itself. But then sometimes what will happen is we get a batch of material, and it might be a combination of things like serials, zines things like that. And the integrity of it as a collection isn't necessarily as important, so in those cases we would actually split them up into format based collections. But we would document where they came from, so we would make

sure that the source of that material was in the records for it. So you could still potentially connect them if you needed to, but largely in those cases we would separate them out and put them into the different collections.

Lea: That makes sense. You talked about how the zine collection started with a focus on perzines because it was around lived experience and that seemed a natural fit, did you have an articulated or written collections development plan or a sense of where you wanted the collection to go, informally, at that stage?

Mel: I think informally we sort of did, in the sense that, when we apply collecting principles to the collections, we apply the same principles right across the collections. We have a collections development policy that sets out we are interested in lived experience, that we are connected to Wellcome's bigger priorities such as mental health, one of their main priority areas, and that goes across the entire collections so we have to apply that to zines as well. We weren't creating a separate policy for zines, but we were looking at more, how we could pull them into what we were doing across the collections because what we try and avoid is having bespoke policy, or bespoke directions for smaller parts of the collections. It's about keeping the integrity of the whole collections and thinking holistically about the whole collections, So we were trying to see how we could fit those into what already existed, and they did actually fit quite nicely because we were already focused on lived experience, mental health, these were the sorts of things we were looking at. There is a very formal Collections Development policy for the whole collections, but in the beginning we didn't have to state what we would be interested in with zines because that's what we were doing with the whole collections. However, we did at a later date reference the Zine Librarians Code of Ethics in the Collections Development Policy, but it was in reference to how we would collect, rather than what we would collect.

Lea: Did you have a standardised way of acquiring zines? Did you have a sense of to buy zines, we do this, and this, and this? Like via Etsy or via a zine fair?

Mel: We spent quite a lot of time figuring out what the best ways to acquire zines were, but again we fitted those into other strands of collecting. We had a strand of collecting which was called event collecting, and that had originally been developed for things like, big trade shows, say there would be an Alzheimer and Dementia show where there would be healthcare providers but also people that were making products to make people's lives easier living in these situations, that kind of thing. So that kind of originated this event collecting stream, which we were then able to bring zine collecting into, but specifically zine fairs. We had already built protocols for that kind of event collecting, but we did add in extra things with zines because of how we wanted to approach people at zine fairs, the way that with some of the other event collecting, they're giving away free stuff, you're grabbing leaflets, but with zine fairs we wanted to talk more to the people that we were buying from and tell them what we were doing and have conversations where we were giving people the opportunity to not have things in our collections as well, so you don't have to let us have these things. So collecting at zine fairs did become part of the event collecting strand but with some added ethical bits that we brought into it as well, that weren't relevant for the other parts of event collecting.

In relation to other ways of collecting. We realised very quickly places like Etsy were great for buying and we were already buying things through Etsy, like comics. That was quite an easy thing to also buy zines, but again we bought in a bit of extra ethical behaviour. What we do with Etsy is when we buy a zine, we'll put in a note to the seller telling them what we are going to do with it and just saying if you want to cancel the sale, you can. I don't think anyone ever has, but we wanted to make sure that if we were going to zines fairs and giving people the option to not have their zines in our collections, that we were trying to replicate that across the board so places like, buying stuff on Etsy we would also try and still behave ethically and give people the option to cancel the order if they wanted to. We also collected quite a bit through social media, and so sometimes you message people on social media or people would have links in their bios, but usually with those we try and send them a little note first, saying if I buy this is that ok because it's going to go into this collection. And that has also impacted other areas of our collecting as well, so although we kind of added in extra bits to make

zine collecting ethical, that also impacted on collecting in other areas because then that ethical model influenced say our visual material culture collection. It was quite a good ecosystem of influencing between formats and different types of collecting.

Lea: So you said at the start that the collection wasn't catalogued, imagine I know nothing about Wellcome Collection – where did they go, and where were they if they weren't catalogued?

Mel: So initially because we just wanted to get a sample together so we could really look at the material and figure out how we might collect it in the longer term, there was an infamous spreadsheet which still exists but is not added to anymore. There was a spreadsheet where everything was listed in there when it was bought and that also helped when people went to zine fairs because they could take the spreadsheet with them to see if we'd already got a title in stock or not. They did go into our stores, and they were there, but we just needed a bit more time to think the collection through and think about how to deal with it, before we actually put the zines out there to the public. That's really where the spreadsheet came from, it was a way of keeping order but so we could give ourselves time.

Lea: So you've got this sample, and then what came next? Now, the zines are catalogued, and are accessible via ordering them, so I wonder if you can account for that transition, or whether there were any key moments in that process?

Mel: There was a report written by Nic Cook and Loesja Vigour which was looking at the work that had been done on the zines, looking at that initial batch of zines that had been purchased and really going through step by step all the different aspects of having zines in the collections. So, looking at everything from developing to cataloguing to policies that we should be looking at like the ZLCoE, making suggestions for the future of the collection and how it should be managed, and that was really key so that went to the managers, really to sign off on us continuing to collect this material and it did get approval so we were very happy. But I would say actually not all of the recommendations were taken forwards and it's quite interesting to look back at the report now, that was written in

2017, even since then our thinking and our way of working has progressed and now I look back at some of our initial kind of ways of articulating zines and thinking about them, and they seem quite remote now, so the language we wouldn't use now, some of the definitions we probably wouldn't use now,. It was quite interesting to go back to that report and see how far we've come since then. At that point, the report getting signed off and official sanctioning of collecting zines into the future, was really important. And what we had to do was decide what recommendations from that report we were going to fully take forward and how we fit zines into our work flows so that was one of the things that the report was looking at, so for me that meant that any work flows that existed around zines were properly documented in our procedural manual so we have to have a procedural manual where all of the library workflows are documented in. But I had to make sure that zines were fully incorporated into that and they were an integral part of what we do and how we collect, and again that was about making them fully a part of what we do, and not trying to have them as a sort of separate side collection doing its own thing over here. We wanted to make sure that we fully integrated them because by doing that, we're securing the future of zines, within our work. I think that was important. And then there was a launch, which was lovely. I think that was important for the public, seeing what we were doing, but before the launch it had taken a couple of years to get to the point of actually doing the launch because so much effort was put into thinking about how we collected them, how we brought them in, and then you know we had these zines that we did actually need to properly catalogue, get into our library management system, make them available to the public. There was quite a long lead up to the actual launch where a lot of work went in where the zines, once they started going into our library management system and became available to the public, but we were sort of doing it on the quiet for a while until we could properly launch them. But again, that helped us think through a lot of the ethical issues around zines and things like the cataloguing and it was really trying to give us the space and time to do that and not rush into things and then have to undo things afterwards. I think since the launch its really been quite functional and we iterate I would say, as we learn more we'll make tweaks to how we are doing things. I think

something that we probably didn't anticipate when we first started collecting zines is that people might want to remove them from the collections. It's very unusual with library and archive and museum collections for things to be easily removable, especially with a collection like ours that is a research collection. It's not like a university's borrowable teaching collection with high usage where things would get damaged, you get a new one. We operate a little bit differently. For example, we don't lend at all. So we had to think through things like that. How do we deal with material where the content is very personal and although someone might agree with us having it in the collections when we first acquire it if they change their minds how do we want to respond to that, because removal essentially is at our discretion, but I think we always wanted to try and build an ethical approach and treat things on a case by case basis and offer people options. We've thought through things like offering anonymity in the collections, so you can not be in catalogue records but still have your zine in there. And trying to have a few different options that might allow people to have a situation that suits them, with ultimately removal from the collections being a last resort.

Lea: It's a rich answer, there's a lot in there. The first question I had was, just from your experience, how often are Wellcome bringing in a new collection, and how typical do you think the pacing of the zines collection development is for a collection generally?

Mel: Well we collect a lot of different ways. We collect archives which we probably bring in, I mean it's hard to say, I'm not one of the archivists, probably every few weeks we bring in an archive and then I also work on for example art collections and we probably bring in two or three larger collections a year but individual acquisitions, there's a constant stream so there might be one every few weeks or every month, and then I think with zines we initially thought of them like books and printed and published material, so we have a constant stream of books being ordered, and they come in every week, and numbers on how many came in went a bit wonky with covid, but prior to covid we probably acquired about 2000 books a year so there would be a constant steady stream coming in. With zines, we collect them constantly in the way that we do books but we don't collect

them to such high numbers, because we put more time into doing it properly which means collecting less than we might do say books, because with books we don't really have to think about having a relationship with a zine maker or, you know, asking them if it is ok to put them in the collections What we try not to do is focus too much on numbers. What we try to do is what's right for the collections, and what's right for the people we are working with, rather than thinking about numbers too much.

Lea: Are there other examples of collections where, the art collections or archives you describe seem to around a particular place or person, are there examples of other collections where form, where the type of thing, is really what defines the collection, or is a core aspect of the collection?

Mel: I guess ephemera? A lot of the ephemera comes to us as individual items, again collected over long periods of time quite often. A major part of the ephemera collection would be the sex worker cards that we have in that collection, that were collected over a period of about 30 years and possibly in a similar sort of way to zines, in that it was slow, it was done over a long period of time, we were just looking out for what was available at all times. With the sex worker cards, they were in phone boxes so that was a very distinct way of collecting, but with the zines, social media has been really helpful for keeping on top of what is coming out, what is available and being able to follow, follow the trends in what people are writing about, looking out for things we might want for the collections. Historically we used to do a lot more collecting of large libraries, we do less of that now, partly because it became diminishing returns and a lot of the material we get offered from that kind of collection, is duplicates and we never duplicate anything in the collections, so a lot of the time we're turning down those sort of big library collections. That in the past we would have taken.

Historically the collections have very much been organised and defined by format. However, our current Collections Development Policy takes another approach. Overall, we think more about the collection as a whole and less about specific formats when we are collecting. Partly because the focus on format can be a limiting factor in terms of our thinking. Shedding some of our historical

practices around collecting within the boundaries of specific formats opened us up to collecting zines, also artists' books, which might not have fit into our previous ways of working.

Lea: The parallel between zines and the sex worker cards, is really interesting, especially in terms of the really specific sites where collection happens.

Mel: I think the ephemera collections probably the most similar in terms of, you know zines can be quite ephemeral and can be something that maybe disappears and there's a time limitation on it because quite often they're not produced in enormous numbers you know someone might print off 50 copies and you don't know if they're going to do another 50 ever again. The ephemera collection has some similarities in that we're collecting leaflets at protests and things like that, that will come and go, but can often have a quite similar DIY aesthetic, often things created quickly for protest and things like that. We've collected a lot of things, the sort of leaflets that might be given out in clubs around safer sex where they're small ephemeral items created for quite a specific purpose and if you don't get them then, you might never see them again. I think there are some similarities with ephemera there.

Lea: That makes a lot of sense. You mentioned a shift in collection rates because of COVID-19, but also in terms of that question of immediacy and producing stuff in the moment, I wondered if you could talk a bit about how or whether the zine collection was impacted by COVID-19, or the changes around COVID-19?

Mel: I think zines were the thing we collected most consistently through Covid and through lockdown period in particular, and part of the reason for that was because our buildings shut down obviously, we couldn't bring anything into the buildings. Wellcome wouldn't allow us to have things delivered, and they actually wouldn't allow us to have things delivered for about 18 months so even when we went back to work as staff, we still weren't allowed to have anything brought back into the building. With zines, because they were actually really small, we were able to buy them and get them sent to Nic who would catalogue them, and that gave her cataloguing work to do, but also meant we

could still keep collecting them, and because they were so small she was able to keep them in her home, and we would obviously never ever do that, have things sent to people's home in that way, but with the zines we thought it was a risk worth taking because with the zines a lot of people quite quickly started making zines about COVID-19. We also recognised that covid fatigue was probably going to come our way, and there would come a point where people probably weren't going to be that interested in taking their covid zines to a zine fair when they finally could, maybe 2 years later. So we recognised in these circumstances it was probably really worth us continuing to buy them, and I'm really glad we did actually because they were one of the most consistent things we bought during that period, and have added I think some really interesting perspectives to the collections around covid. And something that we did, off the back of collecting those, was we put out a call to staff to see if they wanted to make their own zines, and we didn't get a huge number, but what we got was so beautiful and so well thought out and that enabled us to add a staff perspective to the welcome trust archive, on how staff were surviving in this difficult situation. So it inspired this other small strand of collecting and was a really enjoyable thing for those members of staff and they reported back that they were really happy to have done that, and some of them made zines with their children and things like that. So that was a really nice thing to do and a really interesting way that not just collecting as we normally would also impacted on another part of our collecting as well.

Lea: That's really interesting. Have you had internal conversations about, I feel like from my perspective, COVID-19 really initiated a large number of digital zines and not just digitised ones, but born digital zines, don't have a printable option. And I wondered whether that had been part of conversations around collecting covid zines?

Mel: It's a really tricky one. So sometimes digital zines were made that were essentially kind of patterns that you could print out and fold it yourself and have it. So we did buy a bunch of zines where we could print them off, and we could fold them and we could add them to the collections. We've got some others that I think might still be on file, essentially, but we haven't been able to put

them out there. Where we've been able to get permission from zine makers to bring them into the catalogue I think we did that with a couple of zines, it wasn't very many, and with others, there's a longer term question for us around digital preservation and our systems, the capability of our systems which is something that is still very much in development and some big changes are going to be happening over the next year or so for us, where our systems will be able to make ingested material available online. I think when that capability is fully functional, born digital zines are going to be something we need to return to. It's a tricky one because sometimes people are selling their born digital zines and what we don't want to do is do anything that will impact on someone's ability to sell their work. We have to make sure that we're not putting something into our systems, making it available online, and that's impacting negatively on that person in any way. We've got a lot of big questions about that, we haven't fully addressed them yet, but I think its coming, and it will come when our systems are capable of doing it. We're working through a lot of that with things like born digital films and we are working through it with archivists and also artists, but we're right in the middle of working all that out. And I'm not confident in rolling out, bringing a lot of born digital zines into the collections, until I'm able to be certain in terms of what I can actually offer to someone making zines. And I think until that work is done we just won't touch it with zines. But it's there. We're very aware of them. But I want to be able to be clear, and when if I'm acquiring a born digital film, there's a layer of complexity of that which means you can work through technical issues with the person you're acquiring things from, whereas it feels like too much to ask when you're acquiring a single zine from someone,

Lea: And I could imagine the resistance!

Mel: Yeah I think once we've dealt with the big problems, with big technical problems, then I can roll it out to other things.

Lea: And then, in some sense this feels like a well trodden area of zine collections but I feel obliged to talk about it, in terms of digitising the existing collection, I'm curious about both the discussions that

have been had about digitisation, but also, digitisation with zines can also be a blurry line, because they are these visual, material objects, just photographing enough pages as illustrative photos, can count as digitisation in some sense. So I also wondered in terms of… well let's start with the first half of the question, what kind of conversations have there been about the digitisation of physical zines?

Mel: There haven't really been. Firstly, we don't have any plans to digitise the zine collection. But I think part of the reason we don't have any plans to do that is because of the complexities of the material that you find in zines, so there's a lot of sensitive information in there. You could easily have someone that has broken some sort of data protection rule, and then you've put it online and realised some sensitive information that shouldn't necessarily be put out there or online. There are copyright issues with zines. I think mainly the copyright issues you can get around them with things like educational use and artistic, reuse policies. But that's not really been put to the test so there would have to be a risk managed approach if we did it, the appetite for risk would have to be worked out with people making zines and we would need to consult with them. See if digitisation is desirable. Certainly with the rest of the collections, Wellcome has taken what it calls a 'risk managed' approach where a lot of material has been put online with a takedown policy and that was well researched by looking at how many copyright cases there had been, and how high is that risk, is the ability to access more material worth the risk of potentially having to take one or two things down occasionally? That works quite differently when you have material like books and posters, things that were made for public viewing, public consumption, in a slightly different way to zines. When it comes to thinking about actually digitising that collection, I think it becomes ethically much more complex. So, I can't see us having any plans to digitise it in the near future, but I think it is a thing that it will keep being a question that is asked, and I think probably, people really like zines, and they can be very visually appealing, and it can initially seem like such a great thing to make them available online, but actually it very quickly becomes more complicated than that when you start looking into the ethics of zines. So will it ever happen? I don't know! But maybe?! If it happens, it can't be done lightly, and I don't think it can be done in the same way that material like books and posters have

been digitised within our collections. Although as time passes and the collection becomes older the sensitivity does reduce so it might happen, but far into the future.

Lea: What I want to talk about now, for a little bit, is this question of who is using the zines and for what? And also maybe some of these potential future uses of the zines. Because you sort of mentioned a little while back how Wellcome Collection is a research library, and that is different in some senses to a teaching collection in a university library where stuff might get damaged and get taken out, and I wondered if you could talk a little more, about what that means, being a research library, and the ways that might relate to how the zine collection is currently used, but also might be used in the future?

Mel: I wonder if it is worth starting with how we view who a researcher is, because Wellcome put quite a lot of time and effort into thinking about this. So, there was a whole piece of work around how we see a researcher as anyone who wants to engage meaningfully with the collections, so that could be writing a PhD [laughter], that could be an artist looking for inspiration, it could be someone researching their family history, it could be lots of different things, Wellcome's definition was aboutthe purpose of using the collections, rather than what the specific outcome is, in that sense. You don't have to write a paper on the zines. We're collecting them so that if people have something they want to learn about, this material can help with that, then it is there. But what this does mean, and it creates a tension with zines, in that quite often zines are interacted with quite informally and there's informal networks of sharing zines, informal networks of selling, experiencing zines, doing zine workshops, all of these sorts of things and so having them in the collections does make it, your access to them and your interaction with them a bit more formal, and a bit more prescribed. I think that is a tension, but because we are a research collection that is collecting material to keep in perpetuity. That material is not necessarily just there to engage people today. We think in much longer terms, and what people might in the future find interesting for research. It is, a tricky balance really, with the zines in this sense of, in my opinion, we are doing something slightly different with

them, that might not be the purpose of why that person created that zine, but I think they will have value, I think they already do have value and I think they will have value, and continue to have value, and I think that is the thing that is important to us, is what they are expressing, and how they are bringing forward voices and individuals that wouldn't be represented elsewhere in the collections. And I think it's quite interesting when we interact with colleagues who work with much older material, like maybe work with the medieval collections, have suddenly become very interested in zines because they see a similarity in, firstly in the materiality, but also in the way that they are reflecting people's lives, and what can be drawn from them, and I think when you put it in those much longer term contexts, it starts to make a lot more sense in terms of how they exist in our collections and why but I do feel its slightly at odds with how zine makers might have intended them to be in the world.

Lea: It's interesting talking about that tension, and the reflections on colleagues working with much older manuscripts, because I wonder, in some senses, the people who made the older manuscripts, this maybe isn't how they intended them to be used, we have sort of the distance of history there, whereas we have a very active zine making community who, zine makers are relatively present, what do you think, even in the short term, I'm interested in this idea of imagining this future use, do you think that the, it's a hard question because its so speculative so feel free to be like 'Im not answering that' but 100 years from now, when the zine makers are all dead, you're dead, I'm dead, there's none of, do you think the zine collection will be in some sense treated differently, or in some sense continue to bring up these ethical and practical questions or do you think that's to do with its location in the present?

Mel: I think some of that is very much to do with its location in the present. If they were 100 years old, 200 years old, a lot of the ethical questions that we have around them wouldn't be relevant in a lot of ways, because we wouldn't have the potential to do harm to a living individual. And this has come up with other parts of our collection as well where we could have something created 100 years

ago and we could create exactly the same thing now and that thing now we need to be really careful with and think really carefully about how we bring it into the collections, how we provide access, the care we put around that, but if it is something older and there isn't that potential to cause harm, then a lot of those questions drop away and it is more about, not the creators of the original material, but how your contemporary audience interacts with, shifts moretowards the contemporary audience rather than both the creator and the audience. I think a lot of it is about time. Another example where we've had this outside of the zines is around COVID-19 and a series of films that have been made in a hospital in Newnham, and we are putting a huge amount of work into how we make that content available because there's stories about patients, there's stories about medical staff, some of that information can't be released publicly, so we are working to find ways where we could have a version of each of those recordings that is closed and will be restricted for 84 years and then there will be another one with the sensitive data taken out of it, that will be made publicly available online now. But we will also put a lot of effort into how we put care around those films, and thinking about how people interact with them, and we are very used to dealing with this kind of material that talks about people's lives in this way. The level of thinking about it has definitely had to increase because it is so recent and the risk of causing distress or harm is so much higher, and there are legal things like data protection, and public inquiries to consider.

Lea: I was just reflecting on this idea of time and distance and not causing harm, and I was thinking particularly about how, you acknowledged how zines are good way to bring in voices of 'lived experience' but also marginalised zine makers, or people underrepresented in the collection in different ways, and I was wondering if that also added an additional dimension in terms of your sense of responsibility to zine makers that you describe in terms of the ethics of collecting, and I wondered if that had been part of the conversation in collecting or part of the processes you put in place around the zines?

Mel: It's been a really big part of it, but its not been just zines. I do a lot of art collecting as well, and I would say that collection in particular, is one where zines have impacted on our thinking about ethical collecting, but also the art has impacted back as well. So there's been an interesting interplay with those. And also when I work with the archivists and they are bringing in archives, and we're working with either people who are living, or the families of someone recently deceased, all of the thinking around ethical collecting when it comes to zines, all of those collections impact on each other. What's good for one, we've then been able to apply across the others, so that all of our ethical collecting is constantly, hopefully, elevated, as we learn more. Because we try and apply the same principles across everything, we want to make sure if we're doing some really good work around zines, we're not just keeping it there, actually we're doing it across the board. So there's a constant interplay between parts of the collection and what we're learning from working with people, but that duty to creators in terms of care, its really coming through with how we work with artists as well, and things like, so for example we did some commissioning around COVID-19, and we implemented a wellbeing fund, and that was the first time Wellcome had done this, where it was a pot of money that artists' could draw on to support their wellbeing during the commission period and they didn't have to justify what they used the money for so they could either invoice us for some or all of it, however much they wanted from the pot or if they didn't mind us seeing what they spent it on they could just send us the invoices to us. So this is impacting on not just how we work with art, but how we think about paying for time and supporting people's wellbeing when we are asking them to do things for us, but we aren't making them jump through hoops to do it. Zines are an interesting one, because it's often very low amounts of money, but actually I think we need to think very seriously about things like day rates when we're asking zine makers to come in, and supporting people to understand their worth and that is something that has come from the work with artists is getting people to understand their worth, and their value, and offering them what we think is the right thing. And trying to apply that across the board, so with zines, quite often we get offered donations but we would say 'oh we could pay for this, would you like us to pay for this?' and making

sure we're always paying the top rates for things, because often there is sliding scale for payment, so they are all kinds of interplaying with each other and just helping us push all the time where we are offering financial recompense.

Lea: What do you see as the short term future of the zine collection? Where is it heading – is it carrying on as is, or changing direction?

Mel: Certainly for the moment it is carrying on as is. And we don't have any specific directions we are taking it in. I think what we are doing is responding to what zine makers are creating, and following that along, and it might end up, I know I mentioned the sex worker cards earlier, we don't collect them anymore because it got to a point where less and less cards were created and the cards that are still in production are often repeat images of things that have been used before, so it became a diminishing returns, they became less relevant, they fell out of interest, and out of production a lot of the time. So I think with zines it could be a similar thing, maybe if zine makers stop making so many relevant zines, we'll stop collecting them. For example, because zines have expanded into lots of different kinds of zines and you've got lots of sub-genres of them now, but we're really interested in perzines a lot of the time and that's what fits with our collections, but if zine makers lose interest in perzines and start making stuff about other things, naturally that collection will start to wind down, and that does happen with collections. Unless you make a very conscious decision to end collecting in a particular area, what's coming out in the world leads you and sometimes they naturally stop, and that's certainly my thinking that's probably the way zine collecting will end for us, is zine makers stop making them! But it feels like its ticking along very nicely now. Still, I think the zines are something we're very mindful of what we are doing and we do tweak what we are doing. Something I've definitely noticed recently is because we've done a fairly good job internally within Wellcome of talking about zines, and promoting the collection, other colleagues are getting more interested in them, different departments want to do things with them, that's been really successful with things like zine club, and there's a long running zine club and that's great. But there are some

other departments that are really excited about them and want to use them but don't know what we know about zines and don't know about the ethics so I think there's definitely in the short term something for us to think about around how we promote the collection and make sure that within Wellcome there's a wider knowledge of some of the ethics of zines and if people are going to be enthusiastic and want to put them in their exhibitions then they are behaving in a way that fits with how the collections are behaving, and that we are able to share that knowledge and share the time and effort that has been put into it, and make sure that we are all doing the same things, and not all working in contradictory ways.

Lea: That's a nice thing to end on, unless there was anything else you wanted to expand on or talk about?

Mel: I don't think there's anything in particular.

Lea: Ok, I'll stop recording!

Appendix 2: Interview with Nicola Cook, Librarian, Collections and Research Department, Wellcome Collection (Zoom, June 30 2023)

Lea: I thought an easier place to start, although maybe not, would be talking about how the zine collection started at Wellcome, from your perspective?

Nic: At the time I was a senior library assistant in a team that doesn't really exist in the same way anymore. I think that provides a little bit of context of how much influence I had (or not), but I do think my role was quite significant. My actual job involved doing retrievals and being quite hands-on in other parts of the collection, and I was always interested in the self-published stuff that we've got. Graphic Medicine was having a bit of a boom at that point as well, around 2015-2016. These were all things that were going on and I was finding pockets of interesting stuff. At that time we had this major digitisation project where we were digitising our own and archives from other places related to mental health archives, mainly historic asylum records. And there was some really interesting stuff in other archives that I was then finding like hospital magazines. In the journal collection I was also spotting, because I guess if it is on your mind you see what you are looking for, more photocopied stuff, rather than what I expected to be in the journal collection - proper journals and on the edge some magazines. So, I was starting to spot things. I was also seeing the rise of articles and people talking about zines online. I wasn't part of the zine scene, until that point anyway. I wasn't a zine maker, which I think is quite a natural progression for some people introducing zines into collections. If they are already in the culture and community then it is quite a natural progression. That has influenced a lot of things – including the way I thought about zines in our collection. I was seeing lots of things in the collection and lots of things online. We also had a fixed term funded project called 'Arts in Health' where we had a project to catalogue 'Arts for Health', the institutions' archive, and Mel and her team (again at the time her team was in a different form) were doing more collecting around arts in health. So there was this weird area of opportunity where I was basically like: zines are really creative, it makes sense to start collecting them. I approached my manager who encouraged me to approach Mel, and put forward a proposal to start collecting zines, and I went to a collections development meeting….Basically this is all a bit weird for me, because we had a massive transformation and restructure, and that posed a really good opportunity to just sneak something in,

and do something a little bit cool, but also means now my memory is a little warped. I remember though that Mel was incredibly supportive. She said we'll put a little bit of budget aside and you can start looking, scoping out, what's out there, and then start buying some stuff, and we can present it as a sample of the kind of things that are out there. At the time the focus was primarily on mental health, but the more we looked the more we thought we could just start collecting anything that fits within the current collection development policy, which hasn't really changed that much now in terms of format. The library was really drifting away from its previous identity, which was just history of medicine, being an exhaustive research library in that area, we were already drifting from that and becoming more lived experience, and less medical, more human? That's the bare bones of how it started. It was a discrete opportunity and Mel was the keeper of the credit card (which she still is) and was incredibly supportive in terms of getting a sample, and then it escalated from there. The spreadsheet that I sent you a long time ago was basically how I was recording what we were buying because also, at the time, something weird with the budget happened: at the time we were just putting zines through as 'Zines £10' and we weren't saying what they were and we weren't going into any granular detail, which is quite unusual for us. A lot of strange experimental activity happened and it was really good, because it just pushed the boundaries of what we were able to do. Before, I think we were like many libraries if you talk to them: 'oh our acquisitions policy is we can only order from these booksellers, and we can't just send random money through paypal.' That sort of thing. We were able to just do all of those things, and I guess Mel was hitting those hurdles, if she had any with the finance department, whoever is setting those rules, so it impacted on lots of different things we didn't think it would even at those real initial stages.

Lea: I think its really interesting and nice to hear a narrative of bringing zines into a library that isn't the more typical one, of the librarian being into zines, or somehow connected to zine culture, or a zine maker, and being like I want to bring zines into the collection. I think it's really interesting that in all the historical stuff that Wellcome have collected, it still had those moments of self-publishing or DIY media making that you were starting to identify. It feels like a different route in.

In terms of the practicalities, you got the sample and it grew, how did you handle that at the start, where were things sent, where were things stored?

Nic: I can't entirely remember. We just started collecting, without much thought about the future. With the idea of them being a sample, we weren't even sure if we were going to have a zine collection, or how they would sit. It could have been that they just went into the corporate archive, for instance, as an example of something we did at this moment in time. They were probably in boxes. Somewhere in the basement I think I've hidden an archive box of all the envelopes and stuff, because at the time I was like, this is cool, are we going to want to keep this? But we wouldn't keep anything else? But I don't want to throw it away! And Mel said to throw it away! And I was like do I eat the sweets that came with it? I ate the sweets. I didn't keep… well, I kept some of the stickers.

Nic: Right at the beginning, we weren't considering it in that way, we were literally just collecting, seeing what we could get, and taking it from there. It wasn't until me and Loesja [Vigour] put in a bid to go to the Zine Librarian's unConference in Long Beach in 2017 and part of that deal was for us to create a report of recommendations for the collection, which had grown to a few hundred at that time. We laid out everything that we wanted to do, including things that we knew we were never going to be able to do but we thought would be cool. It was at that point that we started to really think about the collection as a discrete collection, because another alternative would have been that we collect zines like we collect comics, and they just go into the pamphlet collection and we don't think about them too much. Particularly for us, the more that we built this collection, the more we wanted it to be a separate entity, rather than being subsumed into something else. That really determined a lot about the collection, but it really did come at the next step. Whenever I talk to people about developing a zine collection, I say: 'Just start it, and then figure it out later'. I think that was really important for us, because with the nature of zines – they're ephemeral, its fast, stuff goes, so we didn't want to miss stuff, which falls into that obsessive collecting in some respects, like 'we need everything'.

Lea: So that transition from sample to collection is interesting. What were the things you were *then* considering? So you dived in, got the sample, transitioned to a collection, what then were the things you were looking back and being like: 'Ok, these are the specific things that we need to talk about in terms of the zines, or make decisions about in terms of the zines'?

Nic: I guess at what stage are you asking that question? Are you asking it from what the zine collection is like now, or when we started to catalogue? Because for me there's many stages of the collection to where it is now. A very distinctive one: the spreadsheet was obviously needed, but it is not the way we work so we did something a bit different there. In hindsight it would have made sense to just accession the zines like we would anything else. They take as much time as a piece of ephemera or a pamphlet to accession. We did lose, in a way, that initial sample stage in our library management system. There are zines without order records, for instance, because we haven't gone back and added it, because it's too much work to do it with 250 zines. The growing of the collection was so fast, which was great, but we do stuff completely differently now, and the whole point of that is because I think it became important that people really bought in on the collection, and we didn't want it to be a dying collection, we wanted it to live as much as the rest of the collection, we wanted it to be valued as much as the rest of the collection. Treating them differently didn't work, because there was no point to doing that if it was just going to be part of your regular collecting, you might as well treat the zines like anything else, in an administrative way anyway.

Lea: I think it makes sense in terms of those stages, I guess my question was really about that moment where you were starting to consider, or you were starting to make decisions about what to do with them, as part of the process of writing the report, but also post report. But I'm also curious about that difference between then and now, I wondered if, you were talking about fast collecting and there's a sense of speed in terms of the acquisition and the growth of the collection was fast in those earlier stages, I guess like I'm curious about … its going to be a multi level question so we'll stack it, and then we'll break it down, so that practical side of how you collected then, which you've

discussed kind of in terms of social media and stuff, and now, and then also like in terms of when you were collecting, you were treating things that were zines differently, or like seeing them as part of this distinct project, so I am going to have to ask, the ubiquitous question, how did you feel out what was a zine, and has that changed as well?

So firstly, how were you and are you practically acquiring zines?

Nic: Again, my job and the restructure are important context here, and also having a supportive line manager at the time where I was able to put this into my work time. But, I was also quite obsessively looking for stuff, not in work time. Social media, Etsy, getting wish lists and gathering stuff, and emailing myself. It was an enjoyable part of being immersed in something that I think is still really exciting. I remember going to my first zine fair, and being completely overwhelmed by it, and then suddenly getting imposter syndrome. I think its really important to note that right at the beginning leaning on the zine librarian's mailing list and talking to people was invaluable. Just being able to have those questions about 'what is a zine?' Going into a scene that I wasn't a part of at the time, and then collecting it, I always felt funny about that. But I only got positive feedback from other librarians who had felt the same. They shared that the whole point is that you're valuing the craft, there's nothing derogatory necessarily about what you're doing, and if you go into it acknowledging your position, and then using that to influence how you go about things, that's a great step. I think that was certainly quite significant for me.

Lea: If zines were a distinctive thing, how did you feel out what they were at the time and has that changed?

Nic: Definitely at the beginning I thought of 'zine' as like the abbreviation of fanzine or magazine, and then I know naturally that term has become a word of its own. A zine can be more to people than just being a fan- or magazine, which has a different meaning to a lot of people because they physically look different. We have a journals collection, which has magazines in it, and I would say it has zines or zine-like material, and then there are things like newsletters too. I'm always on the fence

to what something is. The zine librarian group in the US have a very clear definition of what a zine is and isn't. It's a clear definition, but that's an oxymoron in itself. The whole point is that if the creator makes something and calls it a zine, we just respect that. So in the early part of the collection we have *Do What You Want: A zine about mental wellbeing*. It got coverage in The Guardian, but basically it is an anthology zine that is quite thick, that's about mental health, and it has an ISBN. We wondered if this should be in the zine collection, but on the front it calls itself a zine. That was the first moment of being like 'this calls itself a zine, but naturally it doesn't feel like a zine, it's very thick, it doesn't fit in my wallets, and its got an ISBN' but it is in the zine collection because it is calling itself a zine. We have things like that, we have things like commercially made zines, where they feel more like an information leaflet to me but again are in the zine collection. I think its more important for me now that the zine collection is established, and people are interested are in it, to remind people that zine or zine-adjacent materials exist elsewhere in the collection, and although the zine collection is new(ish), zine stuff does exist in our collection already, or things you might consider a zine. I guess that is an interesting thing, for people to use more of the collection than maybe what they were coming to look at.

Lea: Are there things outwith the zine collection that are in any way labelled as zines, and therefore findable as zines, in other parts of Wellcome Collection?

Nic: Not really. Some of the stuff that I would consider as zines are in the journal collection, and don't have any keywords as 'zines'. Certainly in the archive, there are zines in there but the only notable collection that has specifically put in "zines" as a keyword so you can kind of find them, is the DrugScope archive. I went down a rabbit hole of a zine called Bit. The only reason I knew this zine existed is because I saw the issues in the DrugScope archive and we didn't have the zine collection at the time. This is another thing we were really on the fence about: what the zine collection represented. It is a contemporary collection so we were wondered: do we start pulling stuff out from the library and put it in the zine collection? Or do we put in historic materials into the zine

collection? We still have those questions. A lot of our work, in my feeling and Mel's feeling as well, is questioning ourselves all the time. We encourage our archive colleagues to pull out printed and published materials from the archive collections so that we can catalogue them to a library standard where you can discover them a bit better. And one archive is the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS). What came out of that collection was a lot of radical, underground publications. One or two we put into the zine collection, so there we decided that the historic material did belong in the zine collection, rather than just putting them in the pamphlet collection, which is where they would have normally gone. A caveat on that is the way we describe our collections is quite loose. It is mainly based on how something is housed, and how it will be retrieved, rather than what the thing is. The pamphlet collection isn't just pamphlets and leaflets, its lots of stuff including comics, so it can be unwieldy. That's a reason we didn't want to put all the zines in there because they would risk getting lost in quite an expansive collection.

Lea: In terms of getting lost, and how they are accessed, that feels like it leads nicely into thinking about the zine collection as it stands now. I'm curious about hearing about the transition between establishing the zines as a collection and now, so the process to now, and then where the zines stand now in terms of how they are stored, catalogued, organised and accessed at Wellcome.

Nic: Nothing has really changed from the first thing we did, because we had to establish all of those things before we started. The first thing was 'how are we going to house it?'. We decided to do it the in the same way as the pamphlet collection, as this worked for the pamphlets. We keep them in Melinex sleeves, and in magazine boxes. There was the major dilemma, at the start, of where the zines would be. We wanted them on the open shelves, and we had to put them in the closed stores. Part of the restructure I mentioned was that one of the main objectives was to become an accredited museum – this is different to being a library and archive. A lot of what we were doing was tied, and still is, to museum accreditation. It was only recently, in 2023, that we had the proper discussion with Mel's team [Collections Development] about what part of the collection the zines will be a part of,

because things get treated differently. My hope was that they would be a living breathing zine collection, and wouldn't be subjected to museum accreditation standards. Only things that are special and important are subject to museum accreditation standard. If zines become part of the core collection, which is how it is described, instead of the support collection, then how they are treated changes.

Nic: I've lost sleep over this! Essentially it means that you can't just deaccession something, you have to go through a process of deaccessioning. It also means that there's so many levels of what you have to do. It has to be catalogued to a certain standard, and it has to be housed and located to a certain standard as well. The idea of having a collection where we don't really care if things go missing, or we do but, its worth the risk, for getting zines to the people who just want to chill and read a zine. Even though we still haven't reached that conclusion of where they sit in the collection, these discussions were part of that report, which discussed the reasons we might want to do things differently. There were some really specific things that we recommended, things like creator informed acquisitions – although we didn't have anything as formal as for example Edinburgh Zine Library, where you have an acquisitions form. In hindsight I feel like we should have implemented that from day one, but it didn't happen. It influenced how we collect zines - it was important for us to always put a note with the order to say that we are collecting this for this zine library, you reserve the right to refuse this order and cancel it if you don't want to be in the collection, but also if you have any questions, email us. We didn't used to do that. That's quite time consuming, and I don't know how much of that influences any other part of the collection.

As part of the restructure we got a new website. I'm a cataloguer, so all of my work now is reliant on the website and what people see and how people discover things. At the time [of starting the zine collection] we had an old catalogue, that had certain functionality in it like the statement 'any comments or concerns, email us' as a natural mechanism for people to get in touch, which was on everything. We lost that with the new website, so we made sure that all of the zine collection have

the line in it to say: if you have any comments or concerns or if there's anything wrong or if we've represented you incorrectly in this catalogue record about your zines, do get in touch. That was really important for us to retain that element of passive collaboration with the creator like: 'we've done this, we can't reach out to you when we catalogue something we just don't have the time, but here's a way of getting in contact with us if you want to'. And it has worked. In terms of deaccessioning stuff, I feel confident that if people googled themselves and found their record, they'd know to contact us to get it removed if they wanted to. I feel confident that that is a good thing. And also I know Queer Zine Library also put it into their catalogue records as well.

Lea: We were chatting about, you talked about museum accreditation, you talked about how they are accessed and then we went onto kind of where they are, and then there was the discussion about open shelves versus in the stores, and then the reasoning behind that linked to museum accreditation.

Nic: The whole open shelves and closed shelves thing was really significant. We had the birth of The Reading Room in 2016 and that was a space that we had books in it which weren't part of the library collection. We didn't care about those books in the same way we would in the library, so we did loose stock checks but nothing big. There were interesting opportunities to do things differently, and we thought that there might be interest in doing things slightly differently with the zine collection. But because they were part of the library collection we really were restricted to having a space where we could do something. When you come into the library it's a big vast space, but there's not a lot you can do with it. I think one of our recommendations was that we wanted a bureau in the gallery, which is the balcony area, and we wanted all the zines to be in there, but we also wanted drawers filled with stuff where people could make stuff, and we wanted somewhere where people could donate. This would be our dream scenario. In reality, they had to go down in stores and that was quite difficult for us to think about the zine collection, all of our hopes and dreams for it, and then it ended up just being, you can request 20 zines at one time, and we then take them out of

Melinex sleeves and then read them and then hand them back. It's also even worse now I would say, as COVID-19 happened and a lot of how our library operates has changed and hasn't changed back because of it. Specifically you can only request 15 items now rather than 20 and you can only view closed store materials in the Rare Materials Room, and all of this goes against how I feel the zine collection should be accessed. Actually, for a lot of the collection I feel that it is a major barrier but I have no control over this, I have no influence, so I just suck it up and deal with it.

Lea: Me too. Frantically emailing Wellcome librarian's being like: 'please, just one more zine!'

I'm curious, you pitched that dream scenario of the zines in the gallery, and a making space. Would that still be your dream scenario, or do you feel differently? If we were playing fantasy zine collection.

Nic: It's difficult for me to say, because my dream scenario is always going to be anchored in the library - part of the restructure was Wellcome Library, as an individual identity, being subsumed into Wellcome Collection, the museum. The Reading Room is a space that exists outside of the library, and is managed by the visitor experience, by the gallery staff. Mel and a project group did an intervention where they started collecting better books, more inclusive books, and some zines, for the Reading Room. You'll now find zines in the Reading Room, but there is no connection between the zines that just exist, and the zine making that occurs through events, and the collection in the library. I think my major sadness is that as I've had to drift away from the collection because of my role and my team, there's no true ambassador for the library and the library's zine collection, rather than just zines. This is fine, because zines are zines and if you're involved in them in anyway, that should always be encouraged. I'm not gatekeeping. But I feel like it's such a missed opportunity to not have that two-way street. I appreciate it's difficult for people to buy in to something that is essentially the baby of someone else, like we love it so much and its difficult to pass that baton on. I don't know how you would feel about that in terms of Edinburgh Zine Library? Like getting people to

be as invested in the collection as you are, I say the same thing to Holly [Casio] as well, that must be quite difficult for people.

Lea: I think with Edinburgh Zine Library it is obviously a little different because we aren't juggling, as an organisation, any additional demands or expectations, we are just the zine library – although with running the zine fest that has definitely split our attention. I think I know that we suffer from the like, I don't know whether there's an actual term for it, but in my head I call it the future death of the archivist problem, which is that I could tell you every zine in the zine library, where we got it, when we got it, and how you'd find the person who made it, but that information isn't recorded anywhere, basically because of GDPR, so, if I were to go under a bus, the zine library would continue but there'd be quite this substantial loss of some of the really foundational information to it. I think there's this double-sided thing to it, where I'm emotionally invested in it, it is my baby, but, I sometimes feel I want to stay in control of certain aspects of it, and in doing so I'm also not ceding control to other people to take it in the direction they want to take it in. I think it may be a problem, more broadly as well, within DIY organising generally. Its often why projects don't have a multi-generation lifespan, because typically it's this one generation that's very invested and its very difficult to figure out how to pass that on. That's my theory.

Nic: I can relate to that entirely. Also the FOMO I get passing stuff on and feeling that I want to be doing it. Zine club is the main part of that. The zine collection is now just a part of the whole collection. Anyone can recommend zines. I'm still recommending zines all the time. But the cataloguing is in my team. I'm trying to garner some interest from other people to start cataloguing zines but that just takes a bit of time. And the zines are out there for people to use in engagement sessions and use in showcases. That's fine, I have no feelings about that, but zine club was also the baby, and I had to pass that on. It's been a bit of a slow starter but its become a great collective of people and I'm not involved really, anymore. I felt that I didn't want to go to meetings and stuff so they weren't looking at me for approval. That's really difficult. I also feel like people naturally drift

away from the collection, and I'm always like: 'oh remember we have the zine collection, if you're thinking about zines maybe think about things we've collected recently, you can find out what we've collected recently if you catalogue some stuff with me!' I feel like there's just some stuff I have to let go.

Lea: I wonder if also, from my experience I will often feel quite protective of the zines in our collection because… at EZL we're in a relatively priviledged position where like, we want there to be a particular set of rules or policies about how the zines are used we can just write it, we don't have to marry that up with existing structures really. I wondered if there was a sense of, whether you had a clear sense of, how…How articulated, externally articulated, or written down, or integrated as part of the collection is how they are used, or should or could be used, or the ethics about using them? You described how there was this dynamic, slightly unusual dynamic of when you are acquiring stuff, talking through with the zine makers themselves. So, I wondered how much of that was external to you, having an idea of how they could or should be used?

Nic: I think whenever anyone is doing anything with the collection I'm always thinking about where and what the collection is, and where it sits. Even in the initial stages we were always thinking through: What are we now? Research library. What could we be in the future? We still don't really know but that was supposed to be answered. And where does everything fit in the context of itself? We always have a mission and vision statement, which will change in the future. We are able to tell people what kind of library we are, or what material their stuff will sit alongside, we hope. If we are able to say: 'our vision is to be a place that challenges the ways people think and feel about health by connecting science, medicine, life and art', we basically can say to someone: 'oh your zine will fit perfectly into our collection because it covers this subject area'. We are a subject based library so we kind of expect people to be interested in the subject before they come through the door. In terms of how people can use material, that's so difficult to think about because we are always as an institution thinking about and not really addressing, but thinking about who our audience is, who we

want our audience to be, but also the whole question around what is research and what is a researcher and what does that look like. Although we try and say a researcher can be anyone, there's still connotations attached to that. I think given also our physical location near UCL, people still assume we are an academic library. With libraries generally, each type of library has its own rules and its own connotations that people put onto it. We are a public library, so we are open to the public and we're free, but we're also not a public library, so we can take parts of being a public library, but we have to level it up with 'we're a research library'. What does being a research library mean to people? And then we also have special collections, and that creates even more barriers to access. It is difficult to be completely transparent. I have to be honest that people's experience of accessing material, including zines in the collection, is not always a positive thing. I had a message on Facebook, from someone saying: 'oh I came into see the zine collection but somebody on the desk was like "we don't have one"'. They had a really bad experience, and I was thinking what to do about it. Part of the issue is that ,like all organisations, there will always be gaps to slip through, and it's impossible to fill them. I don't know at what point that person asked. It could be ground floor, and the person they asked could be on a zero hour contact, or it could be they came up to the library and it was a new person on the desk and they don't bother to say, oh I haven't heard of that let me ask someone. It's a training issue. Maybe the person visiting just peeped their head around the corner and expected to see a zine collection, and didn't see it, and expected to see evidence of it. They wouldn't because you have to do all these things in order to see the zines. Or it could even be that they went into the Reading Room, saw the zines in there and went 'Where is mine?' When really you'd have to find a way of saying: 'That isn't the zine collection, it's just some zines'. I don't want to come across as completely negative because I appreciate that we have these conversations about the institutional dilemma all the time, and sometimes we just have to accept the limits that you have, and that we are one collection within an amazing eco system of lots of different collections, and people will access things in different ways, that's just how it is. It seems like an easy thing to consider,

but it is never easy when its one part of the collection, you just rely on so many other people to make decisions for you.

Lea: I wanted to speak about COVID-19 and the last three and a bit years. I'm curious about how COVID-19 and the associated lockdown, what impact that had on the zine collection?

Nic: I think I've touched on one of the impacts, which is accessing the zine collection has changed for the worse: a reduction on how many things you can order, and read in the rare materials room only. Previously you could take zines anywhere in the library, including my favourite place which is the small part of the library where you can talk – even though because its so small its not a very collaborative physical space, you could just go there with someone and 40 zines and sit on the floor and have a nice time. That's one of the negatives. But in terms of what happened I think its been incredible, seeing people turning to zines as an immediate creative output for how you are feeling, or capturing those small details that everyone was feeling, but that now we've got evidence of it for future generations that isn't somebody's well written memoir, six months later. Instead, this is day one of lockdown and we've got somebody's feelings on it, and that's incredible, and there's not many other parts of the collection that could say the same. Except maybe the ephemera collection, because Mel has done a lot of Covid collecting generally. This includes zines but also for example, we collected greetings cards that were suddenly about hand sanitiser, and art and photography on various aspects of lockdown. It was important, being able to capture, in pictures or words, people's experiences of something so uniquely significant. I think is incredible. I really feel like the zine collection shone in that moment. It meant we could purchase things, so we could financially support people during a time where it was really difficult. We were also really relaxed about people posting stuff to us, because obviously, people didn't want to go to the post office regularly, they wanted to do it like once a month. I think that was really good. It meant that people were making zines digitally, for the first time. This is interesting. Previously we deliberately decided that we didn't want digital zines, because of this weird arbitrary rule. Well, I say arbitrary but there's probably a good reason for

it I don't understand. Collections development won't collect anything online unless it has a very specific license, so even if it has no license, or no copyright, they won't collect it. I'm like: get permission and we can still ingest it… Anyway, we were able to purchase digital zines and then save a copy, and then we would print them whenever we went back to the office. And we are still doing that now, so people are not having to post out stuff. I do prefer a printed copy still because sometimes the PDF is not quite right, and that becomes my problem (well, Loesja's problem!) I decided for cases like that I'd include a note in the record that says this was purchased and printed for inclusion in the collection, so people didn't just think we robbed it off the internet. That we did get permission. I assume when I'm sending these requests through that they get permission, I'm sure Mel will be like 'Yes we are' so I don't need to be so sceptical. So those are really positive things that have influenced the collecting now.

Lea: You had zines sent to your house didn't you? How was that?

Nic: That was really good for me because my job as cataloguer pretty much came to a standstill when you I couldn't access the material that I had to catalogue. So even though there was plenty of other work to do, it was a really nice opportunity to maintain a low level part of my usual job, being able to catalogue stuff from home. I wouldn't do that now generally… [laughter] I just can't cope with the thought of putting a biscuit on something, or making a mistake, or losing it. I know other librarians did that as well, anything small, that you could take back. I think a lot of people did that, but the zines were great because they were so low cost, easy for people to post, and well, not easy to catalogue, but a nice thing to catalogue at home and that was good for me actually. I wouldn't have said they saved my life but….

Lea: Ok, is there anything else you want to bring up or talk about that we haven't talked about?

Nic: When thinking about external events, like Black Lives Matter protests, that shaped the zine collection, I think that these did shape the zine collection, but not just the zine collection. As the zine collection exists as part of everyday collecting, it means that we can collect a lot around the subject

regardless of the format it is in, so certainly Black Lives Matter is significant in the zine collection, but also we've got glossy magazines and excellent books and photo books, and lots of other materials, which for us as a subject based library makes the subject more rounded. We love to go across formats and include lots of different types of stuff. Something that I was really delighted with and quite a good turning point was where people, without me being involved, were just starting to love and use the zines. I was starting to see them included in engagement or events with the public. Or someone comparing the experience in a zine with the experience in a manuscript – I was like: 'My job here is done'. The collection has managed to stand on its own feet without needing someone to advocate for it all the time. It's significant and more and more people are finding their own things to like about it and again, that's exactly what I want to happen. I want people to instantly think: 'oh I know this thing exists, lets tell someone about it'. That's the hardest thing with any part of the collection: we collect so much and we catalogue so much stuff, how do we get people to care, or to notice it, or to include it in their research? As a cataloguer there's only so much you can do, there's only so many words that you can put in a catalogue record that is going to tell someone what this thing is. It's likely that they get a whole different experience when they request it which the catalogue record will completely miss and I'm acutely aware of that. I've put in a request to see if we can get all of the front covers photographed and included in the catalogue records, but I don't know if that's going to happen. It's often the visual element of a zine that is intriguing to people; the whole browsability of a collection where you can flick through and just quickly look at something, often feels the whole point. It is small, it's digestible, and if you look at one that is 80 pages with lots of texts you think I need to sit down and read that one and I might come back to it, and that might be more like a book to me, but then there's the 6 page zine with some funny stuff inside, and you've enjoyed something in mere minutes which I think is really nice to have that. Not having a collection that can be browsed that can be really difficult to translate to people. Especially coming from my point of view which is catalogue first where I know this collection cannot be represented in a great way online because it's more than that.

Lea: Yeah totally, with zines because they are this visual media you can only get so much from the title of them, because so much is told to you about the vibe and form and content just from that front cover.

Nic: Also the title often tells you nothing!

Lea: Basically yeah, often the opposite of what you're actually going to get sometimes, as well.

Nic: From the collecting phase, before we launched the collection in 2018, me and Loesja felt we had to catalogue as much as we could because part of the launch event was to put everything in a room for everyone to look at and hope that we weren't going to lose anything [laughter]. We had to very quickly catalogue stuff. 2018 was the launch. Then between 2018 and 2020 we built up quite a considerable backlog of zines. Backlogs are such a common thing in libraries. I would say we have a zine backlog right now. This is because of staffing things – I went to Tate for a while – and I know other libraries have the same problem. I think LCC [London College of Communications] just hired a specific zine cataloguer, because their backlog is so huge that they were getting really frustrated by it. Sometimes, I'll be cataloguing and I'll go back and I'll have the etsy link but by that point the link is dead, so a great description that I could have got from the etsy descrtipion by the creator has disappeared and now I'm having to make sense of something myself. I always know that there's going to be lots of missing bits, but we just do the best we can with what we've got.

Lea: It's all you can do – to be honest, at EZL we've stopped blurbing on our cataloguing, it was just taking too much time. If someone supplies one we will add it in, it wasn't really – our content notes are detailed enough to flag stuff, and because we started the online catalogue where we were hashtagging stuff. Hashtags are rich enough to give a sense of it so we were like writing an actual blurb in sentences is taking too much time, we may also have something of a backlog….

Nic: I don't know one collection that doesn't have a backlog…

But I guess that's another interesting thing is that your hashtags aren't from controlled vocabularies, is that right? It's just like crowdsource tagging.

Lea: Yeah basically, we control the content notes, and the subject heading, the category its in. Hashtags are entirely free form and like, they accumulate, they start with the cataloguer, and they are added to as we go, because they are just a search term, that's what we are using them for.

Nic: In contrast to that, what we deal with is traditional cataloguing. Our controlled vocabularies don't do a good enough job, they rely on external language, but it doesn't accurately describe, or describe at all, or offends, or is just completely inappropriate. We can chose to leave stuff out, but when you leave stuff out it may mean that the zine is less discoverable. You have that to balance. This is why, for our zine collection specifically, I encourage people to add as much information outside of subject headings as possible. This is why I always hope there's a blurb from a creator that I can copy and paste and whack in here and link to their site. Because you want to include things like colloquialisms: for example if you wanted to search for LGBTQ+ zines, there is no tag for LGBT, LGBTQI, it's 'sexual minorities' or something. You're already applying something that is at odds with how you feel about it, but again it is that positioning the collection within existing structures and not wanting to hide it, because it would get drowned out by everything else. There's so many things that we have to consider, which is why I hope creators put in a blurb that has the language you would expect to search for to find this zine, so like queer and crip, all of those things you're just not going to find in a subject heading. We don't have this amazing hashtag things where you can accumulate headings. But we are always thinking about ways we can change in the future, so I might look at yours and be like, is this a good practice…could we…?

Lea: I wouldn't be surprised if the answer is no – the professional librarians amongst us are always horrified by the lack of standardisation amongst the hashtags. Some people capaitalise, some people don't. But for us it's about embracing that cataloguing is creative and fun, and hashtags are a place to make silly jokes, it makes us more present as people, but it also adds to the functionality.

Nic: That's another thing, quite a lot of our zines have content notes and trigger warnings, but we didn't necessarily include them in catalogue records when we first started cataloguing. Cataloguing is so iterative so things change. At the beginning you can really see there was a rush to get stuff out, so the records are not very detailed. It pains me to go back and see it. Also we had like a combination of cataloguers, so we had lots of different people cataloguing, not just library cataloguers, and I can see how varied it is. It's reasonably detailed now, but then we also started to include content notes which is something that across the whole collection we are starting to think more and more about. How do we apply advisory notices I guess, to other parts of the collection, especially where its really difficult like when the thing is racist. In a sense we are warning people they are going to encounter racism here, whereas with a zine, and if a maker has applied it, it's likely that you're going to read about experiences of racism rather than a racist zine, so it's a different angle. I have started to put content notices in, and we would only put that in if it was on the zine, on the cover or the first few pages. I think that's interesting, for people who are considering how people encounter their own zines. I see people in tweets content warning their tweets, and I think that's all an interesting area of life, quite caring.

Lea: You can see the difference on twitter, I see people do it in a way where if you've muted those words you just won't see that content, so its not like the content below you might not want to interact with, it's a way of essentially removing that content from someone's feed, which you obviously can't do with a zine, so there's always that question with content warnings where, like, what are using this tool to try and achieve?

Appendix 3: Zine Index

Zine Title	Date	Creator/Editor	Where and How Read?	In Wellcome Collection (as of Jan 2024)	Chapter(s)
Archiving Joy	2022	Lu Williams (ed)	Paper copy (bought at Glasgow Zine Festival 2022)	No	Four: Crip Doulas
Bed Zine Issue One	2021	Tash King (ed)	Digital Copy	Yes	Three: Bed Bound
Bed Zine Issue Two	2021	Tash King (ed)	Digital Copy	Yes	Three: Bed Bound
Bed Zine Issue Three	2022	Tash King (ed)	Digital Copy	Yes	Three: Bed Bound
Believing	2021	Rachel Rowan Olive	Paper coper (bought via etsy)	No	Four: Crip Doulas
Contagion	2019	Wellcome Zine Club	Paper Copy, Rare Materials Reading Room, Wellcome Collection	Yes	Five: Covid Zines
CRUMPLE ZINE	2022	Flannery O'kafka (layout by Andrew Beltran)	Paper copy (bought at Glasgow Zine Festival 2022)	No	Four: Crip Doulas
Dear GP Zine (Issue One)	2019	Dear GP Collective (ed)	Digital Copy	Yes	Two: Zines from the Inbetween
Disgender: A zine about being trans // nonbinary & disabled // chronically ill issue # 2	2018	Raz (ed)	Digital Copy	Yes	Two: Zines from the Inbetween
Little Single Bed 2017*	2017	Amber Is Blue	Paper Copy, Rare Materials Reading Room, Wellcome Collection	Yes	Three: Bed Bound
Long Covid Symptom Tracker	2020	ASC for Healthy Communities	Paper Copy, Rare Materials Reading Room, Wellcome Collection	Yes	Five: Covid Zines
My First PIP Assessment	2018	HiddenInkChild	Paper Copy, Rare Materials Reading Room, Wellcome Collection	Yes	Four: Crip Doulas
My Job is Just... Mission	2023	Lea Cooper	Own zine	No	One: What Would A Zine Maker Do?
Precious Beauty Therapy	2023	Emma Louise Rixhorn	Paper Copy (bought from Good Press, Glasgow)	No	Three: Bed Bound
Quaranzine ! : a zine about	2020	Mad Covid (ed)	Digital Copy	Yes	Five: Covid Zines

Appendix 3: Zine Index

isolation, connectedness & survival in dark times					
Sectioned: Locked Up in Lockdown	2020	Nell	Paper Copy (sent by Nell via Twitter)	No	Three: Bed Bound
Shadow Song	2018	Lea Cooper	Own zine	Yes	Three: Bed Bound
Sick Days	2019	Hollie Woodward	Paper Copy, Rare Materials Reading Room, Wellcome Collection	Yes	Three: Bed Bound
Sonogram Hospital Diaries 2017	2017	Grant Ionatán (htmlflowers)	Paper Copy, Rare Materials Reading Room, Wellcome Collection	Yes	Three: Bed Bound
Sore Loser: a chronic pain and illness zine on queer disabled grief	2021	Sandra Alland and Etzali Hernández	Digital Copy and Paper Copy (bought from Category Is Books, Glasgow)	Yes	Four: Crip Doulas; Five: Covid Zines
The Ring of Fire Anthology	2014	E. T. Russian	Paper copy	Yes	Four: Crip Doulas
This is Not Our First Pandemic	2020	Sarah Shay Mirk	Paper Copy, Rare Materials Reading Room, Wellcome Collection	Yes	Five: Covid Zines
What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?	2020	WWHIVDD	Digital Copy	No	Four: Crip Doulas
Who Counts as Disabled?	2024	Fiona Robertson	Paper Copy (bought at Edinburgh Zine Festival 2024)	No	Four: Crip Doulas
Your Life is Not Over: A Book of Apocalypses and How to Survive Them	2022	Fiona Robertson	Paper Copy (bought at Edinburgh Zine Festival 2023)	Yes	Four: Crip Doulas

*Was not in contact with zine maker.

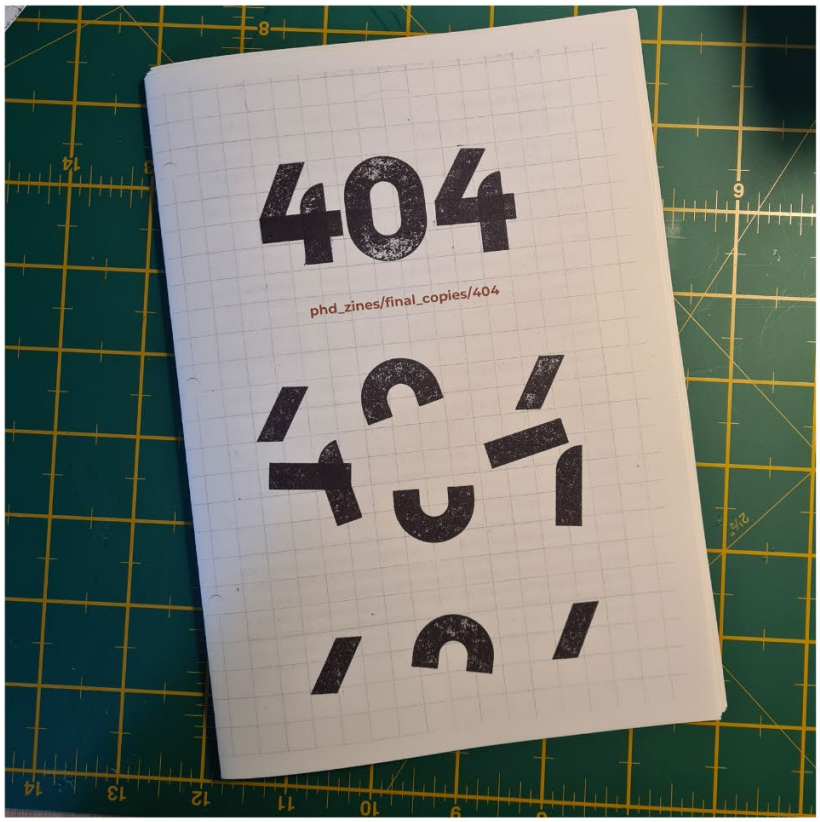
Holding Title (2024)

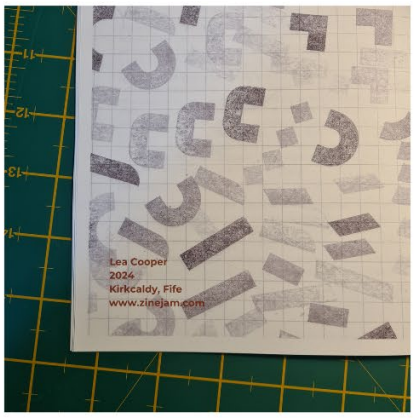
A collection of fourteen zines created as part of PhD project: 'The zINe-Between: A Creative Practice Exploration of Health, Liminality, Lived Experience and the Zines in Wellcome Collection'. The collection of paper zines is presented in hand-sewn bags, with a limited number (6) presented in bags sewn from a Royal Mail postbag.

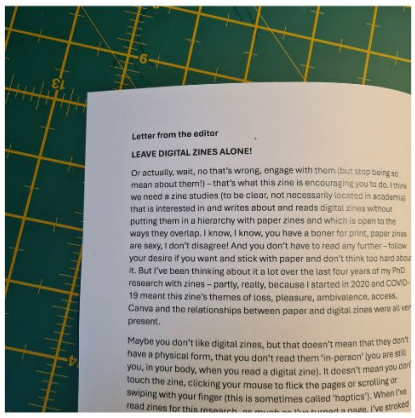
For the digital collection and digital versions of the zines, see: www.zinejam.com/holdingtitle

404 (2024)

20-page, A5, staple bound, digitally printed zine. This zine discusses digital and paper zine reading, making and research. The cover was created using Will Mower's Blockface 24-piece modular typography stamp kit.






Letter from the editor

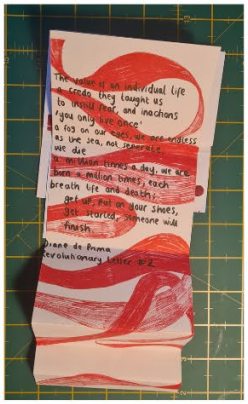
LEAVE DIGITAL ZINES ALONE!

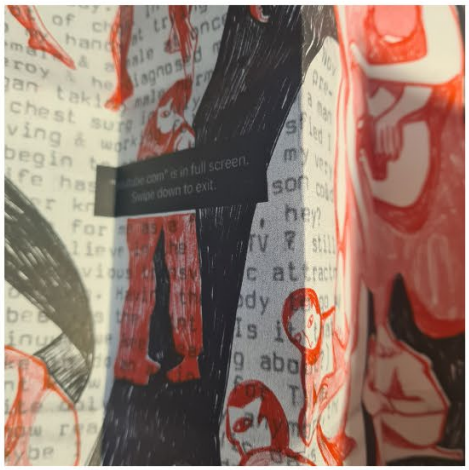
Or actually, wait, no that's wrong, engage with them (but stop being so mean about them!) – that's what this zine is encouraging you to do. I think we need a zine studies (to be clear, not necessarily located in academia) that is interested in and writes about and reads digital zines without putting them in a hierarchy with paper zines and which is open to the ways they overlap. I know, I know, you have a boner for print, paper zines are sexy, I don't disagree! And you don't have to read any further – follow your desire if you want and stick with paper and don't think too hard about it. But I've been thinking about it a lot over the last four years of my PhD research with zines – partly, really, because I started in 2020 and COVID-19 meant this zine's themes of loss, pleasure, ambivalence, access, Canva and the relationships between paper and digital zines were all very present.

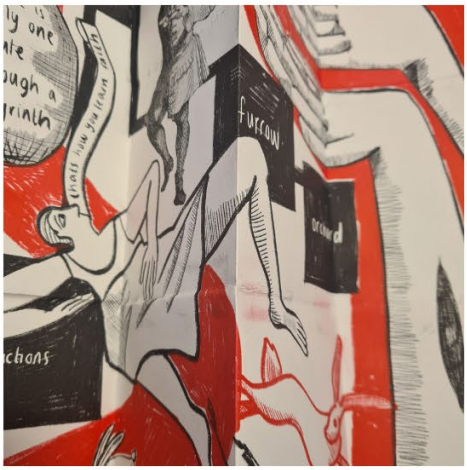
Maybe you don't like digital zines, but that doesn't mean that they don't have a physical form, that you don't read them 'in-person' (you are still you, in your body, when you read a digital zine). It doesn't mean you don't touch the zine, clicking your mouse to flick the pages or scrolling or swiping with your finger (this is sometimes called 'haptics'). When I've read zines for this research, as much as I've turned a page, I've stroked

AfterBirth (2024)

Three A7 zines bound with a belly band. Each zine has the same Risoprinted cover in Black and Red. One is an A7, staple bound zine, with 12 black and white laser printed pages of text, one Risoprinted insert and one relief printed insert. The other two fold out to square sheets with digitally drawn illustrations Risoprinted in Red and Black. The zine explores crip time, crip afters and 'folded time' (after Julian Carter).

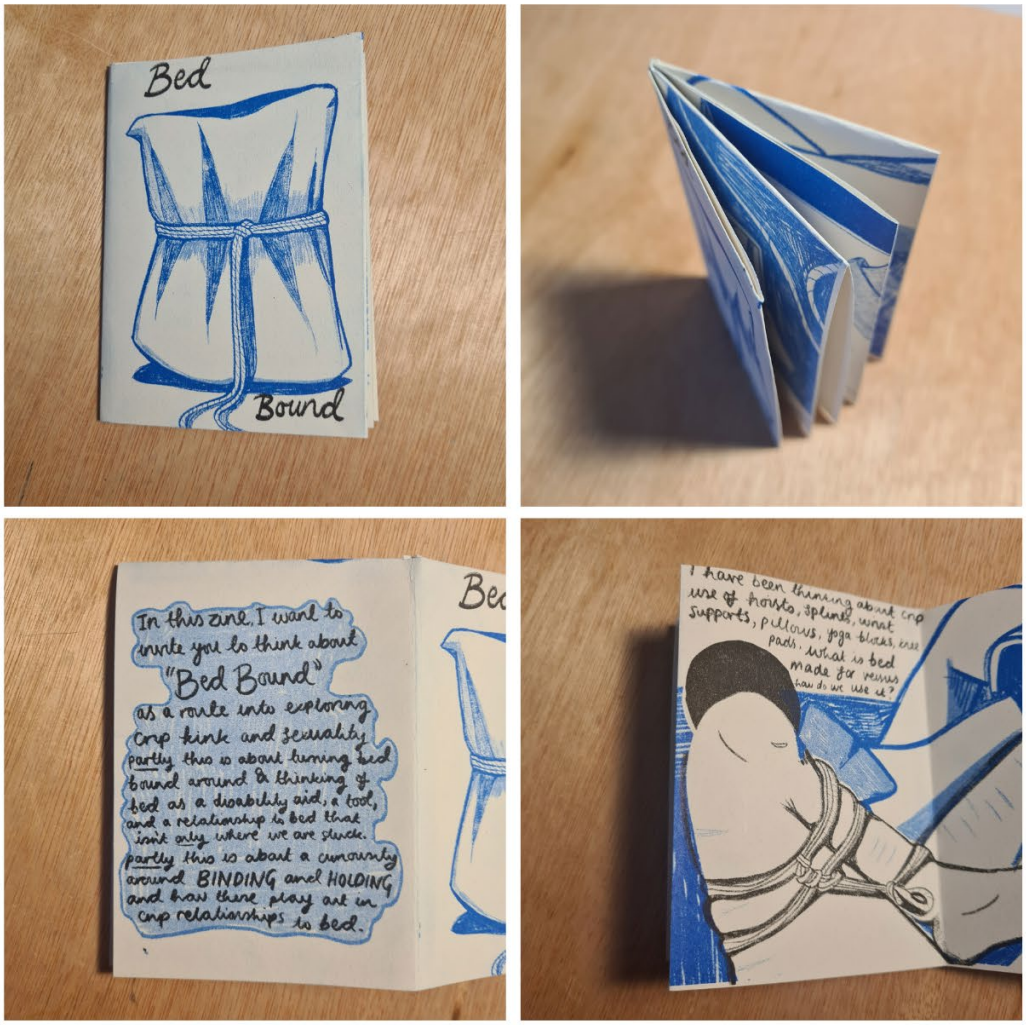






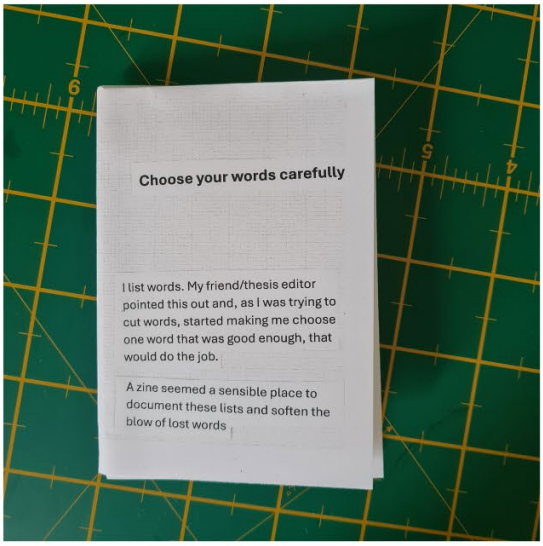
A *Place of Honour* (2024)
12-page, Risoprinted zine, with a fold-out A3 poster in the centre, and two smaller A5 inserts created by Risoprinting original cyanoptypes. Pages are variously: Fluro Orange, Blue, Black and Teal. This zine discusses forms of Mad memorials and archives.

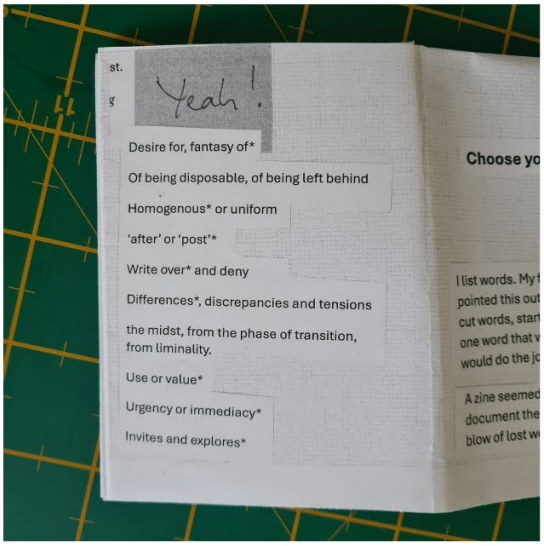
Bed Bound (2022)
8-page, A7 zine, folded from a single sheet of A4 paper and Risoprinted in Black and Blue. This zine is a prompt zine inviting the reader to explore crip kink and sexuality.

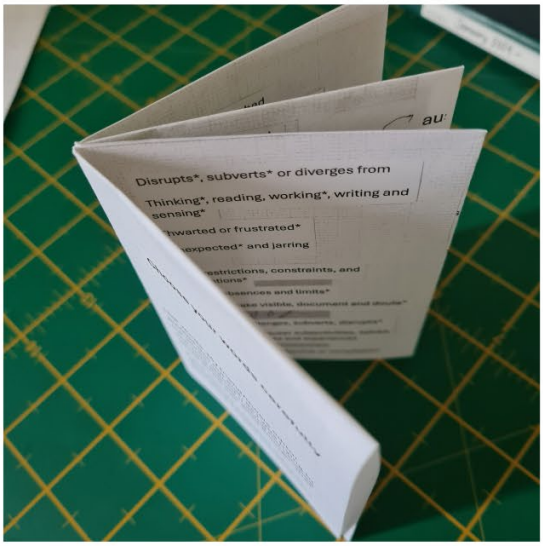


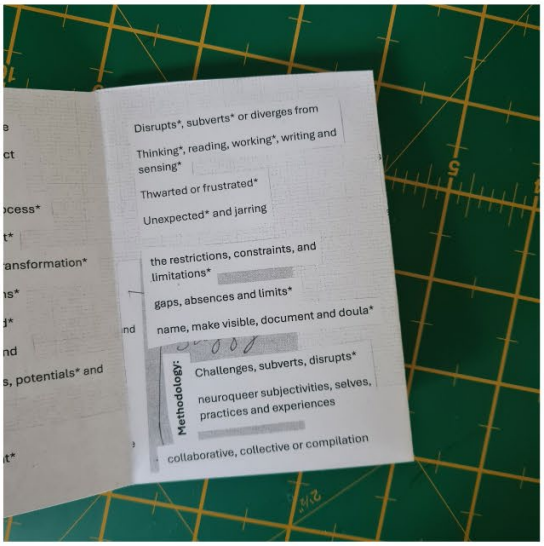
Choose Your Words (2024)

8-page, A7 zine, folded from a single sheet of A4. It has been photocopied in black and white. It is constructed from cut and pasted text (typed and handwritten), on graph paper. It documents a process when editing a PhD thesis.



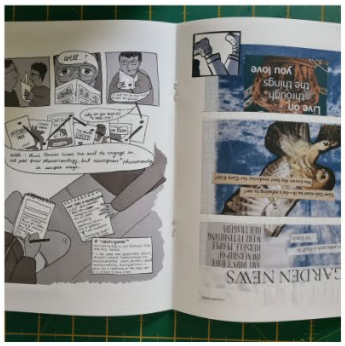






Constellations/Up The Moorhens (2024)

20-page A5, split zine, digitally printed in colour and staple bound. It combines digital and ink comics, and collage. This zine explores both comics and zines as neuorqueer phenomenology, and questions of narrative and Mad liberation.

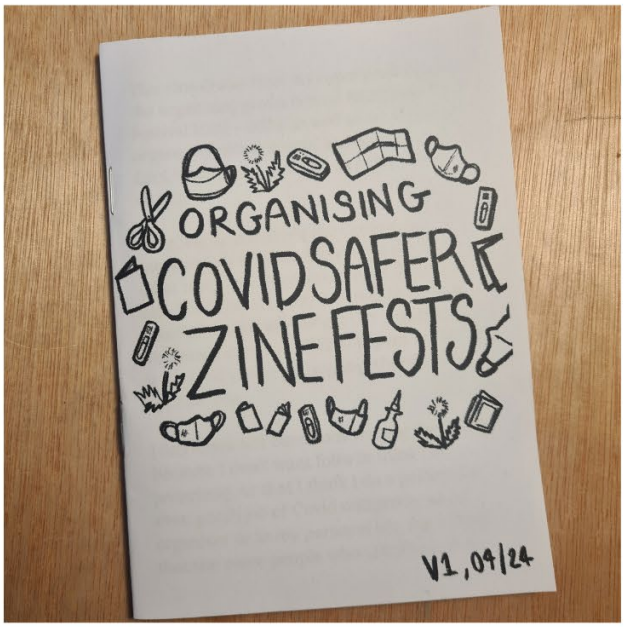


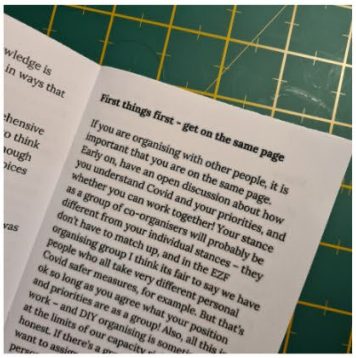
Making the Bed (2024)

32-page, A5, digitally colour printed and staple bound zine. This zine combines public domain images from Wellcome Collection with personal photos and autoethnographic writing of/from bed.

Organising Covid Safer Zine Fests (2024)

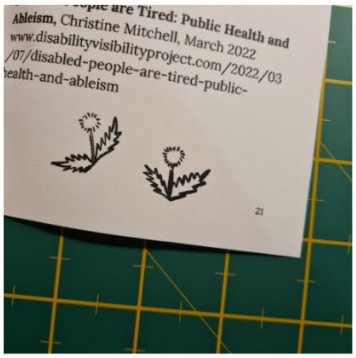
A6, 32-page, staple bound zine, printed black and white on a home laser printer. This zine contains learning about COVID safer event organising from running Edinburgh Zine Festival for three years.





First things first – get on the same page

If you are organising with other people, it is important that you are on the same page. Early on, have an open discussion about how you understand Covid and your priorities, and whether you can work together! Your stance as a group of co-organisers will probably be different from your individual stances – they don't have to match up, and in the EZF organising group I think its fair to say we have people who all take very different personal Covid safer measures, for example. But that's ok so long as you agree what your position and priorities are as a group! Also, all this work – and DIY organising is some... at the limits of our capacity... honest. If there's a... want to abs...



Ableism, Christine Mitchell, March 2022. www.disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2022/03/07/disabled-people-are-tired-public-health-and-ableism

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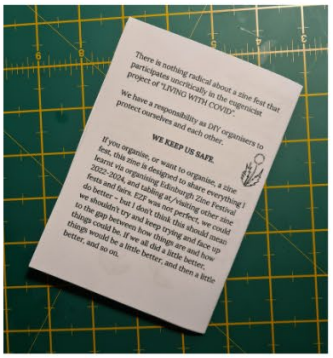


There is nothing radical about a zine fest that participates uncritically in the eugenicist project of 'LIVING WITH COVID'.

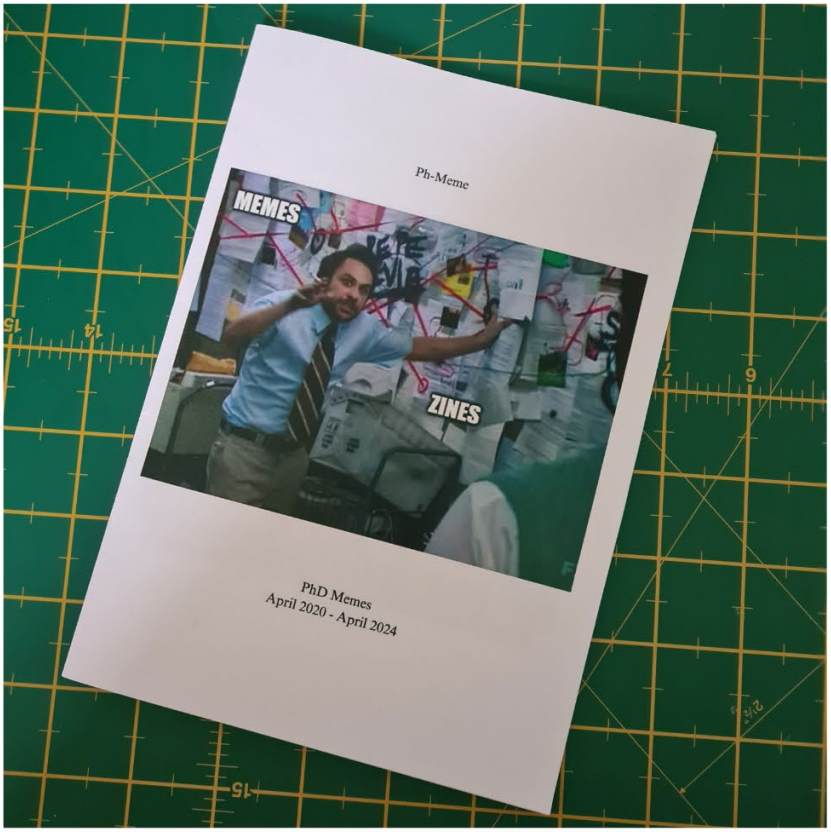
We have a responsibility as DIY organisers to protect ourselves and each other.

WE KEEP US SAFE.

If you organise, or want to organise, a zine fest, this zine is designed to share everything I learnt via zine organising Edinburgh zine festival 2022-2024 and tabling at/visiting other zine fests and fairs. EZF was not perfect, we could do better – but I don't think this should mean we shouldn't try and keep trying and face up to the gap between how things are and how things could be. If we all did a little better, and then a little better, and so on.

Ph-Meme (2024)

16-page, A5, digitally colour printed, staple bound zine. This zine combines memes created during the course of my PhD with a reflective text.

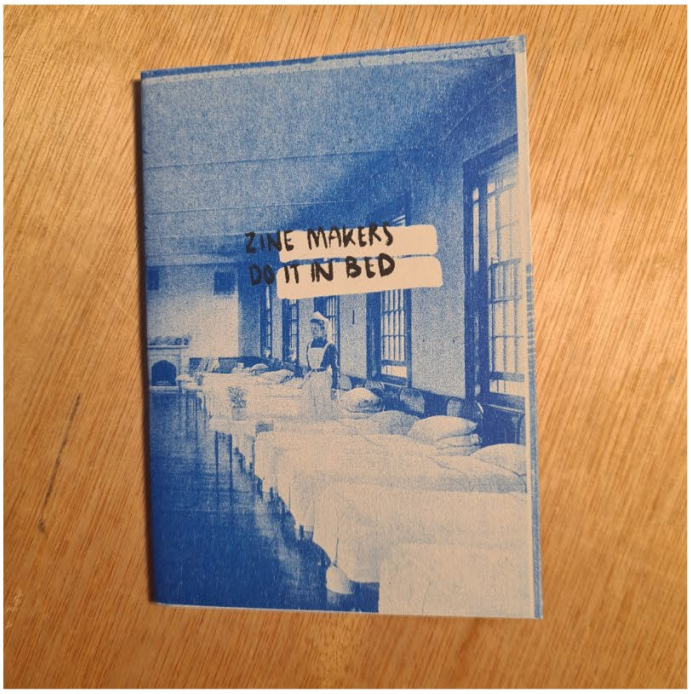


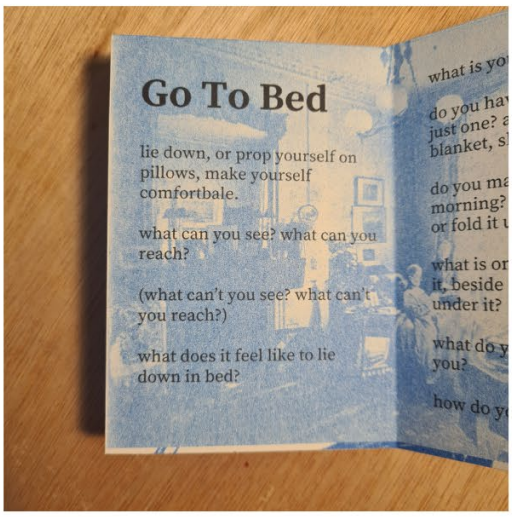
The PostBag (Collected) (2024)

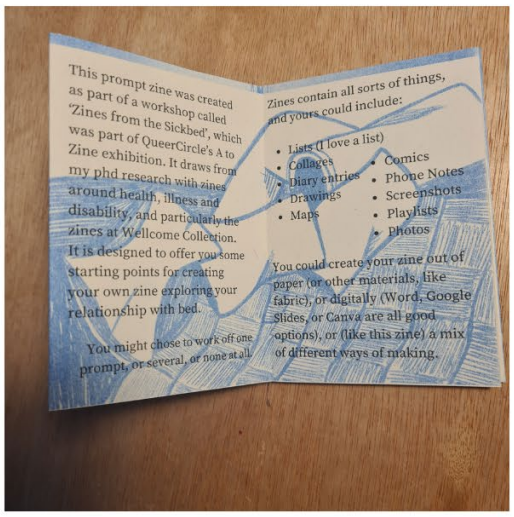
The Post / The Postbag was a one sheet newsletter sent at irregular intervals over the course of my PhD. A complete set of issues (a mix of laser printed and Risoprinted) are collected in a folder folded from an A3 Riso off-print, hand stamped with letters reading 'post bag: collected'.

Zine Makers Do It in Bed (2022)

8-page, A7 zine, folded from a single sheet of A4 paper and Risoprinted in Black and Blue. This zine contains prompts from a workshop 'Zines from the Sickbed'.

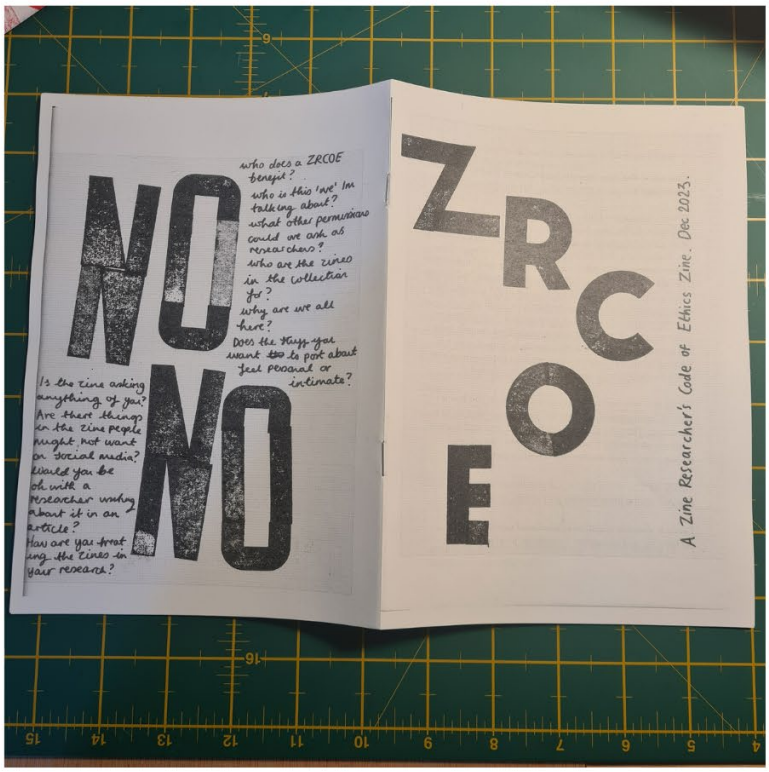


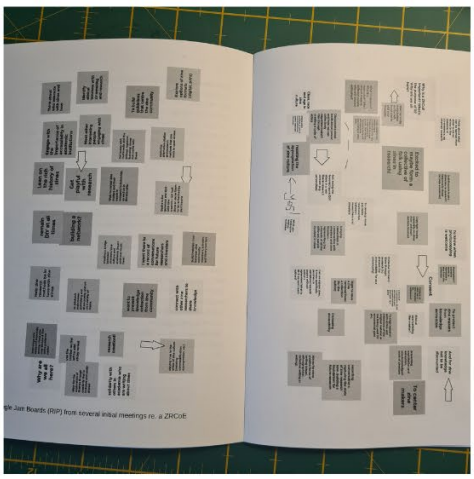


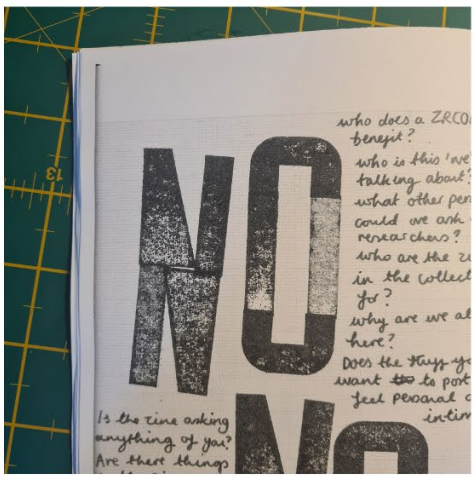


A *Zine Researcher's Code of Ethics* (2023)

40-page, A5, black and white digitally printed and staple bound zine. This zine documents work around a 'Zine Researchers Code of Ethics'.

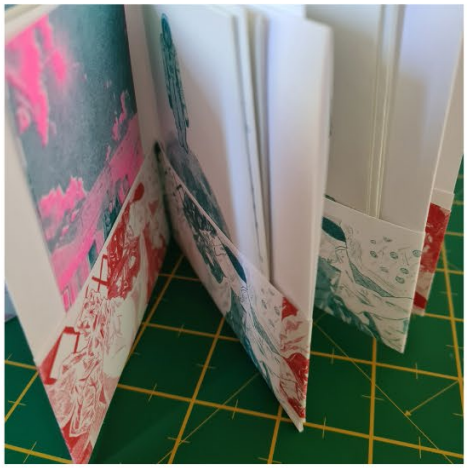






This Zine is a Carrier Bag (2023)

Three 8-page, A7 zines folded from single sheets of A4 and Risoprinted in teal and red; One 8-page, A7 zine photocopied in black and white; Four A7 tarot cards Risoprinted in teal and fluro pink; Two black and white laser printed inserts. All of these are held by an album zine, folded from a single sheet of A3 paper, that has been Risoprinted in red and teal, and bound with glue and strips of Riso off-cuts. This zine explores zine making as a method/methodology.



In the Zine House (2023)

56-page A5 zine, spiral bound with mint plastic coil. This zine compiles the text from a series I authored about zines on medical humanities website *The Polyphony*. Alongside the black and white laser printed text are inserts of collages, Risoprinted in violet.