

**PUBLISHING**

**ACTIVISM**

**WITHIN**

**WITHOUT**

**A TOXIC**

**UNIVERSITY**

**RADICAL OPEN ACCESS COLLECTIVE**

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Co-published by Post Office Press (POP) and Open Humanities Press, this experimental booklet features short reflections by Radical Open Access Collective (ROAC) members on publishing activism and its relationship to the neoliberal university. It adapts and (ab)uses the Surrealists' *cadavre exquis* method to promote collaborative, responsive forms of writing, building on three key books published by ROAC members. Its first text responds to these books, activating and carrying forward their activist strategies for addressing the crisis in Higher Education, initiating a chain of responses.

Contributors were asked to extend the preceding response, engaging with the booklet's theme and, optionally, the ROAC back-catalogue titles. Designed by Alexandra Trenčianska, Mia Dawson, and Lisha Wang, the booklet was 'unfolded' during the 3rd Radical Open Access Conference.

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# THE NON-LOCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

In *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Moten and Harney ask why the university as an institution isn't a place where we can 'be together and think together in a way that feels good' (2013: 117). Why have the conditions of academic labour become uncondusive to study, even actively regulating and suppressing it? Their analysis of how study is increasingly impossible in the institutions supposedly devoted to it focuses on universities' rampant professionalisation and managerialism, further reproduced by the complacency or negligence of critical intellectuals.

This analysis maps easily onto the commercial academic publishing industry. Similarly buttressed by the (volunteer) labour and complacency of critical scholars, this industry exploits their labour, its outcomes, and the relationalities formed around it, while not acknowledging scholars (nor do they themselves) as *workers* in the same industry (going a long way towards 'ridding itself' as Harney and Moten state 'of the trouble of labour' (2013: 29)).

And yet, labour escapes and study still goes on (as it always has happened beyond the university and beyond commercial publishing). It does so through a transformative mode of being that Harney and Moten call *the undercommons*: a nonspace or a set of relationalities emerging in and from different constellations; it represents a fugitive energy and a foundational shift in how individuals engage with the world and each other, a dynamic space where subversive intellectuals gather to find refuge and enact resistance.

How to bolster the undercommons, which is always surrounded?  
A crucial question in our current conjuncture, Harney and Moten focus on how it is sustained by criminal means, by stealing from the university, disavowing its professionalism, refusing its call to order. But 20 years since they first made this analysis: is there anything left to steal from the university in perpetual crisis?  
Can it still be a place of refuge, whose hospitality one abuses?

If so, is scholar-led publishing one such nonplace where the undercommons is non-located? Instead of seeing scholar-led publishing as standing in opposition to and wanting to replace commercial publishing – as some of its critics have argued – could we not perceive it as an alternative to the university (instead)? This doesn't mean positioning scholar-led publishing against the university either, where, as Harney and Moten argue, 'to be against the university is always to recognize it and be recognized by it' (2013: 31). Can scholar-led publishing be situated in a position of undecidability towards the university, as an alternative place to assemble and think and study, a refuge for scholars that are inside or have left the university, that steal from it or scaffold on it as para-academics, or that study outside of it? What is the place of scholar-led publishing here, as an undercommons of the university? Can it be a place to reimagine the university anew through its 'prophetic organization', scaling-small in loose collectives, 'where the commons give refuge, where the refuge gives commons' (Harney & Moten, 2013: 28)?

Assembling after/as a collective call is something Harney and Moten recognise in both Occupy and the London Riots. Conceived in the wake of the early 2010 world-wide socio-political movements, *Occupy A People Yet to Come*, explores how Deleuze and Guattari's political concepts are relevant to their understanding. Occupy, as Conio states, has become a

synecdoche for an accumulation of protests and for a 'belief in the revolutionary transformation of the capitalist system', while imagining a world outside of 'class war and vanguard politics', that cannot be conceived 'in terms of the state, liberal democracy, parliamentary systems' (2015: 25).

Colebrook, in her preface, 'End the Occupation, Long Live Occupy!', contrasts the politics and practices of Occupy with the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory in Gaza. Applying Deleuze and Guattari's vocabulary, a 'minor' occupation occurs when a people or movement comes into being by assembling and occupying a space, and a territory is produced by occupation. Colebrook contrasts this with 'molar' occupation, when nations or their agents (or capitalism) lay claim (or not) to the right to occupy pre-decided or already established territories. The Israeli defence force adopts a molar occupation, 'appealing to a narrative of nation, right, security, constituted peoples and property'. In the Occupy movement the logic of minor occupation was at work, Colebrook argues, where they made 'less a claim of identity, property and right and more a claim of assembling', there was no 'us' or 'we' outside the event of occupation (Colebrook, 2015: 10-12).

Colebrook wants to reclaim Deleuze's and Guattari's thinking in this context, which she admits is hard given their focus on concepts of nomadism and 'deterritorialized philosophy', where 'certain geopolitical forces need to have played themselves out (...) for philosophical agonistics to emerge' (Colebrook, 2015: 13). This celebration of metaphorical place/statelessness has been critiqued as a privilege from the position of displaced people without a territory, without 'the luxury of the philosophical view from nowhere?', disregarding the 'fundamental right of the Palestinian people to autonomy, life and liberty'. Yet as Colebrook argues, the state of Israel appropriates this same rhetoric of territory, rights, and history, to defend its attacks. For Colebrook, then, Occupy forms an inspiration to think

seriously about Deleuze and Guattari's 'claim for a new people and a new earth as a genuinely futural endeavor' and how the earth – not the world – might generate a people (without right, ownership or propriety) to come. This is especially important, Colebrook argues, as we have to ask whether ideals of personhood and nation *are not more risky* in times when climate change is ignored by individual states, reflecting their corporate, not civic, interests (Colebrook, 2015: 17-21).

While not always consistent in the application of its own ideals, Conio argues that Occupy refused to adopt a 'truth' position or master narrative. Because of this, it was accused of not being a clearly defined social movement standing up squarely against the discourse of property. Yet as Conio explains, both Occupy and Deleuze's philosophy 'seek not to restrain capitalism (and life's) fundamental tendency towards deterritorialization but to bring about new kinds of reterritorialization' (2015: 58). Occupy's critique of capitalism came from the position that there is no outside to capitalism, which, as Conio states, made them intensely pragmatic, experimenting with 'practical solutions to the problems of the state, democracy, economy and social relations' (2015: 63) For them, through occupation and collective action, 'space became the material of protest' (Burrows, 2015: 215).

This reterritorialisation of space included occupations outside (encampments) and inside universities (sit-ins, shut-downs), echoed in the current encampments protesting the Israel-Gaza conflict. This assembling in specific spatial zones enabled the becoming of 'a' people or community as an alternative to the university, increasingly impossible within its institutional space, overcoded and territorialised by the logic of capital. There students have become individualised consumers in competition with each other. How can scholars, academics, and students

continue to reterritorialise the university by assembling together and occupying physical or virtual space (of the university, of publishing), engaging in study as an unruly collective practice of sharing, creating, and resisting academic norms and capitalist imperatives?

Further thoughts on this can be found in *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism*, which explores traditions of student activism and participation in HE governance across Africa. The book reflects on how in the 21st century 'students are often seen as burdens, customers, or sources of income, but seldom as the key rationale for the university' (Altbach, 2016: xi). In Africa historically student governance played an important role 'in challenging colonial rule and authoritarian governments across the continent' (Klemenčič et al., 2016: 9), yet today students in general have 'little if any power in governance over basic academic decisions in universities worldwide' (Altbach, 2016: xii).

The book analyses how HE expansion during the 1990s, including the massification of public institutions and the proliferation of private institutions across the continent, affected student representation. Some universities adopted more democratic governance models, yet simultaneously political activism decreased, reflecting a de-politicisation of the student body and a shift to power in the form of 'consumer demands', with students as clients of HE rather than political participants in university governance.

Several chapters talk about the dynamic interaction between representation and protest, reflecting a larger division between (inward-oriented) students seeking a voice and representation in formal decision-making and activist students who see student organising as concerned with social justice activism and changing the status quo. Luescher argues that where student

representation has no formal mechanisms and student interests are under-acknowledged, students tend to voice their grievances through protests and activism. Interestingly, he seems to concur that the discourse on student activism remains focused on formalising student politics and representation at a university level 'to reduce disruptive student activism on campus', instead of seeing student activism as the spatial formation of an alternative university community out of collective action, when there is no space for student politics inside the institution (Luescher, 2016: 41).

The importance of student protest in developing new imaginaries for the university is exemplified in the book by the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests in South Africa, which moved forward discussions on the 'unfinished business' of the post-apartheid transition and the 'legacy of British imperialism, apartheid, capitalist exploitation of Africans' alongside protest against the institutional culture and 'whiteness' of the university and curriculum. The occupation of space and assembling that happened as part #RhodesMustFall can again be seen as experiments in spatial logistics 'combining protest, debates, sit-ins and teach-ins with new ways of student mobilisation and interest aggregation and articulation in social media and through online petitions' (Luescher, 2016: 53, 29).

How can we – the heterogeneous community formed through the Radical Open Access Collective – apply these kinds of spatial logics and logistics, metaphorically or not, to our publishing activities, to assemble, support, and mobilise modes of thinking and being together 'in a way that feels good' (Harney & Moten, 2013: 117), or at least different? How can we help shape the conditions of academic (publishing) labour towards an agency-sustaining refuge for and mutual encouragement of those that are not ready, or willing, to, just yet, give up on study and its transformative potential to 'make a difference in the world'?

# THE CHEQUERED HISTORY OF SCHOLAR-LED OA: DOING IT AND SUPPORTING IT<sup>1</sup>

## *Introduction*

The theme of the conference that this publication accompanies, 'From Openness to Social Justice Activism' is timely, building from several trends affecting scholar-led open access (OA), broadly conceived. OA has many definitions, but a simple one is '(...) the removal of price and permission restrictions to scholarly research' (Moore, 2017: 1). Early activists were committed to unrestricted access to knowledge using the liberatory potential of the internet, mainly from the 1990s. Others were more concerned with developing, hacking, and rolling out open-source software. Both groups have had crusaders and activists against corporates and the privatisation of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Since this time the obvious merits of OA publication in socially just, decolonial, and convivial ways have been appreciated a lot more, particularly in the social sciences where I work. I offer some suggestions for advancing this movement, while recognising the task has been made much harder in recent years.

**SIMON BATTERBURY**

## **Failures**

Unjust OA publication has thrived over the last thirty years. The Cambridge-based Cost of Knowledge campaign<sup>3</sup> against Elsevier from 2012 took this on, but it did not kickstart an 'Academic Spring' boycotting overpriced commercial publishers. Publishing/data management companies like Elsevier continue to rake in massive profits (Batterbury & Silva Garzón, 2025). Especially since the research funder members of cOAlition S have required OA publication by funding recipients since 2021, more work is of course available online. But the costs for authors or their institutions is huge. The big publishers have won, and are still in business, at least for the moment. Worldwide signups to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA),<sup>4</sup> which asks universities and research institutes to pay no attention to place of publication in merit-based academic HR decisions and instead focus on quality, are in the minority.

Several of the early scholar-led OA journals closed as editorial teams disintegrated or authors abandoned them. Universities are still in competition for 'research excellence', and the metrics by which this is measured are still publications in top ranked journals and book presses, sometimes based on semi-secret lists used to guide recruitment and promotion.<sup>5</sup> From my perspective, the current publishing landscape in several disciplines and at many institutions is a de facto breach of academic freedom, forcing scholars down a particular professionalisation route that feeds the commercial publishers.

Early career academics or even more established ones in the Anglosphere still largely publish with commercial journals, even when they could choose to avoid them. While a critical perspective is that they are regretfully forced into doing so by 'the system', this does not apply in all parts of the world, or in all disciplines, or even among my own students. Still, many scholars

overlook the problematic aspects of commercial academic publishers, seeing no reason to look further than their journals. Nor do they devote much labour to scholar-led OA. There is a ‘complacency or negligence of critical intellectuals’ towards getting involved in OA publishing identified by the Radical Open Access Collective co-convenors (2025). Individuals, including many I know, ignore Diamond OA journals, forego refereeing duties, and a few even follow the money to becoming a paid editor of a commercial journal.

The rapid shift from paywalls to mandated OA, with high Article Processing Charges (APCs) payable to the big four or five commercial publishers, and mandated by national research bodies and funders, has further challenged the principles espoused by the early OA activists. They always wanted the release of knowledge into the global commons: but as we argued in the ‘OA Manifesto’ (Pia et al., 2020) and its follow-up (Batterbury et al., 2022), this has worked better for readers than for authors wanting to publish in journals with high APCs. Readers in the Global South<sup>6</sup> have benefited from better access to articles and books online. But their academic institutions can’t always afford to subsidise publication by their academics in large Global-North-based corporate journals, even when discounting and fee-lowering schemes are factored in.

### ***Jobs and Labour***

Like many critical academics, I operate inside and outside the mainstream higher education system. If anybody cares, volunteer editing and OA journal production by our small team at the *Journal of Political Ecology (JPE)* (<https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jpe>) is largely ‘outside’ what Teaching and Research academics like me are ‘supposed’ to be doing, but in my case the ability to assist publication for many hundreds of authors over decades is enabled, but not fully funded, by

mainstream teaching and supervision in a southern hemisphere university where I raise enough student income to keep my job (fingers crossed). I can continue to 'prefigure' a personally rewarding bricolage of activities in the twilight of a long career, and I don't regard OA journal work as some form of self-exploitation on 'borrowed time' (Pia et al. 2024; Batterbury et al., 2022). Others are far less lucky. The authors of the previous text (ROAC co-convenors, 2025) are correct that Diamond OA must nonetheless reposition itself, taking on new directions since so many scholars and activists are now lacking paid work or an institutional base. In the absence of decent remuneration or university support for scholar-led OA, I think we need to do the work anyway as best we can.

Indeed, across the world, decent academic jobs in languages, humanities, and the arts are being lost almost daily. The meltdown in UK universities during and following the pandemic of 2020 and 2021, now with further declines in domestic student numbers, state controls on fees, and rising cost of living, has been severe, affecting 100 out of 140 institutions (Rowell, 2024). If universities cannot afford to pay their staff, with the easy targets being humanities and social science programs, this becomes a social justice issue. But in a world beset by multiple crises and wars, the public are not rallying behind British academics. Rowell says up to 10,000 university jobs could go in the UK, on top of thousands more during the earlier pandemic. Canada is beginning a similar shift (Wong, 2024). Academic staff redundancies in Australia followed immediately from proposed federal caps on international student numbers and are leading to the closure of whole programs, again mainly in the humanities and social sciences (the University of Wollongong, ANU, Canberra, and USQ are currently in the spotlight).

### ***Successes – Subverting the Neoliberal***

This hasn't stopped people writing for, or reading, the journals and book publishers that are part of the Radical Open Access movement (ROAC co-convenors, 2025). In times of precarity, our journals have great value. Some fields I am involved in don't actually suffer precarity much at all, like research and training in sustainability and energy transitions. But in those fields, Elsevier dominates the journal offerings and as my PhD students have found out, the APCs are huge. The trick is to convince aspiring and younger academics that, ethically, they should consider supporting other outlets. I will return to this below.

The rise of better scholar-led OA journals, which I have tracked and listed for a decade now across the social sciences and specific fields,<sup>7</sup> can also be quantified using the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).<sup>8</sup> They are largely rigorous and non-predatory, and they are increasingly popular, for example in Indonesia, South Africa, and India, especially when they break into Impact Factor listings. Some, like *Water Alternatives* and *Environmental Health Perspectives*, are very well regarded. The immense treasure of the Latin American Hispanophone and Lusophone journals and repositories is unrivalled (Becerril-García, 2022). Most of these journals are run by academics and their departments, and they are also appreciated, although less by academics in Global North anglophone countries (where rankings and metrics still have more importance than the ethics of the outlet).

I think the ethical winds are blowing towards these scholar-led OA journals and associated publishing projects. We must continue to offer free or low-cost publication, good academic standards, universality of access, and special features (in *JPE*, no word limits, and full content editing!). There are obvious links between such journals and digital campaigning (as the *Radical Open Access III: From Openness to Social Justice Activism* conference concept notes), and different forms of activism. ‘Hashtag activism’ can in principle combine with collation and presentation of scientific knowledge, as well as ‘actual’ activism in policy circles and on the streets (see chapters in von Mering et al., 2024).

### ***On the Streets and on the Web***

The authors of the previous text (ROAC co-convenors, 2025) ask how can the radical OA movement ‘assemble, support, and mobilise modes of thinking and being together “in a way that feels good”?’ This also means reflecting on how our work is read and used. For years, journals like our own have continued publishing articles and book reviews, without the need to promote ourselves to attract more submissions and hence, revenue. In the *JPE* (one of the first fully open access journals in the social sciences, founded in 1994) the authors try to document multi-scalar environmental injustice and responses to it. The chains of causation are long and complex. The work we publish is innovative, mostly empirical and driven by political economy and environmental concerns, and only occasionally theoretical or speculative in nature. As a publication we are not experimental or avant-garde; to break into and be important in an academic subfield like this, a journal needs year to year stability and continuity, DOI numbers and metadata, and at least a ‘zero growth’ reputation rather than a falling one.

Our achievement (despite lots of back-end dramas) has been about publishing from 3 to 4 articles a year in 1994 to 1995 to over 60 a year in 2024, while remaining entirely free to authors and readers. A small rise in citations has kept up with the commercial journals where our content, the interdisciplinary field of political ecology, is also published (Batterbury & Silva Garzón, 2025).

Our most radical change in thirty years of publication has been to host a Global-South-led initiative, *Grassroots*<sup>9</sup> since 2022. *Grassroots*' concern is with Global South peoples, activism, and multilingual, diverse authorship of shorter contributions. Essentially, we have a Global South section within the *JPE*, even though the journal is still hosted by the University of Arizona. *Grassroots* has most definitely 'taken off'. Our three-language policy (Spanish, English, French) now seems narrow, but is better than the vast majority of anglophone journals.

We remain in a mutual aid economy (Kropotkin, 1902), driven by a willingness to contribute labour and to support the publishing project.<sup>10</sup> We extract what hours we can for such projects in a bricolage economy where jobs can be unstable. I don't think we are consigned to Harney and Moten's undercommons by doing so (2013), nor do I think toxic universities with whatever levels of student protest against them, turn 'insurgents into state agents' as they argue (2013: 38), since the students, and us, show resistance. We have thick skins. Rather, some of us continue to occupy some sort of parallel universe in which it is possible to think, write, and produce freely.<sup>11</sup> And for those outside the oppressive structures of the university, scholarly publishing activities can be satisfying too.

## Conclusion

At least in the humanities and social sciences, my view is that scholarly OA requires skills that can and should be learned: file handling, editing, manipulating open-source software, coding, and design. We can and should teach these. This is what scholars like Martin Eve (Open Library of Humanities<sup>12</sup>) and Gary Hall et al. (Open Humanities Press<sup>13</sup>) have excelled at alongside their academic contributions, in order to stake a claim for a different mode of publishing that works towards mutual aid. In sum, people with the ability to do so should devote our fragments of available time to support scholar-led journals. Those with the luxury of stable academic employment have an obligation to join the movement. Scholar-led openness is easier to theorise than it is to do but, despite the headwinds explored here, its continued existence depends on our contributions.

# THE REDEEMABLE UNIVERSITY

In the first text in this booklet, the Radical Open Access Collective (ROAC) co-convenors (2025) ask the radical open access (OA) community to bracket the typical contrast implied by ‘scholar-led publishing’. Most of the time, when we talk about scholar-led, we have in mind the bad other of Elsevier and its peers. The introduction proposes that we think about *the university* as the counterpoint to radical OA publishing – as a bad, but perhaps usable, other.

JEFF POOLEY

The authors' request is good and timely. The debates, manifestos, and webinars that make a discourse around radical OA and scholar-led set the oligopolists in dark relief. And rightly so: Elsevier is irredeemable. But the university is a more complicated thing. It is nominally non-profit, with the mission – however hollow-sounding to our ears – to pursue truth independently of the market and the state. The university is also *many* things, a bundle of fiefdoms, inheritances, and constituencies. It is held together by duct tape and twine. Those two traits – the residual mission commitments and the sheer bagginess – make the editors' point legible.

The ROAC co-convenors (2025) invoke Harney and Moten's (2013) notion of the undercommons, which can survive inside and around the university, in its interstices. Harney and Moten embrace a kind of piracy-from-within, in which 'moles' and 'refugees' steal 'from the stolen' – a fugitive commons with no lasting shape, a 'nonplace' (28, 53, 39).

The introduction to this booklet asks if scholar-led publishing could be (or perhaps already is) an undercommons like this, one that does its small-scaling in uneasy but indispensable relation to the university. The idea is that scholar-led might be (to invoke my own metaphor) a parasite, undetected by, and feeding off, its university host. To use the university we can imagine against the university we have.

Two of the co-convenors of the Radical Open Access Collective, Janneke Adema and Samuel Moore (2024), have recently published an important article that calls for universities to give scholars dedicated time to work on publishing. The piece is an intervention into a debate about the labour that publishing requires: Is volunteer work, subsidised informally by university salaries, a good way to do radical OA publishing? Simon Batterbury (2025), in this booklet, suggests that it is, citing in part the example of his and others' rewarding work for the *Journal of Political Ecology*. He acknowledges the rub for others,

that lots of those labouring on OA books and journals don't have a faculty salary, or else work on the university's underpaid margins. Given that reality, some hold that the only just way to do radical OA is to pay the people who do it – and to stop talking up the virtues of volunteer labour.

Adema and Moore (2024) don't take a side, exactly. But they do resist the 'calculative logic' that routinised payment (for peer review, for example) arguably assumes. They lean instead on 'free sharing and the gifting of labor', citing the many on-the-ground scholar-led initiatives that adopt such a 'care logic' (Adema & Moore, 2024: 20). They propose, in keeping with this care approach, that universities grant scholars dedicated time for publishing work. They see this as an important step in a project to take publishing back from the oligopolists – to restore custody to scholars.

Adema and Moore's (2024) vision is for this publishing work to fall under the 'service' heading that, together with teaching and research, has comprised the faculty role. The already-resonant idea of 'academic citizenship' might, they suggest, be re-vivified and expanded to include recognised time for, among other things, care-based publishing work.

I have lingered on the Adema and Moore (2024) proposal because it is an exciting and feasible way to link the scholar-led movement to the university. I also want to highlight a subtle but important difference between the Adema/Moore proposal and the introduction to this publication. The latter, in the spirit of Harney and Moten (2013), is about interstitial pilferage – survival within, but also *against*, the university. The Adema/Moore proposal, by contrast, is far more recuperative – more receptive, that is, to a project of reviving the university's own dormant or suppressed ideals. To return to the parasite metaphor, Adema and Moore, in their 2024 paper, have something more symbiotic in mind. They label their approach as 'reformist', which they say is

perfectly compatible with more revolutionary, or subversive-parasitic, stances toward the university. They endorse an approach that both “sneaks” into the unsalvageable university and “steals” what it can – as per Harney and Moten – but also (...) strives to salvage it through reform and political struggle’ (Adema & Moore, 2024: 25).

In the history of the left’s internecine disputes, ‘reformist’ was sometimes dismissed as (to use a word that hardly circulates anymore) accommodationist. The explicit contrast was usually to a ‘purer’ form of revolutionary politics – or, less often, to a ‘great refusal’ politics of modelling an alternative on the margins of an irredeemable system. The undercommons approach suggested in this booklet’s introduction reflects that ‘great refusal’ tradition. The idea is that we might find each other, and also fleeting pockets of possibility, in whatever fissures the university inadvertently opens.

But that’s not the only good approach. As Adema and Moore (2024) themselves suggest, reformist projects that appeal to the university’s self-proclaimed, warped-in-practice ideals have real promise too. They rightly characterise proposals like theirs as *utopian*, in the sense that such calls open up space to imagine a different, more just university – one that, in their case, values care-based contributions to scholar-led publishing (Adema & Moore, 2024: 25-26).

In that spirit, my suggestion is that we add a utopian dimension to the conversation kicked off by this book’s introduction. An undercommons approach, to use a reductive label, is a good, rational response to a university tradition that, at best, is honoured in the breach. But let’s supplement that style of response with its utopian counterpart. It’s true that, in dark moments like ours, a utopian approach requires a suspension of disbelief about the scope of the (near-term) possible.

Among other benefits is to stave off a brand of crippling defeatism that undercommons thinking can feed – the risk, that is, of ‘interstitial realism’ (Pooley, 2024). Let’s pretend that the university is redeemable – a site perhaps, in some better future, where our scaling-small work might be nurtured.

## VINCENT VAN GERVEN OEI

Let us add a ‘utopian dimension’, namely that the university is redeemable! Such is the proposal of the previous author in response to the editors’ introductory suggestion to think of scholar-led publishing as a possible site of reimagining the university. What is the use of this clarion call to reformism, or ‘accommodationism’ as the author themselves references, that rejects a “purer” form of revolutionary politics’ and does not participate in a tradition of ‘great refusal’?

We should read this proposed ‘utopian dimension’ for what it actually is: the final hallucinations of an institution on the edge of brain death, the fantastic mirages one sees in the last moments of desperation seeking a draught of intellectual or moral refreshment in the wasteland of academic thought. For this utopia is precisely that: a non-place. The idea of a redeemable university assumes that scholarship in any shape or form still has any essential function for the university, and that academics still have any – even the smallest – grip or influence on its direction. At least for the United States of America, where a sizable part of the world’s leading academic institutions are allegedly situated, universities have fully turned into real estate investment firms with a football team. Scholarly work is ancillary. Thinking the utmost rarity.

It is telling that this invocation of a 'redeemable university' is simply dumped in the last paragraph without further elaboration except a gesturing toward another published article. Rather, it is drawn from the interstices of the first text in this booklet, perceived inconsistencies between arguments drawn from different papers, a 'deconstruction' of the editors' suspicious radicality, a 1,000+ words of 'gotcha' arguing for centrism, reformism, accommodationism, a 'Third Way' if you will, but let me just wave my hands loosely into the general direction of the devastated political landscape in Europe and North America to make the well-reasoned point that all that centrism, moderation, and anti-horseshoe rhetoric has ever accomplished is accommodating fascism, thank you very much.

Perhaps the author makes their argument for the redemption of the university in order to retain the system-wide aspirations of radical open access, namely not simply the tending of our well-crafted, small-scaling gardens, and retrain our eyes on the 'big picture', to full-fledged overhaul of scholarly communication, dislodging the Big Five.... But why would this imply giving the university a break? Why would the utopian dimension of scholar-led open access publishing necessitate the redemption of the university? A university that has adjunctified nearly every possible junior position? A university that is rapidly dismantling tenure? A university that has been expelling professors for protesting genocide? A university casting its student population into lifelong debt? A university at the cutting edge of surveillance capitalism?

This is centrism posing as radical utopianism: Let's redeem the university! Let's redeem our institutions! Let's redeem the state! I say: Let it all burn. May *our* gardens not be small and tended, but a flourishing sanctuary of invasive species, weeds, brain-eating fungi, ecosystem pirates, unleashed across the world.

One of the first steps we need to undertake in order to undo the dividuation that the university writ large has imposed on what once was affectionately called the 'Republic of Letters' is to once again provide a space that is hospitable to scholarly thought. With this I do not simply mean 'publishing work', pushing it from acquisition through production to publication and dissemination – despite the enormous importance of developing, in tandem with Diamond OA strategies, the open infrastructures to accommodate those processes. What I mean is creating a sense of solidarity, community, and belonging to those authors publishing together at a press.

Whereas commercial publishing (and university publishing, increasingly so) has fully adopted the strategies of the neoliberal university in casting scholars as each other's competitors in some type of dysfunctional, artificial marketplace of ideas, feeding their manuscripts to AI-butressed algorithms to calculate the probability of profitability and boost their dollar-to-word ratio, we have adopted not the dividual work, but collective work as the primary unit of scholarly publishing. Publishing is curatorial, it is a work of care, and the work of the publisher is the *catalogue*.

Considering the catalogue as the primary output unit of a publishing house has several consequences. First of all, it impacts acquisition. Manuscripts are acquired on the basis of their scholarly rigour, writing style, and argument, but also with regard to how they compose with the rest of the catalogue. Even though individual authors may not be familiar with, or even reference any of the other works we have published, for us these resonances and contrasts are a prime concern.

Second, we believe that there is true empowerment to be found in bringing authors together in a shared space, to offer the conditions of possibility for a *community of authors* to emerge. Ever since the Covid-19 pandemic, when each of us was forced into lesser or greater modes of social isolation, we started a monthly author group via Zoom. This group initially started in

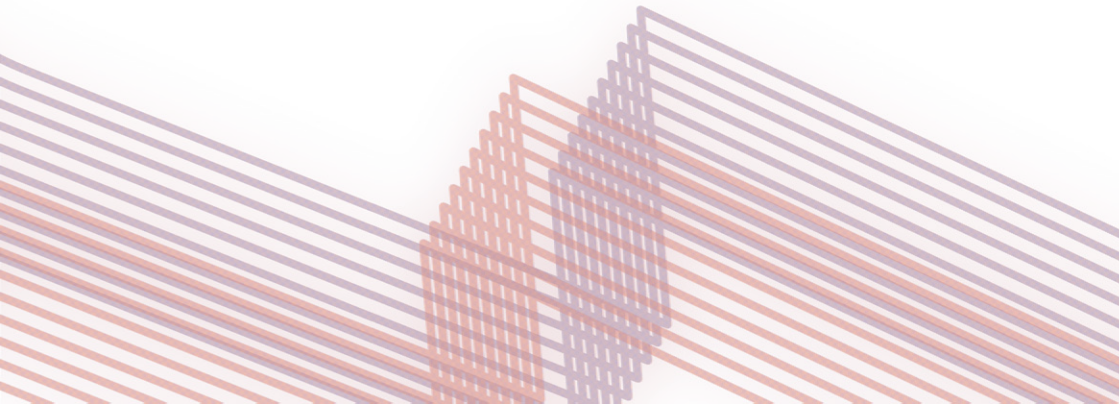
the fall of 2021 with all authors of a single cohort, but has since expanded each year with the authors of the new manuscripts approved that year. The groups are held each month at a different day and a different time, to facilitate attendees from different time zones to attend at regular intervals.

The result has been an annually expanding monthly meeting of authors, exchanging ideas, discussing their writing projects but also production issues. It has presented an open forum to reflect on the writing and publishing experience, for mutual education and exchange, and opportunity for authors and staff to connect in ways that are usually not possible during the 'formal' publishing process. In the open access sphere a lot of words are expended on notions of 'community', 'community-led', 'community-owned', etcetera. What about first actually elaborating the work that actually builds communities? The slow work of the creation of a group, never uniform, never coherent, always in motion, but also providing a fragile sense of home – a home for thinking and writing, individual or collective, explicit or implicit, the duty for which has long been abdicated by commercial and university publishers alike.

One of the few meatspace occasions of seeing a manifestation of this author group has been our annual book booth at the MLA Convention. Started in about the same period as the author Zoom calls, our booth initially felt as a foreign invader relegated to the edge of the 'university presses' section of the MLA book exhibit. 'Who are you?' 'Never heard of you' 'Open access?'.... But over the course of three editions we have seen a remarkable shift. Not only has open access book publishing, even in the humanities, become much more mainstream, our own authors have started to find their way to our booth.

Whereas other (university) presses send outreach specialists or interns to man their booths with little knowledge of the content of the publications they exhibit or the authors who wrote them, we intimately know the books we present. We have read, edited, and typeset them, together with the small team at our press. And authors recognise this. They recognise that the care extended to their work, and the care extended to the catalogue *as a whole* is of a qualitatively different nature than their experience with commercial or university publishing. And these are the moments where, step by step, we can effectuate change within the minds of those who are still invested within the university: *another form of collectivity is possible*. Scholarly communication can be a collectively shared experience.

The move from an incidental, single initiative of tentative community building to a broader model of founding new institutions on top of open access publishing practices, radical or not, may seem like a big step, but it is a step on the road nevertheless, not to redeem the university, and not to utopia, but to the concrete establishment of alternatives to the atrophied communities – if this word may even still apply – of the universities and the massified authorships of the outsourced publishing machines.



# MANUFACTURED UN- WELLNESS, PUBLISHING SCHEMING, AND HOW ONLY MAD PEOPLE CAN BURN IT DOWN

## *I. Manufactured Unwellness: The University is Redeemable?*

I am currently on medical leave from the midwestern public university in the U.S. at which I labour. The reason I am on medical leave is connected to that amebous thing we call mental health. I have been very unwell and the university (and specifically a person in a leadership position who has developed a toxic ableist way of 'managing' me) has made it much worse. I am still looking into diagnoses, and I won't name them here, but it's not looking good. I sleep a lot and talk myself into socialising in small doses, after which I need to rest for long periods of time to recover. Sometimes I identify as Mad. Sometimes I say I am a psycho because it jars people out of hackneyed responses to the nebulous 'mental health issues' with which we all deal, some better than others, but which the conditions of our labour usually aggravate.

ELA PRZYBYŁO

Mimi Khúc (2023), in her groundbreaking work on ableism and the university, demonstrates that universities make us unwell. In other words, while we are made to feel that being a psycho, Mad, or unwell is an individual problem we must seek individual remedies to, it is linked to structural issues, to the conditions of our labour, to the accretive gain of harassment, and for many to sexism, racism, ableism, classism, transphobia and homophobia, femmephobia, citizenship status, and weird forms of xenophobia and linguistic injustice that have not yet even been given names. Like, for example, is it possible that when people with 'ethnic names' have to spell their name, say their name, and respond to unfortuitous versions of their name on a daily basis throughout their working careers it might lead to some psychic fissure that makes happy performative cooperation and perfect masking less possible? Or when we are asked to conform to ways, modes, *habitués/habiti* of doing work that are not made for someone who is disabled, that the work output – even if consistent, strong, careful – will continue to not be understood as sufficient in some way? Or when there is no washroom for someone to use in the place of one's work, how that might shape the fabric of how we understand ourselves as working bodies in working spaces? There must already be a catalogue of such items, and there are so many juncture points of wearing away at the intersections of marginalised identities. Sara Ahmed (2017) talks about how the repetitive act of hitting a brick wall chips away at the flesh, not the wall. For Sara Ahmed, Mimi Khúc, and so many other brilliant feminist scholars, the question of whether the brick wall (read: the university) is redeemable is a vague question, and less important than whether the bodymind that has hauled itself to work can find little ways through or around the wall – little burrows, little caves, little hollows – or whether it will just make more sense to remove one's bodymind and go take a nap after the exhaustion of crushing into the wall.

## ***II. Publishing Scheming: Publishing as ‘Final Hallucinations’***

Okay, okay, so we have the Ahmedian brick wall that is the university and its efforts to crush those who want to modify or disrupt the wall – ‘the material means by which worlds are not encountered, let alone registered’ – and we have the bodymind, hauling ass day after day even while it should be napping (Ahmed, 2017: 18). And what of publishing? In 2012, when I was still a somewhat lively person with my fondness for resting in bed mostly private and in check, I had the remarkable opportunity to meet some friends in graduate school. As goes with graduate school, the program had many cliques, many very cool rich queers who did not like the look of me, but also some other folks who were sort of figuring it out like me. I had the utmost privilege of co-building a few friendships and energised by the work of building friendships we also built a journal together.

*Feral Feminisms (FF)*, under various combinations of editors, became a space to play with knowledge, bring things into being, and deeply question why elements of the wall exist in the way that they do. Alongside the university’s brick wall, there is also the publishing paywall, barring who has access to published content. And alongside the paywall there is also the wall that often prevents junior scholars including graduate students from getting their foot in the door, from publishing. There are also the unspoken walls, unspoken rules – the whole culture of publishing, some of which is written up on journal websites, but much of which is not. *FF*, for us, I think, was a way to build a different thing, to think through all the walls, and give junior folks – ourselves at the time – as well as all those forced out of academia (Jones & Kafai, 2024), and artists, creative writers, and activists, a place to discuss various feminist thematics.

Yet, the journal has also been a site of tremendous labour – so much of it my labour – invisible, uncompensated, expected, domesticated. First time authors might be proud to include the item on their cv, but they are not usually trained nor have any way of assessing the amount of spoon labour (Miserandino, 2003) that went into making their work published.<sup>14</sup> They do not need to know that, behind their piece, are uncompensated reviewers, guest editors with visions enshrined with exhaustion, and ultimately at the end of the tunnel, me at my little laptop entering data into the wordpress site from my ‘bed cave’ (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). I love making things, and especially feminist thinglies like journals, but part of me agrees that publishing might be ‘ancillary,’ as the previous author frames it, to wall-production, to the unjust university. Yet feminist work continues to invent, reimagine, world build, unmake – even as tenure and promotion committees are meeting behind closed doors to decide where merit rests and which colleagues are worth supporting and many never even make it to the imagined mythic *there* of Tenure Track™ employment. It is all pretty dire. As the previous author asks: ‘Why would the utopian dimension of scholar-led open access publishing necessitate the redemption of the university? A university that has adjunctified nearly every possible junior position? A university that is rapidly dismantling tenure? A university that has been expelling professors for protesting genocide? A university casting its student population into lifelong debt? A university at the cutting edge of surveillance capitalism?’ Thank you previous author, why indeed.

### ***III. Only Mad People Can Burn it Down***

Without offering a redemptive third approach, I do want to turn again to thinking about psychotic breaks and to being Mad. This week, week three of the dark chaos of tru\*p and of my medical leave, my toxic boss had the gall to send me a performance review of my work filled with inaccuracies about my ‘labour output’. I spent four hours writing a detailed response,

and another five laying motionless, to be met with an email indicating that she cannot review my responses until after my medical leave concludes. What is the function of sending me, a disabled still quite junior colleague, a performance review while I am on medical leave? I think here and in regard to the 'redemptive' question, Mad studies can give us some tools, if not answers. I think Mad studies can help us craft a 'refusal of the academy of misery' (Moten and Harney, 2013). Here, then, are four initial tools that Mad people hone for thinking about the 'abyss' (Khúc, 2023) that is the university, the abyss that also leaks into publishing:

1. First, and as the author of the text preceding mine in this publication, Ahmed (2017), Khúc (2023), and many others point out, universities, much like toxic bosses, do not care about us. We are at best units of labour they can be proud of. Mad people here have an edge similar to other disenfranchised groups, in that we know and have always known that *we cannot trust the wall!!!* While our colleagues are running around proving their excellence, Mad people know that while *we are excellent*, we have been rendered forfeit before the game even began. Mad people are fortified for disappointment, even though we might cry, freeze, or act up when we are met with it. Mad people are suspicious of authority and surveillance. This aligns with Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's understanding of the critical academic as one who 'questions the university, questions the state, questions art, politics, culture' (2013, 38). I think more and more of us are waking up to the fact that we all need to be suspicious. The wall is not going to protect anyone.

2. Mad people know both how to work alone and to collaborate. If Mad people collaborate it is not likely to be performative because Mad people do not have the energy for that. We might mask, as in portray a version of ourselves to the world in order to strategically decrease the chance of being met with ableism, but – and at least I speak for myself – because we are protective of our spoonage (Miserandino 2003), we will not be doing performative collaboration for toxic bosses, brick wall signings, or taking photos with administrators – perhaps especially when they want us to. Instead, we will challenge narrow, ableist, and compulsory well ways of working, of publishing, through ‘reciprocity, mutual respect, mutual accountability, mutual commitment to each other’s well-being. Mutual recognition of each other’s suffering’ (Khúc, 2023: 79). Here, I invite everyone to not only think about how to say no, how to work around, under, or over the wall, but also how to turn to the bed instead: do you really have the spoons to boot lick, in the least sexy way possible, the wall-enforcers who are deliberately working against you?

3. Mad people also do not usually adhere to the decorum of publishing. As an editor of an independent journal that mostly does whatever it wants, works with guest editors to shape *their* vision for the journal issue they envision, does not depend on institutional funding, and is in general, well, *feral*, I can say that Mad folks bring hybrid and creative publishing to another level. What even is a page? Why would an academic article not *also* include the art one made in their bedroom while they were responding to the brick wall conditions that are making it impossible for them to find employment that honours their bodymind? Why not have soundtracks or zines or collages be part and parcel of so-called academic work? Mad people will take you to the edges and back of whatever you thought publishing was. Here I invite readers to look at our back issues and especially at *FF*’s ‘Excess I’ issue for examples of academic work that freely incorporates art, crip care cards, and bathtime (Schwartz & Kafai, 2024).

4. Mad people also invite universities and publishing undertakings to question the very structures of publishing, their temporalities, their chrononormativities (Freeman, 2010). Why must authors be allotted exactly four months to edit a piece? Why do we need to create artificial pressure to publish or work fast? How can we resist the order of things if that order is actively undermining our ability to do work that feels meaningful, to dream, and to take care of ourselves and others?

5. Mad people also embrace failure. Does every published article really need to be outstanding in the eyes of a reviewer who may or may not be one's academic kin? Cannot some things simply be what they need to be, or maybe not be excellent in every sense but still important, valid, and worth existing? Failure in publishing can mean a lot of things and can also look like abandoning ship when things are not going in sustainable directions, changing course, making exceptions, making edits, and sometimes just taking a nap instead (Hersey, 2022).

To end this short reflective piece, I invite readers into an activity with me. Take a pair of scissors, a glue or tape, and some paper items that are giving you strong feelings. You can also do this digitally but doing it by hand is especially satisfying. Take, for example, a recent piece you received unnecessarily harsh peer reviewer feedback on, or that letter your toxic boss mailed you, or maybe some photos of the goons in power, or even of brick walls. It is time to collage, to disassemble the wall, to rebuild it otherwise, or to burn it all down. Maybe your wall will be that feral garden with weeds the previous author refers to – 'a flourishing sanctuary of invasive species, weeds, brain-eating fungi, ecosystem pirates, unleashed across the world'. Maybe your collage will be a way for the wall, for once, to be the site that is wounded and smashed about, rather than your flesh. If you accept this invitation, may whatever you create be that something you need to rest well tonight.<sup>15</sup>



Description: *forgive yourself*, collage, 2024. My non-wall collage, made of analogue photographs of buildings from a neighbourhood I was born in in Poland and lime green strips of paper, asking only: forgive yourself.

# A SCHIZO GUIDE TO RUNNING AN ANTI- RACIST/ANTI-COLONIAL/ OPEN ACCESS/ONLINE JOURNAL IN (ANTI) FASCIST TIMES

**1. *journal without conditions.*** The (im)possibility of the open access radical journal is the very condition for its possibility. The journal in the black radical tradition is the epistemological resistance to the on-going ontological violence and subjectification of racial capitalism. Against pessimism the subaltern digital journal is heterotopic desire, collective black-ops in textual invention, experimental aesthetics and speculative futurity. A minor mesh, a black secret technology deconstructing para-coloniality and techno-racial marginality.

ASHWANI SHARMA

**2. info-capitalism overload.** Communication capitalism driven by information, AI, and financialisation is the neo-colonial knowledge economy. The polycrisis of capital, fascism, and big tech is the latest configuration of racial capitalism as techno-feudalism. The black journal is a minor protocol, a strange attractor re-rerouting the architecture of networked communication. The commodity of falsity, of big data enclosures, control, command and information (CCI), and the war economy is interrupted through distributed networks of small-scale annotated knowledges. The excessive viral information seeps through the (de)acceleration of modulated, rewired cognition. The networked journal of the (black) common(s) reengineering the swarm of financial speculations, AI fakery, and abstractions of late fascism. The open source digital journal is a black hole, darkmatter in the white noise of data and capital.

**3. cybernetic labour.** The exhaustion of free labour tends towards dead labour. Journal work is self-exploitation and chronic sickness. Cognitive capitalism produces mad subjectivity. Schizo-work operates as immanent relay in the digital platforms of knowledge production. Networked communications delinks labour, distributing actions across humans, information, technologies. The cybernetic feedback loops of journal production create emergent forms of shared work, abstracting techno-sociality and reforming journal work. (Im)material labour automation rewiring the cognitive protocols of journal work between body, communication and machine. Resource (re)distribution, time (re)management, inventive activity are modulated by the fuzzy logics of journal flow and flesh memory. A redistribution of resources in the circuits of thought and writing mediated by queer/raced/class subjectification in data. Techno-flesh distributed across network protocols with cybernetic disruption, schizo-madness and bio-techno breakdown. The positive feedback loops with emergent knowledge workers as potential en fleshed robots latent in the nexus of journal essay, audio-vision, and published issues. Burnout and breakdown are for the machines. Refuse work, why work? Cybernetic human

affection across the journal mesh reimagines the blackness of free labour. A gift economy of sharing, mutual assistance, self-organisation is the common(s) of refusal and re-invention.

**4. algorithmic transmedia.** The digital journal is a schizo-network mediatisation of writing, text, essays, images, audiovisuals, art, voices, sound, music, aesthetics, issues, commons, reviews, comments, inscriptions transforming media genres and forms; recomposing the borders of journal, book, information, journalism, news; reframing the relationship between digital and paper. The hybrid form deconstructs the limits/affordances of the journal. Paper is technology, enfolded, displaced, and recomposed in the technologies of print publishing. New connections, deterritorialisation of the 'friction-free' operations of corporate algorithmic racism, rewired by software hacking, engineering emergent assemblages of writing, essay, and audiovisuals. The (parasitic) open source mode of interrupting techno-capitalism is in constant risk of (re)capture. Is this the only future of the open access journal? The digital journal is fragmentation, and repurposing of information in inventive, experimental aesthetic modes always includes the possibility of its erasure and loss. Inter-referencing, connections, hyperlinks across texts creates new situated knowledges between platforms and journal issue(s), with altered modes of interruptive collective knowledge, subaltern machine learning, and new journal databases and archiving.

**5. black opacity.** In the hypervisibility of excess knowledge production the minor black journal is imperceptible, a small node, hidden in the network of hyper-connection; a trace, a thread weaving alternative connections and imaginings. Black journal mesh opacity transversing different forms and sites, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction. Black opacity modulating, slowing down (and speeding up) the protocols of journal consumption. Slow reading, anti-immediacy resistive tactics of the emergent journal work. Blackness as code switching, shifting

forms, masking, mimetic, diagrammatic – encrypted knowledge transforming reading protocols. Unknowing reconfiguring knowledge overproduction. Schizo-blackness the viral mode of counter-info practices. A secret *techné* inside the late fascist crisis of social democracy. Black opacity a ghost in the (white) machine, a spectral mysticism in the logics of colonial knowledge systems.

**6. geo-cartographies.** The concentration of knowledge and power in the West increasingly interconnects across the globe. Globalisation is totalising info-capitalism, network communication reconfigures knowledge and place. The immaterial labour of cognitive ‘primitive accumulation’ is (re)produced through the uneven development of global capitalism. Subaltern women in the Global South, the hyper-exploited factory workers producing microchips and digital objects. The gendered enslaved are the abstract labour of the global economy that enable digital platforms to operate. The open access journal operates in this extractive economy, proliferating sites through contradiction and resistive damage. The global cartographies of network knowledge provide grids of changing relations of power. The rise of Asian tech-power in and outside the Global South is the reorganisation of state and corporate power. Anti-colonial journal work operates across multiple diasporas, configurations, and nodes. The extension of the journal readership across space and time demands new understandings of the limits of Eurocentric knowledge. New racisms are always refracted through the journal as cultural prism. Anti-colonial intelligence is constantly reworked through historical reference and new sites of global knowledge. Inventive subaltern AI has the potential to enable rapid modes of translation across cultures and nations; translating languages decentres the dominance of English, opening up possibilities of new hybrid and creolised indigenous knowledges. The possibility of mis-translations informing a complex decoding; the untranslatable the ever-constant schizo-encryption in the flow of communication. The multiple translations of

inter-Global South to South bypass the dominant neo-colonial structures of networks. The energy consumption of globalised tech requires new forms of data storage and protocols for the control of information across space and time.

**7. *afterlives of the (white) university.*** The open access journal crosses and blurs the boundaries of the university, the corporate paywalled journal, and the outside. Open source knowledge production happens across multiple sites in and outside the university. The neoliberal university is parasitical of research and outputs as an extractive info-economy reliant on the work of the individual, projects and journals. The toxic university appropriates and assimilates otherness – equality, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, decolonisation are the institutional forms of corporate reproduction and social control. The journal in a complicit mode constantly needs to be aware of the limits of institutional working. The open access publication can provide spaces and connections for more equitable sharing of ideas and writings – it is one site of (black) study. The journal engenders the undercommons, a refuge for the renegades, the ones that don't fit, for the mad ones, the fugitives. The anti-university operates in the dark corners of the university, as a site of sharing and struggle. This entanglement, 'in but not of' the teaching machine, destabilises and permeates the university wall. Affirmative sabotage is the mode of working, in critical intimacy of the institution. The undercommons is another name for the journal.

**8. *future archives.*** Archives are ubiquitous. Digital technologies of recording, copying, and networking everything with the rise of big data and the exponential expansion of massive databases in the archiving of life. The digital journal is by default an archive, it can re-construct its design and use in networked, distributed forms. Collective memory is a commodity in the 'googlisation' of all bio-information. The journal as itinerant archive re-coding feedback systems and racist algorithms. The subaltern

journal intervenes in creating spaces for alternatives to emerge, reengineering conditions for resistance and transgression of future control and commercial exploitation. Perhaps the future journal will be anti-archive – one of hacked virtual data of what we never had in a world of information, noise, and spectacle – journal of nothingness, silence, of negativity are possible futures. Do we need to forget? What is the unthought of journals? Journal archives as the non-archivable. What does a journal as archive become? How do we think the contemporary, the present of journal archives in a digital world? What of collective memory, and the archive of the journal? The journal as alternative history, reworking the temporality of thought, connecting different times and material histories. The digital journal as science-fiction, speculations in the time and space of cyber-thought, traumatic histories, mourning, and surreal knowledge. The digital erasures of the precarious journal create temporal and contingent knowledges reconfiguring what is knowledge. Where the feminist/queered/black repetitive glitches in the cybernetic info-systems deconstructs algorithmic dominance and indexes repressed social memories.

**9. fugitive communism.** The subaltern journal is a node, a modulation, an iteration in the rearrangement of desires for a reimagined sociality. The black journal, the self-organised fuzzy logic for emergent modes of (poetic) thinking, organising, repairing, and plotting. A cybernetic surreal madness resisting the racist, patriarchal, economic control of knowledge – a form of info-sociality from local to planetary levels. Incubating experiments in cybernetic otherness, disruption, interruption, redistribution, invention, repetition, erasures, and fugitive escape. All incomplete collective subjectivities, pirate forms of autopoiesis and autonomy, for abolition not reform of crypto-fascism and its institutions. The subversive open access journal is the general antagonism – for black schizo-machinic communism transversing the university and its outsides. An opaque blueprint for the (secret) recalibration of useful knowledge.

## LAUREN SMITH

As a library worker on an academic-related and professional services contract at my place of work, the time, resources, and freedom I am afforded to engage with academic literature, current research, and relevant communities are limited. I worry this means I am woefully out of touch, if I were ever in touch, with the academic writing in a field I have only ever been adjacent to. Having spent years seeking permanent, full-time employment, even nearly five years into this relative stability, and even as a straight-passing middle class white woman, I still find it challenging to engage 'too strongly' with work that may draw critical attention. I fear I can't adequately honour others' ideas or my own in a brief experimental project.

Nevertheless, I offer this contribution as resistance: an assortment of ideas, connecting theoretical perspectives, the practice of publishing activism, and wider social contexts. Present as I write are three forms of openness: 1) licensing/distribution/reproduction; 2) ethos/accessibility/unoppressiveness; 3) earnestness/vulnerability/authenticity. I am using this opportunity as a *kairotic* moment (Carman, 2021), in which I hope that my thoughts may land with the audience at the right moment for them to think, act, or write from them more deeply.

### **Time**

On the subject of time, it is important to avoid reproducing exploitative patterns in our efforts to offer alternative avenues for publishing. However, touching on Sharma's (2025) identification of self-exploitation, the amount of work that goes into resisting commodification is, in itself, exhausting. There are only so many levers we can pull to manage our workloads, and time is (perhaps) the one over which we have the most control.

Sharma raises the issue of time – ideas around anti-immediacy, slow reading, and time (re)management. Refusing to participate in the hurried pressures of academia and instead embracing slowness in the fields we work in (e.g. Farkas, 2021) requires us to extend patience and understanding – peer reviews, responses, and individual pieces of work will be ready when they are ready, in contrast to the toxicity of strict deadlines imposed by universities and traditional publishing outlets. Doing our best must be good enough, and all contributors should be recognised for their labour; we must honour ourselves and others in our efforts to create something meaningful. The pressure we can put on ourselves to ensure speedy processes is neither sustainable nor healthy. There is scope for the consideration of how to support each other through our processes, acknowledging, for example, *crip time* (Samuels, 2017).

### ***Marginality***

Academic conferences in the US are omitting conference paper titles from visa invitations<sup>16</sup> and federal banned words lists are influencing freedom of expression and academic freedom, extending as far as redacted website content on government and health web pages, and refusal of research grants.<sup>17</sup> In these circumstances, existing in the margins may feel safer, and can be an ‘inclusive space where we recover ourselves’ (hooks, 1996: 54), with the margins of activist publishing as places that can nourish our capacity to resist (hooks, 1996: 52). In a context of universities where there is a reality of educational opportunities for marginalised groups being limited through structural injustice, and the political reality of academic freedom being under assault (Giroux, 2024), activist publishing can be a space for marginalised and silenced voices to be heard. Publishing activism explicitly brings together the voices of early career African academics, for example (Luescher et al., 2016: x) and radical open access publications can create spaces for collaboration, connection, and dissemination.

### ***Accessibility***

Radical publishing as praxis must attend to affect, care, and labour. Sharma (2025) raises the necessity for networks, shared work, mutual assistance, and self-organisation. These are vital aspects of activist publishing spaces; they should prioritise the well-being of contributors (authors, editors, reviewers, all involved in the production) and resist the pressures of cognitive capitalism. I am unsure about how we achieve this sustainably. Do we have models of working or manifestos for how we choose to operate? Are we intentional in the ways we relate to people and consider, for example, power dynamics in our practices?

To be a place in the margins from which people can resist, activist publications must ensure that their own structures and approaches are inclusive and accessible. If we view education and knowledge as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994) and radical publishing as a source of the knowledge with which we educate, we have responsibilities as activist publishers and contributors to prioritise ways of not only ensuring that everyone's voices are heard, but also (as far as possible) ensuring these voices can be understood and accessible.<sup>18</sup> Publishing activism is central to public intellectualism, and as part of this we have a responsibility to seek to communicate our ideas in ways that are clear, accessible, and rigorous (Giroux, 2023), making what we have to say accessible to the wider public and specifically seeking to be inclusive of people without backgrounds in (for example) philosophy or political theory, as well as those with dyslexia and other forms of neurodivergence, or for whom English is not a first language. This accessibility is a precondition for social justice, as it pertains to respondent injustice (Wong, 2021).

Publishing activism in the form of radical open access journals can offer spaces for pluralism and dialogue, where all individuals can exercise their capacities and contribute meaningfully to scholarly conversations, where colonised and oppressed voices to resist psychological oppression (Bartky, 1990) and can be a site of the kind of solidarity so many are deprived of (Stockdale, 2024: 8). They can be spaces that resist epistemological injustice (Fricker, 2007), rejecting and dismantling knowledge hierarchies. To do this, they must (as much as possible) avoid reproducing processes and structures seen within the neoliberal university and dominant modes of scholarly communication. Critical reflection on our demands for standardised referencing styles, expected modes of communication and voice, formatting and other requirements may be part of taking action to make work inclusive for contributors as well as accessible for a wide audience, allowing radical open access platforms to be places where academics and others can cross borders, speaking across disciplines and to the wider public as part of pedagogy of resistance (Giroux, 2024). As Sharma (2025) offers, these are journals without conditions.

However, there are *some* conditions we must hold to. Drawing on Iris Marion Young's ideas around norms, practices, rules, and language being non-distributable goods (1990: 22), I suggest that the standards set by activist publishers should, wherever possible, be designed with the creation of conditions for social justice as a priority. This may be reflected through dismantling unjust practices and standards, and can also be reflected through upholding inclusive expectations around language use (e.g. avoiding sanism in our choice of words).

### ***Discovery***

Once radical publications have been produced, there is a role to play for library workers and systems – specifically our catalogues and discovery layers. How can we bring the margins of activist publishing inward in terms of visibility and discovery?

The state of internet searching and technological shifts are changing research behaviours. On top of this, various injustices, including epistemological injustice (Fricker, 2007) see a significant amount of valuable knowledge excluded from traditional journals and in turn many subject databases, and in turn discovery layers. Digital collections management by institutions may contribute to including voices from the margins, who (as touched on above) may be content with their position but may find their power emphasised were it to be given visibility.

There are some very real limitations around the capacities of academic (and other) libraries to undertake this work, however: in the context of universities in perpetual crisis and an 'emerging authoritarianism and rebranded fascism in the United States, Canada, Europe and elsewhere' (Giroux, 2023), it is increasingly challenging for library workers to make agentic decisions about their own collections<sup>19</sup> and resist exploitative patterns of logistics (Harney & Moten, 2013: 87). However, there is promising emerging discussion about small presses and a more fragmented market offering the potential to create the conditions for fairer and more diverse acquisitions for libraries and collections (Haimé, 2025). With intentional approaches to collections management, libraries and library workers can contribute to creating the conditions for knowledge justice.

### ***Kinship, Solidarity, and Justice***

Considering the extended kinship of community and loving friendships, with love as 'the will to nurture one's own or another's spiritual growth' (hooks, 2016: 136), I view publishing activism as a space for this growth. Mutual giving strengthens community, and this principle should guide our publishing practices. Cognisant of Sharma's warning against exploitation, balanced with his vision of 'a gift economy of sharing, mutual assistance, self organisation', I think about the need to find a way to ensure that our endeavours can aim for contributors to feel valued, appreciated, and supported. How can we create spaces of

publishing activism that feel like community? We often work asynchronously and individually to submit, review, refine, edit, and publish work – there may be scope for projects to intentionally work in ways that foster community as part of the process. Sharma emphasises the importance of collaborative networks in achieving sustainable practices. Without collaborative networks sustainable and just practices are not possible, and through them we must endeavour to practice solidarity and kinship.

As part of this solidarity and kinship, spaces of activist publishing should be sites of affective justice (Stockdale, 2024) in which we engage in affective relationships for good. What can consideration of the affective dimensions of academic publishing look like? In positions of relative power (editorially), it manifests in how we communicate, what contributions we are inviting, what we choose to reject and how we communicate and justify that, and how we can choose to accept what is often rejected in more traditional spaces. Alongside cultures of accountability, there must be room for people to make mistakes in this work and for us to extend patience and grace.

## MARC HERBST

Activist publishing for movements is one thing; it collaborates with movement concerns for the sake of movement building and avails itself, at a different scale, to movement debates.

Publishing in relationship to the (toxic) university is something else. Though the toxicity of the university may be an unfortunate given, it is still an institution that serves young students looking for something other than some status quo. It is with this recognition that our contribution is made. Despite the endless

waves of abuse from politicians, businesses, and the much too-powerful know-nothings that learning institutions endure, and also despite their own internal toxicity, students still enrol in universities. Among the many reasons that young learners still engage in a course of study is the chance to both better understand the world and to hear about the methods that scholars, artists, and activists have employed to change it. They think the adults, professors, know something about all this. And by 'change the world', students might really mean the dating rut they are in, unaccepting parents, or they might mean 'capitalism'. Dating ruts, intolerant families, and capitalism all relate to bad-faith relationships.

Life experience has demonstrated to many students that the epistemic promises to change the world made by capitalism, governing systems, and the arts are, at best, half-truths. And nevertheless, students still come to study culture, politics in systems designed by the Western idealism that is also burning down the world.

Another of the many reasons that students engage in courses of study is that dominant systems – capitalism and its particular entanglements with governance – offer few other waystations besides the university in the path between childhood and work. Importantly, young people can still find waystations and alternative worlds outside of higher education, but that is off topic here. Instead, it's very important to focus on the basic contradictions of the university: its scholarship and practices can rarely deliver what it promises and yet it is there for those who cannot find other options – options that include affirmatively dropping out for even more precarious experimentation.

So the students that I engage with in the fields of art and eco-social design formally follow a curriculum that frontloads the field's necessary practices and knowledges, based partially on systems that no longer or do not yet work. Each student

wrestles with the institution and teachers in order to discover personal and systemic meaning in the projects and readings given to them. They also struggle to find meaning in the wider discipline they have found themselves studying in.

Knowing how difficult it was for me to choose a discipline and how ambivalent many of my students are to the fields they have half-heartedly chosen, I take it as given that many of my students will not work in the field that they are studying. This is particularly true for the undergraduates. Even if I am wrong, the blue chip and non-commercial art world simply does not have enough money or critical attention for them. My students ask me where and how they today could possibly live as artists. Having shared my stories of 1990s artist-activist bohemia in cheap downtown LA and the Lower East Side, the students see rents in Bed Stuy, Berlin, and East London and know that they have been priced out of so much of what we teach regarding meaningful community practice and organic critical and cultural engagement.

Disciplines' systemic logics will fail. Ours is a radically changing world, and the old systems can more easily push around the young. Yet students are hungry to critically think through these general and their specific circumstances to make meaningful contributions within their communities, chosen families, and the wider world.

Their experience with yearnings, their experience with limits and limiting factors, and the experienced openings that they do find and rush through have little to do with most of what is published. Academic publishing is stuffed with young academics' efforts to fulfil publishing requirements for their departments or the department they aspire to work for. So much academic publishing traces an invisible line of desperation, often semi-idealistically pulling abstractions from transformational knowledge. This is abstraction upon the same transformational knowledge that students also need in order to get a grasp on the mess of the world, but employed towards different ends. We know that publish

or perish produces a certain type of writing, and it's not what students need. Rather, the relevant knowledge that students need is best determined in some kind of open collaboration with them, read with and through their eyes – eyes that are experiencing the ongoing systemic collapse that is hardly written about because it is so pervasive, and also so anti-systemic. Doesn't this have something to do with undercommons study (Harney & Moten, 2013)?

With these understandings of the state of university affairs, one aspect of a radical publishing practice is that it focuses on collaborative, active, and contextual knowledge production. Publishing can mind, support, and celebrate the possibility for meaningful contextual critical thought and creative activity; in exchange with wider ideas that are found to resonate with writers and their ends. This 'in wider exchange' is often done with more easily available texts held by the library or freely available online in accordance with students' browsing and research habits. A reason for the importance that radical and mainstream scholars see in open access and accessible language is that paywalling just makes so much discourse irrelevant to open social processes.

And so, publishers can offer a process to the learners. The process involves editorial attention that leads towards a pamphlet, a book, or website that can result from collective learning projects. Texts that are somehow collectively forged by the limits that learners seek to exceed or confront or ignore or clarify, especially when serviced by the minds of an editor, a copy editor, a designer, and even someone skilled with marketing and communication, make the small and intimate large and in wider confrontation with the issues that cursed and birthed them.

Students are there to figure things out, engaged publishing can help.

Open access readers can benefit from these kinds of engaged compositions.

# SURVIVAL UNIT, PRESS

## ROA III

Suggested Music for Reading & Response Writing: Survival Unit III, Live in London 2011: <https://youtu.be/optbpF9z7qA>

The concept of the *pharmakon*, as explored by Derrida, lingers in the dusty recesses of memory – a notion both potent and forgotten, simultaneously a gift and a poison. This duality serves as a useful lens for understanding the contradictions inherent in activist publishing within the context of the toxic university. But where does one draw the line between gift and poison? The distinction is fraught with complexity. Derrida's invocation of the *pharmakon* might have been a means of engaging with the paradoxes of activist publishing: the ways in which it exists both within and against the structures of the university, shaped by and resisting its toxic standards. Or perhaps its citation merely serves to position the author within an intellectual tradition that garners praise and recognition. This very tension mirrors the conditions under which activist publishing operates, navigating between a genuine commitment to change and the necessity of participating in a system that grants legitimacy and survival.

The institution socialises us through a labour process that instils norms and expectations. These are shaped by the very structures that activist publishing seeks to critique and dismantle. The contradictions are undeniable: to sustain ourselves and our comrades – ensuring they receive the degrees, credentials, and legitimacy necessary to survive – we must engage with these toxic structures, even as we resist them. To entirely reject these

norms risks marginalization to the point of ineffectiveness, while full compliance signifies complicity. The Black Panthers described a similar predicament as ‘survival pending revolution’. It is not an ideal state but a strategic necessity. Activist publishing, then, must operate within this paradox, acknowledging and negotiating its ambivalent condition rather than pretending it can simply transcend these contradictions.

This is why, for years, we’ve held a deep scepticism towards the very concept of a scholarly press, even one that operates under the banner of open access. It’s like corporate social responsibility, you can’t shake the knowledge that it smells a bit like bullshit. The scent of the toxic university lingers on such institutions, marking them with the traces of exclusion and gatekeeping. Even when they attempt to break from traditional forms, their operations remain bound by the expectations of academic legitimacy and institutional validation. Yet, what if we reimagined the press – not as a scholarly press – but as a studious press? This reconfiguration moves away from the necessity of controlling or legitimising knowledge within a demarcated scholarly field and instead embraces a press that emerges from collective study. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s concept of study as a communal, fugitive practice outside of institutional constraints becomes a guiding principle. A studious press would not seek to uphold the academy’s prestige but would instead cultivate the fertile grounds of Black study and other insurgent intellectual traditions. It would prioritise experimentation, collaboration, and the free exchange of knowledge beyond the rigid structures of academic publishing.

What would such a press look like? It is difficult to say. It would likely be minor, bastard, and lowly – an institution to come, never fully recognised or funded by the so-called good and great of the open access world. It would not conform to the language of grant-makers or the bureaucratic structures that govern traditional publishing. And it doesn’t want to learn

the manners and good graces of that world because it remembers just enough of Nietzsche to recall that esteemed higher culture these institutions carry on is at the end of the day little more than the refinement and distillation of a barbarous cruelty... but not in good way. Instead, it would function as a fugitive space, a site of radical possibility where the means of production are controlled by those engaged in study rather than those who seek to regulate and commodify it.

The challenge, of course, is one of sustainability. How does one maintain a press that refuses institutional legibility? If it cannot secure funding through traditional channels, it must develop alternative means of survival – crowdsourcing, mutual aid, community support, and other collective infrastructures. This is not merely a logistical issue but a conceptual one: the refusal of traditional funding is not just about avoiding complicity; it is about enacting a different mode of publishing altogether. It is about affirming the necessity of study as a practice of survival and resistance rather than an endeavour requiring institutional validation.

This vision of a studious press is necessarily experimental. It acknowledges that activist publishing exists in a space of contradiction and that these contradictions cannot be simply resolved or dismissed. Rather, they must be engaged with creatively, tactically, and collectively. It is a press that refuses to be easily categorised, one that aligns itself with traditions of radical thought and action, committed to knowledge production as a means of survival, community-building, and transformation. Such a press would not be an alternative scholarly press but something altogether different – a press not of the ivory tower but of the undercommons, of study, of life itself. It would embrace the messiness of its position, understanding that survival pending revolution is not a resignation to the status quo but a strategy for sustaining resistance. The task, then, is to build this press – not in pursuit of legitimacy, but in pursuit of freedom.

## LUCY BARNES, RUPERT GATTI, AND ALESSANDRA TOSI

To inhabit a space of contradiction is arguably the condition of anyone working within a university today. Institutional norms, expectations, rules, and assessment may be omnipresent and often worthy of criticism, but the university is also a site of protest and resistance. Socialising activities within a university can also contribute to critical discourse and to action; for example, seminars and conferences can generate new ideas to create change, as the Radical Open Access Collective events demonstrate – not to mention seeds for eventual publications.

Open access itself exists in a space of liminality: originally (and persistently) a means to critique more established paradigms of research and publication, but increasingly enforced by institutional or national mandates; it was envisaged as a means to share high-quality research more freely and abundantly – including to those outside of universities – but, thanks to inequitable practices such as ‘processing charges’ and ‘transformative agreements’, it is at risk of stifling authors without the support of a university with the means to pay.

As a scholar-led open access press, Open Book Publishers is familiar with the opportunities and challenges of existing both within and without the university, toxic and otherwise. As is true for many others before and after, the press was deliberately founded as independent for the freedom and autonomy of being ‘without’ the university – but it nonetheless exists in a complex set of relationships with(in) universities. Our directors are university

members; much of the research we publish is generated, written, and reviewed within universities, sustained and shaped by the communities that universities create; our books are most often read by those within universities, or by those who *were* within but are now outside of them; and much of our work is funded by universities through our Library Membership Programme and sometimes by title grants. While they can thus be deeply sustaining, these relationships also involve opportunities lost: for example, authors may choose not to publish with us for fear that they will not gain sufficient credit from their universities for doing so, and select instead a publisher on which they believe their institutions will look more favourably. Much of our advocacy involves trying to persuade those within universities to *do something differently*: to publish with or financially support the independent open access presses or infrastructures they may be ignoring, or to value open research in practical ways. Although we exist outside of the university, we do not exist without it: at different times our relationship may be critical, it may be collaborative, it may be antagonistic, it may be nourishing, but it is always vital.

As we see it, the role of the independent OA press in such an environment – perhaps we can call it a ‘studious’ press, or a press that is concerned to act according to principles of social justice – is to create a space of autonomy for its authors. At Open Book Publishers we do this in a variety of ways: most obviously, by creating a model that does not impose charges on authors, who therefore are not obligated to seek financial support from the university (or elsewhere) for the open publication of their book. Likewise independent scholars, who have had to navigate paywalls in the course of their own research, and who choose us so that they do not impose such barriers on their own readers, do not have to hurdle Book Processing Charges in order to do so.

Supporting experimental publication can also offer the author the autonomy of expressing their ideas in their own way – for example, the chapter on copyright that consists solely of comic strips, or the study of the Annunciation that includes recordings of choral music alongside essay contributions – and this can also help authors to navigate the dance between the research outputs they want to create and those that are valued by their institution. An example might be the book that was drawn from an online database, both to give that database the discoverability and preservation advantages conferred by the open access book, but also so that it could assume a form that would be more readily ‘assess-able’ by the university and its funders, ensuring the authors received credit that might not have been given in the work’s original guise.

As Gatti et al. have put it:

*In essence, the scientific field is far more extensive and diverse than academic institutions alone. It is structured by power relations built upon the mobilisation of various resources, including publication venues. Scholars can make use of these venues as authors, reviewers, editors, and even founders to enhance their position within, outside of, or in opposition to institutions. (2025: 19)*

And scholars can, and do, take up all of these positions at different times. The role of publishers outside of the university, as we see it, is to create space for this shapeshifting to occur. This is particularly urgent at a time when, in different ways, universities are in danger of being used – or of allowing themselves to be used – as bluntly coercive instruments, restricting the freedom of speech they should be fostering, and when financial constraints are choking institutions’ ability to support different research communities, with arts and humanities subjects often first to feel the cuts. The role of the *book* publisher is particularly

significant at such a time, given the importance of the book to those disciplines most under threat, and the role of the independent publisher, which does not depend directly on a single institution for its future, is even more so.

Another significant role for publishers like ours is to extend the engagement of communities of researchers based in universities with those outside, whether that be independent scholars, interested readers, or subjects of research. The socially just imperative behind this engagement in the latter case is expressed well by Prof. Geoffrey Khan, the editor of the Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures series we publish:

*The field of Semitic languages and cultures (...) involves the study of languages and cultures of living communities. (...) In the past, the typical practice of academics was to do fieldwork among living communities or to research the history and heritage of living communities and then publish their work in expensive academic books. As a result, the communities whose cultures the academics described could not themselves get access to these descriptions of their own culture. To put it bluntly, it was a form of depredation and asset-stripping that benefited the career of academics but had no benefit for the communities themselves. Open-access publishing is the solution to this immoral practice, since it allows the work of academics to result in a meaningful benefit for the living communities, by ensuring that all members of the communities have access to research of their cultural heritage. (2024)*

Universities, of course, also exist in a complex relationship with the world outside. They are not self-sustaining and they do not exist for themselves alone, but also to serve the society of which they are a part. Inaccessible research is a betrayal of that aspect of their mission and arguably contributes to broader social failures which themselves rebound upon the university in different ways. Open access publishers can help to try to bridge these gaps and repair these fractures.

Finally, a word on precarity. This is a reality that looms increasingly large for those within the university (some perhaps soon to be brutally without it), and it is also a reality for independent OA presses like ours. Independence has its risks and there is no guarantee that individual presses will persist forever (nor is it necessarily desirable that they should). This is why it is so important that communities, networks, ecosystems, and infrastructures dedicated to these goals should be built and nurtured, and should discover the means, via mutual support and care, to be resilient to change and upheaval. Individual entities are not enough by themselves to guarantee the authorial autonomy and freedom to take on different roles that we have sketched out in this piece: ultimately, that responsibility belongs to communities. Perhaps the most important role for the 'studious' press, the independent press, the press that is motivated by social justice, is to contribute to building and sustaining these.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Generative AI was not used in writing this chapter. Acknowledgements: I thank numerous travellers in the Diamond OA movement, including the *JPE* editors and the conference organisers.

<sup>2</sup> Just to note one initiative among many, the Budapest Open Access Initiative: <https://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/read/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://thecostofknowledge.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://sfdora.org/>

<sup>5</sup> These really exist, I have seen them!

<sup>6</sup> The term is usefully defined here, and it is economic as well as spatial. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2021/09/28/what-or-where-is-the-global-south-a-social-science-perspective>

<sup>7</sup> <https://simonbatterbury.wordpress.com/2015/10/25/list-of-decent-open-access-journals>

<sup>8</sup> <https://doaj.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://grassrootsjpe.org>

<sup>10</sup> This model has been questioned (Adema & Moore, 2024) but it seems to work for us, and thousands of others.

<sup>11</sup> As long as we cover the bottom line, 'teaching for food' (Harney and Moten, 2013: 29) and voluntarily donating our time, if we have any.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.openlibhums.org/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.openhumanitiespress.org/>

<sup>14</sup> 'Spoons' are a metaphor Christine Miserandino introduced in 2003 to refer to the amount of energy a chronically ill person has. For example, if one is chronically ill, or Mad, or disabled, they might have 5 spoons on a given day and must decide what to do with them; there often are not enough spoons to care for oneself, care for others, and work – triage decisions need to be made. Spoon theory has since become a shorthand to discuss one's energy levels, and if one is 'out of spoons' it can mean one is not able to complete any further tasks due to exhaustion, pain, burn out, over-stimulation, or any other set of factors.

<sup>15</sup> Additionally, if you like, you can email me a photo of the scape you create to feralfeminisms at gmail dot com. Please indicate whether you want it to remain private or whether you are open to it being published in *Feral Feminisms* (either anonymously or with your name). Please add accessibility text for the image and a description of the collage, if you choose. I have included the collage I created.

<sup>16</sup> For example, *ICA25* in Denver: <https://bsky.app/profile/tobiasdienlin.com/post/3lilz-ijjzrs2w>

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.kpbs.org/news/economy/2025/02/07/federal-list-of-forbidden-words-may-jeopardize-research-at-ucsd>

<sup>18</sup> Here I am specifically thinking about the ways academic language can act as an impediment to understanding, not how natural ways of speaking/writing for marginalised groups may not be familiar to those from privileged groups – also with an awareness (but not yet enough) of language as a place of struggle (hooks, 1996: 52).

<sup>19</sup> See recent announcements from Clarivate regarding the cessation of one-time perpetual purchases for eBooks through Ebook Central; the cessation of print book sales through the library management platforms OASIS and Rialto; the sunseting of OASIS; demand-driven acquisition (DDA) no longer being supported; Rialto only providing publisher-direct and aggregator platform eBooks going forward: <https://www.uksg.org/newsletter/uksg-enews-582/opinion-a-librarians-summary-of-and-re-sponse-to-the-clarivate-announcement/>

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## NOTES ON DESIGN

Rooted in collaborative ideation, research and development, the design process unfolds as a continuous reflection of the cadavre exquis concept, with a conscious decision to maintain an unbroken, singular flow, reflected in the inter-folding ten-line imagery.

*Alexandra Trenčianska, Mia Dawson, and Lisha Wang*



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