



Journal Publishing House ?

Tuesday: Late Age of Print by Ted Striphas

Wednesday: Old Ways of Knowing, New Ways of Playing: The potential of collaborative game design to empower Indigenous Sámi by Outi Laiti

Thursday: The Right to Be Cold, One Woman's Fight to Protect the Arctic and Save the Planet from Climate Change by Sheila Watt-Cloutier

Friday: On the Im/possibilities of Anti-racist and Decolonial Publishing as Pedagogical Praxis by Amy Verhaeghe, Ela Przybylo and Sharifa Patel

Saturday: Phillipino Tree Communicating Practices Collection shared by Peachie Dioquino-Valera

On the Im/possibilities of Anti-racist and Decolonial Publishing as Pedagogical Praxis by Amy Verhaeghe, Ela Przybylo and Sharifa Patel

Anti-racist pedagogy is grounded in honing the critical exploration of racial inequality and white privilege so as to take direct action against injustice, including the ways it manifests in educational contexts. Beyond being “non-racist,” an anti-racist approach seeks to actively identify and dismantle racism in its multiple and insidious forms toward transformative social change (Dei, “Denial”; Dei, “Anti-Racist”). Decolonial approaches to pedagogy foreground Indigenous knowledges in order to challenge the ongoing presence of settler colonialism, seeking to reframe educational practices so that they spring forth from and in the service of Indigenous people and interests (St. Denis).

Although anti-racism and decolonization have been under development by feminists of color and Indigenous feminists for decades, they have acquired the status of “mainstreamed” and “metaphorical” concepts in recent years, often being mobilized in inauthentic or paper-thin ways (Tuck and Yang). We write this piece to explore the pedagogical possibilities and impossibilities for anti-racist and decolonial praxis in the realm of feminist publishing.

Online and open access feminist journals have mushroomed in recent years. Constituting a public space, online feminist journals provide unprecedented opportunities for community involvement, for the making of knowledge in various mediums, and for the making of public space itself. As part of this paradigm in feminist publishing, *Feral Feminisms* (FF) (www.feral-feminisms.com) is an independent, online, peer-reviewed, intermedia, open access feminist journal started in 2012 by Ela Przybylo, Sara Rodrigues, and Danielle Cooper. Each issue of *Feral Feminisms* builds around a particular thematic and includes academic articles, creative pieces, cultural commentaries, poems, photo-essays, short films, and visual and sound art. It utilizes the advantages of online publication, such as a flexibility of mediums, in seeking to subvert structures of knowledge production, to create alternative or “feral” publishing strategies, and to foreground topics elided by other feminist publications. Yet there are limitations on the disruptive potential of online feminist publishing. For example, “open access” can itself rely on Western colonial understandings of knowledge-sharing that thief Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge (Christen); the everyday operation of feminist publications overly relies on unpaid feminized labor (McLaughlin); and online publishing replicates and advances the power imbalances of traditional publishing models (with the ownership of the majority of journals in the hands of five commercial publishers, for example) (Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon).

av afferal Feminisms, along with other feminist online publications, thus must ask: what are the pedagogical purposes, as well as the decolonial and anti-racist possibilities, of publishing online? As three managing editors of Feral Feminisms, we are interested and invested in exploring the possibilities and impossibilities of undertaking online journal work as a form of anti-racist and decolonial pedagogical practice. In this piece, as well as in our editing praxis, we reflect on the following questions: - In what ways are feminist journals active in creating pedagogies of anti-racism, decolonization, and a commitment to free, open, and accessible readership? - What work can journals undertake to not only theoretically, but also practically, dismantle settler colonialism and racist structures? - How are publishing models invested in settler ways of knowing and creating knowledge? - How are publishing models invested in precarious and free labor that mines and undercuts feminist subjects? - In what ways do feminist publishing models suffer when they are bound to academia and its systems of worth and value allocation? - How do models of feminist publishing need to change in order to be truly transformative, empowering, and capable of remaking the worlds we live and work in?

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A Short History of Racism and Anti-Racism in Feminist Publishing

Analyzing the histories and present conditions of feminist publishing and the contexts through which feminist knowledge is made and disseminated is a productive pedagogical practice as it opens up space to question and critique the processes of feminist knowledge production. Such an analysis can be mobilized pedagogically in both feminist classrooms and academic writing toward attempting to hone publishing as an anti-racist and decolonial practice. The conditions in which feminist publications are produced are demonstrative of contemporary trajectories and tensions of feminist organizing, both within and outside the academy. Disputes within feminist publishing since the 1970s reflect broader tensions in feminisms and have shaped the production and dissemination of feminist knowledge. In this section we discuss how racism and anti-racist organizing have shaped feminist knowledge production and consider the ways in which studying feminist publishing can be an anti-racist feminist pedagogical practice.

In 1988, the Women's Press, Canada's largest and best-known feminist press, split into two separate publishing houses, the Women's Press and Second Story Press, to quell resistance to the Women's Press's structural integration of anti-racist policies (Stasiulis 35). followed for all future publications (Stasiulis 36).

In these guidelines, the press stated that they would “avoid manuscripts . . . in which the protagonist’s experience in the world, by virtue of race or ethnicity, is substantially removed from that of the writer [and] . . . manuscripts in which a writer appropriates the forms and substance of a culture which is oppressed by her own” (qtd. in Stasiulis 39). This move by the press was met with fierce resistance from other feminist publishers, The Writers Union, and broader writing and publishing communities, with critiques of the Women’s Press’s anti-racist guidelines centered around the predictable arguments that these guidelines infringed on freedom of speech and “freedom of the imagination” (Stasiulis 39). We understand analyzing the resistance to the Women’s Press’s anti-racist guidelines as a pedagogical practice that can be engaged in through reading or listening to writing that outlines such resistance. We also see these debates as an important component of feminist histories that can be incorporated into feminist classrooms.

During the production of a recent issue of *Feral Feminisms*, we were met with almost identical arguments to those the Women’s Press received when we informed a creative writer that we would not publish her piece unless she followed a peer reviewer’s recommendation to remove the appropriative use of settler constructions of North American Indigenous cultures. In our communications, this writer informed us that she would not remove these appropriative references as doing so would infringe upon her right to creativity and because it would be too limiting to write from her own positionality as a white woman. Because such disputes are typically hidden from view, the publicized debates that arose from the Women’s Press’s anti-racist guidelines are particularly useful sites for learning about the complexity of feminist knowledge production. While the Women’s Press’s anti-racist guidelines were issued thirty years ago, their contents remain relevant and useful, and, evidently, the implementation of such anti-racist publishing practices continues to be met with the freedom of speech argument that seems to be issued anytime white people are asked to stop being racist. Using these debates as feminist teaching tools, both to inform our own publishing collaborations and as material in gender studies or feminist classrooms, not only presents the opportunity to learn about how racism has informed feminist organizing, but also creates the opportunity to think through and develop our own anti-racist practices.

Scholars who theorize the role of capitalism within feminist publishing have taken up the implications of feminist publications managed by white women profiting from the work of BIPOC writers. Alexis Pauline Gumbs asserts that “the white feminist effort to tokenistically incorporate the labor of women of color led to an environment in which black women’s writing was increasingly marketable” and argues that there has been “a practice in the post-civil rights era through which the literary practices of black women we[re] reincorporated into a capitalist and imperialist framework where black women’s lives were ‘new subject matter’ to be consumed and ‘new territory’ to be discovered by an expanded market, which is similar to the way black bodies were prepared for resale in the post-reconstruction moment. . . The reconstitution of the black family as a consumer unit and the reconfiguration of black women as marketable tokens were parts of the same process” (41).

Simone Murray takes up a related issue in posing the question: “what are the ideological ramifications of a press run entirely by white women marketing itself as an outlet for the voices of women from racial minorities?” (“Books of Integrity” 173). These issues—the tokenistic use of Black women’s writing by white publishers and white-run publications marketing themselves as the voice for or of racialized women—remain relevant to contemporary publishing and are generative sites of analysis for students of feminism. While, unlike traditional book publishers, open access journals like *Feral Feminisms* do not profit financially from publishing work by Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color, our journal does benefit from publishing such work. Our emphasis on publishing work by BIPOC contributors helps to produce *Feral Feminisms*’ reputation as a progressive, social justice-oriented journal, which makes the journal appealing to potential donors and contributors who share our political positions. The collaborative thinking processes that led us to prioritize the work of BIPOC contributors have also provided us with opportunities to present on decolonial and anti-racist feminist publishing at academic conferences and write peer-reviewed journal articles, such as this one, on the topic.

This work directly benefits us as graduate students and early career scholars by adding to our academic CVs. As a result, while the benefits for feminist journals to celebrate BIPOC work are mostly immaterial, journals nonetheless have to examine their desires and potential benefits from publishing work by scholars, artists, poets, and creators who have been historically marginalized within colonial systems of knowledge-making. Even more apparently, mainstream presses that feature feminist, BIPOC, as well as queer and trans work, can benefit materially from the labor of these marginalized communities and authors. Murray discusses tensions that arose between the Women’s Press in the UK (not to be confused with the previously discussed Toronto-based Women’s Press) and Virago, the first feminist press in the UK, established in 1972 (“Books of Integrity” 174).

The UK-based Women's Press profited significantly by buying the UK rights to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, as well as the work of other popular racialized women writers such as Tsitsi Dangarembga (*Nervous Conditions*) and Pauline Melville (*Shape-Shifter*), and dedicated "a significant portion of its list—and a commensurate portion of its advertising—to promoting writing by women from those minority groups marginalized by early second-wave feminism: black women, women from ethnic minorities, working-class women and lesbians" (Murray, "Books of Integrity" 174). Murray asserts that, in addition to adhering to a policy of publishing work by women who were not white, middle- or upper-class, and straight, by positioning itself as an outlet for the voices of marginalized women, the Women's Press was able to successfully market its books to "previously underexploited markets among book buyers from minority groups," white feminists who were invested in staying up-to-date with developments in feminism, and international markets ("Books of Integrity" 176). The Women's Press also marketed itself as the outlet for the voices of marginalized women in an attempt to differentiate itself from Virago, which the Women's Press attempted to position as a publisher focused on the first-wave feminist voices of white, upper-class women from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Murray, "Books of Integrity" 176). In reality, Virago was significantly financed by winning the UK rights to Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, similarly to the Women's Press's financial reliance on Walker's *The Color Purple*, and published many books written by BIPOC, working-class, and lesbian women (Murray, "Books of Integrity" 177). Despite the comparable composition of the publishers' lists, the Women's Press was able to use the writing of BIPOC, working-class, and lesbian women to market itself as the more politically radical and inclusive publishing house. While publishing the writing of BIPOC, working-class, and lesbian women is vital to undermining the white, middle- and upper-class, and straight dominance of much feminist publishing, doing so without changing the power structures in which white, middle- and upper-class, and straight women make the decisions about what work by BIPOC, working-class, and lesbian women is worthy of being published and marketed is insufficient to shift power imbalances within feminist publishing houses. Thinking about the material and immaterial benefits that are derived for white publishers, even if feminist, from publishing work previously ousted from literary canons, is key to developing a publishing praxis that is invested in decolonial and anti-racist practices.

Decolonization and Academic Publishing

In our work at *Feral Feminisms*, we aim to employ anti-racist, decolonial, and anti-colonial publishing practices, but the material conditions in which we do our work limit our ability to do so. Being part of a settler colonial state and the beneficiaries of that state makes us unable to comprehensively divorce ourselves from settler colonialism, which makes resistance to settler colonialism a complex endeavor. So we engage in our work by asking ourselves: How do we, as people who are complicit in the colonial project, begin to disrupt this project?

Before addressing this question, we believe there is a need to differentiate between claiming to be a decolonizing force and aligning ourselves with and disseminating work that critiques and resists the intertwined structures of settler colonialism and colonialism more broadly. In their article “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang stress the importance of retaining the connection between the term “decolonization” and work that “brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (1). Tuck and Yang argue that when the term “decolonization” is used as a metaphor to describe any social justice-oriented work, “it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future” (3). We share Tuck and Yang’s concern with the way decolonization is taken up in both academic and community spaces as a way to describe work that is critical or anti-normative, but that is not engaged in the work of decolonization, that is, the work of dismantling settler colonialism and “repatriat[ing] Indigenous land and life” (Tuck and Yang 1).

We are disturbed by the ways in which settlers claim decolonization as their own. These moves to innocence allow settlers to accrue progressive legitimacy through tangential references to the stolen land on which we live, by adding Indigenous to a long list of categories of people subjected to oppression, or by describing Canada as a settler colonial state without shifting the theoretical perspectives to make space for a systematic study or critique of settler colonialism in Canada. Therefore, this discussion is not aimed at securing the progressiveness of our journal by claiming to be undertaking the work of decolonization, but rather it is oriented toward highlighting the impossibility of transforming an academic journal organized by settlers into a decolonizing project. While feminist online journals can provide a space where normative education, ideas, and learning styles are disrupted, it is also important to consider how the journal itself facilitates the reproduction of normative education and learning styles.

Razack argues that “[t]he challenge in radical education becomes how to build critical consciousness about how we, as subjects, position ourselves as innocent through the use of such markers of identity as the good activist” (18). *Feral Feminisms* is written in English and follows the formatting regulations of academic writing, for the most part, even while it includes work from multiple genres and media, and occasionally, other languages. Such use of academic language and writing necessarily reproduces the colonial project, even if the claim (and the attempt) to “untame” feminism is part of the journal’s mandate. We are not only referring to the language that many of the papers use (academic language that is often illegible and incomprehensible to many outside academia), but also to the ways in which the writing is formatted, structured, and ordered on a page, such as through grammar and particular margins, headers, and footers. These demarcations literally create rigid lines between a space for writing (which comes to occupy the space of legitimate knowledge production) and the blank spaces in margins, headers, and footers.

These processes are inherently part of a system that constructs rigid regulations around writing and publishing that can only alienate those who do not have a normative command of the English language and of writing. There are journals and writers that attempt to defy the rigid boundaries of institutionalized writing and language. One such example is the Sistren Collective in Jamaica who wrote *Lionheart Gal*, a compilation of short stories written completely in what Kamau Brathwaite refers to as Jamaica's "nation language."

Feral Feminisms creates a space for various voices to contribute to dynamic conversations that seek to unsettle the foundations of our own privilege, but we still encounter the issue of being a journal that, though open access and encouraging of nonacademic submissions, finds much of its readership and contributors in academic circles. Though various people can contribute, the people that have the means to do so, the know-how, the time, and the ability, are a very small and relatively privileged group. Open access journals can include art and creative pieces that disrupt normative knowledge production, but disseminating these texts to broader audiences is challenging. The concern here, too, is that when this knowledge is (re)produced in feminist spaces, particularly through an online presence, it can remain in echochambers. While these online presences surely include knowledges and information that are unknown to many of those who frequent these journals, and the conversations and critical thinking that they evoke are certainly invaluable, they often do not reach those outside feminist communities and university institutions. How, then, can knowledge produced by online feminist journals move beyond these online outlets to become incorporated in and beyond educational institutions? What is lost when we seek for anti-racist and decolonial knowledge to be recognized as "legitimate" by postsecondary institutions? How can knowledge move from feminist online journals into spaces that can reach more people?

Our concerns with feminist journals as a mode of world-making, knowledge-making, and feminist pedagogy are the ways in which they remain an elitist space that can often alienate more than they include. Even if more people did have the willingness and ability to contribute, we are far from convinced that an academic journal can be an effective forum for dismantling the systems of oppression with which we live. Although *Feral Feminisms* retains its institutional independence in that it is not officially affiliated with or funded by a university, the journal remains deeply dependent on academia to survive. All of the work of publishing the journal, from soliciting guest editors, to copyediting and peer reviewing articles, to formatting and uploading the final work, is done on a volunteer basis, almost entirely by graduate students, very few of whom, we assume, would do this work if it were not helping them collect academic credentials or acting as a form of "hope labor" (Kuehn and Corrigan). Moreover, the people who guest edit issues of the journal and those who contribute to the journal, with the occasional exception of some of our artistic contributors, would likely seek out other journals if ours was not academic and peer-reviewed. So, despite the relative freedom we have to publish work that is unconventional, radical, and critical, *Feral Feminisms* is dependent on the academic industrial complex for its very existence.