A New Genealogy for Critical OA Publishing: Towards a Politics of Intersectional Transnationality

Rebekka Kiesewetter

Coventry University, Sandberg Instituut in Amsterdam

Follow this and additional works at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws

Part of the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.
A New Genealogy for Critical OA Publishing: Towards a Politics of Intersectional Transnationality

By Rebekka Kiesewetter

Abstract

In this article, I suggest opening out from the digital genealogies critical strands within the Open Access (OA) movement usually associate themselves with: I propose a genealogy of OA publishing that takes into consideration feminist and decolonial transnational publishing initiatives that have been active in non-digital realms before, and in parallel to what these critical strands have highlighted as their digital origins. The ways in which these pre-digital initiatives organised and mobilised feminist and decolonial transnational struggle through publishing might offer new insights for contemporary critical OA – specifically, with regards to questions around how to confront uneven hierarchies of place in academia, while holding in tension their intersectional character. By asking “what would the future of critical OA publishing look like, if it BEGAN its formulation from the perspective of feminist, decolonial, anti-capitalist and transnational organising?”, I would like to sketch critical OA as a practice that moves beyond a liberal academic stance to actively develop a radical transnational and trans-epistemic ethic of resistance against capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal domination.

Keywords: Critical Open Access Publishing, trans-epistemic knowledge production, feminist genealogy, decolonial publishing, activism and academia, transnationality

Introduction

The field of Open Access (OA) publishing – the making of research available (findable and readable) free of charge for the public – today is polarised and asymmetric. It is dominated by so-called mainstream OA, which largely consists of funder and policy-based strategies following the competitive and efficiency-driven logic of neoliberal academia. Its scope is underlined by an expansionist belief in technology as an enabler of democratic access to scholarly knowledge – allegedly the base for globally unified academic production. This is an argument that already formed part of early OA manifestos and has been precipitated in the institutions and instruments that mediate academic OA publishing today. These are often located and developed in the West and act as gatekeepers for research world-wide: e.g. through profit-driven metrics for the

1 Rebekka Kiesewetter holds a Lic. Phil. I (MA) in Art History, Economics and Modern History from the University of Zurich. Currently she is doing a PhD titled Open Access Publishing as a Contested Space at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures (CPC) at Coventry University (UK). She is a Research Associate and writing tutor at the Sandberg Instituut in Amsterdam (NL).

2 While the Berlin Open Access Initiative (2003) promoted the internet as “a functional instrument for a global scientific knowledge base and human reflection”, according to the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002) the internet would engender an “unprecedented public good”: Namely “completely free and unrestricted access to [research] by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds. [It will enable to] share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich … [and] lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge”.

58

Journal of International Women’s Studies Vol. 21, No. 7 October 2020
evaluation of research, such as the Science Citation Index (SCI) based on the research engine Web of Science, which largely involves Western journals published in English and is owned by the UK and US based company Clarivate Analytics (Alkadhim 2018). Agents such as the European Plan S³ are pushing for large-scale OA initiatives that often are pursued with no intentions to affect established commercial publishers that increasingly link their sustainability to said metrics. What does not fit into the neoliberal globalising rationale of mainstream OA is set-back as particular, local and small-scale, and for this reason is considered irrelevant compared to what exists globally and universally⁴ (Adema & Moore 2018; Shorish & Chan 2019; Windle 2017).

The globalising rationale and the totalising notions pushed forward by mainstream OA do not only have their own economic, political and epistemic logics but also follow cartographic rules: These rules “unjustly organize human hierarchies in place and reify uneven geographies in familiar, seemingly natural ways [and therewith] necessarily produce insiders and outsiders in the geographies of knowledge production” (Alexander & Mohanty 2010, 28). The spatialising logic of the global vs. the local is underlining binaries prevalent in contemporary academic OA publishing, such as “centre” / “periphery”, “science” / “non-science”, “academy” / “community”, “scholar” / “activist”. These appear as distinct spaces where the former is privileged over the latter.

Since the beginning of the movement certain critical strands within OA publishing have affirmatively criticised the universalist and expansionist tendencies in their field by carving out their distinct politics and practices. These strands perceive OA as an opportunity for academics to regain control over their outputs from commercial publishers and to confront historical inequalities in knowledge production. This motivation has resulted from critical humanities and social science discourses on the ethics and politics of doing scholarship (Adema 2018; Adema & Hall 2013; Zylinska 2005) and on confronting Euro-centrism in the sciences (Hall 2008; Lander 2000; Leyva et al. 2018), as well as from the Open Science and Development movement (Albornoz et al. 2018; Okune et al 2018; Piron et al. 2016). Scholars active within these critical strands often constitute themselves as political actors or activists (Kember 2014a). Some of them – through the lens of cognitive justice – propagate the participation of formerly excluded social actors within research processes and policy development (Albornoz 2017; Moletsane 2015; Windle 2017).

To disentangle their approach from the rationale of mainstream OA several positions have divided out distinct lineages within OA history (Adema 2015, Hall 2008; Moore 2017, 2019a). Moore for example locates the roots of the critical strands’ commitment in the early internet cultures. Specifically, within the engagement of early grassroots DIY publishers from the humanities and social sciences active in the 1980s and early 1990s – e.g. in journals such as Surfaces or Postmodern Culture (PMC) launched on listservs and then the Web. This genealogy has shaped the strategical and methodological horizon of the critical strands within OA publishing, as I will show in this article.

As part of this analysis, I suggest to shift this genealogical perspective (while at the same time affirming the experimental and interventionist potential of OA and its capacity to “address issues of knowledge and its authority and legitimacy in the context of digitisation” (Hall 2008, 12)): I will do so by proposing a genealogy of OA publishing that takes into consideration feminist and decolonial, transnational publishing initiatives that were active in non-digital realms both

---

³ An initiative launched 2018 by a consortium of national research bodies from twelve European countries propagating full and immediate Open Access to research publications.
⁴ E.g. regional networks and databases, poorly funded institutions, research practiced positively within regional contexts rather than on global scale, or “non measurable” experimental approaches that e.g. suggest non-proprietary and collaborative formats.
before, and in parallel to what some of the critical strands of OA have highlighted as their digital origins. As I will show, the ways in which these movements organised and mobilised their transnational struggle through publishing can offer new insights to support contemporary critical OA: specifically, with regards to questions about how to confront the uneven hierarchies of place and space in academia, while holding in tension their intersectional character. This issue of unequal geographies of power is a dimension which, as I will argue, has been largely neglected within early OA initiatives (including the ones from the humanities and social sciences that some of the current critical strand within OA have aligned themselves with). They often have exhibited rather technodeterministic and universalist views.

In my preoccupation with possible alternative genealogies for critical OA I have previously looked at diverse transnational publishing initiatives within U.S. and Latin American third world feminism and European transfeminism (Kiesewetter 2020a, b). In this article, I would like to continue this work through an analysis of Triple Jeopardy (1971-1975), the newspaper of the Third World Women’s Alliance (TWWA). I will interweave my discussion of Triple Jeopardy with a review of Playing with Fire Feminist. Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India, a book published in 2006 by the Sangtin Writers Collective in Uttar Pradesh, India. This choice has been informed by the prominent status these undertakings have in literature concerned with transnational feminist mobilisation through research and publishing. Within their endeavours both these initiatives have complicated the totalising scope of globalised knowledge production and have enabled a critical engagement with the intersectional discriminations that Western expansionism has imposed onto a globalising world view.5 As I will show, through pluralistic, fluid and non-classificatory practices and methodologies they have challenged the binary distinctions that, despite obverse demands, still dominate (academic) knowledge production and discourses around Open Access specifically (Alexander & Mohanty 2010; D’Souza 2009). Furthermore, these initiatives have managed to shift their accountability from a particular institution, regime or class – e.g. the university, anti-capitalism or the women’s movement – to a shared vision of empowering struggles against capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal exploitation. Consequently, by asking “What would the future of critical OA publishing look like, if it BEGAN its formulation from the perspective of feminist, decolonial, anti-capitalist and transnational organising?”, I would like to sketch critical OA as a practice that, from the outset, moves beyond a merely academic realm. This, in order to actively develop a radical transnational and trans-epistemic ethic of resistance. One whose aim is not to “integrate” [the marginalised] into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure” (Freire 2000, 74).

I will follow a methodology informed by the practice of feminist genealogy: one that does not merely reflect retrospectively and does not extend existing frameworks to include previously marginalised positions: rather it strives to rethink the fundamental frameworks that constitute OA. Therefore, instead of looking towards the past as something secluded and confined, it understands it as part of an expanded presence. As much as a philosophico-historical operation, this is a non-linear temporal procedure that does not ask what evolves from what, but asking “after that which resonates, overlaps, converses across spatial and historical specificities” (Vimalassery et al. 2016, no pag.).This approach also owes to decolonial feminism: Diverse scholars from this field have enabled a critical engagement with the discriminations that Western expansionism has imposed onto a globalising world view (Anzaldúa 1987; Dinerstein 2014; Harding 2002; Leyva et al. 2018; Lugones 2010; Sandoval 1998, 2000). This, e.g. by underlining the intersectionality of the alterities

---

5 Understood here as the modern/colonial, humanist and capitalist/neoliberal Western expansion since the 15th Century and its epistemological, material and economic constraints to knowledge production.
produced by its scope and by showing that these are not incorporative but differentiated, multivocal and conflictive. They also have called attention to the politics of location, the spatiality of power and the ethics of cross-cultural knowledge production. Related to this, they have highlighted that even though explaining the discriminatory boundary and binary making within academic knowledge cultures along cartographic and linear models is an useful analytical framework, it has to be regarded with a grain of salt: For example, a number of feminist and decolonial scholars have tried to uncouple transnationality from its function as a normative gesture in service of neoliberal economics and theories of globalisation. Alexander and Mohanty’s theorisation of the radical, decolonising function of the transnational that is illuminating “the work it does in particular feminist contexts [in relation] to colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial histories and practices on different geographical scales” (Alexander & Mohanty 2010, 24), has been especially important for this article. The methods and methodologies of ethical, political, cultural and epistemological resistance described by Alexander and Mohanty as part of their research on transnational feminism will be discussed here with regards to both Triple Jeopardy and Playing with Fire.

**Academic OA Publishing and its Histories**

The binary cartographic patterns that mainstream Open Access (OA) has followed within its totalising and expansionist scope have been recurrent in the geohistorical and epistemological role that academic publishing as a whole has played as part of the modern/colonial, humanist and capitalist expansion of the West since the 15th Century. In these contexts these patterns have, as several scholars show, underlined attempts to normalise Western academia’s position at the top of the knowledge-making hierarchy by rendering entities rival to its expansionist and totalising ideas local and irrelevant along racial, classist and patriarchal divisions. These aspirations have been perpetuated within the economies, institutions and policies that mediate and drive mainstream OA today – such as Plan S, the Elsevier owned citation database Scopus, and the research engine Web of Science and Science Citation Index (SCI) both owned by Clarivate Analytics (Adema & Moore 2018; Alborno et al. 2018; Okune et al. 2016; Shorish & Chan 2019). As Albornoz and others (2018) show, the knowledge paradigms and benchmarks that have been developed and internationally established through this Western-andro-centric framework are underlined with ideas of science as neutral and equal. Based on a rhetoric of objectivity and rigorousness they have been posited as universally beneficial, while disregarding the situatedness of knowledges within particular histories and power structures. The believe in the possibilities of an “unrestricted” sharing of knowledge constitute a uniform objective that, as Windle elaborates, “may be understood [and navigated] from a single ‘bird’s eye’ perspective” (Windle 2017, 364). This idea evokes a subjective proximity between academics as unmarked members of a universal intellectual field, into which “minorities” or “the periphery” integrate (Canaragajah 2002; Windle 2017). This leaves less powerful actors in a position in which they are expected to adapt their scopes. Indeed, platforms like the African, Latin American and South European database Scielo surrender to this pressure by employing Clarivate Analytics to create a journal citation index inside Web of Science.

---

6 E.g. the common understanding of the publication as static object is the result of a normalisation of the history of inscriptions on the base of Western alphabetic scripts. Views about factuality, notions of ‘value’ and human nature underlying current publishing practices and motivations (e.g. the ideals of individualism and the unity of author and work) have been resulting from an Enlightenment idea of a humanist archetype, which –based on racial, gendered and race stereotypes – promoted ideas of superiority and inferiority among humans. Against this background racialised and sexed others have been imagined and positioned and ways of knowing have been delineated in a way that is privileging entities or realties that widen their scope to the whole globe (Canaragajah 2002; Mignolo 1995; Smith 1999).
Decisions like these are often driven by anxieties of “falling behind” in science and technology and thus losing the ability to contribute to the global knowledge base (Albornoz et al., 2018; Becerril-García & Aguado-López 2018).

Even though there has been a growing sensitivity towards the limits of funder and policy driven OA models also within mainstream discourses on OA, the situation I outlined previously in these contexts has largely been framed as a problem of narrow accessibility that can be solved by economic and technological development. Consequently – as Knöchelmann (2020) discusses, and Luescher’s and others (2018) and Snijder’s (2013) claims show – connected approaches have primarily evolved around promises of investment, development and inclusion on the one side and claims for recognition on the other side. This lack of acknowledgement that the prevailing fiction of unified globality connected to similarly unifying claims for democracy, justice and development is itself part of a set of hidden social relations in global knowledge production has been persistent also in early formal OA manifestos, as I highlighted previously (Budapest, 2002; Bethesda, 2003; Berlin, 2003). The positivist and generalising rhetoric employed within these manifestos did not necessarily carry definite conceptual or political meanings and have been available for multiple approaches to OA. Consequently, it has lent itself for the appropriation by mainstream OA and those interested in commercially exploiting OA. This has led Moore (2017) to theorise OA as a boundary object.

The motivation to challenge the totalising trajectory of mainstream OA among some of the critical humanities and social sciences-based critical strands within the movement has emerged from a discourse that focuses on the ethics and politics of doing scholarship. It includes confronting tensions between theory and practice in academic production. This discourse stresses that the engagement with extra-academic interlocutors and experimentation are not opposite to institutionalisation but interwoven with it. Consequently, within these strands, OA has been promoted as a critical mode of being in academia through publishing as an ongoing, experimental intervention into totalising writing and publishing cultures and institutions (Adema 2015; Hall 2008; Kember 2014a, b). This trajectory has been relocating the emphasis within publishing undertakings from a logic of rational, calculative individualism (and a focus on the “author”, the “outcome”) towards a logic of community and care. For example, by using non-proprietary and non-hierarchical formats, such as wikis or open peer review; and by setting up transnational scholar-led, non-for-profit networks such as the Radical Open Access Collective and the ScholarLed consortium formed between presses, journals and other organisations. In favour of more horizontal and diverse publishing infrastructures, the members of these collectives, such as Open Access India or TUWHERA in New Zealand, instead of organising responsibilities top-down, employ bottom-up regimes that respect their diverse material, discursive and economic settings and allow every member to practice their scholarship on the terms valid in their own contexts.

The historical injustices in scientific production and the Euro-centric rationale of mainstream OA have also been challenged from within the Open Science and Development

---

7 Boundary objects can be approached and understood at a general level, between communities, but they also permit experimentation and community ownership of the object at hand. OA, as Moore explains, resonates across communities, is driven by diverse motivations and understandings, and has context-specific meanings. Only the choices made around how research output is made available make up its politics (Moore 2017).

8 Care here is taken “for others, for processes, for the work involved in all aspects of the supply chain, and for the (content of the) publication” (Adema, Moore 2018, 8), it is not conceived as a normative moral obligation but as a “thick, impure, involvement in a world where the question of how to care needs to be posed [together, again and again]” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 6).
movement criticising Western-centric Open Science and Development frameworks through the lens of cognitive justice: Organisations like the Open and Collaborative Science in Development Network (OCSDNet) or the research project SOHA in Haïti and francophone Africa have affirmed the leveraging effect OA could have for opening out towards formerly excluded social and political actors – be it within research or publishing processes, policy development or in academic everyday practices. Scholars active in this context suggest using OA to shift the hegemonic system of traditional science by engaging across academic and non-academic research. These initiatives highlight that: “epistemic violence results when in (post)colonial discourse, the subaltern is silenced by both the colonial and indigenous patriarchal power… and that symbolic and epistemic violence often positions the researched (individuals and communities outside the academy, including women, young people, and others) as the other” (Moletsane, 2015, 40). Consequently, they insist on the co-creation, co-analysing, and co-communication with research participants to transform the unequal power relations underlying academic research and publishing processes (Albornoz 2017; Albornoz et al. 2018; Moletsane 2015; Okune et al 2018; Piron et al. 2016).

While the historical offspring of the funder- and policy-driven approach to OA publishing is often directly associated with the formal and natural sciences, scholars pertaining to the critical strands within the OA movement have divided out more distinct lineages within OA history. A recurrent historical reference are the early grassroots DIY publishers from the humanities and social sciences active in the 1980s and early 1990s mentioned previously. Moore (2019a) emphasizes, how the latter, similar to the critical scholar-led initiatives of today, allowed for and explored experimental ideas relating to publishing and academic writing to “dis-establish the practice of admitting only those who speak our language or who position themselves as we do“ (Amiran, Orr, Unsworth 1990). However, as I thoroughly discussed elsewhere, it is safe to say that the ambitions of these early OA advocates did not reach far beyond the confines of the racialized and gendered academia of their time (Kiesewetter 2020a). Even though they criticised capitalist principles and the Western-centric rationale behind scholarly knowledge production, they did not leave the realm of system-immanent critique: Whereas the first issue of PMC confronts existing tensions between theory and practice in academic thought, representation, and communication,9 PMC’s subsequent issues contradicted some of these promises: Later installments featured a female minority overpowered by male (mostly white) authors, and PMC remained radical maybe in content and form but not in the diversity of its contributors. Advocating for scholar-led infrastructures and perspectives that take into account the situatedness of knowledges within particular histories, power structures and socio-political contexts scholars increasingly also stress the exemplarity of certain initiatives within early Latin American OA: There – since the late 1990s – transnational, non-commercial platforms such as the bibliographical information system Latindex (1997) and the repository Redalyc (2003) have been run by the scholarly community instead of large publishers. These platforms have vindicated the relevance of local, regional and national issues within the sciences – respecting the different idiosyncrasies by area, disciplinarily specific format preferences and dynamics – instead of perceiving OA as an opportunity to contribute to and compete on a global knowledge market (Babini 2019; Becerril-García 2019; Becerril-García & Aguado-López 2018; Packer et al. 2014).

The critical strands within OA publishing that follow a cognitive justice approach root their engagement in the critical open science and development discourse that stresses that narratives of social and economic justice, inclusion and development have primarily been constructed from the

---

9 By including an equal amount of male and female authors and black and Latin American perspectives, and by enabling formal experimentation – e.g. within experimental pieces by Kathy Acker and Laura Kipnis.
perspective of the global north (Death & Gabay 2015; D’Souza 2009; Ziai 2013). Consequently, within their critique of mainstream OA they shed light on how scholarly communication infrastructures and policy claims under insistence on the globality and neutrality of science function as instruments of “epistemic governance” (Albornoz et al. 2018; Chen 2005, 2017; Okune et al. 2016).

It is in this vain that I aim to shift the genealogical perspective of these critical strands and add to their strategical and methodological repertoire. In what follows, I will primarily discuss the affiliative and contestational methodologies employed by Triple Jeopardy and within Playing with Fire. As I will argue, these have been more adequate for confronting the uneven geographies of power in knowledge production than the techno-deterministic and universalist gestures of inclusivity and democratization of the early OA initiatives were that some of the current critical strands within OA align themselves with. Furthermore, I would like to show how these initiatives have not been accountable to a particular institution such as the university (even though some members WERE academics) but pledged themselves to a transnational vision of empowering struggles against capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal domination. This will be the basis on which I would like to formulate a new vision for OA practice in the last section of this article.

Two Pre-Digital Publishing Trajectories

Triple Jeopardy (was putting women-of-color feminist struggles in the U.S into conversation with women’s anti-colonial struggles world-wide. The book Playing with Fire was written and produced by the collective Sangtin Writers (seven NGO-based village-level activists in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh; together with Richa Singh, the district-level organiser of the women’s NGO Nari Samata Yojana (NSY); and Richa Nagar, Professor at the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota).

Triple Jeopardy (recurrent subtitle: Racism, Imperialism, Sexism), edited and published in New York and the Bay Area, was striving to interlock the Third World\textsuperscript{10} struggle against imperialism and capitalism internationally. The voices it assembled were diverse.\textsuperscript{11} Even though the U.S. remained predominant throughout all the issues (Enszer, Beins 2018), Triple Jeopardy decidedly abdicated from an U.S.-centric perspective. Instead, a transnational commonality was tentatively revealed in the specific and situational account of particular struggles (Enszer, Beins 2018). Enszer and Beins in their detailed discussion of the practices within and around Triple Jeopardy, highlight the importance transnational and diasporic figures had for the nuanced expression of transnational communality within the publication: Specifically Frances Beal, who contributed to Triple Jeopardy regularly and was its head editor in 1974-75. These figures allowed the editors and authors to work and think through the seemingly contradictory notion of identifying

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{10} The Third World by the editors was identified as a concept to describe “lands and peoples who have suffered the oppression and exploitation of colonialism. African, Asian and Latin Peoples, wherever they may be … These struggles must be interlocked with one another in order to obtain the most effective results … Despite cultural differences, this common historical oppression unites us in the struggle to eradicate these enemies”. Retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/27628370@N08/2570007296/in/album-72157605547626040/

\textsuperscript{11} Reports from anti-war rallies in the US and on labour struggles (e.g. related to domestic work or day care) worldwide; articles on abortion laws and the sterilisation of black women in the U.S.; an essay on machismo in Puerto Rico; personal accounts on militant activism in the US, Guinea-Bissau, Palestine, Cuba and the Philippines; an interview with activist Angela Davis; poems, illustrations, photo essays and travelogues. The collection of the Woman of Color Resource Center in Oakland provides a good overview over the diversity of Triple Jeopardy: https://www.flickr.com/photos/27628370@N08/sets/72157605547626040/
\end{flushright}
as Third World peoples while living in one of the most imperialist and capitalist nations on the
globe.\textsuperscript{12} Their life experiences, the travels that informed their politics and subjectivities and
allowed them “to interact with other third world peoples” (Enszer, Beins. 2018, 39) constituted a
specific kind of solidarity between the different stakeholders of \textit{Triple Jeopardy}: It was not
presumed as a homogenizing sentiment born out of mutual powerlessness but it was an
achievement through an active engagement with the diversity of Third World struggle, a shared
sense of accountability and a commitment to individual transformation. The terms and the nature
of the relationships emerging around \textit{Triple Jeopardy} was established perpetually through
encounters situated in these women’s life worlds and specific struggles, which were enabled and
further expanded within their common publishing undertaking. A community shaping role can also
be ascribed to the daily necessities imposed by the running of an anti-hegemonial press with the
intense commitments and forms of organization necessary to sustain it.

\textit{Playing with Fire} is one of the outcomes of \textit{Sangtin Yatra} (a Journey of Sangtins). The
journey started in 2002 as a collective process of solidarity constituting and constituted by an
exploration of “poverty, hunger, privilege, and oppression” (Mohanty 2006, XI) and the politics
of “casteism, communalism, and elitism in the writers own lives, in their work spaces and activist
organizations, and in the larger context of the ownership of knowledge within NGOs” (Mohanty
2006, ibid.). The book was instrumental in the constitution of Sangtin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan
(SKMS), the Sangtin Farmers and Laborers Organization.

The writing and publishing process evolved along a “collectively produced methodology
in which autobiographical writing [by women working in and with NGOs] and discussions of that
writing became tools through which we built our analysis and critique of societal structures and
processes” (Nagar 2006, XXVIII). The content and the form of the publication was determined
collectively during a process of collaborative development of both the book as a whole and every
story by the women activists. The process was enabled and facilitated by Richa Singh and Richa
Nagar. Singh and Nagar decided to not write their own life stories, arguing that their class positions
and privilege might side-track the efforts of the NGO workers (Mohanty 2006, X). Their common
process of writing, discussion, revision, negotiation and re-revision, gave each member of the
collective a sense of ownership of the words and thoughts assembled in the publication and allowed
them to claim authorship of their own lives and struggles, while also strengthening their sense of
agency and accountability as members of the collective (Nagar 2006, XXXIV).

Publishing for the Sangtin Writers Collective became a process of both collective and
individual empowerment and a means for shaping identities: Those of the group and those of the
individuals involved in this process – “through” (“not over, not by, not around, but through”
(Moraga & Bambara 1983, xiv)) the engagement with each other’s singularities and differences.
They were speaking in the first person, exchanging experiences, reflecting together, and therewith
enabled the collective construction of new and other perspectives: “The significance of this
collaboration is tightly interwoven with the labor process that went into the making of \textit{Sangtin
Yatra}/\textit{Playing with Fire} and with the contradictory realities of a collective praxis that consciously
aims to intervene in the discourse and politics of empowerment” (Nagar, 2006, XXVI).

The formats of \textit{Triple Jeopardy} (a zine-like assemblage) and \textit{Playing with Fire} (a collective
yet individual account, produced within a slow and intricate process) were not only responsive to
epistemological and context-related specificities of writing, they also were able to accommodate
the precarious and strenuous status of many of the involved authors’ engagement as academics,

\textsuperscript{12} The editors, in one of the editorial statements, referred to the US as “belly of the [imperial, capitalist] monster.”
Retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/27628370@N08/2570007296/in/alb
activists, poets, and community organisers. Furthermore, the authors and editors of *Triple Jeopardy* and the Sangtin writers recognised that not only the relationships among the involved activists but also the publications as such constitute new communities, who share the struggles of the ones the newspaper and the book gives voice to. These publications thus are embodying a relational and performative space (Adema 2015; Drucker 2009; Moten Harney 2013). Publishing and publications within these contexts were instruments for opening out towards certain attachments and refusing others. The labour process that went into sustaining the newspaper and making publications, structured situations, in which diverse agents actively engaged with each other’s singularities and differences. Common activities of writing, revision and negotiation foregrounded questions of positionality, connectivity, collective responsibility, and mutual accountability and induced individual and collective agency and transformation. Also, they helped the involved women to articulate common needs without homogenising distinct struggles.

*Triple Jeopardy* and the Sangtin Writers Collective employed methods of ethical, political, cultural and epistemological resistance that were contestational, non-linear, affiliative and generative, and defy (or at least infinitely complicated) classificatory knowledges and binary conceptions of practice/theory, activist/scholar, academia/community. It is no coincidence that these methods and methodological frameworks (as well as those employed within other publishing practices within U.S. and Latin American third world feminism and European transfeminism) allude to the Chicana “borderland” feminism that Gloria Anzaldúa theorised within *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). As Carla Trujillo (1998) discusses, these movements have been related insofar that they have theorised emerging cross-disciplinary and transnational politics of resistance as “border,” “hybrid,” or “mestiza” and have strived to identify techniques capable of advancing politics and struggles shared between races, genders, cultures, languages, and nations. Anzaldúa, for example, in her reflection displaces the emphasis from the linear demarcation of geographical spaces towards hybridised conditions of possibility for the creation of different ways of living and thinking. For her, borderlands are places of contradiction, anger, hatred, and exploitation, but also places of resistance against racism, gender discrimination, class oppression, sexual repression, and colonial domination. Borderlands constitute places of ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollination. Due to these properties they, as Anzaldúa states, mobilise certain “faculties” that constitute a new mestiza consciousness – “a consciousness of the Borderlands” (Anzaldúa 1987). She verbalises the substantive *mestiza* into *mestizaje* to indicate its double property as not only a place but also a critical methodology for Mestiza consciousness of Chicana and woman-of-colour feminist agency and identity. *Mestizaje* is pluralistic and ambivalent, yet profoundly anticolonial and anti-imperial and is offering practices of ethical, political, cultural, or even ontological resistance that are contestational, affiliative and generative, and defy classificatory knowledges to “re-inscribe” marginalised knowledges into imperialist perspectives. The epistemology and methodology that Anzaldúa therewith proposes is, to use Chela Sandoval’s (1991, 2000) term, a “differential consciousness”: This border thinking (Dabashi 2015) or border consciousness is not accountable to a specific gender, nation, race, sex, or class but arises from a specific deployment of differentiated borderland resistance. Consequently, it recognises all sources of knowledge as valid within their historical, cultural or social contexts.

---

13 Anzaldúa discusses psychological, sexual and spiritual borderlands as “vague and undetermined place[s] created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (Anzaldúa 1987, 3). Borderlands like these are, as she specifies, constituted “wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes couch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (Anzaldúa 1987, ix).
Against this background, it can be said that publishing and publications in the cases of *Triple Jeopardy* and *Playing with Fire* framed a methodology for feminist agency, in which reclaiming sovereignty, critical race and gender activism engaged in a generative, sometimes uneven, dialogue. This dialogue was accounting for varying scales of representation, economics, and politics, as well as maintaining a commitment to difference and asymmetrical power. Knowledges were understood as relational, processual, performative, and evolving. Publishing created a hybrid space in-between from where to think rather than a space to talk about, in which questions of intersubjectivity, connectivity, collective responsibility, and mutual accountability were foregrounded.

**Tying Things Together**

To go back to my original question: What if the critical OA movement BEGAN its formulation from the perspective of feminist, decolonial, anti-capitalist and transnational organising? How could this resonate with today’s critical OA strands?

What for me becomes clear through looking at projects such as *Triple Jeopardy* and *Playing with Fire*, is that digitisation is a prerequisite for OA but not a means to an end: Affirming the re-distributional potential of new media technologies, while pursuing OA as a way of being in academia through a publishing that strives to confront entrenched hierarchies of place in scholarly knowledge production, is a struggle that evolves both online and offline, both inside and outside of academia.

To confront the Western hegemonial order persistent within large parts of the academically validated means of knowledge production, shared publishing, writing, editing and production processes play a crucial methodological role: Complexifying (and disabling) narratives of globally unified academic production and knowledge as universal, they can engender “borderland situations”, in which distinct knowledges meet, resist, and subvert each other; hybrid spaces in-between from where to think rather than spaces to talk about.

Concluding this text, I would like to tie in the transnational publishing endeavours of *Triple Jeopardy* and *Playing with Fire* with current critical discourses on and initiatives of OA publishing by reference to the contemporary research project *Pirate Care*. This transnational and trans-epistemic project was launched at a conference at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University in 2019. *Pirate Care* has been directed against the criminalization, marginalization and precarization of care and has focused on bottom-up responses to the current “care crisis” that experiment with alternative forms of self-organisation, tools and technologies. It aims to map and enact forms of activism at the intersection of “care” and “piracy” (the latter implies not only a topical but also an organisational, processual and epistemological focus on sharing, openness, decentralisation, free access to tools throughout the entire project). Instead of summoning debates forged in struggles outside of academia and relegating them to the sphere of the alien and particular, the initiators strived to open out from the academic setting after the conference. In this process, an open accessible “syllabus” conceived together by activists and scholars has been instrumental. It has been set-up as an open and collective note taking experiment that has gathered several reflections on as well as tools to respond to the “care crisis”. The epistemological and strategical lenses of piracy and care, as well as the collective publishing undertaking, have allowed the initiators to shift their accountability from a particular institution – the university – to those,

---

14 https://syllabus.pirate.care/
who share a vision of empowering struggles against capitalist, colonialis
t exploitation of care labour. The importance of this with regards to the question of undoing the hierarchies of place in academia can, as I argue, be summarised in one question that also has been posed by scholars such as Albornoz (2017), Okune and others (2016): Whose interests are reflected and served within OA publishing projects?

This question, as illustrated through the transnational practices around *Triple Jeopardy* and the trans-epistemic engagement of the Santgin Writers Collective, is closely related to the politics of location, as well as to questions of collective responsibility and mutual accountability: Contributors to the *Pirate Care* syllabus emerge proactively from a growing transnational network which is mainly organised on social media. They upload their own, largely anonymised contributions, whose nature is based on their individual material, discursive and economic conditions. Anonymisation allows sharing legally sensitive practices. The risk here is mainly carried by the organisers: While taking on a responsibility predicated on their experience in academia and media piracy, they respect that some knowledges can only emerge within certain contexts that differ in social recognition and vulnerability.

The *Pirate Care* platform is set up on gitea, an open-source forge software package. The contributors follow a manual written by the developers of the page to upload their contents. This means that everyone is required to engage with the (hacker) technologies the platform runs on. In this respect, doing open access is not about learning technologies or skills to use e.g. corporate platforms. It is not about, as illustrated previously by reference to the database Scielo, surrendering to Western- and andro-centric policies and their globalising and totalising rationale: instead it means co-developing the technologies that hold up to what consistently organising a decentralised struggle attentive to the intersectional hierarchies of place in knowledge production affords. And it means commonly acquiring literacy about how and when to employ which tool.

Shared processes can, as seen in the case of *Triple Jeopardy* and *Playing with Fire*, catalyse individual and collective transformation. This implies what I consider the most important prerequisite for any struggle against the hierarchies of place in academia, namely that an ethical and critical way doing scholarship also implies undoing scholarship: to pursue pirate care in the way the project has done, the academic organisers had to, in parts, break their "epistemological contract" to borrow Sylvia Wynter’s (1995) term: They disinvested their academic identities from the will to power, ownership and the equation of research output and success. They moved beyond a liberal "policy neutral" academic stance to actively develop a radical ethic together with those who share a politics in empowering the struggles against capitalist, colonialis, and patriarchal domination – across epistemological, disciplinary or geographical boundaries.
Bibliography


Ziai, A (2013). The discourse of “development” and why the concept should be abandoned. Development in Practice, 23, 1, 123-136.

Haunting