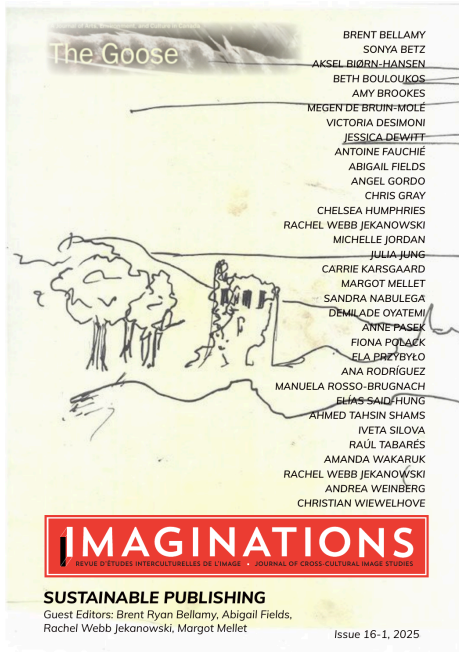


# IMAGINATIONS

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## PUBLISHING THOUGHTS FROM THE BED SORBONNE: TOWARD A CRIP PUBLISHING MANIFESTX

ELA PRZYBYŁO

In this piece I draw on my experiences as a neuroqueer editor of the peer-reviewed, intersectional, and intermedia independent journal *Feral Feminisms* and on disability justice to hone a short manifestx on crip publishing. While peer-reviewed journals often demand free, invisible, and feminized labor along with high-speed efficiency, I imagine crip approaches to publishing as necessitating such principles as slowness, anti-fascism, recognition, care, failure, multiple mediums for knowledge-making, and community building. The piece begins with a reflection from the “Bed Sorbonne” or academic’s bed office, and moves into a consideration of how thinking sustainable publishing with lichen can enliven our publishing praxes. Finally, I outline the nine part manifestx as a starting point for imagining crip informed publication models. The hybrid and art-based piece engages with the theme of *sustainable publishing* by thinking about how to make publishing sustainable—as in doable, feasible, possible, limitless— both for crip authors/creators and crip journal editors.

### I. FLOOFY BED THINKING

**C**lose your eyes and imagine you are cozy on or in your bed, surrounded by plush pillows in the texture you find most soothing, and covered by your favourite blanket, exactly the perfect fabric and weight. The bed is warm and comforting, it supports your back in the best ways possible. You feel held and might fall asleep, or you might listen to music, or pet the cat. But the bed is not always the perfect place, and for people with disabilities it can be a place of conflicting feelings, not always associated with rest, or

play, but also with pain, trauma, immobility, and missing out (*Bed Zine* 2021; Clarke and Przybyło 2026; Khanmalek and Restrepo Rhodes 2020). Over the years I have spent more and more time in bed, often working from my bed in what Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha refers to as the “bed cave” (2018), and what my mother has called my “Bed Sorbonne” (see fig. 1). In 2012 I, along with two friends, founded an independent feminist journal called *Feral Feminisms*, which I still edit and manage, and over the years I must say that most of the work on the issues, and especially the production work which falls into my hands due to my background in graphic design, has been done from my bed. I am not suggesting the bed is the ideal place for work, and in some ways it might be the worst in the sense that it turns a sacred site of rest into one of productivity. And yet the fact remains that for better or worse *Feral Feminisms* is a bed-based production. This bed-based nature of the journal’s creation has gotten me thinking lately, what would a bed-based theory of publishing look like?

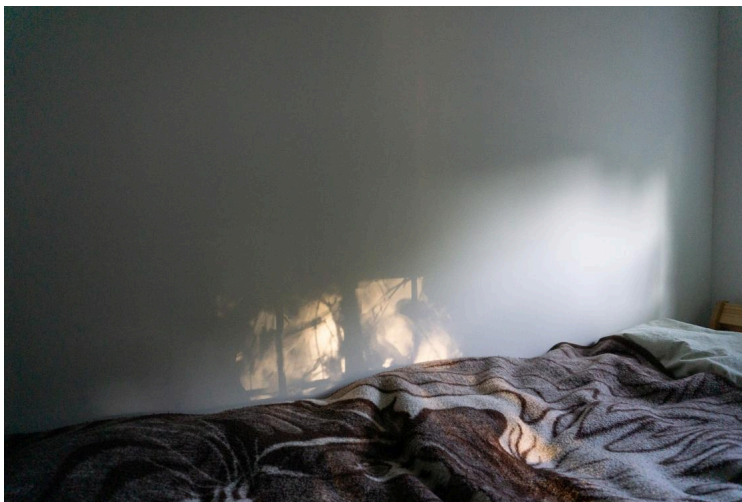


Figure 1: Ela Przybyło, “The Bed Sorbonne,” digital photograph, 2023.

Academic publishing is renowned for its brutal and toxic nature, especially but certainly not solely towards authors. In this sense it is the opposite of the cozy bed. Let's follow the metaphor. Oh, you'd like to lay in a cozy bed with pillows behind your back? Well, reviewer #2 would like you to hop around the bed instead. No, hop higher please. No, actually, hop over the bed. What's that you say, you are proud of the texture of the piece? Well, through the peer review process we have ascertained that the texture is not the right one for the type of scholarship you purport to do. I see that you are proposing to collaborate on this with someone else on the bed or in another bed? Well, that's possible, of course, but you must rank each of your importance for the piece and, by the way, all except the first person are unlikely to be cited at all. I could go on, and this, of course, is all from the author's perspective. We could extend the bed metaphor to think about the politics of publishing teams, the feminized unpaid labour of most editors, the ranking of publications, the free labour of peer reviewers, and even—conversely—the disrespect that can be shown by authors to those seen as service workers in the publishing profession (copyeditors, production people, etc.). Feminists writing about publishing have drawn attention to these and other concerns about the publishing process—a process that can tend to be pretty unfeminist. About 13 years of working on an independent journal have given me first-hand experience of a lot of these mechanics as well as of the need to study publishing as a site of knowledge-making in the first place.

In this short piece, I want to cozy up to a bed-informed, that is to say disability justice informed, approach to feminist publishing. What would a plush, lush, and floofy approach to the publishing process look and feel like for *all involved*? How could we make publishing feel more like a favourite blanket, which is not to say that it needs to lose its rigor or integrity. How could we imagine what softer approaches to publishing might bring forth, how they might yield not only a different way of doing publishing but also different published outcomes—that is, different research altogether? Audre Lorde, in “Uses of the Erotic,” wrote that “the celebration of the erotic” is “a longed for bed which [one] enter[s] gratefully and from which [one]

rise[s] up empowered” (55). How, then, could feminist publishing act as more of that celebration of the erotic that Lorde is known for—indeed, more like a bed?

## II. LICHEN BED THINKING

While peer-reviewed journals often demand free, invisible, and feminized labour as well as high-speed efficiency, I imagine crip approaches to publishing as necessitating slowness, multiple mediums for knowledge-making, and community building. Although this might not seem to be immediately about sustainability, in many ways it is. As both research and public knowledge projects in the Environmental Humanities, such as the “For the Wild” podcast have shown, nature has much to teach us about process, and we would do well to model the *how* of how we do both publishing and sustainability on more nature-bound rhythms. Take for example photographer Laurie Palmer’s recent work on lichens. In *The Lichen Museum* (2023) and shorter corresponding pieces, Palmer invites us to think with lichen through developing an alternate set of modalities that compel us to bow down, wait, open, refuse, and collectivize. For example, in “5 Tips On How To Live Like a Lichen” (2023), she writes: “Bring your face, your heart, your hands, your belly, down, down, close to the ground—to the rock of the world, the dirt, duff, sand. [...] Draw close. *From this horizontal perspective, everything is more*” (n.p., italics mine). Her filtration of lichen’s lessons are multitudinous but include remaining attentive to details, reorienting ourselves to mattering, lingering, listening, being alert to the space we take up, reassessing understandings of productive time, being vulnerable, resisting cultivation, and building symbioses. A wonderful set of manifestations both for our time and for publishing specifically, wouldn’t you say?

Lichen can function as a bed for publishing thinking in other ways as well. In “Sensing Lichens,” Jennifer Gabrys discusses how lichens function as “bioindicators,” signaling environmental events and reading pollution levels, and have been harnessed to monitor air and soil quality. In this sense, a licheny bed might function as a metaphor for

the state of publishing too, assessing the extent to which a publishing environment or academic structure is corrupt, or warning of incoming interpersonal toxicity. Taking the metaphor further yet, lichen are composite organisms, fungal and cyanobacterial, living in symbiosis and in relation to plants and animals. In this sense, lichen can also function as a model for the ideal journal bedding, the aspired-to feminist project of knowledge crafting, where many bodyminds come together as a greater whole. Thinking crip publishing with lichen requires, in Donna Haraway's words, "making oddkin [...] unexpected collaborations and combinations" (4), challenging "bounded individualism," and developing "sympoiesis" (a making-with) (5). Yet, lichen, as pointed out, resist cultivation, requiring certain conditions to flourish rather than simple implantation. In other words, publishing-making like the worldmaking of lichens is sensitive to environments, relationalities, and conditions of creation. In this sense, lichens remind us that, as Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing puts it, "staying alive [...] requires livable collaborations" and that the same is true for sustainable publishing (28).

In this piece, I draw on my experiences as a neuroqueer editor of the peer-reviewed, intersectional, and intermedia independent journal *Feral Feminisms* and on disability justice to hone a short manifestx on crip publishing ethics. The art of attention and slowness that Palmer draws forth and that lichens evoke, alongside a disability justice approach to publishing is, I stipulate, one that refuses individual understandings of authorship, builds with others (across and with tensions), embraces slowness at all costs (including amidst pressure from authors to speed up!), and opens up to what Natalie Loveless (2019) has termed "polydisciplinamory" (59), or a robust interdisciplinarity rooted in the erotic and in a refusal to be disciplined by disciplines. This hybrid and art-based piece thus engages with the theme of *sustainable publishing* by thinking about how to make publishing sustainable—as in doable, feasible, possible—for crip authors/creators and crip journal editors, *as well as* for everyone else involved in the process as "journal makers" and "journal workers"—terms I see as mutually substitutional.

To craft the manifestx that will follow, I draw especially on my support-role work (dare I say care work?) with a recent double special issue of *Feral Feminisms*, titled *Excess*, guest edited by Andi Schwartz and Shayda Kafai on Mad, queer, and femme abundance (2024). The journal issue curated the work of many Mad and disabled artists and authors. While it might be unfair of me to say, one of my favourite pieces was authored by Cynthia Ling Lee, a dancer and choreographer (2024). Lee explores the medium of cards with watercolor artwork and self-care messages sent to friends during the pandemic (which she crafted in dialogue with each friend, specific to their needs) as its own form of knowledge-making. This “ongoing social practice mail art project that centers art as (feminized) care work, informed by [her] perspective as a chronically ill queer artist of color” (96), in many ways draws on some of the lichen principles Palmer depicts, namely slowness and attentiveness. Importantly, Lee’s artwork is committed to “an alternate network of community care” that is critical of “capitalism’s excesses, especially its harmful ableist demands to overwork and overproduce at the cost of our bodyminds” (96).

While working on the invisible production end of things for the issue, Lee’s piece stayed with me, subtly in the background of my mind, as I undertook the intense work of producing a journal issue, which includes copyediting (our lead copyeditor had left the journal and I took over to “save” on time), the design, the coordinating of contracts, generating proofs, corresponding with authors, uploading content online, creating accessibility text, and so forth. Not long after reading Lee’s piece (or maybe it was long after—time sometimes becomes tangled in the blankets of the Bed Sorbonne), I read two other thinkers who centre cards as forms of knowledge-making—Tricia Hersey (2023) and Mimi Khúc (2023). Hersey’s work on her Nap Ministry project advocates for rest as a form of resistance for Black people and other communities historically denied the right to rest (2022). Khúc’s *dear elia: Letters from the Asian American Abyss* (2023) considers how unwellness is manufactured at the university with specific attention to how it harms Asian American students and university workers. While Hersey develops nap cards in one of her pieces, Khúc



features in her book a collaboratively developed set of tarot cards. Lee, Hersey, and Khúc's work, all to various extents disability and justice informed, and drawing on a unique medium of publishing—a set of cards—soon became a sort of trinity for me for thinking about slowness, rest, and crip forms of knowledge creation, and it is one that infuses this piece in both evident and implicit ways.

In what follows, I undertake initial thoughts on a crip publishing manifestx, inspired and propelled by the work I mention above, and in particular by disability studies, Lee (2024), Hersey (2022, 2023), and Khúc (2023), and Palmer's lichen meditations (2023). My goal is to continue the conversation already developed by feminist publishing studies scholarship (i.e., Eichhorn and Milne 2016 ; Gilley 2017; Jordan and Meagher 2018; McLaughlin 2014; Murray 2004; Przybylo 2019; Verhaeghe, Przybylo, Patel 2018) about the limits of academic publishing for how it can serve creators, authors, and journal makers, and an attention to the processes and "mundane realities" of knowledge-making and feminist publishing (Tanselle, quoted in Gilley 142). Drawing on the medium of a manifestx (in its gender expansive formulation, or manifesto or manifesta) is strategic because it allows for emotions, big claims, and commitments other forms of writing do not easily afford (Fahs 2020). Crip manifestos, understood in the broadest sense possible, have their own lineage, and include such beautiful pieces of scholarship as Mia Mingus's statement on "Access Intimacy: The Missing Link" (2011), Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch's "Crip Technoscience Manifesto" (2019), Johanna Hedva's "Sick Woman Theory" (2020), Mel Chen, Mimi Khúc, and Jina B. Kim's "Work Will Not Save Us: An Asian American Crip Manifesto" (2023), and many others. I think that shorter, punchier mediums such as manifestas, can facilitate writing for those of us who are chronically ill, disabled, and/or burned out while drawing on a revolutionary energy often propelled by rage. It is in line with these affordances of the medium that I pursue this piece in manifestx form. Rather than a complete statement, my manifestx thoughts are intended as an opening up, something that can be built on and developed, both by myself and others. Likewise, there is no one crip publishing manifestx and the manifestx need not always take the same

form; it is rather shifting, context-dependent, and need and care driven. Toward those goals, I invite other journals, cultural producers, and authors to design their own publishing manifestos.

### III. A CRIP PUBLISHING MANIFESTX

1. **The wall is not going to protect you.** Whatever wall you have in mind, it is the wall I am referring to. A wall, whether a physical wall of border imperialism or a pay wall of academic imperialism, will not protect you, or me, or anyone except for those making money off of it. Walls run as gashes along the earth's skin, dividing connected lands and entwined lives. Academic paywalls sever knowledge-producers from those who want to learn from them, from the people. A crip approach to publishing is necessarily suspicious of walls, developing independent publishing models, feminist approaches to open access, and other modes of critique, and wields a hammer of one form or another to take walls down.
2. **Stay feral.** It's a scary time for feminist publishing. At *Feral Feminisms* we have had to anonymize some of our contributors for fear that their pro-Palestinian content would attract government attention and lead to deportation, as is currently underway in the United States. Feminist publishing must remain feral because, in the words of Mona Eltahawy (2025), "Fascism is not polite. Fascism is not civil. Fascism cares little for decorum [...] Fuck fascism" (n.p.). A crip approach to publishing must fuck fascism, must remain—as U.S. Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett's t-shirt indicated, drawing on a slogan by Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman in U.S. Congress and a key feminist of the women's liberation movement in the U.S. — "unbought and unbossed" (Eltahawy 2025). For publishing to be crip—to model crip ways of being and be for crip people—it must likewise be unbought and unbossed. This beautifully dialogues with one of Cynthia Ling Lee's (2024) crip cards that reads, "no one is the BOSS of princess" with "princess" being the nickname Lee's cor-

respondent assigns to her crip body. Similarly, no one is the boss of feminist and crip publishing.

3. **Do not trust your university.** Academic journal publishing is about a lot of things. It can build community, share bold and important ideas, and teach us to think in anti-authoritarian ways. And yet so much of academic publishing is a toppling tower of free, unpaid, or underpaid labour. Authors labour *for free* to publish their pieces (despite the insistence that their work is compensated by the university, everyone knows that most of our time at universities is spent in teaching and service). Peer reviewers labour *for free* while bringing in money for journals, owned by conglomerates, that then sell their published goods at high cost to libraries. And very often, editors and support staff at journals labour *for free*. Why do we all do it? We do it all in service of the author who does it all in service of yes, their research, but also their university and career—having a chance at dwindling tenure track jobs, having a shot at often corrupt tenure review processes, fighting for meagre merit raises, pursuing rewards in an environment of utmost fiscal and emotional scarcity. A central principle of a crip feminist publishing ethics is thus that we must stop trusting our universities, we must become anti-work in ways that acknowledge gendered, racialized, classed, and abled abilities and inabilities to opt out, as Mel Chen, Mimi Khúc, and Jina B. Kim explore in “Work Will Not Save Us: An Asian American Crip Manifesto” (2023).
4. **Protect your spoonage, no one else will.** In 2003 Christine Miserandino put forward the metaphor of spoons as an effective means for chronically ill folks to explain to able-bodied people how it is that they might be tired, burnt out, or out of energy. The metaphor of having limited spoons to go around for each of life’s daily activities demonstrates that a chronically ill person might have enough spoons to go to work, but then not enough to also be social after work, or enough spoons to undertake three tasks, but not four, and certainly not five. Once one’s personal supply of spoons runs out for the day, that is it. Spoonage protection is a core principle of crip publishing. Editors, journal staff, as well as

reviewers, need to protect their spoonage. Despite pressure (often artificial!) to move quickly and be *highly productive!*, the pressure to do more and be more are not worth the toll this takes on chronically ill bodyminds. Journal makers especially must protect their spoonage as artificial pressure is created to get them to publish other people's work. Unfortunately, limited spoon holders also bear the additional burden of having to manage our limited spoons and to protect them at all costs in the face of institutions that might be only too willing to give us more and more commitments without creating conditions for the spoons to match them.

5. **Go slow.** Going slowly is perhaps the key component of crip publishing. Publishing schedules are not necessarily ableist, as they can provide guidance and accountability, but in many ways tight publishing schedules function against the access needs of both journal workers/creators and authors. Slowness and crip temporalities more generally have emerged as a key component of crip theory and praxis, from Alison Kafer's theorization of crip time and crip future (2013), to Ellen Samuels's reflection on crip time (2017), to disability memoirs such as *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey (2010), which reflect on the temporalities of disability. A crip publishing ethics that goes slowly isn't only about a slow pace, it is also about refusing linearity when it doesn't make sense, allowing for the contraction and expansion of timed schedules as needed by all parties including, importantly, journal workers, and for circularity, looping, and iteration. A slow approach to publishing does not create and adhere to artificial timescapes and it does not place a published product above the needs of creators—including journal makers *as creators*. As Palmer writes of lichen, "Before doing, before speaking, before leaving. Linger. What happens when you listen, or let another lead? [...] Crustose lichens grow less than a centimeter a year, and live all sorts of lifetimes, some up to 10,000 years. Find possibility in deceleration. There is no rush." (2023, n.p.).
6. **Express recognition and care.** This one is directed at authors. Authors: So much of journal publishing requires invisible, as-

sumed, and expected labour. On some level you know this because authors are also often journal makers and editors and vice versa. Yet the often traumatizing process of academic publishing makes authors put their guard up so that as authors we assume that the other party will somehow hurt our published product (which can and does happen!). While errors do of course happen, journal workers are nonetheless providing huge amounts of labour to make an author's piece published and publishable. While it is sometimes common to thank peer reviewers in an article's acknowledgments section, it is very rare for journal maker's work to be recognized, formally or informally, in a published piece. Some might assume that the work of journal production and copyediting is less creative, knowledge-driven, or essential to publishing an article than, say, the work of a guest editor or author; I would dispute this claim. Without a visual presence, whether physical or online, a published piece would not attract audiences. Without a solid round of copyediting, an author's errors, including such things as embarrassing misspellings of other scholars' names, would be visible for all to see. Without journal makers who create proofs, articles would be little less than unpolished Word documents with tracked changes. You see, the work of journal makers is creative and absolutely essential to knowledge-making, and a crip approach to publishing invites it to be recognized, honoured, and celebrated. I am a published academic with a decade-long career of publishing on both ends, as an author and a founding editor of a journal, yet on more occasions than I can count, authors have, while corresponding with me about their in-press piece, "put me in my place" when they assume I exist only as a journal service worker whose sole function it is to help publish *their piece*. And even if I was not publishing my own work, the work of supporting authors is inherently valuable and worthy of respect. Importantly, an author's work is dependent on this labour, and to borrow Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's formulation regarding mushroom economies, "private assets most always grow out of unacknowledged commons" (271). A crip approach to publishing thus makes this labour vis-

ible, makes this commons visible, makes these naturalized hierarchies evident, and challenges them. This is part of a crip vision that makes space for “reciprocity, mutual respect, mutual accountability, mutual commitment to each other’s well-being. Mutual recognition of each other’s suffering” (Khúc 2023, 79).

7. **Challenge decorum, hone polydisciplinamory.** Returning to the medium of knowledge-making through care cards, I want to suggest that crip publishing is open to many forms of knowledge-making. Feminist publishing since the years of the women’s liberation movement and earlier has made space for art, poetry, and other forms of creative expression alongside more formal academic pieces. Similarly, many feminist and disability studies sites of publishing have honed and celebrated hybrid and creative forms of publishing that break with disciplinary confines to imagine alternate ways of making knowledge. Crip publishing invites such “polydisciplinamory” (Loveless 2019, 59), because it recognizes that there are many ways to make knowledge and answer research questions. Here I invite readers to engage with *Feral Feminisms*’ back issues for instantiations of knowledge-making across media and forms.
8. **Failure is expected.** Finally (at least for now), crip approaches to publishing recognize that no published product, no publishing relationship, and no publishing undertaking will be without failure. Failure can mean many things, but importantly it recognizes that bodyminds have limits and that it is more important to honour the bodyminds involved in publishing than to publish and perish at all costs. This has been a series of hard learned lessons for me, since, as a person on the autism spectrum, I have not always understood lessons such as that “failure” is okay, that one cannot prove their way out of disability, or even how to respect hierarchies and decorum in publishing and academic relationships. Failure in crip publishing recognizes tension and works toward accountability. It also means recognizing that we can bail, exit, make exceptions, change rules, respond to conflict, address injustice, and sometimes, just take a nap in our bed instead.

9. **You.** What would you add to this crip publishing manifestx? To finish this piece, I invite you to be my “comrades-in-bed,” as Tala Khanmalek and Heidi Andrea Restrepo Rhodes (2020) write in their thinking on the “bedlife” of disabled people of colour (36, 37). I invite you to reflect on your own crip feminist publishing principles, either from the perspective of an author, a journal maker, or both and develop your own publishing manifestx.

#### IMAGE NOTES

Figure 1: Ela Przybyło, “The Bed Sorbonne,” digital photograph, 2023.

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