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Knowledge Actors

Revisiting Agency in the History of Knowledge

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Scholars as knowledge actors

Taking the knowledge paradigm personally

Christa Wirth

This essay is a suggestion that we should take the knowledge paradigm personally—or at least professionally.¹ What if historians of knowledge employed the insight gained from studying knowledge in the past to recreate themselves as knowledge actors in the present and future? How can the historiography of the history of knowledge inspire us to reimagine ourselves, the knowledge we create, and the institutions we work in? For example, if we have learned from our research that knowledge circulates in interactions between different actors, why is single authorship celebrated as the gold standard of publishing in history? This does not suppose naively applying what we learned from the past to the present, as contingency will make our selfhood and practices drift in unexpected ways. Instead, self-reflective knowledge actors put themselves inside history.

With this mindset, we, as scholars, can tweak our identity as knowledge actors and gauge our research interests, objects, and methods accordingly. Lorraine Daston employs the *mise en abyme* when describing the practice of historians of science who historicize their own discipline in the hall of mirrors.² Building on this metaphor, I contemplate what (self)reflected subject of the historian (and their discipline) emerges in this hall of mirrors. Do we like what we see? And if not, how do we change it?

In the following, I will ask what insights and perspectives we acquire from the history of knowledge could circulate back on us as

historians and establish knowledge actors that develop epistemologies, a praxis, and institutions that contribute to open, democratic, collaborative, and pluralistic societies. Which knowledge actors can exist and counteract the current contexts of the humanities as they face legitimacy pressure, precarious working conditions at universities, and on a larger scale global warming and the rise of (post)fascism? What kind of scholarly personae do we then adopt?³ What kind of epistemologies do these personae create? How does a scholarly persona work, affect, and impact the academy and the public?

Since this is a programmatic essay, I rely on literature that has been programmatic in the history of knowledge. In addition, I will lean on my experience as a former associate member of the Zentrum Geschichte des Wissens of the ETH and University of Zurich (ZGW). The literature I rely on is neither to be understood as a representative canon, nor as an exhaustive list, but as the lay of the land that historians of knowledge have described to make sense of what doing the history of knowledge could entail. Taking seriously the shortcomings of the history of knowledge, I make suggestions for how a knowledge actor can develop the 'critical agency' which can represent and contribute to knowledge-making in and outside an academy committed to open, democratic societies.⁴ Crucial for this normative project is not only the literature coming out of the history of knowledge, but also the writings of the female and feminist scholars in the philosophy of science, history of science, and in science, technology, and society (STS). In the canon-building of the history of knowledge they have been continuously written out of the script.⁵ As Banu Subramaniam has pointed out, 'feminists have begun to re-theorize a science and technology that seriously engages with subjectivity, to create new subjectivities'.⁶ We thus need more feminist history of science, as Monika Dommann declares.⁷ Just as historians and STS scholars have proven that science and technology are formed by values, our own studies of histories of knowledge are no less imbued by (implicit) values, a fact that feminist scholars are aware of and can name.⁸ The feminist intervention in the history of science and STS is value driven. To veil one's own values is a luxury only scholars have who

are continuously reproducing the values of the mainstream. These feminist values, nevertheless, are contingent upon time and space and ‘do not represent timeless truths’, as Sandra Harding notes.⁹

I have gleaned the resurfacing definitions and characteristics of the arguments about the history of knowledge from many programmatic texts published in the last twenty years. (I date the starting point of a self-conscious, institutionalized *Wissensgeschichte* to 2005 when the ZGW was launched—although this might be the result of personal bias as a former associate member of the ZGW.¹⁰) Other institutions, people, or starting points might be relevant. I have traced the following saturated discursive nodes within the programmatic texts of the history of knowledge. They are incomplete but not arbitrary: (i) definition(s) of knowledge; (ii) the circulation of knowledge; (iii) the role of power and how it impacts which knowledge gains currency; (iv) failures of knowledge; and (v) knowledge actors. I will consider what implications these five aspects have for the making of a new subjectivity of knowledge actor, which we as scholars can perform.

Definition(s) of knowledge

A great deal of ink has been spilled over the question of what is and what is not knowledge.¹¹ Yet a concise definition continues to elude us. If all aspects of human life, behaviour, societies, and objects can be tagged with ‘knowledge’, the term loses its analytical sharpness.¹² Although the what is not clear, a consensus has emerged on the how, that is how to study knowledge. Concretely, historians historicize and analyse the following: in what contexts did knowledge discourses emerge and change, and how were they ‘situated’?¹³ How did they become relevant and eventually vanish? Who were the actors or carriers of this knowledge?¹⁴ And how do power and societal asymmetries shape knowledge systems?¹⁵

Intrinsic to historians grappling with the proper definition of knowledge is another question: is rational knowledge, such as ‘wissenschaftliches Wissen’, distinct from other forms of knowledge, such as belief systems?¹⁶ And should historians who analyse all forms of knowledge

(including rational science) remain agnostic about the ‘truth’ aspect of the knowledge they study? The COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of fake news have given this and the question of ‘truth’ in knowledge greater urgency, as anti-vaxxers and conspiracy theorists took to the streets, torpedoed the containment of the virus, and sabotaged public health.¹⁷ Given these global circumstances, Sandra Bärnreuther et al. interpret the ‘Corona-Krise als Wissens-Krise’.¹⁸ For historians of knowledge to take merely an agnostic position in their research whether a mRNA vaccine or the deworming drug ivermectin is better at preventing people from getting very sick from the COVID-19 virus seems irresponsible. Especially since taking a stance and responsibility for it does not even mean we must quit our constructivist perspective. We can confidently and pragmatically declare that some forms of knowledge have been more helpful in specific historical contexts than others. I would argue that a postmodern constructivism with pragmatic, feminist, democratic values eclipses relativism, orthodox agnosticism, and also positivist–rational science.

The idea that historians of knowledge merely report on the ebbs and flows of epistemic regimes without having a stake in them is epistemologically naïve.¹⁹ A ‘fundamentalist’ agnostic position invites alleged objectivity and neutrality through the back door. Notions of socially disconnected objectivity as a view from nowhere have been relegated to the dustbin of history, and rightfully so. (Granted, too much morality can stand in the way of understanding.) A close rereading of Donna Haraway’s seminal essay on situated knowledges, which does more than mention ‘situated knowledges’ in passing as one of the founding texts of the history of knowledge not written by a man, brings to the fore the recent unease about the dichotomies of rational, positivist science versus postmodern constructivism. Haraway criticizes scientific positivism which she refers to as ‘the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere’.²⁰ As a remedy for the god complex, she offers a feminist ‘vision’; a way of seeing that is always partial and based on the scholar’s embodied situatedness in society that considers the social and historical ‘webs of knowledge and power’.²¹ She clarifies her concept of situatedness: ‘Such a preferred

positioning is as hostile to various forms of relativism as to the most explicitly totalizing versions of claims to scientific authority'.²² Taking our cue from Haraway, knowledge actors with critical agency can declare their situatedness and positionality in a society which they are studying. With this embodied position, we can propose how some science and knowledge may be more applicable in specific contexts to solve specific problems than other forms of knowledge.

The circulation of knowledge

That knowledge circulates is arguably *the* leading paradigm in the history of knowledge, as gleaned from the programmatic texts.²³ Knowledge takes on different forms as it circulates across borders from one societal arena to another.²⁴ For knowledge to circulate, it requires constant translation practices.²⁵ As historians of knowledge, we study these translation practices empirically, but what does the importance of the concepts of circulation and translation mean when applied to critical knowledge actors? How does this impact our self-understanding and our actions in institutions? First, knowledge actors should be able to translate their research for various contexts and several audiences, contributing to the societal circulation of 'wissenschaftliches Wissen'. Awareness of the translational character of knowledge enables university-based knowledge actors to work with other knowledge actors from varying societal arenas, be it activists, journalists, librarians, and beyond. Second, it is in these translational spaces that new knowledge emerges, as we know from the history of knowledge: Peter Burke, by referring to Anton Blok, has pointed out that 'innovation in knowledge' stems from displaced people working in groups.²⁶ Not all forms of knowledge share the same (scientific) quality, yet translations can be seen as displacements of knowledge and provide an intriguing space for creativity.²⁷ And this means, third, that universities, aware of the translational character of knowledge, should value the experience of scholars who have gained insight into other knowledge institutions—for example, public bodies—when applying for academic positions. Scholars who can translate their

knowledge and practices from one societal knowledge institution to another should be valued academically in higher education. Critical knowledge actors should communicate the circulation of knowledge between institutions as a historical reality within societies, and challenge the misconception that scholars need to be lured out of their ivory tower or that scholarly knowledge does not translate into professional proficiencies outside the academy.²⁸

A public acknowledgement of the circulatory character of knowledge should help undermine the ivory-towerism which permeates public conceptions of the university, which in this narrative finds itself outside society and history. As Vincent Brown stated,

Too many people imagine the university as an ivory tower, which suggests that is detached from the world or perched above it. But shouldn't the thought of an ivory tower make you wonder how many elephants you would have to kill to make one? There is no place outside of history.²⁹

Critical knowledge actors communicate the circulation of knowledge between institutions as a historical reality within larger society, challenging misconceptions about ivory towers.

The importance of power

I look at failures of knowledge alongside the role of power and its impact on which knowledge gains currency for the simple reason that they are connected. As historians of knowledge unsentimentally substitute the master narrative of *progress*, which was more prevalent in the history of science, with *power* as the master narrative in the history of knowledge, the questions of which orders of knowledge have pushed other forms of knowledge out to liminal spaces (and against what historical backdrop) are pertinent.³⁰ Failures of knowledge, not knowing, and marginalized knowledge are thus equally relevant as objects of study.³¹ Historians of knowledge have studied knowledge-making in all its messiness. How can we use these insights

when forming a scholarly persona as a critical knowledge actor? I would suggest that critical knowledge actors are well placed to share the character of the messiness they study and experience in their own research in and beyond the academy.

The stakes for the universities communicating science and knowledge against the background of the global health crisis set off by COVID-19, could not be higher. Fake news, decades of discriminatory medical practice, intellectually lazy relativism: there has been much to rattle the public's trust in science in the last 30 years.³² It seems doubtful that relapsing into megaphoning to the public that science is a purely rational process will guide us out of the debris. Instead, critical knowledge actors could convey science and knowledge as an imperfect process shaped by historical contingencies and power that nevertheless can come to a scientific consensus advantageous to public health.

Regarding the history of discriminatory science practices—these can potentially be curtailed if scholars working together are diverse, as Naomi Oreskes argues.³³ And that would make science better, although there is 'no guarantee that scientists are correct in any given case'.³⁴ Oreskes continues:

Moreover, outsiders may judge scientific claims in part by considering how diverse and open to critique the community involved is. If there is evidence that a community is not open, or is dominated by a small clique or even a few aggressive individuals (...) this may be grounds for warranted skepticism.³⁵

For example, if a critical number of black scientists had been allowed to join white scientists in the US Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee in which black men were denied much-needed treatment for syphilis, the black scientists could have recognized that this was bad science.³⁶

Communicating research failures and the messiness of academic research provides scholars with critical agency as knowledge actors. Our expertise as historians in tracing the trials and tribulations of

knowledge-making in the past sets us up for verbalizing our own shortcomings and obstacles in the archives, in libraries, at conferences, in lecture halls, and at our desks. Yet too often these failures are merely shared in hallway conversations. As Paul Rabinow stated back in 1986 when confronted with the crisis of representation in anthropology, ‘For many years, anthropologists informally discussed fieldwork experiences among themselves. ... But such matters were not, until recently, written about “seriously”’.³⁷ Can we draw parallels between the crisis in anthropology in the 1980s and what Bärnreuther et al. have declared to be the ‘Corona-Krise als Wissens-Krise’?

Rabinow contextualizes the inconvenient truth of the messiness of (field) research—in the past only shared unofficially—within the framework of power and hierarchies in the academy. This lets us focus on the question of power as the leading paradigm in the history of knowledge. Without a doubt, power permeates all relationships and epistemologies. When it comes to us as academic researchers, teachers, and supervisors, Michel Foucault’s *oeuvre* hands us—and especially those of us on permanent contracts—the tools to understand our position in the political power structure of the university and how it treats us favourably compared to our non-tenure colleagues and students. Under the hashtags *#IchbinHanna* and *#IchbinReyhan*, junior scholars have exposed the feudal working conditions in the German academy.³⁸ The Swiss academy prides itself in having slightly better working conditions than Germany, but the grotesque disparities in income and job security reveal a similar pattern.

These asymmetries are not a side product of epistemologies made at universities—they are constitutive of them. The *#BlackLivesMatter* and *#MeToo* movements have reached academia, bringing to light abuses of power by members of the academy. Moving this knowledge about power abuse from hallway conversations and ‘whisper networks’ among students, women, and minorities in the academy into a public space is an important step. Critical knowledge actors could tie these asymmetries to questions of epistemology. As Rabinow explains, when talking about struggles in the field,

But what cannot be publicly discussed cannot be analyzed or rebutted. Those domains that cannot be analyzed or refuted, and yet are directly central to hierarchy, should not be regarded as innocent or irrelevant. We know that one of the most common tactics of an elite group is to refuse to discuss—to label as vulgar or uninteresting—issues that are uncomfortable for them. When corridor talk about fieldwork becomes discourse, we learn a good deal.³⁹

Since historians of knowledge are keenly aware of the power asymmetries that shaped epistemologies in the past, why do they fall short in their own time? How does power in academia shape epistemologies? It behoves critical knowledge actors to look at the conditions in which they produce their knowledge.

Knowledge actors

Like other areas of history, the discussion about knowledge actors unfolds along the lines of agency versus discourse (structure), albeit strongly weighted towards discourse. It is well established that individuals should no longer be seen as the ‘founders’ or ‘discoverers’ of an idea but mere focal points of knowledge systems.⁴⁰ Actors’ relevance—and power—in the orders of discourse depends on their ability to be identified with knowledge considered true and relevant.⁴¹ It is again this Foucauldian combination of knowledge and power that knowledge actors owe their existence to. The allure for scholars to define people by how much they know and how powerful they are is easy to explain, as Suzanne Marchand states. However, and as Marchand convincingly continues, “There are many more things that make up our humanity, and our histories, than what we know and how we know it”.⁴² She invokes the ‘P-word’ when she invites us to see knowledge actors as ‘people’.⁴³ Östling and Larsson Heidenblad have suggested the history of knowledge should concern how knowledge impacted the life of everyday people.⁴⁴ And this has been one of its big promises: the history of knowledge will bring more knowledge actors into view, which the history of science had relegated to the

outskirts of knowledge production systems.⁴⁵ If we want to bring the *human* back into the humanities, which the history of knowledge is part of, how would this shift impact us as critical knowledge actors? Before I try to answer these questions, I would like to first set out the main discrepancies between the theoretical assumptions described here and the daily academic praxis, epistemologies, and habitus at the university.

As a PhD student in the late 2000s at the University of Zurich, I knew very well that the author was dead, yet Foucault had risen in Zurich. His celebrity, together with that of the other founding fathers (*sic*) often mentioned in the same breath as the advent of the history of knowledge—Ludwig Fleck, Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend—ran counter to the promised ‘pluralization’ of the study of knowledge in society which the history of knowledge embodied.⁴⁶ Fleck and the others were more than mere nodes or subjects in the discourse. Bärnreuther et al. conclude that the promise of a ‘pluralization was not generally fulfilled because the “orders of domination” simply (were) reproduced on a different level’.⁴⁷ What Newton and others were to the history of science, so Foucault, Fleck, Kuhn et al. now were to the history of knowledge.⁴⁸ Under the guise of the discourse, the individual male ‘genius’ yet again took the chair at the head of the table.

Although the German *Romantik* myth of an individual, male ‘genius’, working in lofty solitude as he awaits divine inspiration for his next discovery, has been thoroughly debunked, its spectre obviously haunts the hallways of many a university. It manifests itself not only in the celebration of the few founding fathers in the history of knowledge, but also in other areas. The single-author monograph as the gold standard among historians of knowledge is another manifestation of this myth. As critical knowledge actors we could emphasize the discursive–collective effort of doing *Wissenschaft* by publishing a single text or texts with others which goes beyond editing an anthology together.⁴⁹

The concept of critical knowledge actors must then find its equivalent at the structural level of the university. Collective research efforts are impeded by the *Lehrstuhl* system in German-speaking academia,

which creates (financially) extreme asymmetries and undermines the possibility of collaboration on more equal terms.

Another insight from the history of knowledge should give us pause, if only because of the current status quo of traditional discipline and hiring practices. New, creative knowledge emerges where displaced people meet. That displacement can be social or geographic, but also, as we have seen, disciplinary.⁵⁰ It is in interdisciplinary settings and not just in traditional disciplinary contexts that creative shifts in knowledge occur. Displacement, which holds the promise of innovation, is another argument for critical knowledge actors with diverse backgrounds to come together—in addition to guaranteeing the quality of the science by identifying discriminatory practices, with for example the lessons of the Tuskegee Study in mind. And since calls for the history of knowledge have implied a democratization of knowledge production, and by extension a wider cast of actors, this could be represented at the level of critical knowledge actors who come from varying (dis)placements in society. One of the biggest strengths of the ZGW was its interdisciplinary composition, encompassing historians, philosophers, literary scholars, art historians, and ethnologists among others.

In the Claimed Pasts (CliP) research group, based at the University of Agder in Norway, we try to follow these principles in our studies of critical knowledge and heritage production. We come from different levels of the academy (and while well aware of the existing hierarchies we strive for a flatter hierarchy than in other national academic contexts). Our critical knowledge actors are the University of Agder's PhD and MA students, full professors, postdocs, lecturers, and associate professors, but are also drawn from other (academic and archival) institutions beyond. An array of disciplines—history, art history, psychology, archaeology, and heritage studies, geography, religious studies, and linguistics—are represented in Claimed Pasts. The participants come from various regions in Norway and the world and different social locations within society, which is the precondition for 'displaced'—or what I also like to call it—'diasporic' knowledge production. The group is an experiment in embodying critical knowledge actors within the university.

The curtain and the vessel

I started this essay with the general question of what insight can be gained from the programmatic texts in the history of knowledge to (re)invent ourselves as (critical) knowledge actors, to think about the underlying epistemologies we create, and to form the institutions in and for an open, solidary, and pluralistic society. To that end, I asked what lessons from the history of knowledge can be used—and possibly tweaked first—to envision a knowledge actor. I set feminist arguments from the history of science and STS alongside insights about the history of knowledge. Subramaniam wrote that in order to recreate technology and science, one must also reimagine subjects, and this was my aim with this essay: to reimagine the historian as a subject–knowledge actor. The main discussion points in the history of knowledge, as I have shown, entail definitions of knowledge, circulations of knowledge, power, and knowledge, failures of knowledge, and, ultimately, knowledge actors.

Recent conversations about the definition of knowledge turn on whether historians should maintain a purely agnostic position vis-à-vis various forms of the epistemic regimes they study. To my mind, the answer is no. Historians should eschew agnosticism and relativism on the one hand and positivist science on the other. Orthodox agnosticism implies the historian who studies knowledge is not positioned within society and has no stake in *Wissenschaft*, which allows the supposed neutrality or socially disconnected objectivity of the historian make an uncalled-for comeback. Relativism stands for a fallible concept applied by those who misunderstand postmodernity; rational, positivist science, a ‘god trick of seeing everything from nowhere’, as Haraway puts it. Instead, I would suggest the reimaged knowledge actor pursues postmodern constructivism undergirded by pragmatic, feminist, and democratic values. Adopt this intellectual position and historians of knowledge can run the gamut from *Wissenschaft* to belief systems, as long as they are aware—and communicate—that not all forms of knowledge are created equal. Specific historical contexts and specific functions matter.

The Claimed Pasts research group tries to abide by the values that underwrite the critical knowledge actor. Since knowledge circulates and ‘translates’ between different societal spaces, as historians of knowledge have argued, Claimed Pasts makes it a principle to bring people from various spaces together and create new—by which we mean translated—knowledge. We take to heart Blok’s assertion that displaced people create new knowledge. Displacement manifests in manifold ways, and contributing to Claimed Pasts’ knowledge production are local Kristiansandere, Norwegians from elsewhere, and people who have migrated to Kristiansand from other parts of the world and are thus culturally and linguistically displaced, while its LGBTQ+ members, people of colour, and those from different class backgrounds have experienced social displacement. Further, Claimed Pasts’ knowledge actors translate knowledge from other institutions where they work—libraries, museums, the media, while collaborating with other institutions such as archives and LGBTQ+ organizations in Kristiansand. As an interdisciplinary research group they bring together disciplines—history, art history, psychology, archaeology and heritage studies, geography, and linguistics—and ‘displace’ or conjoin them in creative ideas that can disrupt the scholarly status quo. A similar effect comes from integrating scholars from most levels of the academic hierarchy: MA students, postdocs, faculty, and PhD students all add to the possibility of knowledge creation that is not ‘disciplined’. All these expressions of displacement, however, only realize their creative potential if they coincide with other knowledge actor values, such as a self-critical awareness of one’s positionality in the Claimed Pasts group or society. This includes an awareness of power relations, not least within the group.

Armed with these insights, we treat Claimed Pasts’ seminars and research as a process where, in addition to our successes, we share the failures, messiness, and challenges we encounter. Publishing not only edited volumes together, but also articles, is an expression of the worth and empirical knowledge of texts from a (small) milieu rather than an isolated individual. With these values and—as we hope—corresponding behaviours, Claimed Pasts produces an academic

identity along the lines of a knowledge actor, contributing to an open, collaborative, and pluralistic society. For the same reason, members are also politically active in the academic institutions at the University of Agder, fully aware that knowledge emerges from a specific institutional context.

In this essay, I have asked where my proposed critical knowledge actor should be placed on the spectrum between agency and discourse. What lies beyond the genius on the one hand and the all-consuming discourse on the other? The critical knowledge actor may be framed by structures and discourses, but also has something more to offer than—and here I am exaggerating—being an empty vessel through which the spirit of the discourse flows. At the other end of the spectrum, the critical knowledge actor has jettisoned the myth of the individual (male) ‘genius’, and what remains is one who contributes to knowledge as a place of creativity and possibility, but nevertheless is acutely aware of how power (in discourses) shapes societies—and the academy. Marchand asks of historians, ‘do we really believe that we too simply are part of a discourse whose rules dictate, more or less, what we say, and in which curiosity, creativity, and compassion are mere illusion, while only power is real?’⁵¹ Curiosity and creativity, the driving forces of the scholarly persona embodied by the critical knowledge actor, align with Haraway’s ‘feminist embodiment (that) resists fixation and is insatiably curious about the webs of differential positioning’.⁵² Curiosity about our own and other’s positionality comes with responsibilities, as Haraway writes.⁵³ Instead of hiding responsibility for our claims and praxis behind the vast curtain of the discourse from which most likely the individual male ‘genius’ is peeking out, we can own our responsibility by our own positionality and situatedness as we study knowledge as critical knowledge actors.

Notes

- 1 I wish to thank Josephine Munch Rasmussen, participants at the digital workshop *Actors of Knowledge*, 23–24 Mar. 2022, and Anna Nilsson Hammar, David Larsson Heidenblad, and Johan Östling for commenting on earlier drafts of this essay. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

- 2 Lorraine Daston, 'The History of Science and the History of Knowledge', *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 1/1 (2017), 131.
- 3 Lorraine Daston & H. Otto Sibum, 'Introduction: Scientific Personae and Their Histories', *Science in Context* 16 (2003); Peter Galison, 'Ten Problems in History and Philosophy of Science', *Isis* 99 (2008).
- 4 Judith Butler & Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political: Conversations with Athena Athanasiou* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 193.
- 5 Sandra Bärnreuther, Maria Böhmer & Sophie Witt (eds.), *Feierabend? (Rück-)blicke auf 'Wissen'* (Nach Feierabend; Zurich: Diaphanes, 2020), 13; Monika Dommann, 'Donna, Isabelle, Vinciane etc. Warum wir in der Zukunft mehr feministische Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung brauchen werden', in Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*, 68–70.
- 6 Banu Subramaniam interview in Wenda K. Bauchspies & María Puig de la Bellacasa, 'Feminist science and technology studies: A patchwork of moving subjectivities: An interview with Geoffrey Bowker, Sandra Harding, Anne Marie Mol, Susan Leigh Star and Banu Subramaniam', *Subjectivity* 28/1 (2009), 340.
- 7 Dommann, 'Donna, Isabelle', 63.
- 8 Sandra Harding, 'Introduction: Beyond Postcolonial Theory: Two Undertheorized Perspectives on Science and Technology', in ead. (ed.), *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 21.
- 9 Sandra Harding, interviewed by Bauchspies & Puig de la Bellacasa, 'Feminist science', 337.
- 10 Johan Östling, Erling Sandmo, David Larsson Heidenblad, Anna Nilsson Hammar & Kari H. Nordberg, 'The History of Knowledge and the Circulation of Knowledge: An Introduction', in eid. (eds.), *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018), 12.
- 11 See, for example, Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*, the final issue of *Nach Feierabend*.
- 12 For criticism of such an all-encompassing term, see Suzanne Marchand, 'How Much Knowledge is Worth Knowing? An American Intellectual Historian's Thoughts on the Geschichte des Wissens', *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Special Issue: History of Science or History of Knowledge?* 42/2–3 (2019).
- 13 Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14/3 (1988).
- 14 Jakob Tanner, 'History of Knowledge, Economic Analysis, and Power Struggles', in Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*, 155; Philipp Sarasin, 'Was ist Wissensgeschichte?' *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur (IASL)* 36/1 (2011), 165.
- 15 Tanner, 'History of Knowledge', 155.
- 16 See, for example, Daston, 'History of Science'; Philipp Sarasin & Andreas Kilcher, 'Editorial', in *Nach Feierabend: Zürcher Jahrbuch für Wissensgeschichte*, vii: *Zirkulationen* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2011), 166.
- 17 See also Caspar Hirschi, 'Wissensgeschichte: Das geisteswissenschaftliche Beiboot des Neoliberalismus', in Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*
- 18 Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*, 8.
- 19 University-employed historians have a professional stake in giving preference to rational knowledge over belief systems. Philipp Sarasin, 'More Than Just Another Specialty', *Journal for the History of Knowledge* 1/1 (2020), 4 writes of historians

- of knowledge being committed to distinguishing between rationality and belief systems.
- 20 Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', 581.
- 21 Ibid. 588.
- 22 Ibid. 584.
- 23 Simone Lässig, 'The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 59 (2016), 43.
- 24 For the concept of arena in history of knowledge, see Johan Östling & David Larsson Heidenblad, 'Fulfilling the Promise of the History of Knowledge: Key Approaches for the 2020s', *Journal for the History of Knowledge* 1/1 (2020).
- 25 Lässig, 'History of Knowledge'; Tanner, 'History of Knowledge'; Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*, 146.
- 26 Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 20 referring to Anton Blok speaks of 'displacement'.
- 27 For the relevance of the quality of knowledge, see Marchand, 'How Much Knowledge', 139.
- 28 Steven Shapin, 'The Ivory Tower: The History of a Figure of Speech and its Cultural Uses', *British Journal for the History of Science* 45/1 (2012), 26 points to the negative connotations of 'ivory tower'.
- 29 Ivelisse Estrada, 'Brown, Vincent: Beyond the History Book', Harvard Radcliffe Institute interview (22 Nov. 2021). www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/news-and-ideas/vincent-brown-beyond-the-history-book
- 30 Daston, 'History of Science', 145; Sarasin, 'Was ist Wissensgeschichte?', 167.
- 31 Burke, *What is the History*, 4; Lässig, 'History of Knowledge', 45; Sven Dupré & Geert Somsen, 'The History of Knowledge and the Future of Knowledge Societies', *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, 42/2–3 (2019), 192.
- 32 See, for example, Stephen Bates, 'Sweden Pays for Grim Past', *The Guardian* (6 Mar. 1999) on compulsory sterilization in Sweden for eugenic purposes, which continued until the late 1970s.
- 33 Naomi Oreskes, *Why Trust Science? With a New Preface by the Author* (Princeton: PUP, 2019), 55–64.
- 34 Ibid. 59.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 For the history of the Tuskegee experiment see James H. Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment: New and Expanded Edition* (New York: Free Press, 1993).
- 37 Paul Rabinow, 'Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology', in James Clifford & George E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography with a New Foreword by Kim Fortun* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), 253.
- 38 Amrei Bahr, Kristin Eichhorn & Sebastian Kubon, *#IchBinHanna: Prekäre Wissenschaft in Deutschland* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2022).
- 39 Rabinow, 'Representations', 253.
- 40 Sarasin & Kilcher, 'Editorial', 9–10.
- 41 Sarasin, 'Was ist Wissensgeschichte?', 169–70.
- 42 Marchand, 'How Much Knowledge', 132.
- 43 Ibid. 143.

- 44 However, I am skeptical of the claim by Östling & Larsson Heidenblad, 'Fulfilling the Promise', 2 that 'Historical events and phenomena that only affect a few individuals or small groups of people cannot be a point of departure for such a study.' Who are these supposedly irrelevant small groups?
- 45 See Christa Wirth, 'The History of Knowledge and the Cold War: An Essay', in Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*, 159–166 for the inclusion of more actors in the history of knowledge.
- 46 Bärnreuther et al., *Feierabend?*, 13, translated.
- 47 Ibid, translated.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 For example, Christa Wirth & Josephine Munch Rasmussen, 'The Value of Forgeries for Historical Research', in Neil Brodie, Morag Kersel & Josephine Munch Rasmussen (eds.), *Variant Scholarship: Ancient Texts in Modern Contexts* (Leiden, NL: Sidestonepress, 2023), 169–187.
- 50 Burke, *What is the History*, 20.
- 51 Marchand, 'How Much Knowledge', 143.
- 52 Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', 590.
- 53 Ibid. 587.