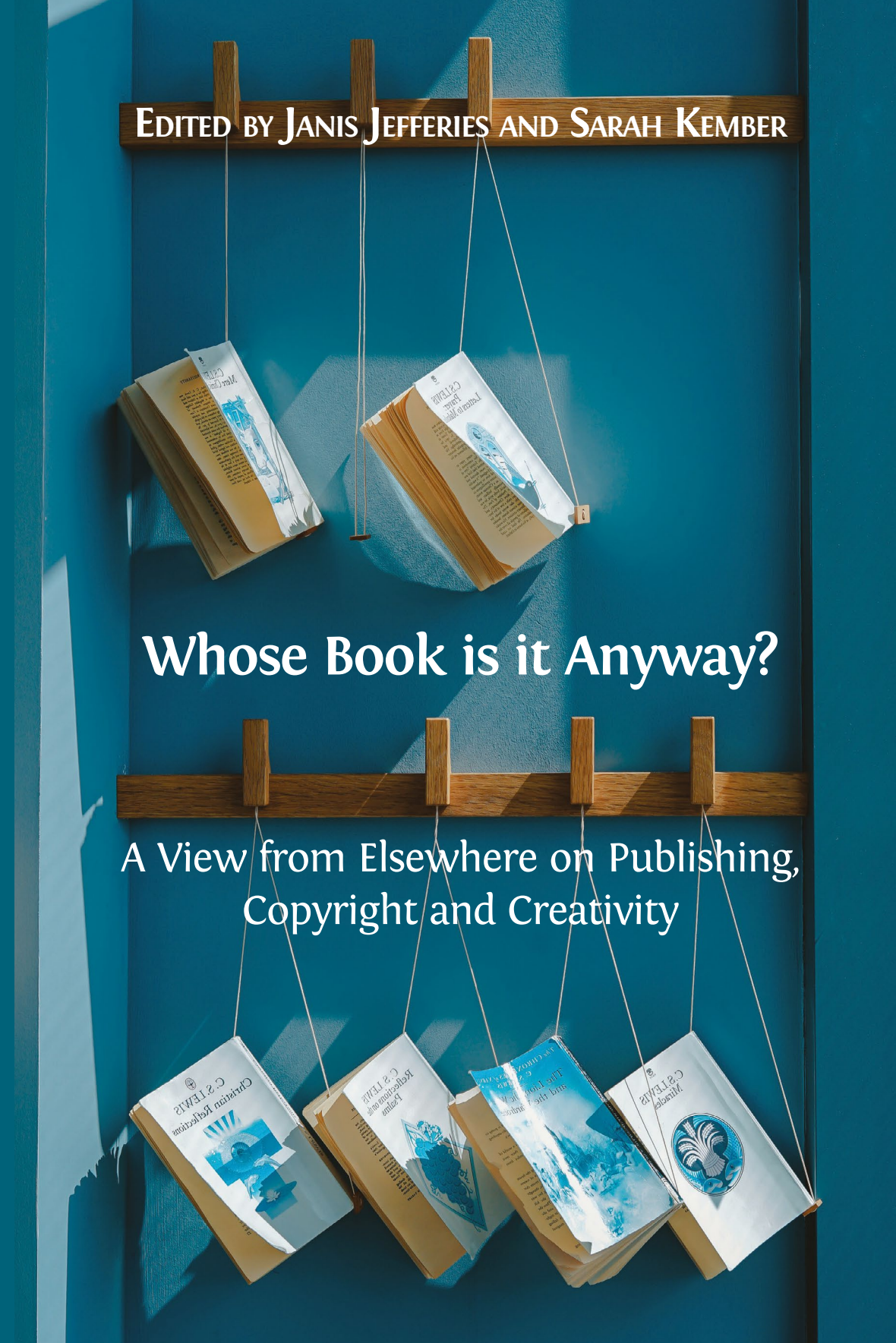




EDITED BY JANIS JEFFERIES AND SARAH KEMBER

Whose Book is it Anyway?

A View from Elsewhere on Publishing,
Copyright and Creativity



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2. London-Havana Diary: Art Publishing, Sustainability, Free Speech and Free Papers¹

Louise O'Hare

May 2018, London

I've been prompted to sign off the essay about art publishing in Havana that I wrote for this anthology over two years ago, but I can't bear to do it. In part because the world seems so changed, and changing, in part because I am. I read in the essay a false confidence. Not that my report was proved incorrect, but that in attempting an overview, the writing failed to address its own relationship to the issues — of self-censorship, institutional power, and control of access to knowledge — that it purported to discuss. London on Havana. Had I forgotten that the exchange was supposed to go both ways?

I come across something written in 1994 by Coco Fusco, and wonder if her approach might offer a formal solution — a way to acknowledge the limits of my perspective and unpick some of the bias of much Anglophone reporting on Cuba. Fusco describes herself as a Cuban-American artist and writer, 'the daughter of a Cuban who emigrated to the US in 1954, and was deported in 1959 shortly after the triumph of

1 This chapter is an excerpt from an ongoing research and writing project titled *Centrefold 1974: A Memoir*, a practice-based Fine Art PhD at BxNU Institute of Contemporary Art, BALTIC 39, Northumbria University, 2014–2018.

the revolution.² Titled 'El Diario de Miranda / Miranda's Diary', Fusco's text describes her experiences travelling, and writing about Cuba, and how these have inflected her understanding of herself as 'a child of the diaspora'.³ It is a story of menacing uncertainty, gathering unverifiable reports of delays, threats, and surveillance. It's a story of letters received, refused visas refused, and quiet conversations, and covers dates just prior to and during the 'special period' — the euphemism for the economic crisis in Cuba that was precipitated by the continuing US trade embargo, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Comecon. Fusco explains that she gathered recollections and put them in a non-linear form to 'find the logic that links disparate events'. Of course that logic is entirely her own.

I visited Havana in May 2015 when the first flights from New York were arriving, which provoked in me a tourist's wistfulness for idiosyncrasies — the imagined authenticity of Cuba's isolation; alongside perhaps less patronizing fears of the growing impact of tourism and deregulation of the economy on the island, and excitement about what new connections and collaborations might be possible now that an end to the US embargo looked to be in sight. I was there to discuss the idea of setting up of an artist's magazine, a project that would require us to consider limits to free speech, as well as the models available for sustaining such a venture, alongside questions of what a magazine as a discursive platform or space might be — something further complicated by the fact that this would be a post-internet project operating in a place with limited broadband coverage.

Shifting between London and Havana, this diary will touch on intellectual property as part of a broader reflection upon limits to free speech and access to information. I'll touch on the impact neoliberal approaches to education, and arts funding, have on freedom of speech

2 Coco Fusco, 'El Diario de Miranda/Miranda's Diary', in Carol Becker (ed.), *The Subversive Imagination: The Artist, Society and Social Responsibility* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 96, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315021317>. The diary details the period 1986–1993. Coco Fusco describes the children of her generation as those who 'didn't choose to leave or stay' and 'are traitors to the exile community's extremists', and 'ungrateful' to their parents, 'who saved us from the Caribbean "gulag"' (p. 97). The final diary entry (dated 'August 1992') reads: 'I receive word from *Third Text* that they cannot publish this piece as I have written it [...] all the names must be removed, and that all personal information about my experiences in Cuba must also be excised' (p. 110).

3 Ibid., p. 97.

and access to information in London, and I'll consider some attempts to cope with this reduced ability to share knowledge — two small scale projects (initially set up in the US) that use online platforms to gather supportive communities to enable new research and writing. These tactics — proposed by the digital library aaarg.org and the Publication Studio network — are placed alongside *El Paquete Semanal* (*The Weekly Package*) a cross-country file-sharing operation sometimes described as the 'Cuban internet'; discussions of the way the Cuban state tolerates piracy; and my experiences as an art worker and activist in the UK. In this I refuse to implement a boundary between political, and artistic work, gathering observations about the potential of Web 2.0 for community-making, creative practice and grassroots democratic change.

June 2015, Gatwick

No one stops me at the gate.

I was born in Bristol and am returning home from three weeks working with Cuban artists and writers discussing the potential for setting up a Havana-London magazine, featuring works by artists based in both cities, and translated into Spanish and English. Meetings and discussions around the idea were part of 'Hors Pistes: La Primavera del Amor', an events, residency and exchange programme organised by French-Canadian curator Catherine Sicot, and taking place in Havana around the 12th Havana Biennial.⁴ The Havana Biennial takes place every three years, not two — organised by curators at the public gallery Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam and funded by the state, it either doesn't have the resources or the inclination to chase the same pace as the rest of the sponsored, patronised, industry of the international art world.⁵

4 Curated by Catherine Sicot, 'La Primavera del Amor' (Spring-Summer 2015) was 'a platform for artistic development and production, international and local networking, and community outreach in Havana and suburbs.' The programme reflected upon 'identity, gender and sexuality and its relationship to media and technology', through publishing projects, film premieres, performances, workshops and panel discussions. For more information see: <https://elegoa.com/en/content/la-primavera-del-amor>

5 The biennial is funded by the state, while contributions from foreign governments cover the inclusion of artists from their countries.

It seems important to start with my white tourist body — the limits of my experience in relation to state bureaucracy. I'm officially returning from a holiday: Catherine advised that she was not able to arrange an artist's visa, as the programme itself was not officially recognized.

May 2013, London

We have finally published an interview between Catherine, Aurélie Sampeur and Candelario, discussing LASA, their social enterprise and arts commissioning project in San Agustín, a suburb on the outskirts of Havana. I work as an associate editor for Afterall and commissioned it months ago, but there were many delays as Catherine, who is usually based in Toronto, waited for confirmation of certain details from her colleagues in Cuba.⁶

Six days later I receive a worried response:

Please remove the term 'post-revolution' or I will never be able to cross the Cuban border again. We are currently in year 56 of the Revolution here. It is a major faux-pas, and turns the article into anti-Castro propaganda [...]. Then it is also a mistake re: the content. What I was talking about was negotiating within the structures for artistic production established by the Revolution.

I immediately log in and quickly change the text online, kicking myself for not double-checking and — probably unfairly, I can't remember who changed it — write back blaming my American managing editor for the final edit.

May 2015, Havana

My plane lands at José Martí International and I am greeted by Catherine, and Reynier Guerra Capote; a student of literature at Havana University and her assistant on the project. Catherine and I have only met in person once before, but after emailing and Skyping I feel like we are old friends.

6 Catherine Sicot, Aurélie Sampeur, and Candelario, 'Artists at Work: Laboratorio Artístico de San Agustín', in Louise O'Hare (ed.), *Afterall Online*, 23 May 2014, https://www.afterall.org/online/artists-at-work_laboratorio-art_stico-de-san-agust_n_cuba

Later I meet Reynier for drinks in old Havana, the UNESCO heritage part of the old town where I am staying a couple of nights in an official hotel, the address a prerequisite for my tourist visa, before I'll head to rent a room with a family in Vedado, the leafy suburbs. Reynier is excited about the magazine idea, says there is nothing like it in the city, and doesn't seem very concerned about us getting into trouble. When telling friends and colleagues back home about my plans most had responded with concern: 'but there is no free press in Cuba!' Catherine too has been nervous, 'it could be considered activist', implying that the magazine could be subject to state censure and our Cuban collaborators put in a difficult situation, investigated, even arrested. However, my understanding of the constraints are that if you are not doing something counter-revolutionary, you will not be stopped. I recall Fidel's slogan: 'Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing.'⁷ Are we being wilfully naïve?

December 2014, Havana

The artist Tania Bruguera attempts to restage *Tatlin's Whisper #6* (2009) — her open-mic performance offering invited speakers 'one minute free of censorship' — at the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana. She first attempts to gain permission, is refused and then does it anyway. She is arrested and detained overnight, then released but ordered to remain in Cuba while the police decide whether to press charges.

7 Unlike previous socialist societies, freedom of form was guaranteed; only freedom of content remained at issue, the parameters for which were succinctly encapsulated in Fidel's maxim "Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing". In other words, all artwork that was not explicitly counterrevolutionary would be welcome.' Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, 'Whose Side are You On?: A Response to Coco Fusco', *Mute*, 29 January 2015, <http://www.metamute.org/community/your-posts/whose-side-are-you-response-to-coco-fusco/-state-detention-performance-politics-and-cuban-public-e-flux-3>

'Cuba always stood out among bureaucratic socialist countries for its rich and diverse visual arts. Though Cuban artists have never been put in a stylistic "straitjacket" of socialist realism", there are however certain limitations to their freedom: "There is freedom of artistic creation as long as its content is not contrary to the revolution," states the constitution of the Republic of Cuba in chapter 5: "Education and culture".' Maciej Zurowski, 'More Glasnost, Less Perestroika: Interview with Havana Times Editor Circles Robinson', *Weekly Worker* 848, 13 January 2011, <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/848/more-glasnost-less-perestroika/>

January 2015, New York

e-flux, a free digital art journal based in Lower Manhattan and funded by pumping out thrice-daily press releases to its coveted art world mailing list — selling its critically engaged kudos and the use of its contacts to ‘public art centers and museums’ internationally⁸ — publishes an article by Coco Fusco from which the summary in the post above was paraphrased.

In the article Fusco points out that the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana is a restricted government space and can be considered ‘the Cuban equivalent of the White House lawn’.⁹ The article explains that *Tatlin’s Whisper* had previously been staged at the Wifredo Lam gallery as part of the 10th Havana Biennial (2009), and that the new version for the Plaza de la Revolución was given the title *#YoTambienExijo* (*#IAlsoDemand*). The use of a hashtag is strange for a project in Cuba as most people do not have access to the Internet, and suggests it was aimed at an audience not on the island. Fusco notes: ‘Bruguera’s reliance on the Internet to convene the Cuban public has provoked a certain degree of skepticism from critics about her intentions’, considering that Cuba ‘is the country with the lowest level of connectivity in the hemisphere [...] The vast majority of Cubans lack access to the Internet, cell phones, and home-based landlines.’¹⁰

July 2015, London

An email from Reynier arrives — he is wondering if I might be able to help arrange visas for a trip to the UK during his summer holidays. He was expecting to visit Catherine in Toronto but despite numerous references, including recommendations from a professor at the University of Toronto, established artists and various arts professionals, Reynier’s

8 ‘Who uses *e-flux*? Nearly all the leading art museums, biennials, cultural centers, magazines, publishers, art fairs, and independent curators worldwide [...] *e-flux* is read by 90,000+ visual arts professionals: 47% in Europe, 42% in North America, and 11% Other (South America, Australia, Japan, etc.) [...]’ The promotional emails are ‘made free for its 90,000+ readers’, <http://www.e-flux.com/about>

9 Coco Fusco, ‘The State of Detention: Performance, Politics, and the Cuban Public’, *e-flux* 60, December 2014, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/60/61067/the-state-of-detention-performance-politics-and-the-cuban-public/>

10 Ibid.

application has been rejected by Canada. His trip is suddenly cancelled, not because of Cuban restrictions, but because of unfathomable Canadian bureaucracy. I begin to look up the process on the UK customs site and reply back that I think it might be hard to organise at short notice.

July 2014, London

Caroline Woodley, Joyce Cronin and me are sitting at the outside tables of Caravan, the expensive restaurant that leases the entrance of Central Saint Martins (CSM), and eking out our coffees while we wait for an email to come through on Caroline's phone. Our office is on the top floor of the university and one of a number of rooms in the recently built art school that, rather oddly, have no natural light, and this morning we can't yet face going in. The Granary Building used to 'store Lincolnshire wheat for London's bakers', but the architects have left it difficult to differentiate from a mall: a panopticon-esque conversion with four floors of glass-walled studios overlooking a downstairs 'street' accessible past a barrier of swipe-card turnstiles.¹¹ Wide walkways look out over a large atrium, and feature areas for students to hang out and hot-desk in — a necessity for those students the courses not allocated studios — which are valued real estate. Located in a new development area behind Kings Cross station, it is hard not to see the art school as the vanguard of north London gentrification: Google is coming; Eurostar runs out of the station; the canals are suddenly accessible; and more shops arrive each week. Once, for a freshers' fair, University of the Arts London (UAL, of which CSM is now a part) produced a series of tote-bags that said 'Lifestyle not education'. The canvas bags continue to circulate around the building, faded by washing but still appalling.

The email we are waiting for is from the Arts Council England (ACE) with news as to whether we will lose our regular funding.¹²

11 '[...] The Granary Building is now the stunning new home of the world famous arts college — Central Saint Martins, part of the University of the Arts London. The building has been transformed by architects Stanton Williams. While the Western Transit Shed has been converted into unique office space with shops and restaurants at street level.' — 'Historic Buildings: The Granary Building', anonymous, undated, King's Cross Development website, <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/granary>

12 Every three years, arts organisations that are regularly supported by Arts Council England (ACE) must reapply for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status.

Afterall (which produces various books series, online content, and an eponymous journal) is financed by various streams that Caroline, as publishing director, oversees, endlessly strategizes over and worries about. The bones of the organisation are covered by UAL — editors and assistants are employed as administrative staff and have contracts with the university. With the basics covered our different publishing series are paid for in different ways: *Afterall* journal for example raises enough money from advertising to just about cover its print production costs, receives a fairly negligible amount from sales (through its distributor University of Chicago press), and then covers the rest (for example writers' fees, design work, and image rights) using money from its partnerships with public art institutions internationally (curators from these benefactor institutions then joining the editorial board). We know that this mix of funding means we are seen as more 'sustainable' by ACE, less reliant on them, and paradoxically less likely to be cut.¹³ But still we are nervous. Solidarity disappears and I begin to envy our successful contemporaries — the other small contemporary arts organizations who have already received their news and started tweeting in relief: 'Thank you Arts Council #ACEfunding #artsfunding #npo'.

Why haven't we heard yet? The email is in Caroline's spam! We haven't been culled, but neither have we received the uplift we applied for, so we are at what ACE euphemistically calls 'standstill'. Like everyone else who has been 'successful', when inflation is taken into account over the next three years we will see our funding from ACE cut by 7.1%.¹⁴ The relief that we don't have to organize another obsequious

13 The first chapter of Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt's recent book on the cultural policy of the Cuban Revolution quotes Maria Miller's April 2013 speech stating that 'funding distributed by the Arts Council [England] should effectively act as seed funding [...] giving confidence of others to invest.' (p. 7). The quote is included as part of a summary of 'Cultural Policy under Capitalism', which describes the 'detrimental effect on the cultural field' of the 'withdrawal of the state in favour of market forces' (p. 1), explaining how recent US and European policy focuses on culture's 'perceived contribution to economic recovery' while excluding art from these 'creative industries' that have 'potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (pp. 6–7). See Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, *To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture: The Cultural Policy of the Cuban Revolution* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015).

14 This is in comparison to the previous three-year period. 'The majority of organisations in the new portfolio (75 percent) have received *standstill* funding.' [my italics], 'Arts Council Announces Investment Plans for 2015 to 2018' (press release), Arts Council England, 1 July 2014; the press release has been reposted here

benefit auction, for a while at least, is palpable. We stay at the table watching the fountains, which burst out in synchronized squirts across the public-private square. Some say the water feature is designed to stop any potential student protest or gathering, but still it's fun to sit here on a sunny day and see it populated in number by screaming laughing toddlers from the estates up the road.

May 2015, Havana

Catherine films me talking about the magazine idea for one of the videos she is making about the residency program. The videos will be disseminated through *El Paquete Semanal* (*The Weekly Package*) a file sharing system that is sometimes described as the 'Cuban Internet', but could perhaps also be considered a kind of multimedia magazine. The anonymous organisers gather 2TB of material including documentaries, soap operas, e-magazines, art programmes and music videos with adverts — and then distribute them across Cuba through representatives carrying hard drives. User-subscribers then pay 2CUC (Cuban Convertible Peso) and select particular items or download the whole package for that week onto their computer or hard drive. I guess it's called the Cuban Internet because of the way it claims to be an ungoverned, un-edited space — anyone can submit content — and constitutes an archive of shared digital material. Catherine is paying 30CUC for 7 weeks' inclusion and has organized it through a friend of a friend. I gather that due to the lack of anti-government content and pornography, *El Paquete* is considered to be either self-censored or infiltrated and controlled by the government. It is not known who edits the content, but the advertising side of the operation is run by a Cuban firm called Etres, making use of changes to property law in 2011.¹⁵ The

with an incorrect date: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/arts-council-announces-investment-plans-2015-2018>

15 The restrictions on the sale of computers were relaxed in 2008, and since then transmission of ebooks via manual USB stick transfer has become more and more commonplace. Wikipedia states that *El Paquete* started around 2008 and Etres has taken care of its advertising since 2011, when legal property reform of private enterprise allowed Etres to charge local businesses a small fee to advertise in *El Paquete*. An article in *frieze* describes how people have claimed to be the organisers of *El Paquete* and then been discredited, suggesting it is more of a phenomenon than a singular entity, with different versions distributed in different places and run by

government has also set up its own version as an alternative — *Mi Mochila* (*The Knapsack*) — you can download content and access this Cuban Intranet at *Joven Clubs* (*Joven Club de Computación y Electrónica*) — kids computer clubs — in cities and towns across the country.¹⁶

There is something wonderfully incongruous about the idea of a team of editors travelling the country sharing digital files — the Internet! — on foot. I don't wish to romanticise something that comes from a lack, but I wonder if this hand-held relay of information has benefits. Does it change the relationship between the users and the editors? Is it simply like the Internet before Web 2.0 or is there an opportunity for a publication to create a community of readers in a different way? If our magazine was circulated via *El Paquete*, how would we know the extent of its readership?

Later I'll be asked if the question of government infiltration affected what I said on camera, and I'll shrug: Why would it be any different from anything I ever write online, and doesn't London have the most CCTV cameras per person in the world?

December 2015, London

I have been contracted to run a module on art publishing for Central Saint Martins, and I decide to use some of the allocated teaching hours to pay speakers for events open to the public. Sean Dockray, the programmer of *aaarg.org*, is in London from Melbourne, and agrees to

different organisations. See 'Data Roaming', Orit Gat, *frieze*, 30 July 2016, <https://frieze.com/article/data-roaming>

- 16 'According to the government, there are some 600 Joven Clubs, approximately one for every 18,000 Cubans. But the Joven Clubs' online access is restricted to the Cuban "intranet," which accesses only Cuban email addresses, websites and resources. The centers also offer classes in Microsoft Word and Excel, and host visits by domestic bloggers. But the emphasis is solidly on [the] "domestic." When Fidel Castro announced the creation of the centers in 1987, he envisioned them as supports for the domestic pillars of collective society: "The Joven Club of the factory, of the institutions, and the Joven Clubs of the masses, because these are the neighborhood institutions; this is the family doctor, the Cuban family computer.'" — Annie Nelson, 'The View from inside Cuba's not-so-Worldwide Web', *Tech President*, 5 April 2013, <http://techpresident.com/news/wegov/23702/cuba-highly-restricted-internet-access-leaves-population-hungry-more>. See also: Jason Koebler, 'Cuba's Communist Computer Clubs for Children: Photos from Beyond', *Vice Motherboard*, 28 August 2015, https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/78xg8z/the-communist-computer-club-for-kids

a conversation event with my students at Housmans, a left-wing radical bookshop down the road from the university.¹⁷ Sean is generous with his time and ends up talking with us for hours about his intentions for the website, his surprise at how quickly it started working, and how much it relies on those who use it.

Aaarg largely consists of critical theory texts shared by hundreds of users who have started collections, suggested themes, or added to existing selections, by scanning and uploading PDFs of articles in their possession. The website functions as a private library that evolves with new areas of interest added by its members in response to their scholarship, current issues and concerns. Dockray explains to us his irritation with users who simply start uploading everything they have onto the site — such misguided generosity turns it into a pointless archive, a file-sharing dump.¹⁸ Discussing the site we start to apply models of pre-internet printed matter to this post-internet platform: talking about it as a kind of mutating anthology, or a magazine of republished materials, with an editorial-*ship* that is its readership. Understanding it as a magazine or a library seems to acknowledge the creative and caring maintenance work of the users, and of Dockray; the particular knowledge of the community of participant-librarians is crucial to the useful functioning of the site.

Aaarg.org changes its number of 'a's whenever the website address gets too well known.¹⁹ I've read that the name is the acronym of 'Artists, Architects, and Activists Reading Group',²⁰ and notice that Dockray doesn't seem at all interested in an anti-copyright or IP stance — instead

17 'More aaaaaa: Sean Dockray in Conversation', Tuesday 8 December, Housmans Bookshop, London, event organised by Three Letter Words in collaboration with Housmans Bookshop and the 'Publishing/Writing' module, MRes Art: Theory and Philosophy, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, <http://threeletterwords.org/more-as-sean-dockray-in-conversation-housmans-london-tuesday-8-december-10-30-a-m-1-00-p-m/>

18 Dockray does his best to discourage the sharing of whole ebooks; he takes down material immediately if a publisher or writer complains, and emphasises that he wants the site to be used as a place to share material that is hard to find and not otherwise available.

19 'More a's?' was Dockray's response to a question about the future for aaarg from Morgan Currie, 'Small Is Beautiful: A Discussion with AAAARG Architect Sean Dockray', *Masters of Media*, University of Amsterdam, 5 January 2010, <https://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/blog/2010/01/05/small-is-beautiful-a-discussion-with-aaaarg-architect-sean-dockray/>

20 See the description here: <https://monoskop.org/Aaaaarg>

he is utterly focused on what aaarg provides as a collaboratively curated collection of materials, and as a way to think about the potential of pedagogy and collaboration outside expensive institutional frameworks.²¹ I'm performing the same function here; in this text I am advocating for the potential for aaarg to be tolerated and understood as a small library.

If you are employed as an academic, or you are a student, you can easily access university libraries and catalogues of digitised scholarly articles. However for those who have finished their formal education it is difficult to access any of this kind of material, or to find ways to connect and collaborate. For these people aaarg isn't about free access to something that might have fallen behind a paywall on JSTOR, but is rather a place to discuss ideas, to find people with the same or similar speciality interests. I've found aaarg to be particularly useful when people share items that are now out-of-print and would otherwise be completely unavailable. Visiting lecturers and artists, critics, curators, writers, poets — those in precarious creative work on the edges of academia and those who work outside it — number those who make use aaarg, contributing to it as a forum and discovering idiosyncratic selections of research.

January 2016, London

I'm writing the first version of this text and I email Reynier to ask him about his experience of IP restrictions. He replies more quickly than I expect — as a student at Havana University he has better access to the Internet than most Cubans. As well as his free education he currently receives 150MB data/month for free (an amount that has increased considerably, last year they received just 30MB).²² He and his friends

21 Later with Fiona Whitton, Dockray established the online platform the Public School (2007). A description on its website (currently unavailable but due to be updated with an archive) described the Public School as 'a framework that supports autodidactic activities.' The platform was developed as part of their work as the Telic Arts Exchange (2005–2012). See <http://thepublicschool.org/>

22 'But the most important vehicle for popular participation in the arts is the national system of art education that operates free of charge through primary and secondary schools, specialized art schools and high schools, university-level art education, and the Casa de la Cultura, which is an art institution present in

use Facebook on their smart phones whilst at university because the app is conveniently designed to work well with slower connections.

Reynier explains how the US blockade stops artistic exchange between Cubans and Americans — linking to an article in *Art Law Journal*, which tells the story of an American writer unable to clear copyright for a film adaptation of a popular children's book written by his Cuban friend, because to make a formal contract with the friend amounts to a transaction and is therefore illegal.²³ Reynier summarises the situation:

In the early days of the Revolution the state ignored intellectual property, establishing public libraries across the country and reproducing everything they wanted for them. In the 1990s, this changed and Cuba started to conform to international law regarding copyright.²⁴ Not that this more recent official stance has necessarily meant a strict approach in practice. For example, due to the embargo it is not possible for Cubans to buy US goods, including movies, software, or music legally. The government cannot therefore commercialise these products themselves, so they have allowed the private sector to illegally reproduce the material, tolerating piracy.

I go on to read a couple of articles that claim that both *El Paquete* and the government version, *Mi Mochila*, contain pirated American series

every municipality. The Casa de la Cultura offers free and low-cost art lessons for children and adults and provides space for exhibitions and performances. Cuba has a strong movement of aficionados that promotes and organizes artistic expression from all sectors of population, but especially youth.' Miren Uriarte, 'The Right Priorities: Health, Education and Literacy', in her *CUBA: Social Policy at the Crossroads: Maintaining Priorities, Transforming Practice. An Oxfam America Report*, 2002, <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/cuba-social-policy-at-the-crossroads/>, pp. 6–18 (p. 12).

- 23 Nicole Martinez, 'How Does Relaxing the Cuba Trade Embargo Affect Artists?', *Art Law Journal* (online), 11 May 2015 (the article is no longer available on their website).
- 24 In 1967 Fidel proclaimed the abolition of copyright. In October of the same year, at a preparatory seminar for the Cultural Congress of Havana, artists and writers willingly renounced the commercial rights to their work in return for social recognition and the value inherent in the creative act. Paraphrased from Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, 'The Emancipatory Potential of Culture under Socialism', in her *To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture: The Cultural Policy of the Cuban Revolution* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015), pp. 103–04. Cuba has been a member of the World Trade Organisation since 20 April 1995, https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/cuba_e.htm and acceded to the Berne Convention soon after (with some exceptions in November 1996, http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/notifications/berne/treaty_berne_176.html).

and films, and seem to complain about the visibility of pirated DVDs for sale in Cuba. I start to imagine the badly printed covers of American blockbusters lined up on a wall, and realise I am actually recalling a scene from central London, not Centro Havana.

June 2017, London

I guess I will be back writing this when I know the result. After polling closes on Thursday we are gathering in the 1Love pop-up community centre in Canary Wharf and watching the results together. We need a place we can be all night, with a prayer room for those observing Ramadan, and so this venue will be perfect. We are going to bring the baby and are hoping she sleeps in the pram, amongst other cautious, bigger hopes. We plan to be out all day, knocking on doors in Thurrock, our nearest marginal, doing the work of 'getting the vote out' — leaving reminders and encouraging those who said they would vote for us to actually go and cast it. I didn't know this was what happened on polling day until a few weeks ago, but apparently it's crucial.

I keep fantasising about it. I see us crying in red t-shirts like we are watching the final of a big game. Are we happy or sad? I remember last year, waking at 3am and watching the results of the EU referendum coming through from the light of our phones. The baby asleep, the BBC website, checking in on Facebook to see comments of dismay as the Leave vote got clearer.

It will be strange to be physically with our Tower Hamlets Momentum friends, reacting in the moment. When other important news reports have arrived we've been apart, but sending messages in our WhatsApp group. The 'chat' has got more and more frequent these weeks since the snap election was called. Two hundred or so messages a day: witty responses, declarations of support and love, secret irritations and theories shared. The chat gives a focus, something to engage with when confronted with the helpless inevitability of watching the news unfold, out of your hands but there in your bed. I write a wry comment, Gavin smiles at it sitting across the room from me. I worry that we won't all be as witty in person, but I can't imagine not being there in the flesh, I can't imagine missing it: missing watching it collectively, in solidarity, whatever it is.

May 2015, Havana

Catherine has gathered a group of artists and writers and we've been meeting every few days, in each other's flats, perched with laptops in lounges, sitting at kitchen tables. Today we are discussing what is already available in terms of arts magazines — Reynier has brought along *Upsalón*, which is stapled and monotone, focused on contemporary literature and published by the Faculty of Arts at the University of Havana. As well as university-run publications that cover art criticism there are two official arts magazines: *Artecubano*, which focuses on fine art in a fairly academic art historical way, and *Revolución y Cultura* which is multidisciplinary. Both are perfect-bound with coated covers and colour illustrations, but the design feels dated and they appear drab and heavy. Yanelys Nuñez Leyva describes her frustration that there is no print publication that has regular listings of upcoming shows, or reviews of current exhibitions. She writes on art for the *Havana Times*, an online magazine founded in 2008 that was initially approved by the Cuban Journalists' Association (UPEC) before its permission was withdrawn, apparently because some of its writers were publishing blogs critical of the government (it is now run out of Nicaragua).²⁵

25 *Havana Times* (HT) features both 'journalist and non-journalist writing' in Spanish and English, and was set up in 2008 by Circles Robinson while he was working in Cuba (for 'a Cuban government agency that assisted the Cuban media with translations'). Robinson says it set out to 'distance our publication from the polarized and conservative Cuban government media as well as from the mostly foreign-based anti-Castro media', and describes the funding of the site as 'self-financed', 'an after-work "labor of love" [...] with a little help from my friends', declaring that 'HT has refused to apply for any grants from direct or indirect US government funding sources.' The website was initially supported by the Cuban Journalists' Association (UPEC), but six months later this support was withdrawn: 'The sharp criticism of government policies by several of our bloggers was too much for an organization [UPEC] that is totally dependent economically and ideologically on the government/party line.' Circles Robinson, 'About Us: Havana Times Reaches 8th Birthday', *Havana Times*, 17 October 2016, <https://havanatimes.org/?p=121610>. In an interview with the *Weekly Worker* (The Communist Party of Great Britain's online/print publication) Robinson describes his aim 'to promote a combination of conventional and new-style reporting, as well as commentary that reflects critical support for the Cuban revolution, which is not necessarily synonymous with its leaders.' He also explains that he is a US citizen and had been living in Nicaragua before he came to work in Cuba, having returned there with his family after his contract working for the Cuban government came to an end. 'I had a major conflict at work resulting from some of my co-workers and myself openly questioning the unethical conduct of our immediate boss. To get me to support his behaviour he

Llópiz (Julio César Llópiz) is graphic designer and an artist; he shows us some artists' books he's made — digital printed booklets, hand-folded and of limited print run, that are clearly benign from an activist perspective: there's no reason they would be considered publishing in any kind of illegal — counter-revolutionary — way. He then shows us a newsprint project that looks unofficial, but it turns out it isn't — *Noticias Artecubano* — a monthly newspaper edited by the same team as *Artecubano*. He has been running a column for the paper called 'La Fracción por Llópiz' where he invites other artists to make work for the page. Printed cheaply in black and red *Noticias Artecubano* looks like the kind of mass-produced paper you might pick up at a protest — its cheap form immediately suggests wide distribution. I imagine if we were to produce our 'magazine' in a format like this, it would look mass-produced and be likely to raise concerns from the authorities due to its apparent potential reach.

May 2015, Bermuda Triangle

Looking out the airplane window I imagine I am gazing at the edge of the earth: flying into a curve of bright white glinting light. I feel so far away, so physically distant from home, yet my conversations with Catherine — communicating over three thousand miles — have compounded my idealism about the potentials of the internet for enabling ongoing discourse, and my enthusiasm that we might be able to set up ways of working between Havana and London. The hope is that editors in both localities could feed in remotely, creating a platform for Cuban artists in the UK and vice versa, that would be sustainable on a small scale without the need for massive travel grants.

Yesterday I met with Louisa Bailey and got her go-ahead (in theory) to publish the Havana-London magazine with her branch

threatened to make a case against me using *Havana Times* and the fact that I had started it "without permission", though this was done in my free time. In the end, they simply refused to renew my yearly work contract. While no reason was given, I never felt that *HT* was the main issue in this. Since my residency in Cuba was dependent on the job, I was given a month's notice to leave the country. My family is from Nicaragua and I had lived there for many years before coming to Cuba, so we decided to return there.' Circles Robinson in Zurowski, 'More Glasnost, Less Perestroika'.

of Publication Studio, which she launched in London in February. She's been flat out since then, printing, cutting, gluing and packing copies of her first publication, and all UK orders for books made by similarly tiny 'studios' across the globe.²⁶ Publication Studio (PS) is an interesting model for small-scale publishing — each of its 'nonfranchise franchise'²⁷ of thirteen studios internationally (from Sao Paulo to Malmö) works locally with artists and writers to produce books which are then printed on demand using the same affordable machinery — perfect binder, guillotine and digital printer — that each studio owns (or borrows).²⁸ As with all print-on-demand models this means that by printing and binding books 'one-at-a-time, by hand and on request' they avoid the upfront costs and potential waste of bulk printing.²⁹ But the interesting thing about Publication Studio is the way its network works across territories — because each studio follows similar design formats, shares files online and uses similar equipment, it means publications commissioned and edited by one studio can be easily produced and sold by a studio on the other side of the world. So, if you lived in Malmö, you could order a copy of our magazine from the studio there, and have a copy quickly and easily made — no need for shipping from Havana or London.

The description, 'nonfranchise franchise' pithily acknowledges that new studios benefit from the brand and ability to print and sell a whole back catalogue of PS titles, but it also indicates that PS avoids the homogenisation normally associated with franchises by also being a site for production — creating an international network of local editors, writers, artists... and publics. It's a two-way thing — new studios bring new readerships to existing publications, and PS provides an existing context and readership for new ones. Publication Studio is often described as a really great model for sustainable, small-scale publishing practice,

26 Publication Studio Glasgow was launched in November 2016.

27 'Nonfranchise franchise' was Bridget Kinsella's way of describing Publication Studio in an article for *Publishers Weekly*. Bridget Kinsella, 'Publication Studio: A Nonfranchise Franchise', *Publishers Weekly*, 23 May 2011, <http://publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/47387-publication-studio-a-nonfranchise-franchise.html>

28 There were thirteen studios during the editing process of this text. For an up-to-date list of Publication Studios visit <https://publicationstudio.biz/about/>

29 Louisa Bailey, 'Sustainable Publishing', in *Plastic Words* (London: Publication Studio, 2015), p. 63.

and the sustainability might be true in environmental terms — there is little wasted paper — every book printed has been ordered, and there is no need to fly books across the globe. However, although ‘the retail price of the book covers the cost of materials and labour and a small profit that is split between the studio and the author(s)’, its economic viability is flawed: it relies on free labour and risking time on fundraising attempts.³⁰ The small profit is negligible and Louisa, who works two other jobs to pay her London rent, spends the ‘spare’ time she doesn’t spend making the books on applying for grants.

May 2015, Havana

We are at ‘Sometimes Art Space’, the living room of Solveig Font, in Vedado where she and her partner Llopiz (Julio César Llopiz) intermittently organise art exhibitions, inviting an extended network of friends and colleagues. The space is not official but also not illegal — it’s listed as part of the biennial satellite programme. Our conversation is again circling around how the magazine might be tolerated. We talk about the term *permissive / permisivo*, its vernacular association with tolerance of sexuality, and in relation to the testing of other freedoms — the careful dance around what is allowed and what is pushing too far — and despite our reluctance to give her any more airtime we find ourselves talking again about Tania Bruguera.

Solveig describes the meeting between Raul and Obama as an important delicate moment — most Cubans have family in America; fragile international policy is not an abstraction. However she does have some sympathy with the first iteration of *El Susurro de Tatlin* #6 (*Tatlin’s Whisper* #6) for the way it negotiated the system, and used the art context to create a ‘state of exception.’³¹ *El Susurro de Tatlin* #6 was part of a

30 Bailey, ‘Sustainable Publishing’, p. 63.

31 ‘Estado de Excepción’ (‘State of Exception’) was the title of a series of group exhibitions curated by Tania Bruguera and Marilyn Machado as part of the Havana Biennial 2009, and to commemorate the end of her project *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (*Behaviour Art School*, 2002–2009).

On *El Susurro de Tatlin* #6 (2009), Coco Fusco, in a letter she wrote in response to the article by Claire Bishop, ‘Tania Bruguera at the 10th Havana Biennial’, *Artforum*, Summer 2009, noted that ‘An important question about the usefulness of the piece is whether this performative spectacle effectively diverted attention away from ongoing activism on behalf of civil rights in Cuba, focusing the Western gaze

number of exhibitions and events that took place at the 2009 biennial to commemorate the end of Bruguera's project *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (*Behaviour Art School*, 2002–2009), and we discuss how she refused to let this art school become official, a situation Solveig finds questionable: why not test its potential?³²

Reynier is the most critical of the artist: if the work was an intentional provocation, the duration of the performance 'expanded' by the responses it received from the Cuban police and the international press, then the provocation encompasses the way an American press utilised her critique for their ends, any delay to the end of the embargo, and the negative impact on the freedoms that Cuban artists have and the steps being made towards enlarging these.³³ Bruguera has suggested

instead on the theatrical props that frame official Revolutionary discourse and the emotive charge that those props impart.' See 'Public Address', *Artforum*, October 2009, pp. 38–40, <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/260-0-Public+Address.htm>

- 32 Contrary to my understanding presented here of what happened, Claire Bishop has said that *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* closed due to government pressure: 'In a similar fashion, her art school, the Catedra Arte de Conducta, proceeded on the premise that more can be achieved by negotiating with the Instituto Superior de Arte, which enabled international teachers to be invited legally to Cuba, than by remaining militantly outside it. (When the state cannot recognize Arte de Conducta as desirable and expedient, Bruguera closed it down.)' 'Public Address', 'Claire Bishop responds', in *ibid*.

Although we are talking about a magazine, we don't discuss Bruguera's first 'alternative institution', the newspaper *Memoria de la Postguerra* (*Postwar Memory*, 1993–1994), perhaps because we are specifically talking about a magazine as exhibition space, not as a vehicle for news or activism. *Memoria* has been called 'positive institutional critique' and Bruguera has noted that, as with the *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (*Behavior Art School*, 2002–2009, <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/492-0-Ctedra+Arte+de+Conducta+Behavior+Art+School.htm>), she was creating an 'alternative institution' — challenging the government-controlled press, and the official national newspaper (*Granma*), by producing her own. W. J. T. Mitchell, 'How to Make Art with a Jackhammer: A Conversation with Tania Bruguera', *Afterall* 42, Autumn/Winter 2016, p. 55, <https://doi.org/10.1086/689803>

The first issue of *Memoria* featured a list of 'Internacionales' — artists who had left Cuba — printed like a list of war dead, and her website describes the paper as for 'debate of non-authorized topics, criticism generally silenced by the state.' The paper seems to have been as much about a Cuban-American voice, as a Cuban one, and was eventually censored. See <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/564-0-Postwar+Memory+II.htm>

- 33 In this phrasing I have adapted 'duration is expanded' from a description by Daniel R. Quiles. 'The work's duration was followed — and effectively expanded — by the appearance of state power, effectively transforming the privileged moment (the "you had to be there" school of performance) into a narrative of provocation or resistance whose importance supersedes that of the original.' D. R. Quiles, 'The Vicissitudes of Conduct,' *Third Text*, September 2016, <http://thirdtext.org/vicissitudes-of-conduct>

she works alone to stop other artists getting into trouble,³⁴ but Reynier suggests that her lone authorship, far from being sacrificial, only serves herself, pointing out that *Tatlin's Whisper #6* (2009) was bought by the Guggenheim — the emphasis upon the name of the American millionaire dynasty.

Back home I check and confirm: *Tatlin's Whisper #6 (Havana Version)* was purchased via the UBS MAP Purchase Fund and it acceded to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum collection in November 2014, a month before Bruguera's attempted restaging.³⁵ Further searching shows me that Bruguera's place in American academia was pretty much secured on her return to the US — she received a Yale Greenberg Fellowship, a six-month residency at the university starting in August 2015.³⁶ According to Wikipedia, Maurice Raymond 'Hank' Greenberg is a Republican and an American business executive, former chairman and CEO of American International Group (AIG), which was the world's eighteenth largest public company and the largest insurance and financial services corporation in history.

April 2015, London

'Please join us at 10am, Rolls Building, Royal Courts of Justice, London.' We send an email to all our subscribers calling for support for the students who have been taken to court by University of the Arts London. Since March around 80 graduate students (who I figure will each be paying around £9,000 a year in fees) have been sleeping in the reception area of Central Saint Martins to oppose the cuts to foundation degree courses across UAL.

Foundation courses are one of the last free courses the university runs, and help bring more diverse groups into the arts, but it seems that, with ongoing government cuts to further and higher education, they have stopped being cost-effective for the university.

34 Tania comments that the experience of collectively making the newspaper *Memoria de la Postguerra* and inadvertently getting others into trouble had caused her to want to work alone and in performance, although she later 'regretted having answered to political pressure in such a way, using my own body instead of pursuing the social body'. Mitchell, 'How to Make Art with a Jackhammer', p. 53.

35 See Guggenheim collection online: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/33083>.

36 The title of the work is listed in English (without any Spanish version) on the Guggenheim website. See <https://worldfellows.yale.edu/tania-bruguera>

Having failed to shift the students from their occupation, UAL has decided to get them out by cherry-picking a few students, some of them student union reps, and taking them individually to court over costs.

January 2016, London

I tweet, post and share a crowdfunder for the legal defence of ‘Sean Dockray (the initiator of the online library aaarg.org) and Marcell Mars (who registered the latest domain, aaaaarg.fail).’³⁷ The fundraiser reaches \$10,000 over its initial \$5,000 goal in a matter of days, but they are being sued for \$500,000 by a publisher in Quebec, and the site explains they have no idea what the eventual legal costs will be.

I don’t know how their lawyers are running the case, but perhaps they will argue, as Dockray has in the past, that digital property — ebook ownership — contradicts the First Sale Doctrine, which was established in America in 1908 and gave the owner the right the sell, lease or rent their copy of a book — making it possible that second-hand bookshops and public libraries could be legal.³⁸

Dockray has also written eloquently about the care behind the act of scanning, and the feeling of intimacy when reading someone’s scanned PDF, seeing the marks of previous readings, pencilled notes and spillages. The use of scans on the site also indicates that the papers are from printed books in people’s possession — property they have the right to share with those they choose. Perhaps by emphasising that this is *someone’s* book, dwelling on a smudged fingerprinted scan serves to indicate that [aaarg](http://aaarg.org) is not a place designed for illegal file-sharing but rather a semi-private digital library.³⁹

The current network of thousands of [aaarg](http://aaarg.org) users grew from just one email Dockray sent to a list of friends, collaborators and colleagues, inviting them to share and make use of what he had built.⁴⁰ It feels depressingly

³⁷ See <https://uk.gofundme.com/aaaaarg>

³⁸ Ebooks actually only provide a license for use and access and this contradicts the First Sale Doctrine. See Sean Dockray, ‘Interface, Access, Loss’, in Marysia Lewandowska and Laurel Ptak (eds.), *Undoing Property?* (Stockholm and Berlin: Sternberg Press & Tensta konsthall, 2013), p. 189.

³⁹ When [aaarg](http://aaarg.org) first started it only contained scanned documents because the PDF files of the time were too big to share in this way (it now also holds PDFs).

⁴⁰ The site is semi private: in order to access aaarg.org you need to be invited or to be told the website address (which migrates, changing its number of ‘a’s to avoid legal

apt that Dockray might be saved by an online crowdfunder — one of an industry of businesses that position themselves as benevolent community-builders in order to collect their cut, and that first emerged around the same time Dockray was coding away, making his ‘scaffold’. ‘Scaffold’ is Dockray’s word for what *aaarg.org* is, which I understand to mean that it is not the architecture — it is not part of the academic institution — but it is attached to it and supports it.

January 2015, London

Mute, a magazine that lost its regular Arts Council funding in 2012 and yet somehow continues intermittently posting well-researched writing online, publishes an article by Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, which takes further Coco Fusco’s criticism of Tania Bruguera and *#YoTambienExijo* by elaborating upon the ‘blatant hypocrisy’ employed when Cuba is discussed in Anglophone press. ‘It is no surprise that freedom of expression is the first resort of those seeking to discredit alternatives to capitalism.’ Gordon Nesbitt suggests that ‘in commissioning Fusco’, ‘a full-time faculty member at Parsons The New School for Design’, ‘the editors of *e-flux* exposed the prejudices of their location’. She quotes Howard S. Becker, on ‘hierarchies of credibility,’ and describes how tenured academics, ‘with the most power and access to information’ are assumed to be neutral, yet of course take sides to help ‘maintain the existing order.’⁴¹

September 2015, London

I am talking at the symposium that instigated this anthology, organised by Goldsmiths and funded by the ‘Centre for Copyright and New Business Models in the Creative Economy’.⁴² I’m expected to discuss

threats). There is an ‘invite’ button on the site that warns: ‘Any registered user can invite anyone else, but please don’t invite the wrong people.’

41 Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, ‘Whose Side Are You On?: A Response to Coco Fusco’, *Mute*, 29 January 2015, <http://www.metamute.org/community/your-posts/whose-side-are-you-response-to-coco-fusco/-state-detention-performance-politics-and-cuban-public-e-flux-3>

42 ‘Friction and Fiction: IP, Copyright and Digital Futures’, Goldsmiths University symposium, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 26 September 2015.

ideas for a copyright system that is 'not based on normativity and national copyrights.'⁴³ It seems like a good opportunity to promote *Sonrisa* (*Smile*), our magazine project, but I'm four months pregnant and acutely aware of how unlikely it is that the magazine will ever actually happen, now I'm having a baby.⁴⁴ I end up talking about the unsustainability of my work in London running independent print projects, and, in response to the comments that Cuba has no free press, I talk about the problematics of American descriptions of artists' books as a 'democratic' form:

Since the 1970s a largely US-based discourse on art publishing has defined 'artists' books' (over more rarefied book arts) by their gesture towards seeking a mass audience — their presentation as "cheaply produced democratic multiples."⁴⁵ These books are celebrated for their potential — entirely unrealised — to be a cheap way to get art to the masses.⁴⁶ This well-meaning, inclusive, ethos, is oppositional in many

43 'If we were starting from scratch, we might devise a copyright system which is global and diverse rather than based on territoriality, normativity and national copyrights.' — Description for the panel 'A View from Elsewhere' (Chair: Casey Brienza), 'Friction and Fiction: IP, Copyright and Digital Futures', *ibid.*, <https://www.gold.ac.uk/calendar/?id=8946>

44 *Sonrisa* refers to Stewart Home's declaration that anyone could make an issue of *SMILE*, the magazine he founded in 1984. The resulting magazines, produced by numerous editors yet understood as part of a series, represent a refusal of homogenised branding and editorial authorship, and a desire for collective cumulative magazine-making. 'Countless issues have been produced by others, making it impossible to know how many issues have actually been published.' Gwen Allen, 'A compendium of Artists' Magazines from 1945 to 1989', *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), p. 297.

45 Writing in 1995, US-based art historian Johanna Drucker described how 'the idea of the book as democratic multiple' (p. 69) had become 'a definitive paradigm for artists' books' (p. 72), suggesting that the availability of inexpensive printing technologies post-1945 'combined with major changes in the mainstream art world of the late 1950s and early 1960s' (p. 69) to define the artists' book as something mass produced and un-editioned (p. 69).

This dream was encapsulated in Lucy Lippard's much repeated comment of 1974: 'One day I'd like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores, and airports and not incidentally, to see artists able to profit economically from broad communication rather than the lack of it' (p. 80), and evidenced by the buying strategies of bookshops and library acquisition policies — the stipulations that emerged in the early 1970s that publications must be in editions over 100 to qualify as an 'artists' book' (p. 81). J. Drucker, in 'The Artist's Book as Democratic Multiple', in *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 1995), pp. 69–91.

46 Something accepted by Lippard: 'Yet even then, I think we knew accessibility was pie in the sky. Very little contemporary art is truly accessible [...]. The fact remains that while the democratic impulse has engendered many artists' books, distribution has foiled most of us.' L. Lippard, 'Double Spread', in Maria Fusco and Ian Hunt

ways to the overwhelmingly market-led, patron focused and elite, state of the UK and US 'art world'-cum-market. However I can't help but feel cynical about a discourse on publishing that leaves us with the production of limited edition art works as enfranchisement (however 'affordable'). A celebration of Fordism as democracy — bravo Ed Ruscha — genius self-promoting entrepreneur!⁴⁷

May 2015, Havana

There is an opening tonight and the bar at La Fábrica de Arte Cubano (FAC) is heaving. The FAC is an ex-factory building in the outer edges of Vedado and contains film screening rooms, concessions selling silk-screened t-shirts, vast dance and music spaces, and quieter exhibition areas where paintings are displayed on temporary partition walls. FAC describes itself as a 'space'. In Havana a 'gallery' is always run by the government, whereas 'space' and 'independent' always indicate something unofficial by various degrees — side-projects by artists, like Solveig and Llopiz's 'Sometimes Art Space' and larger tourist businesses like this one. The centre feels a bit like the ICA in London with its similarly multidisciplinary program: cinema, performances, exhibitions, and café bar. It's certainly got a very different feeling to the quiet

(eds.), *Put About: A Critical Anthology on Independent Publishing* (London: Book Works, 2004), pp. 86–87.

Drucker also points to 'some paradoxes' with the use of the term 'democracy' — questioning the idea that democracy resides in a publication's affordability rather than the accessibility of its content, and pointing out the 'terrific confusion' 'between the idea of what is affordable for an artist to make and what is affordable to buy' (bulk production requiring capital up front). Drucker, 'The Artist's Book as Democratic Multiple', p. 72.

- 47 This is a reference to the US canon, which positions the first artists' book as Ed Ruscha's *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* (1962). *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* features a series of black and white photographs of 'exactly that' (J. Drucker, 'The Artist's Book', p. 76) and has become a 'cliché in critical works trying to establish a history of artists' books', a kind of 'founding father' tendency, which overlooks the 'numerous mini-genealogies' in the field. (Drucker, 'The Artist's Book as Idea and Form', p. 11). The claims of a democracy in the mass-produced artists' book form, and Ruscha's later statement 'I want to be the Henry Ford of book making', chime with the content of *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* (the gas station — the journey along Route 66 — the car, albeit unseen). See 'I want to be the Henry Ford of book making', *National Observer*, 28 July 1969, referenced by Gagosian in the press release for their gallery exhibition 'Ed Ruscha: Books & Co', Gagosian, Madison Avenue, New York, March–April 2013, https://gagosian.com/media/exhibitions/2013/ed-ruscha-books-co/Gagosian_Ed_Ruscha_Books_Co_2013_Press_Release.pdf

government-run Wifredo Lam over in old Havana. The closest parallel to the Wifredo Lam in the UK (in funding terms) would have to be the Tate Britain — Tate is an executive non-departmental public body, directly funded by and accountable to the state (the Department for Culture, Media and Sport).⁴⁸ However the DCMS is only one of Tate's many sponsors; it receives funding from a mass of other enterprises and subsidiaries, including BP, and its various patron schemes — Young, Silver, Gold and Platinum — each provide different levels of access.

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara (Luis Manuel) arrives. Catherine describes him best: 'dressed up as a female dancer from the famous Havana-based cabaret Tropicana — fuchsia frou-frou, fishnet stockings, and gold heels way too small [...]'.⁴⁹ He is here as part of his performance *Miss Bienal* (2015) for which he has been to every single opening and art event over the course of the biennial month, greeting visitors, handing out business cards, and posing for selfies, accompanied always by Yanelys, who has been helping him with makeup, staging photos, and moral support. The commissioned performance is a result of Catherine's mentoring programme with Luis Manuel, a setup that was potentially problematic for them both because Luis Manuel is not an 'official' artist. He was not educated as an artist (he was originally a professional athlete), so he cannot

48 I double-check this on the Tate website and I am amused to see the image used on the page describing their governance is a photograph of Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, 2008 © Tania Bruguera. The performance involved two uniformed mounted policemen on horseback herding visitors within the Turbine Hall, and provides a British representation of the mechanisms of state power, just as menacing as the image of the dove and podium, flanked by a male and female uniformed guard, used on the Guggenheim website for *Tatlin's Whisper #6 (Havana version)*, 2009. I enjoy the coincidence and wonder if this was posted with a sense of irony. 'Tate is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and an exempt charity defined by Schedule 3 to the Charities Act 2011. It is exempt from registration with, and oversight by, the Charity Commission and is regulated by DCMS in accordance with a management agreement agreed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for charity law purposes.' <http://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/governance>

When I was at FAC the department was called the 'Department for Culture, Media and Sport'; it added 'Digital' on 3 July 2017. BP announced plans to end its twenty-six-year sponsorship of Tate in March 2016.

49 Catherine Sicot, 'Miss Bienal Inaugurates La Primavera del Amor: Genesis of a Platform for Research and Intercultural Artistic Production in Cuba', June 2014–2015', *Public* 26.52 (2015), 58–67 (p. 63), https://doi.org/10.1386/public.26.52.59_1

be a member of the artists' union and participate in exhibitions in government-run galleries, and he cannot travel abroad as easily as official artists.⁵⁰

Luis Manuel's business card looks pretty official though, it reads 'Welcome to the 12th Havana Bial' and features — like a funding credit — the official logo of the very official biennial, appropriating the brand and placing it without permission alongside the 'La Primavera del Amor' one. Luis Manuel hands it out, accepts photographs, and then moves on evading any further interaction.⁵¹

Leaving the FAC we walk past the entrance to *El Cocinero* — a bar and restaurant with views across the city from the top of an old smoke stack. It is owned by the same person who owns FAC. A bouncer in a suit is officious over the wait list, barring the downstairs entrance.

June 2015, London

I'm scrolling down, catching up with what has happened since I've been away and I see that a number of friends have shared an article by an online magazine based in Brooklyn, lamenting the second arrest of Tania Bruguera. This is the first I have heard of it, despite being in Havana at the time.

50 'The state doesn't recognize me as an artist because I didn't go to art school. [...] Cuba is a paternalist country that generates a political, economic, and social structure for those who follow its educational path. You graduate from a school and they give you a card that identifies you as an artist, and gives you benefits according to that. Artists in Cuba are privileged: they belong to a different social class; they can travel abroad easily.' Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, 'Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara photo-documentary', *Wondereur* [online sales platform], Toronto, undated (ca.2015), <https://www.wondereur.com/artists/luis-manuel-otero-alcantara>

51 Catherine writes that the Tropicana cabaret was stigmatised but not banned by the Revolution, so it was ready to be re-exploited in 1990s with the opening up of tourism on the island. She describes Luis Manuel's performance as 'passive and passive-aggressive' in the experience of Western audiences: it frustrates, because it 'generates expectations but nothing "else" ever happens.' She points out that it can be read as an implementation of 'typical capitalist (*yuma* [foreigner]) strategies: networking, marketing, advertising, branding and especially self-promotion' and she notes that 'homophobia still widely dominates in Cuba. All the pictures of Miss Bial posing in the company of visitors and circulated on Facebook actually give a rather false measure of the reception of the work.' Luis Manuel 'felt a lot of rejection, especially from Cubans who avoided eye contact, laughed to hide their discomfort'. Was this performance a joke on the realities of Cuban progressiveness? Was it a satire of the exploitation of the Cuban 'outsider artist' by the art tourists and industry? See Sicot, 'Miss Bial Inaugurates La Primavera del Amor'.

Hyperallergic tells me that Bruguera was taken into custody for a few hours, after attempting a 100-hour long reading of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in her home.⁵² A picture shows her smiling outside her home earlier in May, alongside two men the caption describes as 'Guggenheim curator Pablo Leon Dela Barra, and Cuban-American curator Gean Moreno'. The image is taken from Leon Dela Barra's Facebook page and he is making a 'V' with his fingers. More posts from other friends and colleagues — re-performances of *Tatlin's Whisper #6* in Creative Time, New York, the Hammer, LA, and Tate Britain, described as acts of solidarity.

April 2015, London

The protest is busy and the art students have of course made very good banners. Sofia Landström, a student we have taught and one of those who has been unfairly singled out, is dressed smarter than I've seen her, ready for court; she speaks passionately to the crowd.

Suddenly Caroline gathers us into a group and tells us we are *not there as Afterall but as individuals*.

May 2015, Havana

Catherine is confused and upset. FAC have suddenly, no warning, pulled our participation from its program. The owner is angry that Luis Manuel attended the opening night, and so we can't run the further planned screenings for 'La Primavera del Amor' in his space. He states it is nothing to do with homophobia but is about the performance happening without his permission.

May 2015, Havana

We are in Catherine's flat discussing distribution, and Reynier suggests we focus the Cuban distribution on a free ebook version of the magazine, like *VISTAR*, which describes itself as 'Cuba's first music magazine' and

52 Ari Akkermans, 'Artist Tania Bruguera Temporarily Detained During the Havana Biennial', *Hyperallergic*, 25 May 2015, <https://hyperallergic.com/209591/artist-tania-bruguera-temporarily-detained-during-the-havana-biennial/>

is distributed purely through *El Paquete*. Clicking its pages I'm surprised to see a Havana address and advert for what looks like an iPhone — has Apple arrived on the island already? On closer inspection it is for a tech repair shop.

I've seen various dog-eared copies of Condé Nast publications, things like American *Vogue*, knocking around some cafes and ask 'Are there any more gossip-like mags?'

Luis Manuel replies sharply: 'we don't have *People*'.

'I know *that*.'

The economics that influence the form and content of mass-market print magazines obviously wouldn't work in Cuba. Glossies are normally largely funded by advertising — daydream fodder: they rely on disposable incomes and luxury markets. Magazines like these celebrate decadence — their focus on the new and upcoming means they are quickly out-of-date, expensive throwaways. In London the textures of art magazines seem to have diversified since *Frieze* became better known as an art fair: think of *CURA*, *Mousse*, *Kaleidoscope*, the Italian magazines that probably aren't that cheaply produced but yet seem to gesture towards the low-fi and counter cultural — perfect bound with matt finishes.⁵³ The art market needs to be news, it invests in this constant commentary, and this increase in art publishing might mean more voices, and levels of irreverence, but I'm not sure what this paper-thin trickle-down offers in terms of criticality. Sometimes it's entertaining, sometimes it just feels like drowning in a heavy bulk of marketing material.

Maybe the idea of setting up a 'magazine' was always fundamentally insensitive, especially when I was arriving so empty-handed — without a funding plan. *VISTAR* is funded by advertising; it operates from the Dominican Republic, has only ever been digital, and after Cuba its widest readership — its greatest number of hits — comes from Miami.⁵⁴ I'm

53 The first *Frieze* Art Fair took place in Regents Park, London, in 2003. *CURA* was founded in Rome (2009), *Mousse* was founded in Milan (2006), as was *Kaleidoscope* (2009), which was originally free.

54 Judy Cantor-Navas, 'Cuba's First Music Magazine *Vistar* Speaks to a New Generation: Interview with Robin Pedraja', *Billboard.com*, 5 November 2015, <http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/latin/6753751/cuba-music-magazine-vistar-new-generation>. There is a glossy magazine called *ART OnCuba* published in Spanish and English, but this is a Miami-based publication. It started in 2013 and describes itself as the 'first Cuba-focused monthly and quarterly bilingual magazine publication with national distribution in the U.S.' It is owned by Fuego Enterprises, Inc., Miami, a 'diversified holdings company focused on business opportunities in Cuba and the

nervous about seeming to parachute in content in a similar way. I don't want to help produce another example of the neo-liberalism creeping into the island. My interest in Cuba was inspired by an nostalgic idea of different models for working together that I might find here, but — 'We don't have *People*' — Luis Manuel's irritation with me somehow seems to nail the problem with that — different perspectives and desires, completely different feelings about the proximity and distance of US culture and hegemony.

Reading back over this text I cut most of my other descriptions of Reynier and Luis Manuel. Dear London-London diary, how am I to avoid flattening my friends, making them into example of a Cuban millennial demographic? Talking about her experience with exchange projects Catherine warns 'We are always in danger of cultural colonialism'.

June 2017, London

No sign of the US trade embargo against Cuba being lifted. I receive an email from *Cuba Counterpoints* announcing their 'Open Letter to Donald Trump'. Trump is due to announce his US-Cuba policy agenda in Miami on Friday. The letter demands that he does not reverse the course set by the Obama administration and limit travel to Cuba as well as educational and scholarly exchanges.

May 2017, Melbourne

Sean Dockray comments on Facebook: 'Working on my defence is like the biggest, most consuming grant application ever'.

In some ways it feels wrong to end with this quip, a moment of semi-private speech, a wry comment to friends and colleagues with whom Sean shares the experience of arts funding bureaucracies. I'm conscious that there is little humour in the difficult situation he is now confronted with, day in day out, as he attempts to negotiate this ongoing legal battle. Yet it seems the best way to end: the situation still evolving and the act of sharing the post suggesting some remaining hopes for the potential of online connections and international solidarity.

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