

# Library Underground

- **a**
- **reading**
- **list**
- **for**
- **a**
- **coming**
- **community**

- In capitalism, institutionalized libraries, publishers and book traders all have ways to suppress the publishing of, the access to or the distribution of texts and books—rigidities inviting for creative subversion.

*Eva Weinmayr*

## I

## Ed Ruscha's Letter • An Alternative Information Service • There is No Such Thing as Neutral Knowledge.

INNER VOICE: Why start with Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*?

EVA: Simply, because he is *the* pioneer of artists' books and because he gives interesting insights on the topic in a letter we have in The Piracy Collection in London.<sup>1</sup> In it, he writes that it was "a terrible mistake" to number the first edition of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. He saw, that numbering the individual copies creates a "limited edition" rather than "just another book." He wanted his books to circulate freely. So it seemed quite counterproductive to turn the book into a collectible. Numbering creates a scarcity that hikes up the value. He actually was right: a copy of the first (numbered) edition of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* sells today on AbeBooks for 17,432 £ [fig. 1]. It has become an object of desire for private collectors and big art institutions likewise.

INNER VOICE: Remind me, what was Ruscha's initial print run?

EVA WEINMAYR: He numbered and signed the first run of 400 in 1963. This had been followed up by a second edition of 500 in 1967. In 1969, he printed a third edition of 3,000. A huge print run for an artist-booklet. In my view it can be seen as the attempt to flood the market in order to undermine the trading of the books as expensive collectibles.

INNER VOICE: But what's wrong with that? Why can't books primarily be a collector's spoil and reading matter only as a secondary function?

EVA WEINMAYR: Books need to circulate to have an impact by being read. That is why books came about in the first place. Owning a book is fine but it still needs to be accessible. It's quite interesting that, roughly at the same time in the 1960s, a few hundred miles north of Los Angeles another publishing project took off. Stewart Brand, Lois Jennings, and a group of friends kicked around ideas to finally set up a serial publication in 1968: the *Whole Earth Catalog*—an alternative information service and distribution system [fig. 2].

INNER VOICE: I guess it was more about providing information to friends, who like themselves, attempted to live in communes. It was more a newsletter than a real book.

EVA WEINMAYR: The decisive point is that its publication gave it freedom to circulate. It was published twice a year—with more frequent updates in the form of supplements. The *Whole Earth Catalog* collated reviews of self-published counterculture literature, manuals, information about new tools,

<sup>1</sup> Letter to co-founder of *Village Voice* John Wilcock, February 25, 1966.

building and land use designs, as well as general philosophical texts. It provided practical “News to Use” for everybody in the community and source ideas for potential community building. Imagine the perversity, had such a rich tool been put into the cupboard of a solvent collector. David Senior, bibliographer at the MoMA Library, wrote a fantastic text about it in *Fragments from Access to Tools: Publications from the Whole Earth Catalog 1968–1974* [fig. 3].

INNER VOICE: If I am correctly informed, it also listed and reviewed a wide range of products such as books, manuals, tools, machines, but did not sell any of the products directly. Instead, the vendor’s contact information was listed alongside the item and its review. In that it was decidedly anti-commercial.

EVA WEINMAYR: No doubt. And in a way it resembled an alternative library project—a kind of “reading list for a coming community,”<sup>2</sup> as Senior put it. And as such the *Whole Earth Catalog* was not just informing about tools, it was a tool in itself, a publishing concept and a community-in-print. It was also a kind of educational service. Before they started the magazine, Stewart and his wife Lois embarked on a commune road trip with a truck touring the country and doing educational fairs. The *Whole Earth Truck Store* was not only “a store, but also an alternative lending library and a mobile micro-education fair.”<sup>3</sup>

INNER VOICE: Interestingly, David Senior describes the catalog project as a precursor of today’s online communities as the publication talked directly to its readership, asked its readers questions and completed the feedback loop by publishing reader letters, reviews and announcements.

EVA WEINMAYR: Yes, and that’s why the catalog became very popular and kept growing. In the years 1968 to 1975, more than 2.5 million copies were sold. It was a living organism, alive and kicking, rather than something dead put on a plinth for worship. They were widely distributed through informal channels like mail order, alternative bookshops, and in community libraries.

INNER VOICE: Libraries were an important reference point at the time, as it seems.

EVA WEINMAYR: Indeed, one of the many ads in the *Whole Earth Catalog* announced the 158-page library press publication *Revolting Librarians* [fig. 4] which campaigned for the inclusion of neglected topics in their library information service. Materials produced by independent and small-scale publishers had up to then not been reviewed in the library press, therefore not acquired for the libraries. Subsequently, they were not accessible for the readers, who had to do with the fairly limited range of publications by commercial publishing houses. Those, of course, would pick up alternative topics only when profit could be sensed.

2 David Senior, *Fragments from Access to Tools: Publications from the Whole Earth Catalog 1968–1974* (Portland, Oregon: Publication Studio, 2013), 2–3.

3 Andrew Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 48.

QUESTION: Do you know Celeste West?

EVA WEINMAYR: Yes, she is brilliant! She actually co-edited the *Revolting Librarians* book. She was a feminist librarian and, in 1967, the founding editor of *Synergy Magazine*, an alternative library newsletter. She campaigned for librarians to become pivotal to enforce the Library Bill of Rights issued by the American Library Association in the 1930s (see Appendix).

INNER VOICE: Free and neutral provision and access to knowledge for everybody is the famous creed of that bill.

EVA WEINMAYR: Neutral? I don't think there is such a thing as neutrality when it comes to knowledge! Librarian activists such as *Synergy Magazine* demanded to address and recognize the political context of the work of librarians.

They looked at the nature of library catalogs, indexes and search tools because they believed that "these tools were mostly 'rear-view mirrors' that provided little or no bibliographic access to the actual information needs." From April 1968 on, a feature section was included in an attempt "to concentrate on subjects of current interest or on popular subjects for which we feel there is a lack of available information."<sup>4</sup> These were subjects such as Women's Liberation, Gay Liberation, Dope, Native Americans, Ecology, Changing the Family Structure, Independent Publishing and the Underground Press.<sup>5</sup>

INNER VOICE: (Holding up a back cover of *Synergy Magazine*)  
This list of subjects here gives an instructive overview  
of topics important to them [fig. 5].

EVA WEINMAYR: New cataloging and new subjects were just one thing. Celeste West's aim was also to fundamentally shift the concept of the library from "conserving and organizing information to generating or promoting" it.<sup>6</sup> She initiated an alternative library culture that was less preoccupied with archiving of cultural records then more with activating them.

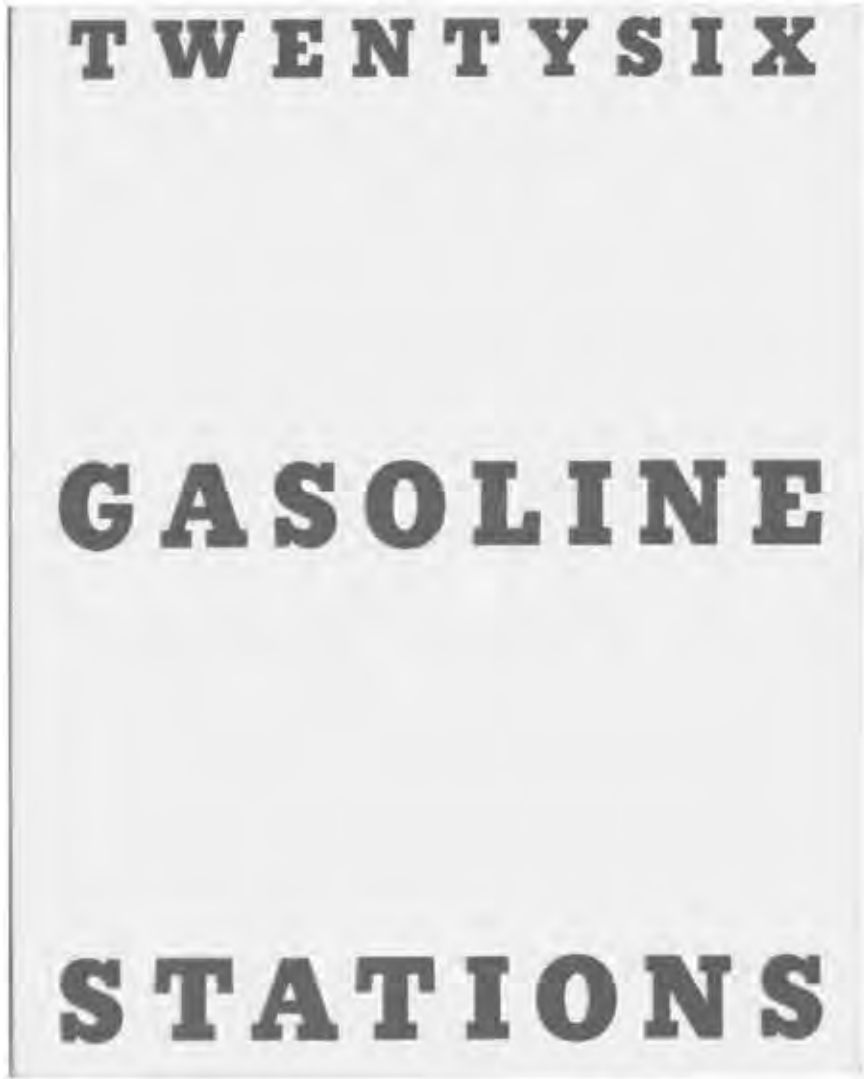
INNER VOICE: It sounds as if you also came across Anna-Sophie Springer's book *Fantasies of the Library*?

EVA WEINMAYR: Andrea Francke just sent me a copy [fig. 6]. It basically builds on Celeste West. The book looks at libraries from a curatorial perspective. It says that the library's primary function privileges active use over passive display and presentation, whereas museums and archives normally store objects and information only after the time of their utility has expired. So the library is really about being switched on by its readers. And that is a good thing.

4 "Index for 1967-71," *Synergy Magazine* (San Francisco: Bay Area Reference Center, 1972).

5 See Tony Samek, "Intellectual Freedom within the Profession: A Look Back at Freedom of Expression and the Alternative Library Press," *Library Juice* 6:6 (2003), [http://libr.org/juice/issues/vol6/LJ\\_6.6.html](http://libr.org/juice/issues/vol6/LJ_6.6.html).

6 Celeste West, "Conversation with Celeste West," interview by Milton Wolf, *Libraries for Social Change: Women's Issue*, 31/32 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983), 29-35, 29.



**Fig. 1.** Ed Ruscha self-published the first edition of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* in his own imprint National Excelsior Press in 1963. It had a print run of 400 copies, which he numbered.  
© Ed Ruscha 2015.

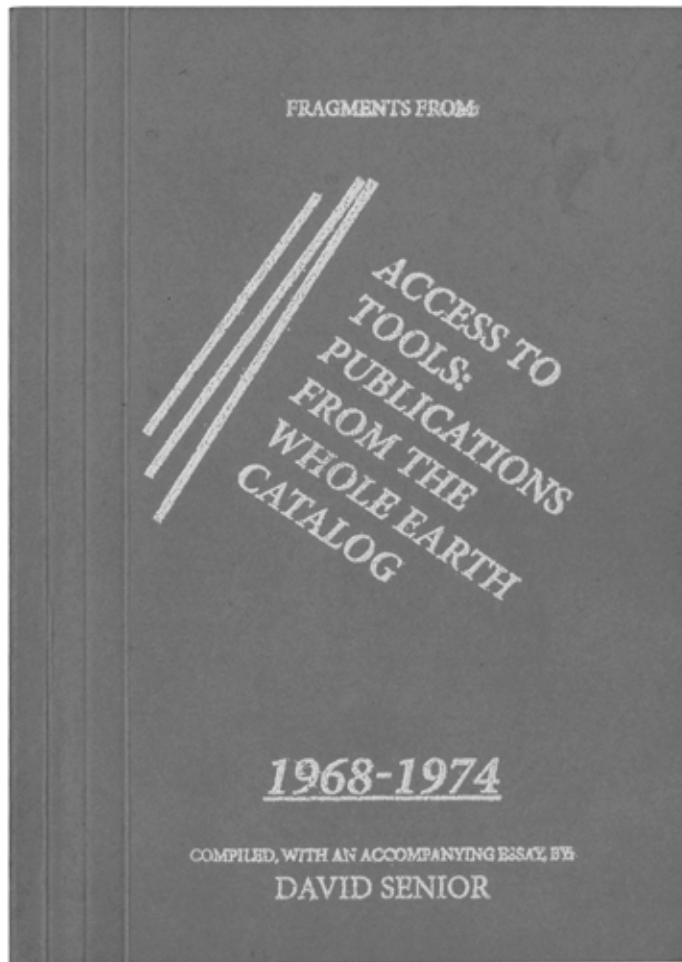
→ **Fig. 2.** Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Catalog*, Fall 1969, front cover.

# WHOLE EARTH CATALOG

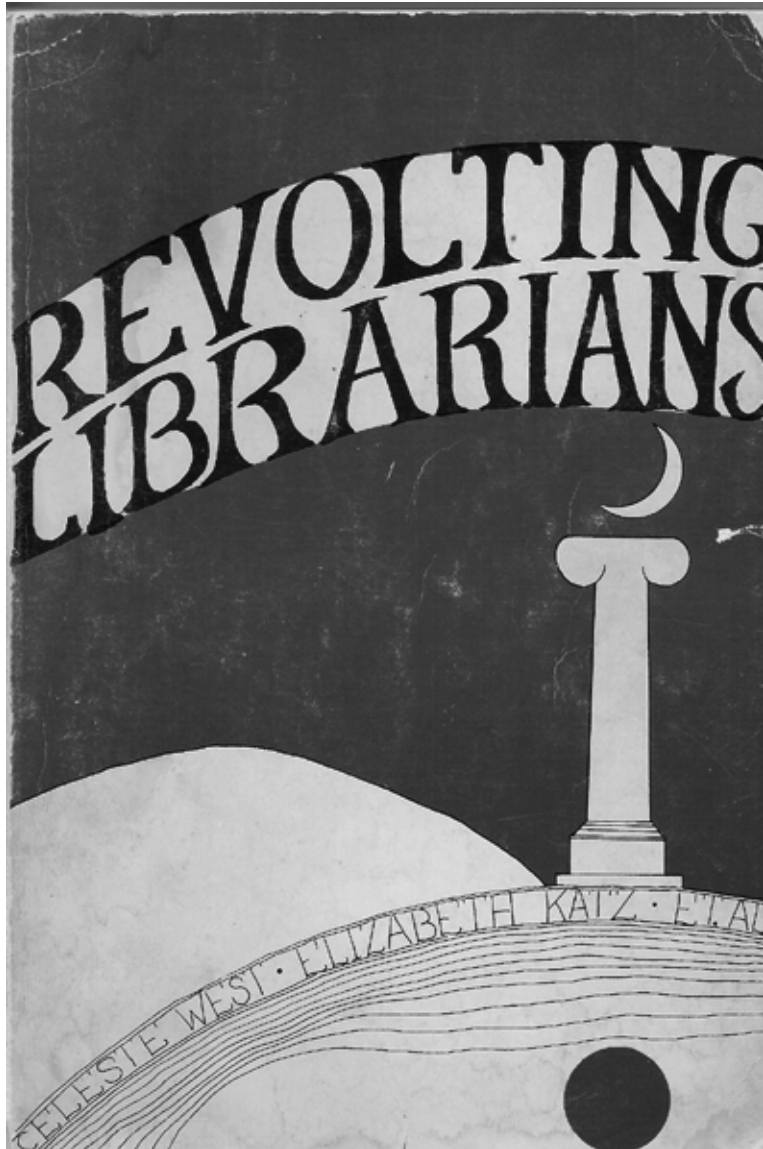
*access to tools*



Fall 1969  
\$4



**Fig. 3.** David Senior (ed.), *Fragments from Access to tools: Publications from the Whole Earth Catalog 1968-1974*, Portland, Oregon: Publication Studio, 2013 (first edition Wooden Leg Press, 2012), front cover.



**Fig. 4.** Celeste West and Elizabeth Katz (eds.), *Revolting Librarians*, San Francisco: Booklegger Press, 1972, front cover. The price was \$2.00 and the book was distributed by the American Library Association, Chicago by prepaid post. Photo: Sarah Mae, CC-BY-NC, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0>.





## SUBJECTS BY ISSUE NUMBER AND DATE

- 1-4-DEC '67-MAR '68: REFERENCE INFO AND NEWS ABOUT DEVELOPMENT OF THE BARC PROJECT
- 5-APR/MAY 68: BONNIE AND CLYDE
- 6-JUNE 68: ASTROLOGY
- 7-JULY 68: NEW TERMS IN ART
- 8-AUG 68: CONTEMPORARY POETRY
- 9-SEPT 68: SAN FRANCISCO SWITCHBOARD
- 10-OCT 68: SCIENCE PROJECTS AND EXPERIMENTS/THE OCCULT AND ESOTERIC
- 11/12-NOV/DEC 68: THE UNDERGROUND PRESS
- 13-JAN 69: SAN FRANCISCO STATE COLLEGE-STRIKE
- 14-FEB 69: FOCUS ON OURSELVES \*THE BARC PROJECT (REVISED DEC 69)
- 15-MAR 69: EARTHQUAKES
- 16/17-APR/MAY 69: NEGLECTED NOVELS
- 18/19-JUN/JUL 69: RIGHT-WING PERIODICALS
- 20/21-AUG/SEPT 69: THE CREATIVE ALTERNATIVE
- 22/23-OCT/NOV 69: FOOD
- 24-DEC 69: WOMEN'S LIBERATION
- 25-JAN 70: NATIVE AMERICANS
- 26-MAR/APR 70: ECOLOGY
- 27-MAY/JUN 70: SAN FRANCISCO SCENE
- 28-JUL/AUG 70: RADICALS IN THE PROFESSIONS
- 29-SEPT/OCT 70: GAY LIBERATION
- 30-NOV/DEC 70: DOPE
- 31-JAN/FEB 71: PRISONS
- 32-MAR/APR 71: SPRING! GREENFEEL
- 33-SUMMER 71: INSURGENT LIBRARIANS
- 34-AUTUMN 71: OCCULT
- 35-WINTER 71: CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURE

a barc production + L\$CA  
© sf public library 1972



Fig. 5. Synergy Magazine, San Francisco: Bay Area Reference Center, 1972, Index for 1967-71, back cover. Source: <https://celestewest.wordpress.com/synergy-magazine>.

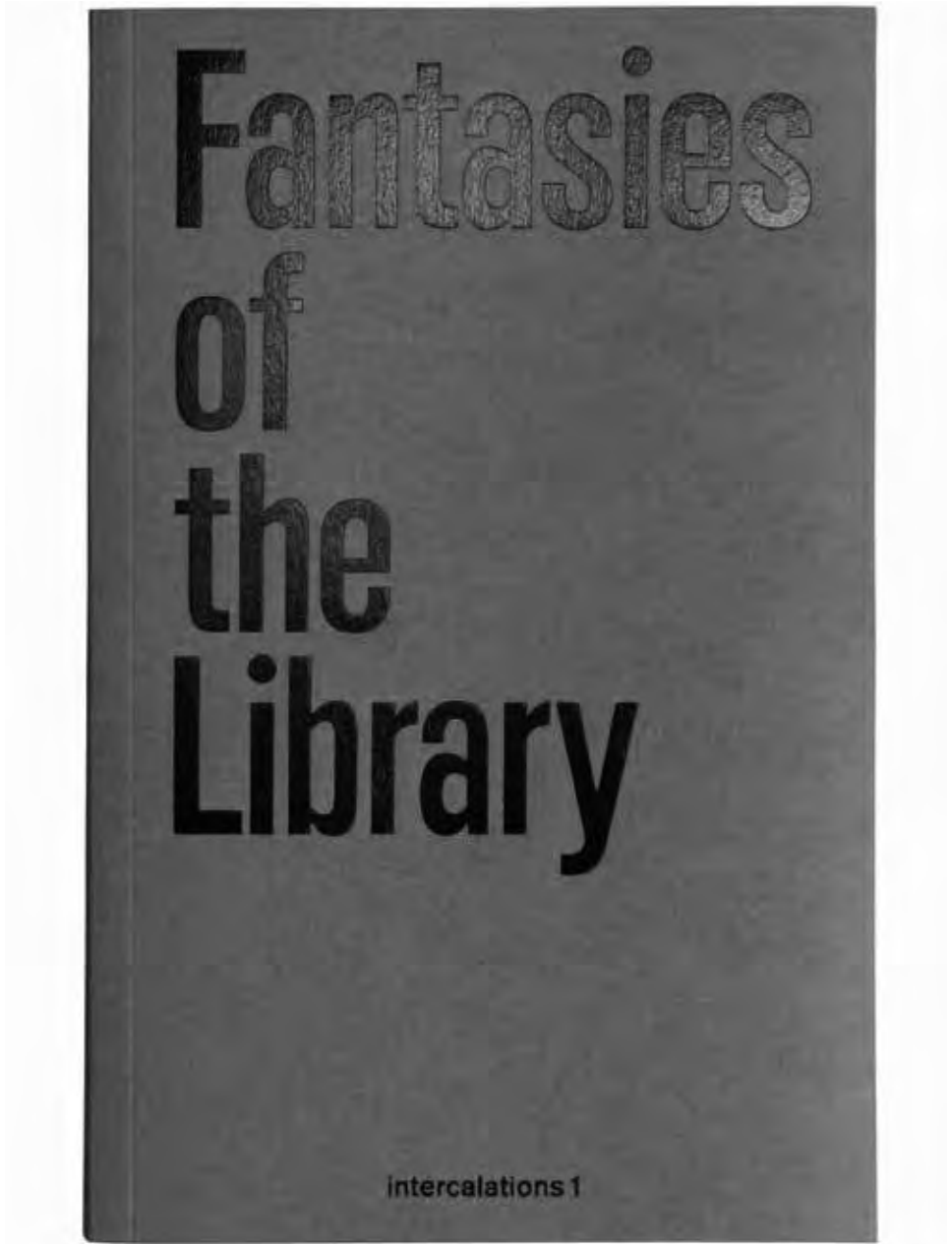


Fig. 6. Anna-Sophie Springer & Etienne Turpin (eds.), *Fantasies of the Library*, Berlin: K. Verlag & Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2015, front cover. Photo: Anna-Sophie Springer.

## II

## Infinite Hospitality • The Library is a Growing Organism • Melvil Dewey as One-Man Silicon Valley.

EVA WEINMAYR: The library essentially is also a structure that is animated by the use of its reader. And therefore it's important to make it easy to retrieve information. David Senior writes in his essay *Infinite Hospitality* [fig. 7] about the Indian mathematician and librarian S.R. Ranganathan and his *Five Laws of Library Science* (1931). "The library is a growing organism" is one of these laws. Ranganathan developed an unorthodox classification system using "facets" where several topics can be linked in a series of keywords in order to describe the various subjects present in a single book.<sup>7</sup>

INNER VOICE: This system creates relationships between the concepts instead of a hierarchical delineation as it is used traditionally by libraries and developed by Melvil Dewey.<sup>8</sup>

EVA WEINMAYR: Melvil Dewey's model is still the standard organizing system in many public libraries. But it is not without criticism: his biographer Wayne A. Wiegand interestingly argues that Dewey's narrow interpretation of objectivity is fully based on "a patriarchal White Western (and, of course, Christian)"<sup>9</sup> worldview. What is left out here is a whole range of alternative perspectives on humanity's knowledge.

INNER VOICE: Are you aware that writer Shannon Mattern has described Melvil Dewey "as a one-man Silicon Valley, born a century before Steve Jobs"<sup>10</sup>? Because in 1876, just after graduating from College, he copyrighted his library classification scheme.

EVA WEINMAYR: More than that! He simultaneously even started a hugely successful furniture business providing the 'right' chairs, tables and shelves to

7 S.R. Ranganathan outlines the Five Laws of Library Science. "1. Books are for use. 2. Every reader his [or her] book. 3. Every book its reader. 4. Save the time of the user. 5. The library is a growing organism." "Infinite Hospitality," in *Every Day the Urge Grows Stronger to Get Hold of an Object at Very Close Range by Way of Its Likeness*, ed. David Senior (New York: Dexter Sinister, 2008). This unbound collection of 14 folders has been reprinted in *Portable Document Format* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009) and can be found online at [www.dextersinister.org](http://www.dextersinister.org). French writer Georges Perec also came up with a set of unusual categories to organize his personal library—"alphabetically, by continent or country, by colour, by date of acquisition, by date of publication, by format, by genre, by major periods of literary history, by language, by priority for future reading, by binding or by series." Georges Perec, "Brief Notes on the Art and Manner of Arranging One's Books," in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, ed. John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1999), 148–155.

8 The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system, based on numbers attributed to nine main categories, was invented in the 1870s. It is extendable, as its numerical sequences can be split up infinitely and new categories added.

9 Wayne A. Wiegand, "The 'Amherst Method': The Origins of the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme," *Libraries & Culture* 33:2 (spring 1998), 175–194, 183. Wayne A. Wiegand examines meticulously how the conservative mindset at Amherst College, where Dewey was a student and library assistant, shaped Dewey's concepts of classifications and their hierarchies. "Its moral center was located in 'Anglo-Saxonism' a doctrine that defined 'objectivity' and touted the unique virtues, mission, and destiny of the Anglo-Saxon 'race.'" Ibid. It is quite important to understand, that with the very headings, he came up with, Dewey framed and cemented "a worldview and knowledge structure taught on the tiny Amherst College campus between 1870 and 1875 into what became the world's most widely used library classification." Ibid., 188.

libraries. Even in that respect he imposed his control on how libraries had to function according to him.

**INNER VOICE:** Megan Shaw Prelinger from the Prelinger Library in San Francisco talks about the shortcomings of Dewey's system: "First," she says, "[our] collection is unique to our combined areas of particular interest. It has never tried to be a general-interest research collection. Second, therefore, the library did not really fit the taxonomic systems of either the Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal. For instance: Art and politics? Handmade films? Nature-culture interface?

The history of the demonization of the youth in society? These are just a few of our subject areas that are not clearly articulated in pre-existing taxonomic systems."<sup>10</sup>

**INNER VOICE:** Do you know of any examples where people have organized publicly accessible libraries in an alternative way?

**EVA WEINMAYR:** The Ethical Culture School in New York City for example carried out a radical experiment. They wanted for their students a more independent and empowered seeking practice in their library. Therefore they ditched the Dewey system and developed the Metis system instead, named after the mother of Athena in Greek mythology. They responded to the problem that students frequently were more focused on actually seeking materials rather than using them and along with the kids developed a more usable classification system.<sup>12</sup>

**INNER VOICE:** For example?

**EVA WEINMAYR:** They discovered, that kids were interested in topics rather than in authors. Some sections were under-used such as "Languages" which were turned into "Community," "Craft" is now labeled "Making Stuff." But the most radical step was to mix the classic categories of "fiction" and "non-fiction."

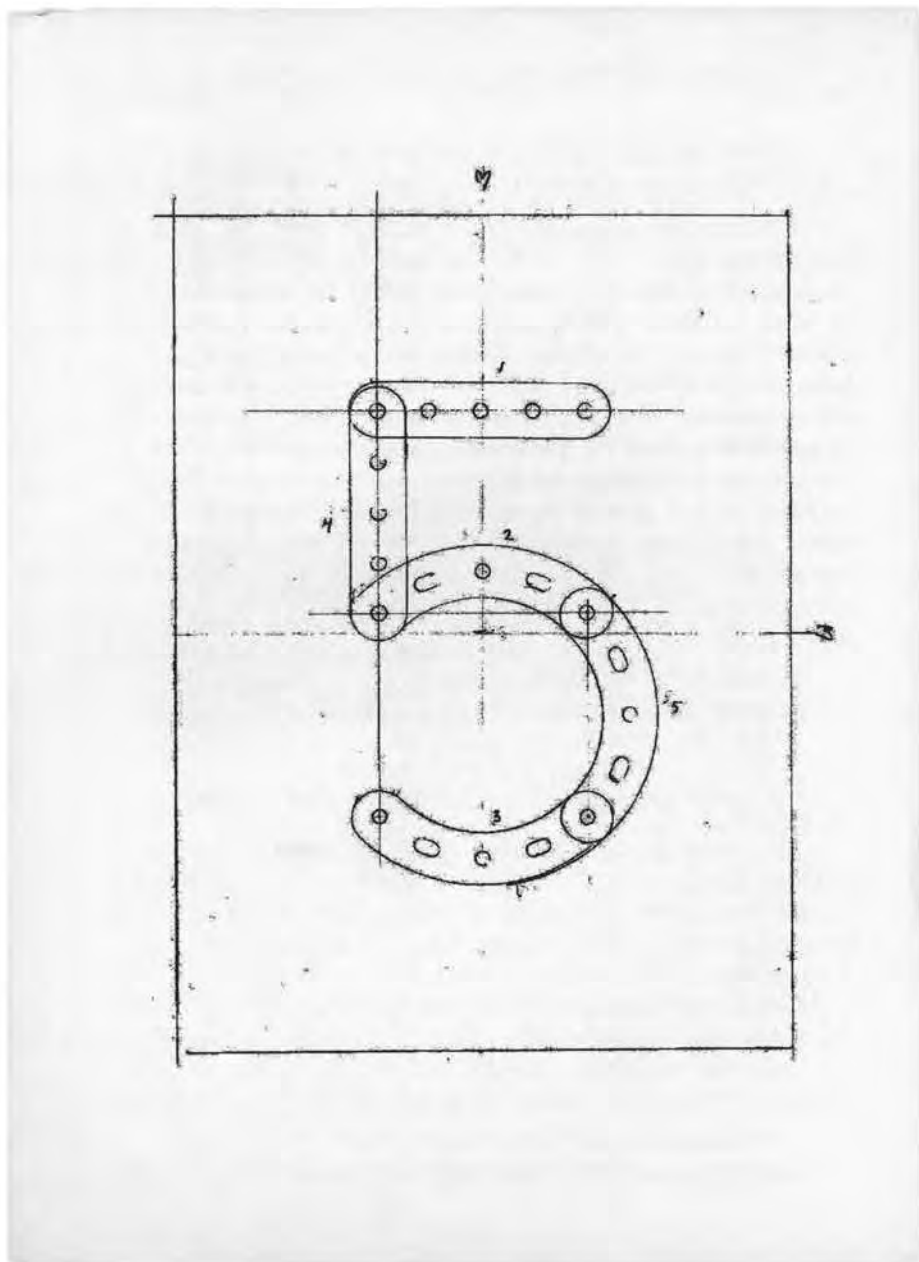
**INNER VOICE:** Really? That sounds pretty radical.

**EVA WEINMAYR:** Yes, they found out, that this move triggers thoughts and discussions, where students have to evaluate on their own what is imagination and what is information and discover the blurred lines in between.

**10** Shannon Mattern describes Dewey as "the quintessential Industrial Age entrepreneur. [...] He helped found the American Library Association, served as founding editor of *Library Journal*, and launched the American Metric Bureau, which campaigned for adoption of the metric system. He was 24 years old. He had already established the Library Bureau, a company that sold (and helped standardize) library supplies, furniture, media display and storage devices, and equipment for managing the circulation of collection materials. As chief librarian at Columbia College, Dewey established the first library school—called, notably, the School of Library Economy." Shannon Mattern, "Library as Infrastructure," *Places Magazine*, June 2014, <https://placesjournal.org/article/library-as-infrastructure/>.

**11** "Erin Kissane in conversation with Megan Shaw and Erik Prelinger," *Fantasies of the Library*, ed. Anne Marie Springer and Etienne Turpin (Berlin: K Verlag & Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2015), 2–18, 4.

**12** Tali Balas et al., "Are Dewey's Days Numbered? Libraries Nationwide Are Ditching the Old Classification System," *School Library Journal*, September 28, 2012, <http://www.slj.com/2012/09/collection-development/are-deweys-days-numbered-libraries-across-the-country-are-giving-the-old-classification-system-the-heave-ho-heres-one-schools-story/#>.



**Fig. 7.** David Senior, *Infinite Hospitality*, in *Every Day the Urge Grows Stronger to Get Hold of an Object at Very Close Range by Way of Its Likeness*, published by Dexter Sinister as an unbound collection of 14 folders, New York: The Art Libraries Society and Museum of Modern Art, 2008, folder front cover.

## III

## A Library is a Space Where Marketable Goods Are Turned into Public Goods.

EVA WEINMAYR: Libraries provide immaterial goods and media that would otherwise have to be purchased. When we try to reduce the book and its knowledge to an object-commodity, we forget that a book is actually brought to life by its readers and not by its sales figures. It's the reader's engagement with the book that generates creative and critical thinking, which feeds back into a public domain.

INNER VOICE: Sales figures? Commodity? You are not talking about Amm...

EVA WEINMAYR: Amazon, exactly: "Books are easy to ship and hard to break." That was Amazon's initial idea. George Packer quoted the company's former deputy in a piece for the *The New Yorker* saying: "It wasn't a love of books that led Jeff Bezos to start an online bookstore. It was totally based on the property of books as a product."<sup>13</sup> As I said: Libraries provide immaterial goods and media that would otherwise have to be purchased.

INNER VOICE: Terry Deary, one of the best selling children-book authors, follows up this logic with his remarks about libraries. He recently said in a speech that libraries are not relevant anymore. His argument: it has been 150 years since the Public Libraries Act gave rise to the first free public libraries in the UK, and since then times have changed.

EVA WEINMAYR: It is as scary as it is stupid. He perversely reasons that libraries promote the idea that "we've got an entitlement to read books for free, at the expense of authors, publishers and council tax payers. This is not the Victorian age, when we wanted to allow the impoverished access to literature. We pay for compulsory schooling to do that."<sup>14</sup> You can see that current approaches of greed to books as objects of commercial fetish have come a long way from the generous distribution of culture of the Sixties we were just touching on.

INNER VOICE: Apparently Deary's statement triggered lots of hate mail.

EVA WEINMAYR: His statement is actually just following a general hidden logic of neoliberalism, permeating every single aspect of our lives. The current intellectual property discourse is cynically shaping our relationship with culture. Andrea Francke, my

<sup>13</sup> George Packer, "Cheap Words," *New Yorker*, February 17, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/02/17/cheap-words>.

<sup>14</sup> Alison Flood, "Libraries 'have had their day,' says Horrible Histories author," *Guardian*, February 13, 2013.

colleague in The Piracy Project<sup>15</sup>, recently wrote a passage in an unpublished paper I want to read back to you: “Deary’s conclusion is a perfectly logical one and it was just a matter of time before someone voiced it. That is what makes it so scary. Deary’s mindset tries to turn knowledge into property: It’s yours, you own it. Like a house, a car or a coat that has been passed down through generations shouldn’t you have the right to pass down the rights of your book so your great-great-great grandchildren can live on it. Maybe that’s why the use of ‘commons’ as a synonym for public domain has become so popular by using it we unconsciously confirm the transformation of culture and knowledge into property (even if into a communal one).” And this is very illustrating.

## IV

### Against the Monopoly of the Frankfurt Publisher

INNER VOICE: You also visited  
Raubdruck Archiv in Germany  
recently. And there seem to  
be striking parallels to America  
in the Sixties?

EVA WEINMAYR: Yes, Sarah Käsmayr, a young graphic designer, who did her dissertation on book piracy<sup>16</sup>, took us to Raubdruck Archiv. It’s an archive of more than 3,000 pirated books collected by Götz von Olenhusen, a now retired intellectual property lawyer in Germany [fig. 8].<sup>17</sup> And you are right. Around the same years, Ruscha and Brand circulated their self-published books in California, West Germany’s student scene grew fed up with the limited access to critical theory, which was a crucial intellectual resource for the growing alternative and political student culture. They saw mainstream publishing ignorant and disinterested in printing, for instance, more radical writings of critical psychoanalysts like Wilhelm Reich or Anna and Sigmund Freud. The same went for some writing in social theory and philosophy where isolated works of the Frankfurt School—from people like Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno, Lukács, Habermas, or Benjamin—were ignored by the mainstream publishers.

<sup>15</sup> The Piracy Project is an international publishing and exhibition project exploring the philosophical, legal, and practical implications of book piracy and creative modes of reproduction. Through research and an international call for submissions, The Piracy Project has gathered a current collection of 200 modified, appropriated, and copied books from all over the world. The collection, which is cataloged online, is the starting point for talks and work groups around the concept of originality, the notion of authorship, and politics of copyright. The Piracy Project is run by Andrea Francke and Eva Weinmayr as part of AND Publishing’s research program. See [www.andpublishing.org](http://www.andpublishing.org).

<sup>16</sup> See Haras K. [Sarah Käsmayr], *Ein Raubdruckbuch, Wandlungen der Chronik eines angekündigten Todes von Gabriel García Márquez* (Bremen: University Press Bremen, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> See Götz von Olenhusen and Christa Gnirß, *Handbuch der Raubdrucke. Theorie und Klassenkampf. Sozialisierte Drucke und proletarische Reprints. Eine Bibliographie* (Pullach: Verlag Dokumentation Saur KG, 1973).

INNER VOICE: How did these students go about this?

EVA WEINMAYR: Well, the students based their reading groups and discussions partly on texts which were banned during the 1930s and 40s, got lost or were difficult to access. In some cases republication was even banned by heirs or the author's estates in a conservative climate of post-war Germany. Von Olenhusen told us for instance, that the estate of Wilhelm Reich ...

INNER VOICE: ... the author of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, *The Function of the Orgasm* and the *Discovery of Orgone* ... ?

EVA WEINMAYR: Yes, he had already passed away at the time and his estate did not give permission to publish his most controversial writings, because his family wanted to secure a more moderate legacy.

INNER VOICE: And that was fair reason for Reich's German fans to pirate, publish and circulate these texts?

EVA WEINMAYR: Certainly. They used for example the term "sozialisierter Druck" for their pirate-prints, which means these prints are meant to get "socialized" for the use of the public working against the privatizing power of individuals (authors, publishers, heirs) and monopolies owning the copyright.<sup>18</sup> Often, the copy in the library was good enough to serve as a source for a pirate-print. They transcribed excerpts on the typewriter, duplicated them and circulated the texts on the streets, in the university or in the newly created left-leaning bookshops starting to pop up across German cities. It was a thriving scene and quickly an informal network of makeshift publishers and DIY-printers had developed.

INNER VOICE: Was that also a business model? Did they make money from it?

EVA WEINMAYR: Well, I'd call it rather a labor of love. Imagine all the effort invested in typing, printing on a mimeograph, binding and distributing the texts, which were then sold very cheaply. In our interview von Olenhusen, who runs Raubdruck Archiv, said that later pirates employed financially more successful models and generated a small income for themselves. Some of Germany's left-leaning small publishing houses, such as Merve or März Verlag took their origin from this unruly ecosystem of DIY-publishers. But the motivation to bring buried texts back into circulation were in these early years clearly driven by a mission to contribute to society rather than making commercial gain.

INNER VOICE: And it was not only theorists they pirated for good?

EVA WEINMAYR: Sarah Käsmayr collated stunning research on the many unofficial translations and pirate editions of García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* [fig. 9]. Tom Koenigs, who is today MP for the German Green party, felt the copy price for the forthcoming official translation by publisher Kiepenheuer & Witsch was too costly. And, he did not want to wait for the publisher's translation of the novel—so he did

<sup>18</sup> This motivation is also apparent in the visionary names, some pirate-publishers gave themselves, such as "Basisdruck" [grassroots-print] or "Zerschlagt das bürgerliche Copyright" [Smash the bourgeois copyright].



the job himself. His colleagues at the Karl Marx bookshop in Frankfurt supported him by working his shifts in the bookshop and after a few weeks the home-translated novel was published in Frankfurt's city magazine *PflasterStrand*<sup>19</sup> [fig. 10]—a few months before the official translation came out. In order to avoid obvious copyright infringement Koenigs attributed authorship to “C. de Arataca,” the name of the village in Colombia where García Márquez was born.<sup>20</sup>

INNER VOICE: So the reader wasn't aware of the real author?

EVA WEINMAYR: Only a few days later, Koenigs—under the synonym of his young daughter's name—revealed in an article in the German cooperative newspaper *taz* that the author is in reality Gabriel García Márquez. Koenigs added a tongue-in-cheek disclaimer: “published by mistake.” So the German readership could read the novel for two Deutschmarks (DM) compared to 19.80 DM.<sup>21</sup>

INNER VOICE: And they got away with it?

EVA WEINMAYR: According to Sarah, yes. But beside affordability and open or hidden censorship, topicality was also an issue. For example, the DIY-publishers among the Frankfurt students explain their goals in the foreword of their reprint of Wilhelm Reich's *The Sexual Struggle of Youth* (1932) [fig. 11]. I'll read to you what they say there: “We published this abbreviated text by Wilhelm Reich because until today unfortunately there is still no affordable book for the youth, which explains in simple terms the relationship between sexuality and power [...] we hope to replace this 40-year-old ‘sex struggle’ with a new one. The income of this pamphlet will go into the production of the new book, a collation of excerpts, a reader, in which we want to include images in order to make the reading more fun and sensual. We'll check out youth magazines, which are around to look for useful material. If you want to help us with this, please get in touch [...]. Osnabrück, December, 1971.”

INNER VOICE: What are these other pamphlets here on the table?

EVA WEINMAYR: It's Walter Benjamin's *A Communist Pedagogy. Toys and Play. Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre. Building Site* [fig. 12]. It has a great foreword, written by his pirates, which explains that the goal was to read this text in a contemporary context, in a discourse and to make these texts work beyond a “philologically clean, dignified capitalistic literary market.” They opposed publisher Suhrkamp's monopoly to come up with a “solemn, but useless edition of Benjamin's collected works, banned behind golden spines.” They instead want to unleash the politicized Benjamin, taking sides, from a strictly edited and bourgeois environment.

INNER VOICE: The aesthetics of the pamphlets as well as their

19 *PflasterStrand*, Frankfurt/Main, June 19, 1981. *PflasterStrand* [cobble beach] developed from the student union's magazine as a voice for the left revolutionary scene and had in 1980 a print run of 8,500. The name refers to one of the slogans of 1968 civil unrest in Paris: „Sous les pavés, la plage!” [Under the cobbles, the beach!].

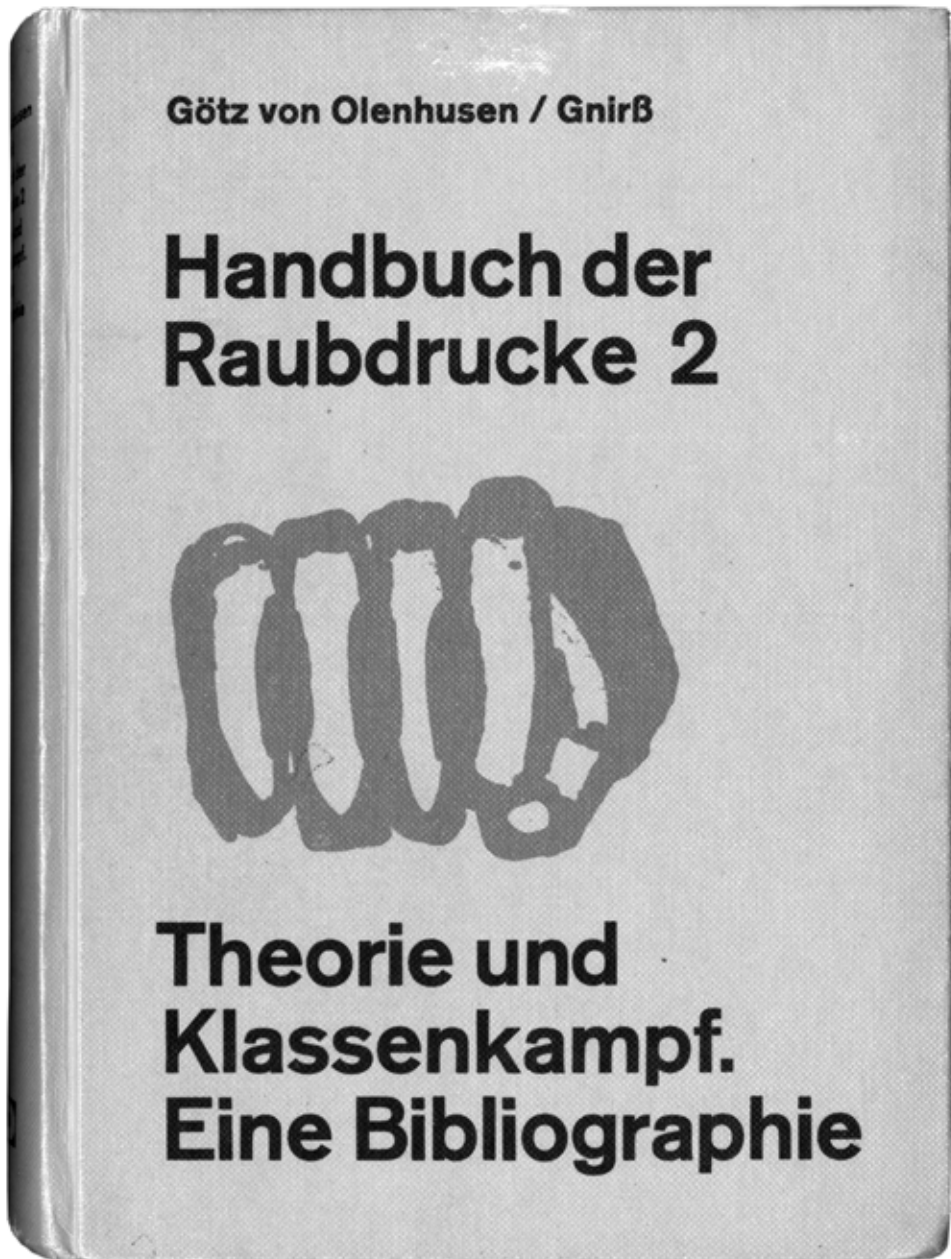
20 See Haras K. [Sarah Käsmayr], *Ein Raubdruckbuch*, *ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

motivations seem to have a lot in common with samizdat publishing in East Germany and Soviet Russia where censored literature was illegally retyped on a typewriter, duplicated and secretly circulated from hand to hand.

EVA WEINMAYR: It is a striking parallel, isn't it? And it's the achievement of these activist publishers, that texts, which had fallen between the cracks of capitalism or other proprietary motivations (in the West) or open censorship (in the East) were rediscovered, circulated, and therefore archived. It's quite ironic, that sometimes the book pirates were also seen as a kind of market researchers for the big publishing houses. Once a certain text proved to be popular in the underground networks—it might become a bestseller overground. The Cologne-based publisher Alfred Neven DuMont told Götz von Olenhusen: when the first illegal print appeared on his table, he knew it was time to publish Wilhelm Reich. And subsequently he managed to persuade the Reich estate to give permission. Reich's later controversial works, self-published since the 1920s, hence had to wait for mainstream publication until after his death.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Singular texts were published in the late 1970s by Kiepenheuer & Witsch. His collected late writings were only published in 1995–1997 by Zweitausend-eins, Frankfurt/Main.



**Fig. 8.** Götz von Olenhusen and Christa Gnirß, *Handbuch der Raubdrucke. Theorie und Klassenkampf. Sozialisierte Drucke und proletarische Reprints. Eine Bibliographie*, Pullach: Verlag Dokumentation Saur KG, 1973, front cover.

→ **Fig. 9.** Haras K. [Sarah Käsmayr], *Ein Raubdruckbuch. Wandlungen der Chronik eines angekündigten Todes von Gabriel García Márquez*, Bremen: University Press Bremen, 2014, front cover.

Haras K.

# Ein Raubdruck buch

Wandlungen der  
*Chronik eines angekündigten Todes*  
von Gabriel García Márquez



Freisteller und  
Rand ansetzen



WELT MEISTER AUSCHANG 15 METER REINE PHOSPHOR KLEBMITTELGEIGEN 100% SICHEN MÄNNER BEIM OPIUMKURZGEHEN 2  
NUMMER 100, VON 20.6. BIS 2.7. 1993, PREIS: 2.50 €

11/74



← Fig. 10. *PflasterStrand*, 1981, front cover as shown in: Haras K. [Sarah Käsmayr], *Ein Raubdruckbuch*, ibid.  
 Fig. 11. Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*, pirate edition, around 1970, front cover (Raubdruck Archiv). Photo: Andrea Francke.



**Fig. 12.** Various pirate editions of Walter Benjamin, *Eine kommunistische Pädagogik. Spielzeug und Spielen. Programm eines proletarischen Kindertheaters. Baustelle + Diskussion + Anhang*, published by Zentralrat der sozialistischen Kinderläden, West Berlin, Nr 2, 1969, front covers (Raubdruck Archiv). Photo: Eva Weinmayr.

## V

### Artists and Activists

**INNER VOICE:** It would be great to think about how such activist publishing practices are playing out today? And what do you think is the relation between such activities and artistic practice?

**EVA WEINMAYR:** That's a good question. What is the goal of artistic practice? In the cases we discussed earlier, piracy is always associated with the re-appropriation of somebody else's property against the law. It challenges the idea of knowledge as property. For me the role of the cultural pirate is more complex. It is a trickster, similar to the role of the artist, who has no

predefined territory to roam, connects different areas of thought, and questions established ways of thinking. And this thinking translates into action. Often people who do great stuff just happen to be artists. I don't even think it is helpful to categorize such activities in artists or activists—the main thing is they intervene in the world and envision or create alternatives.

INNER VOICE: What do you think of piratical practices like *Amazon Noir*—an interventionist project by Alessandro Ludovico, Paolo Cirio and the Vienna-based collective *Übermorgen*? In 2006, they hacked the code of Amazon's "Read inside the book"-feature and developed a "robot-perversion-technology" giving access to the entire content of a book rather than just a few preselected preview pages.

EVA WEINMAYR: It was such a great hack. It came as a real shock to Amazon who immediately took court action, which eventually resulted in Amazon buying the invention.<sup>23</sup> Other examples would be Sean Dockray and Fiona Whitton, who founded the online archive *aaaaaarg.org* and Marcell Mars's online library *memoryoftheworld.org*. These are activist practices of today who create communities—on- and offline.

INNER VOICE: I came across *memoryoftheworld.org*, when Marcell Mars did the *Public Library* project in Stuttgart in 2014. It's the idea that people share their books online.

EVA WEINMAYR: The cataloging aspect is very important to them. They use Calibre, a flexible online cataloging software designed to organize your own e-book/pdf collection. You can search for a variety of terms such as title, author, date added, date published, size, rating, etc. And with the free downloadable "let's share books"-plugin you can also allow other people in the worldwide web to find and read your own cataloged e-books. A true and socially adequate public library is growing here.<sup>24</sup>

INNER VOICE: By comparison, *aaaaaarg.org* comes from a slightly different angle. It is often understood solely as an open source platform for freely sharing books, but is actually born from a desire to share books with others in order to start a conversation.

EVA WEINMAYR: Yes, I think it developed from gatherings of the *Public School*, a self-organized educational project in Los Angeles, which started in 2007<sup>25</sup>. It was founded by Fiona Whitton and Sean Dockray. They felt that a curriculum always comes with an institutionalized agenda defining a prescribed canon

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.amazon-noir.com/index0000.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Their mission statement is: "The Public Library is firstly—free access to books for every member of society, second—a library catalog, and third—a librarian. With books ready to be shared [online], meticulously cataloged, everyone is a librarian. When everyone is librarian, library is everywhere." Marcell Mars, Manar Zarroug, and Tomislav Medak, *End-to-End Catalog: Memory of the World*, November 26, 2012, <https://www.memoryoftheworld.org/end-to-end-catalog/>.

<sup>25</sup> "The Public School was initiated in 2007 in Los Angeles in the basement of Telic Arts Exchange. The Public School is a school with no curriculum. It is not accredited, it does not give out degrees, and it has no affiliation with the public school system. It is a framework that supports auto-didactic activities, operating under the assumption that everything is in everything." See <http://thepublicschool.org/la>.



of learning. People propose classes they want to take or want to teach and collaborate in exploring the proposed subjects together. The German artist Cornelia Sollfrank conducted very informative interviews with Sean Dockray and Marcell Mars as part of her research project *Giving what you don't have* at Postmedialab, Leuphana University, Lüneburg, in 2012. You can watch all the interviews online.<sup>26</sup>

INNER VOICE: I heard that *Public School* has been spreading to other cities?

EVA WEINMAYR: That's right. Buenos Aires, Berlin, San Francisco, New York, Durham, Helsinki, London, Vienna and the list goes on.

## VI

### Unsolicited Collaborations • Removing Authorship

INNER VOICE: Okay, maybe first say a few words about your and Andrea's Piracy Project.

EVA WEINMAYR: It started at Byam Shaw School of Art in London in order to fight the closure of its library. We launched an open call for copied, reproduced and altered books, which were added to the library collection. Within months we received an unpredictable variety of book projects taking wild and surprising approaches to appropriating somebody else's work.

INNER VOICE: Was it all material not represented in the library before?

EVA WEINMAYR: Partly. Sometimes several pirated and modified versions—or shall I say “interpretations”—of the same book lived just next to each other on the shelves. In some cases content has been added or erased, the size or graphic design ‘improved,’ books printed out from the internet, pushed through different platforms, algorithms, compressors or scanner software, printed professionally or with the just-about-to-dry-out ink jet printer at home. Some books credit the new author, others don't. Some disguise the alterations pretending to be the original book. A playful and subversive tension was created between the modified entries and the original books on the shelves. It is a wild almost freakish set of beasts we never expected to land on our table.

INNER VOICE: I guess, the infiltration of an art college library with such pirates unsettles a few traditional concepts and habits there? I mean, how do you figure out what constitutes the authoritative text and which is a clone variety or its interpretation?

EVA WEINMAYR: Actually some of the most interesting books reach us from outside the art world. Intrigued

<sup>26</sup> See <http://artwarez.org/projects/GWYDH/>.

by Daniel Alarcon's article *Life Among the Pirates* [fig. 13]<sup>27</sup>, Andrea traveled to Peru in 2010 and discovered a pirate version of Jaime Bayly's autobiographical novel *No se lo digas a nadie* in the street markets. This physical object may look obviously pirated to a trained eye but could easily pass as the original if you were not looking for differences. Crucial however: the pirate version has two extra chapters. And more: these extra chapters are well written—well enough to blend in. Now, here somebody borrows the author's voice, invents two chapters of his life without telling us. There is no indication in the book, that it has been altered [fig. 14 and 15].<sup>28</sup>

INNER VOICE: How would a librarian approach the task of cataloging such “unsolicited collaborations”? Who would be accounted as author?

EVA WEINMAYR: That is interesting. When we took the *Piracy Collection* to New York to install a temporary reading room at the New York Art Book Fair in 2011, a librarian from the Pratt Institute spent a lot of time browsing the books. She was fascinated by the richness of strategies and approaches to unauthorized copying. How people interfered with, copied and altered the book and confronted the questions these authorial hybrids pose. She wondered how this collection could be documented and cataloged from a librarian's point of view. What are the criteria for authorship? How can this category be defined? How do you deal with the awkward relationship between the original (the reference) and the pirate copy?

INNER VOICE: In this respect the books in the piracy collection live in a limbo, posing interesting questions and problems when it comes to institutional capture, which aims at streamlining and rendering everything into measurable and accountable units.

EVA WEINMAYR: In a wider sense this question is also relevant when we think of Higher Education, which in the current climate of commodifying education, aims to sell originality and individual authorship as a commercial asset to students. Collaborations among students for example are only valid, when each collaborator's part can be clearly defined (and assessed). This is pretty counter-productive, because the very nature of collaborating is that you inspire each other, that it becomes more than the sum of individual parts.

INNER VOICE: That's interesting, because today's education climate seems to just adopt the mechanism of the art market, which is fully based on signature and individual authorship, and therefore creates speculative commercial value. I am just thinking about what you said earlier about the circulation of Ed Ruscha's book.

EVA WEINMAYR: There is a striking example of what happens, when authorship is suddenly removed: the American artist Cady Noland summarily “de-authored” her work *Cowboys milking* (1990),

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Alarcon, “Life Among the Pirates,” *Granta* 109 (2009): 9–36.

<sup>28</sup> See The Piracy Project's essay “The Impermanent Book,” published on *Rhizome*, April 19, 2012, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2012/apr/19/impermanent-book/>.

when it was put up for auction by a dealer against her will. Cady Noland has been named as the highest selling female artist (\$ 6.6 m) in history. She removed her authorship of the work a few days before it was scheduled for auction at Sotheby's. As a result, the dealer Marc Jancou, who bought the work a few years ago for \$101,000, could enjoy it in his living room, but not resell it as a Cady Noland work. It is a Cady Noland in his living room, but not on the market. Artist Melissa Gordon did a piece in *Persona Magazine* about it [fig. 16] and artist and lawyer Sergio Munoz Sarmiento has written extensively about the case on his art & law blog *Clancco.org*, because Jancou sued Noland and the auction house.

INNER VOICE: This is an amazing story. It really dismantles the speculative bubble and makes us think about how value is created. Who, and for what reason, defines the value? And how quickly this can collapse with the removal of the signature and authorship.

## VII

### Just Another Book

EVA WEINMAYR: There is actually a funny anecdote about Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. Art historian Douglas Crimp was once hired to do picture research for an industrial film about the history of transportation. He went into the New York Public Library and came across Ed Ruscha's booklet *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* in the transportation section, just next to books about automobiles, highways etc. Douglas Crimp recounts: "I remember thinking how funny it was that the book had been miscatalogued [...] I knew, as the librarians evidently did not, that Ruscha's book was a work of art and therefore belonged in the art division. But now, because of the reconfigurations brought about by postmodernism, I've changed my mind; I now know that Ed Ruscha's books make no sense in relation to the categories of art according to which art books are catalogued in the library, and that that is part of their achievement. The fact that there is nowhere for *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* within the present system of classification is an index of the book's radicalism with respect to established modes of thought."<sup>29</sup>

INNER VOICE: Ed Ruscha must have been relieved, that at least in this instance, his book was just another book.

29 Douglas Crimp and Louise Lawler, "The Museum's Old, the Library's New Subject," *On the Museum's Ruins*, (Cambridge: MIT 1993), 66–83, 78.

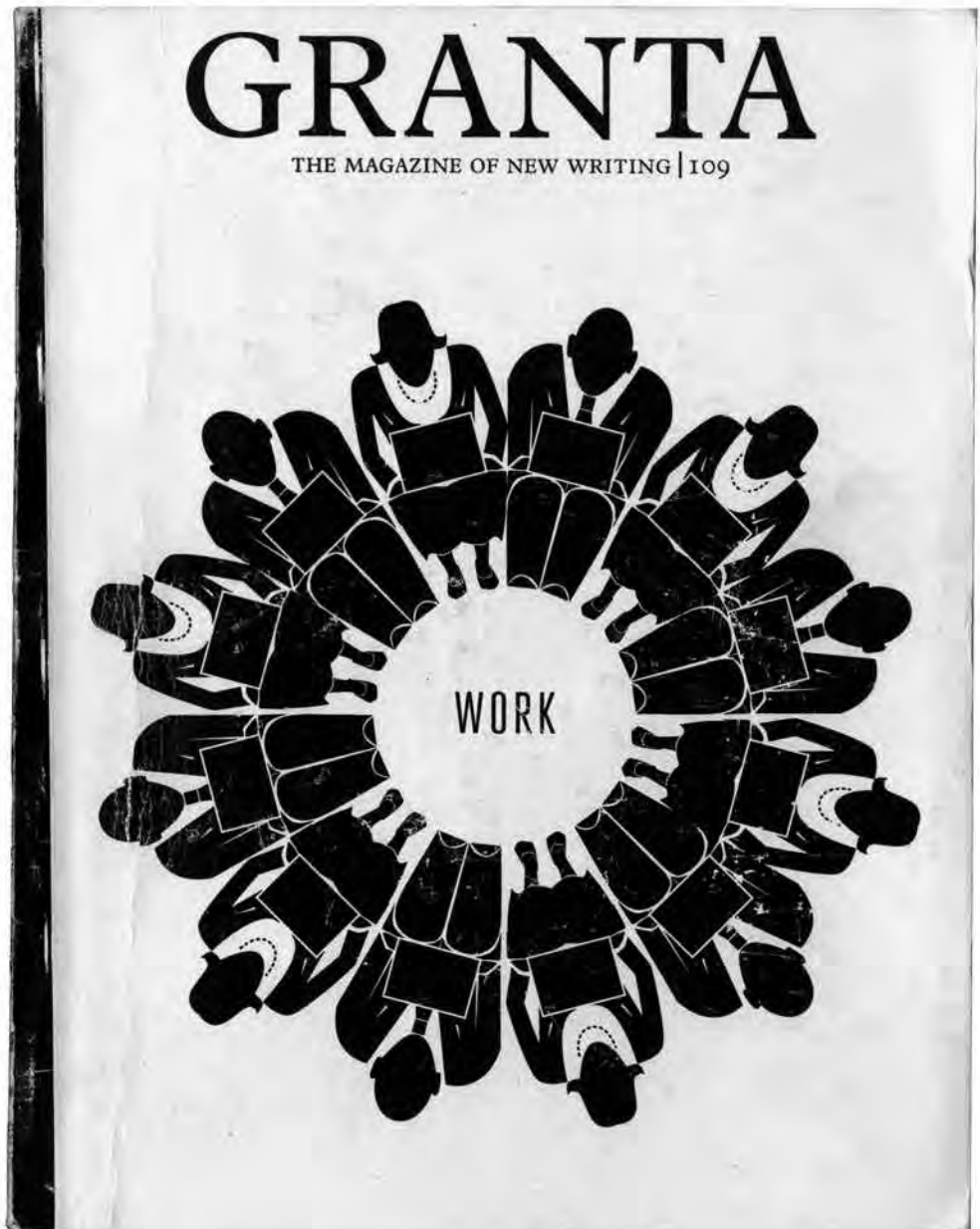


Fig. 13. Daniel Alarcon, *Life Among the Pirates*, in: *Granta* 109 (2009), front cover.  
© Granta and Portobello Books.

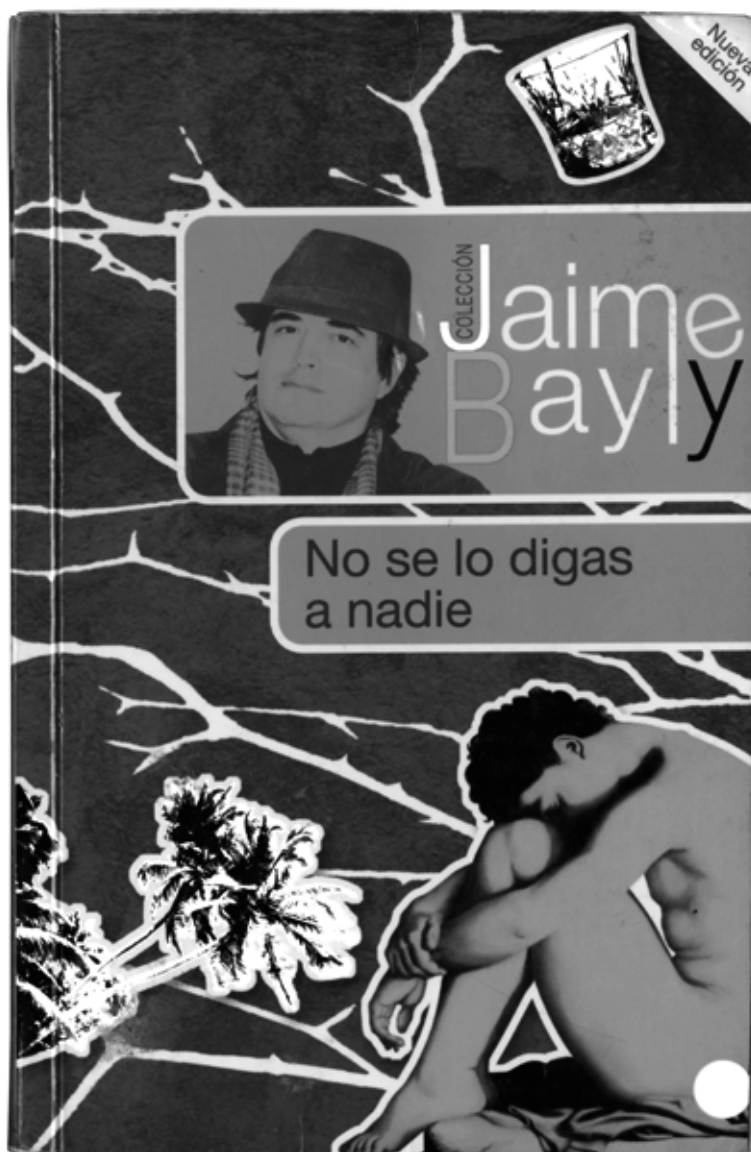


Fig. 14. Jaime Bayly, *No se lo digas a nadie*, Lima: Punto de lectura, 2010, front cover (The Piracy Collection).



Fig. 15. Jaime Bayly, *No se lo digas a nadie*, pirated copy with two extra chapters added by an anonymous writer, front cover. Bought in Lima, Peru (The Piracy Collection).



## Appendix

### Library Bill of Rights

American Library Association (1939, with several amendments until today)<sup>30</sup>

1. As a responsibility of library service, books and other library materials selected should be chosen for values of interest, information and enlightenment of all the people of the community. In no case should any library materials be excluded because of the race or nationality or the social, political, or religious views of the authors.
2. Libraries should provide books and other materials presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times; no library materials should be proscribed or removed from libraries because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
3. Censorship should be challenged by libraries in the maintenance of their responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his age, race, religion, national origins or social or political views.
6. As an institution of education for democratic living, the library should welcome the use of its meeting rooms for socially useful and cultural activities and discussion of current public questions. Such meeting places should be available on equal terms to all groups in the community regardless of the beliefs and affiliations of their members, provided that the meetings be open to the public.

← Fig. 16. Melissa Gordon & Marina Vishmidt, *Persona*, Berlin: Archive Books, 2013, front cover.

30 "Library Bill of Rights," <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>.