

Notes Toward a Publishing Practice

Archive Books 2019

Chiara Figone, Paolo Caffoni, "Notes Toward a Publishing Practice," *Publishing Manifestos* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press / Berlin: Miss Read, 2019).

It is Monday, the 8th of October, 2018, in Berlin.

Much of the impulse to publish is the compelling desire to disseminate stories for the intrinsic subversive potential they can yield. For the way they create cracks in dominant narratives. For the way they trigger the formation of alternative readings, plant the seeds for new understandings. Much of the publishing impulse comes from the intense relationship with languages and their potential.

Perhaps a pertinent place to start is to approach the many questions surrounding the very act of "making public." Questioning is the foundation of the publishing process. It is also that which forces the continual disengagement from congealed meaning, from the pitfalls of certainty. It is that which allows hypotheses to play a constitutive role in shaping the many ways of thinking the world.

- What does the practice of making public entail?
- What does it mean to make public here and now?
- What are the sources from which the compelling necessity to make public emerges?
- What are the implications in making public those concealed, undermined, or forgotten stories?
- How to find, select and edit stories in today's complex scenario of multiple worlds and temporalities?
- How to nurture the fundamental relationship with publics?
- How to establish a conscious standpoint?
- How to question the rules of the game?
- How to foster and prioritize polyphony over coded voices?
- How to perpetuate the act of questioning?

We could say that establishing terrains, mapping experiences, and defining the sources and conditions of frameworks and points of enunciation are the critical first steps in the foundation of a publishing practice.

We could say that a publisher doesn't solely publish books but authors as well. We could hint at the fact that publishing is the creation of an ecosystem where authors,

translators, and editors are working to build a line of communication with different publics. Working toward the establishment of a bond of mutual trust. We could say that this ecology would feed learning and exchange, disseminate meaning beyond itself.

We could say that publishing is a collective practice in which we question the limits of our most certain ways of knowing, thinking, and doing. The very boundaries of systems of thought and knowledge production. We could say it is a space for the exploration of the possibility to think otherwise—to tirelessly question the order of things. It entails a crisis of the epistemological framing of our worlds. It is the product of an active vision, of a gaze which perceives what is not there, and actualizes it.

We could say publishing is a practice in which a critical approach manifests itself through the willingness to scrutinize fundamental truths, through not accepting given structures on the mere basis of authority, and addressing the violence they uphold. In this capacity, the practice of publishing entails exposing oneself to existing powers regardless of the consequences. We could say publishing is a practice of critical thinking, wherein the term critical is unbound from any negative connotations and instead understood as a symptom of crisis, as a mode of radical inquiry interfering with these existing relations of power while simultaneously questioning the validity of its own perspective.

We could say that the practice of publishing thrives on the desire to create moments of sharing, to bring together readers from across different contexts to explore how we can transcend national boundaries and discuss models for sharing and distributing knowledge. We could say that the practice of publishing should imagine a borderless world while simultaneously confronting the realities of borders.

We could say that mobility is immanent to the form of the book and as such it requires the engagement with multiple worlds. We could say that a book is an autonomous space-time sequence engaging with multiple temporalities. We could say that a book can problematize the myth of linearity, bear witness to the presence of the past within the

present, and highlight the juxtaposition of temporalities and of their resistance to categorization.

We could say that the practice of publishing should imagine processes of (un)learning and subjectively constructing non-hegemonic narratives—in the form of self-education, auto-didacticism, and self-learning—which protest and provide exit strategies from the normativity of education systems.

We could say that the practice of publishing is concerned with the nature and implications of filtering and amplifying contents, and with the potential of these two processes as transformative action.

We could say that the practice of publishing entails acting against the impoverishment of information, of meaning. It is to salvage information from the tissue of established—often historical—meaning, to loosen the weave and open it up to new readings and new meanings.

We could say that the practice of publishing always, thus, implodes the present fabric of meaning. The act of publication, therefore, corresponds to the act of protest, and the space of publication becomes a space of protest and con-

testation, where the possibility to un-weave repressive and hierarchical histories is (re)awakened.

We could say that, within this perspective, publishing the archive is especially powerful, as it is the product of an engaged, active gaze which dismantles (temporal) hierarchies. Thus, publishing the archive involves a literal unweaving of repressive narratives and, as a consequence, redefines and reappropriates the archive itself as a tool which no longer categorizes but is, rather, open to continuous unfixing, de-archiving, and re-archiving.

We could say that publishing is a protest act that recreates reality, or creates it anew. It is to protest the exclusionary principle which defines the archive when submitted to passive investigation. The dynamics of publishing thus become shaped by forms and means which actively participate in the erosion of this exclusionary principle.

We could say that the practice of publishing should master strategies of camouflage and coding through the political potential of the poetical.

We could—and should—see the practice of publishing as an essential site of resistance and protest.