

volume. I consider both of Markham's books to be very considerable contributions to the history of British bookselling in the latter 20th century.

Since they were conducted in Britain, most of the interviews are understandably with British dealers, with a few exceptions. There is therefore another thing Sheila Markham's two important books make clear: the North American trade needs to have its trade recorded in a similar fashion. With so many of the old famous bookstores already disappeared and now my generation of booksellers already gone or going, our history is in great danger of slipping into, first obscurity, then silence.

I urge the ABAA and the ABAC to take note.

~ REVIEWED BY DAVID MASON

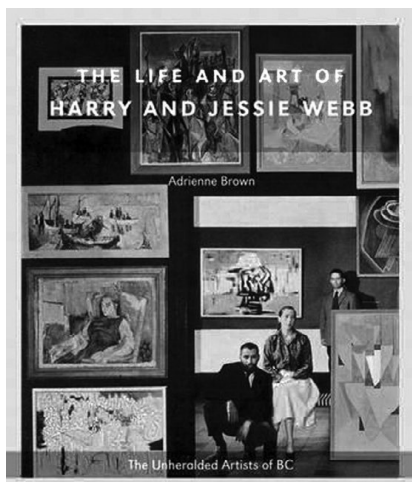
The Life and Art of Harry and Jessie Webb

BY ADRIENNE BROWN.

INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT R. REID

(MOTHER TONGUE PUBLISHING,

2014, \$34.95)



The Unheralded Artists of B.C. series is the brainchild of Mother Tongue publisher Mona Fertig, who deserves our praise on at least three counts: one, the books are beautiful; two, the series redresses a wrong by reviving interest in deserving but neglected artists; three, these books tell us about ourselves,

placing their subjects in the context of the recent cultural past of Western Canada.

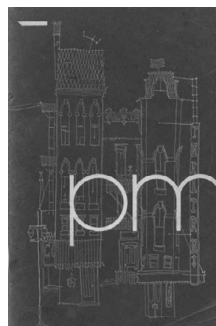
While the first two causes for commendation are applicable to *The Life and Art of Harry and Jessie Webb*, the seventh and most recent volume in the series, the third is perhaps the most important for the purposes of this review.

Two illustrations will serve to set the scene, though neither are among the lush reproductions of the Webbs' work that contribute greatly to the appeal of this book. However, both have associations with master typographer and long-time friend of the Alcuin Society Robert R. Reid, who wrote the book's introduction.

The first is a magazine cover, with ghostly city buildings outlined on a dark background and the letters "pm" in lime-green lower case lettering. It announces the appearance in 1951 of a literary magazine put together with love and hard work by a group of young artists and writers led by George Wright, a 19-year-old student at the Vancouver School of Art (VSA), and Yvonne Agazarian Maartman, later a famous psychologist and principal developer of Systems Centered Therapy.

Reid printed *pm* for free, his expertise in typography and layout complementing the Webbs' enthusiastic knowledge of art and its history. Jessie Webb was art editor, while contributors included poets Phyllis Webb (no relation) and Marya Fiamengo; Bill McConnell, a founding member of the Alcuin Society; artist-musician Al Neil; and artists B.C. Binning, Jack Shadbolt and Harry Webb—none of them yet household names.

A little bigger than a pocketbook, *pm* included abstract art, which enthusiastic readers wanted reproduced as cards. Rather than do this, the team designed original silkscreens and linocuts that could be removed from the magazine, if desired. The magazine lasted just



three issues; however, it was the precursor by a decade of the little magazines of my own early Vancouver years, *Tish* and *Blew Ointment*, whose mimeographed pages and staple-bound format were in sharp (and probably deliberate) contrast to the impeccably produced *pm*.

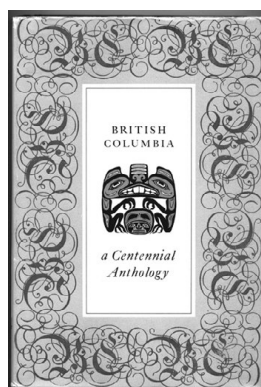
Yet the 1950s was an era when Vancouver's creative juices were flowing. Malcolm Lowry was living in North Vancouver and trying to write *October Ferry to Gabriola*. Aspiring literati gathered around poet and professor Earle Birney, who was busy establishing Canada's first creative writing program at UBC. They read the Beat poets, assembled Heathkit hi-fi music systems, and drank Calona Red from huge bottles.

Meanwhile, vsa instructors Fred Amess and B.C. Binning had launched the Art in Living Group, which inspired the Webbs and their circle with the belief that good design could be morally and spiritually uplifting. The importance of individual participation in planning and designing better environments rang true for the Webbs, who with Al Neil and others founded the legendary Cellar Jazz Club as a gathering place for musicians, artists and writers.

The second illustration dates from 1957 and adorns the cover of the present volume. The photographer was Graham Warrington, and Reid tells how the photo came together in his introduction: "We hung [paintings by 18 contemporary B.C. artists] all over the walls around a doorway in the Vancouver Art Gallery and called Bert Binning, Don Jarvis, and Harry and Jessie Webb to come over right away and be in the photo."

At the time, Reid was designing *British Columbia: A Centennial Anthology*. Commemorating the 1858 union of Vancouver Island and the mainland as a single political entity, the volume was edited by Reginald Eyre Watters and wrapped in a jacket featuring the work of Haida artist Bill Reid. Robert Reid's design for the jacket encloses it like a jewelled frame. The anthology remains a treasured portrait of the province at the conclusion of its first century and a splendid backdrop to everything that has happened here since.

A year later the Webbs again appeared at the Vancouver Art Gallery, as part of an exhibition and accompanying publication, *100 Years of B.C.*



Art. Yet within 20 years, when the VAG prepared *Vancouver: Art and Artists, 1931–1983*, Jessie and Harry Webb have dropped from sight. Why and how did this happen? Adrienne Brown's book intends to answer that question, or at least to tell the story. The sole child of the Webbs, she offers a special perspective and draws Reid and other family friends into the narrative. They happily share their memories, while Brown taps her mother's extensive notes and memorabilia for a rounded picture of her parents, who met while studying at the Vancouver School of Art circa 1948.

Harry Webb (1927–1995) had come west from Toronto to study and found a counterpart in local student Jessie Hetherington (1930–2011). They married in 1950 and survived a decade of constant moving and limited income while producing watercolours, oils, pastels and gouaches, drawings, lithographs, silkscreens and collages, especially their "progressive linocuts." They designed furniture and shoes and anything else which came their way, from Davidson dinghies to a poster for *Krapp's Last Tape*, their personal relationship enriching and enlivening their artistic collaborations and vice versa.

In 1957, the year of Adrienne's birth, Harry began a successful career in landscape architecture, his designs including the Park & Tilford Gardens in North Vancouver. For years Jessie suffered from depression and the stress of balancing the housewife's life with the artist's. After their divorce in 1972 she lived alone, continuing with her printmaking and painting until her death. Both she and Harry wrote poems, represented in the book as elegant sidebars to the visual art.

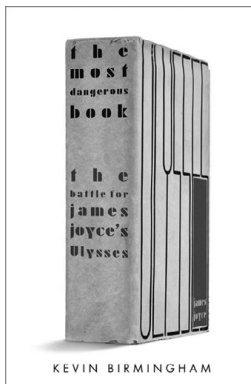
So why are Jessie and Harry and their art considered "unheralded"? Brown hints at

class issues, which at some point excluded her parents from the “in” crowd. The claim is similar to those for artists featured in previous volumes, and it may indeed be the case. On the other hand, I wonder if the answer might be simpler, less conspiratorial: that for a couple of generations, B.C. was blessed with more artistic genius than we could handle or appreciate.

~ REVIEWED BY PHYLLIS REEVE

The Most Dangerous Book: The Battle for James Joyce’s Ulysses

BY KEVIN BIRMINGHAM
(PENGUIN, 2014, \$34.95)



WHILE FACT-CHECKING for this review, I stumbled upon a report of the demise of Imprimerie Darantière. Established in 1870, the distinguished French printer has fallen victim to 21st-century economic realities.

On June 27, 2014, Michel Bachelard, mayor of Quetigny in Dijon, where Darantière was based, issued an emotional press release expressing his sadness at learning of the judicial liquidation of one of the area’s “emblematic” business enterprises. He lamented this most recent blow to the label “made in France” and paid tribute to Darantière’s stature as printer of Gallimard’s prestigious “Pleiade” collection, whose catalogue contains “the greatest works of our literary heritage and world philosophy” (translation mine). The closure is, said Bachelard, “une page douloureuse de l’histoire économique de Quetigny.”

It is also a painful page in cultural history, and far beyond the Quetigny city limits. Among Darantière’s many productions have been fine editions of works by Émile Zola, Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and the Imagist poets, as well as issues of *The Little Review*, the magazine in which appeared the first serial installments of *Ulysses*.

In 1922 Darantière also printed the first edition of the complete *Ulysses*, published by Sylvia Beach of Shakespeare and Company of Paris. The typesetters assembled this monstrous book in a foreign language “by hand, one letter at a time,” while the author returned page proofs covered with new material right up until the moment of publication; this is just one of the episodes in Kevin Birmingham’s “biography” of James Joyce’s novel.

After printing came the no less frustrating and equally adventurous attempts at distribution in the face of police raids and courtroom dramas. I appreciate knowing that Ernest Hemingway facilitated the smuggling of *Ulysses* into Canada from the U.S.

Birmingham’s research focuses on “twentieth-century fiction and culture, literary obscenity and the avant-garde.” This, his first book, provides all that and more. It might have been a chronology of the technical, political and moral challenges facing attempts to publish literary modernism’s greatest book, but because Birmingham can’t bear to leave anything out, *The Most Dangerous Book* becomes a racy account of publishing and printing in the first half of the 20th century. It features biographical tangents on interesting people, some more relevant than others, from poets such as Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot to publishers, including the aforementioned Sylvia Beach and Bennett Cerf, of Random House. Policemen, postmasters and philanthropic lawyers also get their due.

The dolorous news of Darantière’s passing makes Birmingham’s lively and inclusive book all the more valuable as a contribution to the history of books and the varied, unexpected individuals who make them possible.

~ REVIEWED BY PHYLLIS REEVE