

single words or a brief phrase. A bonus for the Carson collector is an envelope of drawings by the writer; *Hö comix*. A remaining bibliographic mystery is that the box of the set I purchased is black, while every photo of it on the Internet, all clearly derived from the Steidl catalogue entry, which is still online, is white.

*Wonderwater* is an example of a title that is likely to be more elusive because buyers (collectors and libraries) with different collection focuses are drawn to it. In this instance it is not difficult to imagine Horn, Bourgeois, Carson and even Waters enthusiasts needing the set. I am not so sure Cixous will attract collecting interest *but* I stand to be corrected.

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I recently purchased *The Art of McSweeney's* (Chronicle, 2010) and wish I had had it to hand when I discussed the press in *Amphora* 153. A heavily illustrated oral history on the publisher, the volume captures the motivations and modus operandi of a collective devoted to the pleasures of the book as object. Coming as he does from a generation much more likely to be immersed in the digital world, McSweeney's devotion to books as "things we want to keep" is heartening:

We came together and remain together  
only out of a mutual love of words...  
and are committed to the neverending  
process of reinventing bookmaking to best  
guarantee those words live and last.

*The Art of McSweeney's* goes well beyond the visual to encompass fascinating details on author relations, editing, design, production and budgeting for many of their titles, including all issues of the journal up to number 31.

Reproductions of late-19th and early-20th-century book covers and title pages from the press "reference shelf" point to the inspiration for the look of many McSweeney's titles. Of particular interest are descriptions of the interactions between designers and printers, most notably Oddi, the Icelandic printer for the majority of early McSweeney's titles. Detailed printing specifications are provided along with the

costing for many of the "bells and whistles" (to use their phrase) that have made McSweeney's productions unique. For example, I now know that leatherette case wrap will cost \$2.30 per unit and a fold-out poster-sized dust jacket with printing on both sides (see the volume under review as an example) will cost \$0.27 per unit.

Of particular interest to the collector are the details behind variant states for some titles. For example, *McSweeney's* number 11 appeared in three different coloured leatherette covers for the simple reason that the printer didn't have stock of one colour for the full press run. It turns out that the orange cover of 1,800 copies will be much more elusive than the black cover of 9,000 copies.

The third printing of Dave Eggers' *What Is the What* in red was 10,000 copies but will also prove elusive (in these parts at least) as most of the print run went to Ohio State University, which assigned the book to its entire incoming freshman class. This is the kind of deep background that sets a collector's adrenaline surging.

All in all, *The Art of McSweeney's* provides fascinating insights into a seemingly quixotic publishing enterprise. Highly recommended.

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~ Paul Whitney is city librarian at the Vancouver Public Library.

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## REVIEWS

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### *Through Darkling Air: The Poetry of Richard Outram*

BY PETER SANGER  
(GASPEREAU PRESS, 2010, \$65.95)

IT HAS BEEN EIGHT YEARS since the last publication of the Gauntlet Press was issued. Peter Sanger's study *Through Darkling Air: The Poetry of Richard Outram* has brought the Gauntlet Press, the private press run by Outram and his wife, Barbara Howard, back into people's consciousness.

Will Ransom, in *Private Presses and Their Books*, recognized the Gauntlet Press as a

significant example of the private press as the typographic expression of a personal ideal, conceived in freedom and maintained in independence. In 1954, having recently graduated from the University of Toronto, Richard Outram moved to London, England, where he met Barbara Howard. She had graduated from the Ontario College of Art and was in England for further study with the aim of becoming a professional artist. Outram began to write poetry about this time.

In England, Howard and Outram encountered the English private press movement. This was the inspiration for Christmas cards they sent during this period. Howard designed a wood engraving. Outram provided the poem that served as the text.

In the late 1950s they returned to Canada and were married. The best man at their wedding was Allan Fleming, the noted Canadian designer. Fleming's imprint, the Tortoise Press, published Outram's first book of poetry in 1959 (the only book issued by that press). Outram had six of his poems published in the second number (July 1961) of James Reaney's journal on literature and the arts, *Alphabet*. Fleming designed *Alphabet* and Reaney set all of the text by hand, making it something of a journal in the private press tradition.

It was out of this background that Outram and Howard resolved in 1960 to set up their own private press, which they called the Gauntlet Press. Howard continued to pursue her work as a painter and wood engraver with a great deal of success. Meanwhile, Outram wrote poetry while working as a stagehand for CBC Television in Toronto.

Gauntlet Press publications reflected the intense collaboration of these two artists. Together they designed the broadsides or books, set the type and printed them by hand, often using more than one colour. Howard provided the wood engravings and bound the books. The pair were committed to printing only what they wanted to print. Until the 1990s this was restricted to Outram's poetry and Howard's wood engravings. Broadsides with poems by writers that Outram admired were published in the 1990s.

All of the design elements reflected Howard's training as a visual artist. Each book or broadside was a work of art showing careful consideration

as to the choice of endpapers, text papers, colours and binding. Howard and Outram isolated themselves from the commercial pressures that restrict independence. Generally speaking, the books and broadsides were not sold but given to friends. If any were left over after this distribution, these might be sold. This practice, not typical in the private press world, combined with the small editions, might explain why Gauntlet Press items rarely come on the market.

The primary aim of Peter Sanger's *Through Darkling Air* is to bring Outram's poetry to the notice of scholars and the general public and show that it is very deserving of attention.

In discussing Outram's poetry, Sanger has of necessity discussed the Gauntlet Press and the bringing together of Howard's design ideas and wood engravings with Outram's poetry. It is not my purpose here to comment on how successful Sanger is in achieving his aims. Rather, I wish to point out that *Through Darkling Air* provides a unique opportunity to gain some insight into these two artists and their private press. A potential reader should note that these discussions by the author are distributed through a text of 433 pages although somewhat concentrated in two chapters.

From 1960 to 1988, the Gauntlet Press printed everything by letterpress, with wood engravings printed from the wood. After 1989, the Gauntlet Press produced its books and broadsides electronically and printed them on an ink-jet printer.

As the publisher of *Through Darkling Air*, Gaspereau has given us something more than critical commentary in this book. It contains 32 pages of colour illustrations of Gauntlet Press broadsides and pages from books. Howard made liberal use of colour in the Gauntlet Press publications. The wood engravings were printed in various colours of ink. Titles were frequently printed in a colour of ink different from the rest of the text.

These illustrations include pages from three books produced in the early 1970s: *Creatures*, *Locus* and *Arbor*. In particular, plate 37 stands out. Here we see reproduced on two pages face to face what is an exquisite double-page spread in the original, *Creatures*. One only wishes that the pages were reproduced to size, but the plates do provide original measurements, and

readers can get a good sense of the layout.

As one would expect in a work focusing on Outram's poetry, *Through Darkling Air* does not contain bibliographic descriptions of the Gauntlet Press publications. Outram published a few items after Howard's death in 2002 but did not use the imprint of the Gauntlet Press as the publisher. Pages from some of these are also illustrated. Richard Outram died in January 2005.

As a physical object, this is an outstanding visual publication. The text comprises 460 pages plus the aforementioned 32 pages of illustrations, containing 71 images. A substantial number of the images are in full colour. The endpapers reflect Barbara Howard's designs as does the covering of the boards. The author's name and the title appear on the spine. The whole is wrapped in a paper that appears to be a Japanese sheet. Nothing is printed on this sheet.

As issued by the publisher, the book also has a paper collar on which the author's name, the book's title and the publisher's name appear. I purchased my copy in April; the Japanese sheet has faded a little over the summer where it was not covered by the collar. This is my only disappointment. A price approaching \$70 is expensive but justifiable given the number of pages and fine production values. For those of us who want to delve deeper and develop an understanding of the creative process in the making of a book as an art object, *Through Darkling Air* is a treat.

~ REVIEWED BY CHESTER GRYSKI

## *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing*

BY GAIL EDWARDS & JUDITH SALTMAN  
(UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, 2010,  
\$125 CLOTH, \$39.95 PAPER)

TO BEGIN WITH A CONFESSION: I bought this book for its cover. Who could resist that moose, or his companion fauna, flora and landscape, painted by C.W. Jeffreys for *Uncle Jim's Canadian Nursery Rhymes for Family and Kindergarten Use* (1908)? After reading *Picturing*

*Canada*, I find myself not wanting to shelve it because it looks so happy on my coffee table.

It is not, however, a picture book, despite its 20 colour plates, 40 black and white illustrations, and chapter heading icons borrowed from the cover image. Nor is it a typical academic tome, despite its 132 pages of notes and bibliography, its comprehensive index, its nine-page "Chronology of Children's Print History in Canada," and its professional methodology of exhaustive research described in the introduction. It's a story.

Our narrative begins far back in the 18th century. The first adventure, "Beginnings to the 1890s: Canadian Children's Books in the Imperial Era," carries on over several generations to the second, "The 1890s to the 1950s," and the time of my role as a Canadian child. The third, "The Postwar Period: Creating a Children's Publishing Industry," leads logically to the fourth, "The 1970s: Developing a Children's Publishing Industry," and fifth, "The 1980s: The Flowering of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books."

By this time I have acquired several Canadian children of my own as well as a degree in librarianship. Our story is going along swimmingly and I become a bookseller and a grandmother, but villains persist astride economic dragons as we approach "The 1990s: Structural Challenges and Changes," and we thrill to the valiant continuing struggles of "Children's Illustrated Books, 1990 to the Present Day." The conclusion is necessarily a cliff-hanger, as we ponder "Canadian Cultural Identity; Canadian Cultural Identities."

The overall story pits our hero/ines, feisty publishers such as May Cutler, William Toye and Patsy Aldana, backed by a small but fierce army of librarians, critics and booksellers like Irene Aubrey, Michelle Landsberg and Judy Sarick, champion writers and authors (Elizabeth Cleaver, Frank Newfield, Dennis Lee, Dayal Kaur Khalsa, Marie-Louise Gay, Ian Wallace and others too many to name), and of course our children, against the dastardly enemies Ignorance, Indifference, Skepticism and Scarcity.

Edwards and Saltman earn their place in the current front lines through their scholarship and lucidity, but they transform this reference tool into treasure whenever they linger over the description of form and content in a specific