

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

book—*A Canadian Child's ABC* (1931), for instance, or *Something from Nothing* (1992)—to name only two from a multitude of loving pauses.

Along the way they set themselves a series of riddles: “What do Canadian children see when they pick up an illustrated Canadian children’s book? How have creators and publishers shaped the image of Canada presented in children’s books? Have those images changed over time, and why? What role do illustrated books play in the creation of communities of readers? And, finally, why have critics argued that Canadian children need children’s books in order to develop a Canadian cultural identity?” Their proffered answers point beyond the bounds of the specific topic and into the labyrinth of Canada’s beleaguered publishing industry.

They do not mention Harbour Publishing, which has kept *Timmy the West Coast Tug* in print for two generations, or Whitecap’s Walrus Books, or the tale of Raincoast’s dramatic encounter with the magic alien Harry Potter. On the other hand, I rejoice that Canadian children’s books are too numerous for one volume to embrace them all. As a seller of books for, by and about coastal British Columbians, I marvel at the large percentage of shelf space occupied by kids’ books. Please, let’s not let the story of *Picturing Canada* end any time soon.

~ REVIEWED BY PHYLLIS REEVE

The Art of the Book 08

MALTWOOD GALLERY, MCPHERSON
LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA,
UNTIL JANUARY 5, 2011

THE CANADIAN BOOKBINDERS and Book Artists Guild was established in 1983 and since that time has held an exhibition of members’ work every five years. The exhibition of 2008 has been travelling around the country and this year finishes its tour with a flourish at the McPherson Library, University of Victoria, in the Maltwood Gallery—the exhibition’s sole showing in British Columbia.

The exhibition is very professionally put together. Past shows have been curated by two

dedicated and hard-working people, Shelagh Smith and Susan Corrigan. Three jurors are enlisted to jury the applications; this year they included the fine printer Crispin Elsted of Barbarian Press, the fine binder Nicole Billard and the book artist Edward Hutchins. Fine printing, fine binding, calligraphy, hand paper making, paper decoration, box making and artist books are the categories for entry, although many of these may be represented in the same piece of work.

As most of the exhibits are books, the glass-topped display cases and plinths in the gallery are ideal and show the works to best advantage. The plinths allow a 360-degree view of the 3D works, and if you are able to go on one of the tours, the guide will take out some of the exhibits to show further pages.

There were approximately 250 submissions, of which less than 75 were selected. These came not only from Canada, but the USA, U.K. and Japan. Shelagh Smith remarks in Peter Sramek’s essay in the exhibition catalogue, “The quality of work in this year’s submissions is far greater overall than in the past.” The catalogue is worth obtaining; it runs to 95 pages, with each exhibit beautifully photographed on its own page, a fitting tribute to this CBBAG 25th-anniversary celebration. Sramek’s essay thoughtfully explores some of the questions that inevitably arise out of this exhibition and seeks to put those varied arts into context as part of the “book as a functioning entity.”

CBBAG (as it is affectionately known) has in recent years made changes to its constitution to allow the establishment of regional groups. CBBAG BC Islands is an active “chapter” established a few years ago to foster the practice of the various book arts, by putting on workshops, “show and tell” meetings and visits, as decided by the members. BC as a whole, and Vancouver Island in particular, are well represented in this exhibition with at least 10 entries from BC, and seven of those from Vancouver Island. We can safely say that the book arts are alive and well in Canada.

In addition to the Maltwood Gallery and previous locations across Canada, the CBBAG exhibition is also available for viewing online at www.cbbag.ca/AB08Web/AB08.html.

~ REVIEWED BY JAN KELLETT