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published for its members by

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA



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A BRIEF EDITORIAL MANIFESTO BASED ON ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF TRADITION WITH A FEW MINOR SUGGESTIONS TO ACCOUNT FOR CHANGES IN OUR PERCEPTION OF FINE PRINTING IN THE REAL WEST

by Peter Rutledge Koch



The first issue of The Book Club of California *Quarterly News-Letter* (Volume 1, Number 1, May 1933) opens with a note from editor Oscar Lewis:

The publication of a quarterly bulletin is a new venture for the Club, and the appearance of this first number requires, perhaps, a word of explanation. The need for a vehicle by which information about Club activities can be supplied regularly to members, and in which policies and projects can be discussed, has for some time been evident. The first purpose of the “News-Letter,” hence, is to serve as a medium for promoting a closer relationship between the Club and its members.

Today, I invite you all to use this *News-Letter* to discuss policies and introduce projects. Letters to the Editor will be published, reviews will appear, and announcements will be made. Your editor needs information and written correspondence to keep our membership informed.

Lewis goes on to state that the *News-Letter* is to function as “a résumé not only for Book Club activities but [also for] allied fields that touch the interests of collectors ... of fine and rare books, and in western literature and typography.”

The Winter issue of 1934 was largely dedicated to western literature including the informative article, “Letters of Western Writers and the Literature of the High Sierra.” Mentioned in the issue were exemplary Book Club publications like *The Letters of Ambrose Bierce* and Robinson Jeffers’ *Poems*. Pursuing the matter further, I noted that in the first years of the Club’s existence (from 1914-1920) the Club published twelve books in all, nine of which were poetry and fiction by authors living in Oregon and northern California. The writers included: Bret Harte, Ina Coolbrith, Sarah Bard Field, Edwin Markham, Ambrose Bierce, George Sterling, and Clark Ashton Smith—a truly impressive array of the literary stars of that time.

One hundred years later, pursuing our original mandate and a continuing dedication to the literature of California and the West, the Club will offer the short stories of Stegner Fellow Monique Wentzel (see Jennifer Sime's article about this collection in this issue) and Carolee Campbell's masterfully edited, designed, and produced *Poetry At the Edge: Five Contemporary California Poets*.



In Volume III, Number 1, (June 1935), the legendary bookman and chairman of the Book Club's publications committee, Albert Bender, suggested that a new publishing program be established based on concerns current in 1935, as distinguished from those of twenty years earlier at the Club's founding (Bender had, interestingly, been chair of the publications committee for all of those years!):

A brief review of our publishing activities in the past will explain the present situation. During our first decade, the problem of what to print, and how to print it, was much less complicated than it has since become. We then occupied the always interesting position of pioneers;...[publishing] what was then called "the book beautiful."

Our course is not yet definitely laid out, but I believe its general direction is clearly indicated. We should, of course, continue to maintain a high typographical standard in our publications; such changes as we make should be, not in the physical excellence of our books, but in the choice of texts...With the spread of good printing, desirable editions of all the major and minor English classics have become available to the collector, and the Club may safely leave this field to others....

Does this indicate that our future publishing field must be a narrow one? By no means! We are the only book collectors club in the West with a regular publishing programme. The mere fact of our geographical position constitutes both an opportunity and a challenge. With the literature of the entire Pacific Coast to draw from, and with the Far East at our door, we are assured of a profusion of opportunities....We should begin by recognizing that this is our logical field, and that we should devote our major effort to seeking out and publishing literary material closely identified with this territory.

From my own perspective, eighty years later, I find little to dispute. I would only suggest that the Pacific Coast include our northern and southern neighbors (from Alaska to Chile) and that the literary West include a considerable portion of the Rocky Mountains—from British Columbia to Arizona—and the mighty Great Basin as well. Western regions that may have seemed to San Francisco bibliophiles of the first half of the twentieth century to be literary wastelands or inhabited only by regional hacks have proven otherwise over time, and we could do well by keeping the powerful literature arising from Montana to Mexico in our sights. With the convenience and speed of modern communications, the West has grown considerably and we must grow with it.

With this historic perspective on publishing in mind, I have been moved to a new and higher level of appreciation for what we have accomplished by our collaborative efforts over the past century. The "we" in this case includes great bookmen and women: printers, readers, writers, booksellers, artists, and craftsmen whose lives have been infused with the principles of fine workmanship and a highly developed sense of responsibility for the cultural values that the civilizations of the book inspire.

Revisiting the early issues of the *Quarterly News-Letter* has only served to increase my faith in the aesthetic presence and moral value of print as a medium for disseminating information while providing an occasion for pleasure. There is something quite uniquely calm and restorative about sitting in one's own library, perhaps in a pool of warm light generated by a sturdy reading lamp, and simply enjoying a quiet hour with a good book. Time stretches out and becomes transparent during such moments—rewarding the reader at times with a diffuse and gentle lucidity.

WHAT IS FINE PRINTING ANYWAY? PART I

by Peter Rutledge Koch

I have, on a number of occasions, been privy to a conversation with a curator in one or another of our great institutional libraries where the statement, "Oh, we don't collect Fine Printing," has been made. Imagine my shock! Please understand, I am a connoisseur of excuses, and can appreciate the wit and wisdom of "We never buy books by living printers," or "We never by books that include the artist's bodily secretions," etc. But "We don't collect fine printing" is, to my mind, an excuse both lame and ignorant of the meaning of the term "fine printing." It's like saying "I don't eat finely prepared food." I readily understand when a dinner guest pronounces, "I never eat braised duck," because surely our guest is rejecting the duck and not the degree of skill with which the duck was prepared. That would be an insult to the cook! To be generous, I usually surmise that the curator meant to say, "We don't collect gentleman's library books prepared with too much sauce and too little meat." In fact, upon reflection, I rather like *that* excuse, especially after having read Joseph Brodsky's description of a certain Venetian nobleman's library in his lyrical essay *Watermark*:

At the far end of the gallery our host flitted to the right, and we followed him into a room which appeared to be a cross between the library and the study of a seventeenth-century gentleman. Judging by the books behind the criss-crossed wire in the red, wardrobe-size wooden cabinet, the gentleman's century could have been the sixteenth. There were about sixty fat, white, velum-bound volumes, from Aesop to Zeno; just enough for a gentleman; more would turn him into a penseur, with disastrous consequences either for his manners or for his estate.

These and similar overheard excuses prompt me to attempt to present a short exploration of the meaning of the phrase Fine Printing. As I see it, a book finely made is not a work of mere craftsmanship or expensive, labor-intensive cosmetic puffery, but a collaboration among writer, printer, typographer, illustrator, book binder, papermaker, and finally, reader, each having mastered his or her own craft, profession, or interest. I should add, each one having risked following his or her art to the farthest limits

of his or her considerable ability. To this end, I have of late been rereading selected early twentieth-century writers on printing to determine what others, far wiser than I, have said about fine press books and fine printing during its golden age (Note: The age of the "Ideal Book" is excellently described by Megan Benton in *Beauty and the Book: Fine Editions and Cultural Distinction in America*, Yale University Press, 2000).

One of the most succinct explanations I uncovered was written by Ruth Shepard Granniss, Grolier Club librarian and lecturer, and published in *The History of the Printed Book* (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1938). In her article "Modern Fine Printing," Granniss brings to bear her considerable ability to digest and clearly propound what she firmly believed to be the true characteristics of the finely printed book. After a brief nod to her intellectual forebears, William Morris, Theodore Low De Vinne, Daniel Berry Updike, and Stanley Morrison, Granniss begins her essay with the question, "What is fine printing?" She continues:

Let us say, then, that printing, to be good, distinguished, fine, must concern itself first with the type, which must be adequate for expressing legibly, sanely, and suitably the matter in hand. The words and lines must be correctly spaced, the registration and impression faultless, the margins in the right proportions, the opposite pages properly related to each other, the ink and inking perfect, the paper firm and appropriate. Effect should not be sought by eccentricities.

Success in all these particulars presupposes a thorough knowledge of his craft and of its history on the part of the printer, who can achieve that success only by putting into his work the best effort of which he is capable. He must have the intelligence to use all the resources at his command, and to have thoroughly conquered the intricacies of the machine, whether modern or primitive. He must have taste and the aesthetic discernment which will guide him in his choice of paper and ink and teach him to adapt the type to the text, the ornament to the type, and the illustration to the whole. He must know the principles of design and the possibilities of the use of color in printing and he must be able to obtain the best results with the least strain to the reader's eye.

The above heroic-sounding description of a printer draws a flattering picture of what would seem to be a lost profession—a printer with all the

qualities of a scholar, a craftsman, and a typographer with highly refined taste and unerring judgment. A little later on Granniss states:

A last element which the printer must take into consideration is the binding, whether it is to be done under his own eye from his own design, or by an outsider. The exterior of his book may mean, however unfairly, the success or failure of his entire work. Again he must know the evolution of styles, the proper and timely use of leather, cloth, boards, and paper and must be sure the forwarding will be honest, the finishing suitable and clean cut, the lettering sensible and legible.

Fine printing, then, is that which in materials, in typography, in ornament and illustration, makes a harmonious, beautiful, and above all, legible whole, appropriate to its use, but not subserviently so. It may be accomplished for commerce or for private purposes, by hand or power press, provided the printer puts into it his very best and most intelligent effort, after acquiring mastery over his craft and its possibilities. All this has been said many times in many ways, but it cannot be too often reiterated.

What is certain and “of the moment” for the members of The Book Club of California in the year 2014 is that, 102 years after we began and 75 years since Ruth Granniss penned her eloquent essay, the principles she so concisely stated, and for which we currently stand, are both moving and still fundamentally at risk.

Perhaps the greatest threat is that we have been losing at a very rapid rate the scholar-printer-typographer—a professional of infinite patience and deep learning. Today, the job of typographer has largely been replaced by a word processing program that makes decisions—unfortunately too much like the robot that it is—mechanically. We witness every day the ridiculous and profuse typographic errors and gaffes that are found in most books, journals, and magazines produced since the advent of “desktop publishing.” To quote the great authority, Daniel Berkeley Updike:

The practice of typography, if it be followed faithfully, is hard work—full of detail, full of petty restrictions, full of drudgery, and not greatly rewarded as men now count rewards. There are times when we need to bring to it all the history and art and feeling that we can, to make

it bearable. But in the light of history, and of art, and of knowledge and man's achievement, it is as interesting a work as exists—a broad and humanizing employment which can indeed be followed merely as a trade, but which if perfected into an art, or even broadened into a profession, will perpetually open new horizons to our eyes and new opportunities to our hands.

There are, of course, professional book design and production specialists still working today who do indeed follow in the footsteps of the great masters. However, I fear they are in the minority and not exactly flourishing in today's competitive and nervous atmosphere.

At the risk of boring you with too many perfectly poised and brilliant old examples, I will end this brief preface to the study of Fine Printing on that exquisite simile drawn from Beatrice Warde's classic, *Printing Should be Invisible*:

Imagine that you have before you a flagon of wine. You may choose your own favourite vintage for this imaginary demonstration, so that it be a deep shimmering crimson in colour. You have two goblets before you. One is of solid gold, wrought in the most exquisite patterns. The other is of crystal-clear glass, thin as a bubble, and as transparent. Pour and drink; and according to your choice of goblet, I shall know whether or not you are a connoisseur of wine. For if you have no feelings about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain.

Bear with me in this long-winded and fragrant metaphor; for you will find that almost all the virtues of the perfect wine-glass have a parallel in typography. There is the long, thin stem that obviates fingerprints on the bowl. Why? Because no cloud must come between your eyes and the fiery heart of the liquid. Are not the margins on book pages similarly meant to obviate the necessity of fingering the type-page? Again: the glass is colourless or at the most only faintly tinged in the bowl, because the connoisseur judges wine partly by its

colour and is impatient of anything that alters it. There are a thousand mannerisms in typography that are as impudent and arbitrary as putting port in tumblers of red or green glass! When a goblet has a base that looks too small for security, it does not matter how cleverly it is weighted; you feel nervous lest it should tip over. There are ways of setting lines of type which may work well enough, and yet keep the reader subconsciously worried by the fear of 'doubling' lines, reading three words as one, and so forth....

If you agree with this, you will agree with my one main idea, i.e. that the most important thing about printing is that it conveys thought, ideas, images, from one mind to other minds. This statement is what you might call the front door of the science of typography. Within lie hundreds of rooms; but unless you start by assuming that printing is meant to convey specific and coherent ideas, it is very easy to find yourself in the wrong house altogether....

Printing demands a humility of mind, for the lack of which many of the fine arts are even now floundering in self-conscious and maudlin experiments. There is nothing simple or dull in achieving the transparent page. Vulgar ostentation is twice as easy as discipline. When you realise that ugly typography never effaces itself, you will be able to capture beauty as the wise men capture happiness by aiming at something else. The 'stunt typographer' learns the fickleness of rich men who hate to read. Not for them are long breaths held over serif and kern, they will not appreciate your splitting of hair-spaces. Nobody (save the other craftsmen) will appreciate half your skill. But you may spend endless years of happy experiment in devising that crystalline goblet which is worthy to hold the vintage of the human mind.

Warde's eloquent piece rewards the reader with rhetorical precision and has subsequently had a profound influence on quality trade book design throughout the twentieth century. By the 1970s, however, Beatrice's essay raised more questions than it answered for experimentally minded artists, critics, and connoisseurs of modern book design, contemporary book arts, and artist's books. Young turks began to question the idea that a typeface or choice of style could be in any way "invisible." Current and critical thinking understands that every design choice employs considerations of taste, gender, class prejudice, etc., and all are "visible" in the object. Take this passage, for example:

We may say, therefore, that printing may be delightful for many reasons, but that it is important, first and foremost, as a means of doing something. That is why it is mischievous to call any printed piece a work of art, especially fine art: because that would imply that its first purpose was to exist as an expression of beauty for its own sake and for the delectation of the senses. Calligraphy can almost be considered a fine art nowadays, because its primary economic and educational purpose has been taken away; but printing in English will not qualify as an art until the present English language no longer conveys ideas to future generations, and until printing itself hands its usefulness to some yet unimagined successor.

There are arguments abroad today declaring that the "unimagined successor" has already arrived and that only old-timers prefer books, while the young, in fifty years time, will have never even seen a book but only texts on reading devices. These arguments are generally aimed either at proving that the "book arts" are relevant as art practice and not to be confused with industrial craft, or at convincing the listener of how modern and up-to-date the speaker is, while at the same time encouraging a consumer instinct to buy more pads, devices, and electronic books. But something about Warde's thinking lingers in the imagination and rings true when we regard books from the reader's point of view.

But to my point! The above quoted thoughts and opinions, though still relevant, are from days long past when lead type was the norm and printing was still considered a noble profession. In part two of this essay—to be published in the Summer 2014 QN-L—I will attempt to sketch the outlines of an updated concept of fine printing, taking into consideration new imaging technologies and the recent and related field of the book arts as practiced around the world today.

FORTHCOMING FROM THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE:
 MONIQUE WENTZEL'S *THE WOODS WERE NEVER QUIET*
 by Jennifer Sime, Executive Director

This spring, The Book Club of California will release its 232nd publication, a collection of short stories by Monique Wentzel titled *The Woods Were Never Quiet*. Wentzel earned her MFA at Portland State University and is the recipient of a Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University. Her work has appeared in the literary journals *ZYZZYVA* and *Cimarron Review*. Anthony Marra, author of the novel *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*, which was a National Book Award nominee in 2013, has described Wentzel as “a writer of remarkable talent. Her stories incise the shell of daily life to reveal the strange, the heartbreaking, and the joyful.”

The stories in this collection take place in mostly rural and semi-rural areas in Northern California, along the California-Arizona border, and in suburban locations around the San Francisco Bay. In an interview, Wentzel explained:

Most of the stories in The Woods Were Never Quiet were born out of encounters with specific landscapes in California, mostly rural pockets of the state, which are not necessarily totemic of California, but to my mind are completely Californian and western. If I have any kind of process, I'd say that I conjure the feeling of a particular landscape first, then characters who belong to that landscape emerge, and those characters tend to have stories of their own to tell, predicaments they've gotten themselves into.

Wentzel is a fifth generation Californian. Her parents both grew up in Humboldt County, and she was raised primarily in the Napa Valley but also has ties to Mendocino County, the Central Valley, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Asked how being a Californian might figure in her work, Wentzel responded:

I don't think there's any credit to be gained for having roots in the state, but at the same time, it affects my writing in this simple way: place is overlaid with story. In other words, having roots and history here makes place synonymous with story, though the stories in this

collection are not autobiographical. I also sincerely hope that having roots here complicates my understanding of certain issues and conflicts that we face in the West. For example, knowing both loggers and environmentalists on a personal level dispels easy judgments while heightening one's regard for the kind of tensions that are at the heart of a compelling story.

The voices, lives, and settings we encounter in these stories are distinct from one another, yet an astute sensibility runs through the collection and renders the differences resonant and memorable. One source of both the unity and variety within Wentzel's stories is her attention to the economic situation of the characters:

Someone once pointed out that people in my stories tend to find unconventional ways to make a living, and that is true. They chop firewood, grow marijuana, sell corn and cotton seed, raise chickens, or at the opposite end of the spectrum work in sales or international investment. I suppose that to me, this too is quintessentially Californian—this incredible economic diversity from the most robust economic engines in the world to pretty extreme poverty.

Another commonality throughout the collection is the uneasy presence of nature. The book's title points to nature as dynamic—as a force defying expectations—and the characters are caught up in individual struggles for mastery over it or for their place within it. For Wentzel, “There is something about confronting nature from the vantage of our comfortable modern positions that is quite compelling to me. I'm fascinated by the spectrum of compassion to cruelty that this confrontation brings to the surface, what it says about us as modern, western people.”

Both compassion and cruelty are vivid in Wentzel's writing, which achieves an artful balance of detail and restraint. These stories have been developed and refined over the past two years, during the period of Wentzel's Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University. Wallace Stegner, the celebrated writer and environmentalist, founded Stanford's creative writing department and the fellowship program in 1946. Two-year fellowships—ten in poetry and ten in fiction—are given annually to allow emerging writers to develop their craft in workshops with senior

faculty members at the university. Stegner originally intended the fellowships to benefit returning WWII servicemen, but since then the program has nurtured many remarkable writers, including Ken Kesey, Raymond Carver, Philip Levine, Tobias Woolf, Wendell Berry, and ZZ Packer. For Wentzel, the fellowship has provided an opportunity to focus on her mastery of the short story form, and the occasion to develop a group of stories that would work as a collection. She writes:

*Not everyone who goes through the program, of course, is a western writer, but Wallace Stegner himself had a special connection and commitment to the West, and so it has seemed appropriate to work on these particular stories during my stint as a Stegner Fellow, and to consider the ways that Californians come to the land with many intentions, with diverse forms of exploitation or appreciation. California is a place of strong humanism in extreme situations: wealth and poverty, population density and isolation, and I find the intersection of characters in these extremes is where the most interesting stories occur. I love this quote from Stegner's *The Sound of Mountain Water*: "One cannot be pessimistic about the West. This is the native home of hope. When it fully learns that cooperation, not rugged individualism, is the quality that most characterizes and preserves it, then it will have achieved itself and outlived its origins. Then it has a chance to create a society to match its scenery."*

The publication of this collection by The Book Club of California is the result of a new collaboration with Stanford University, but continues a tradition of publishing significant literary works, notably those of Ambrose Bierce, Robinson Jeffers, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Designed and printed by Jonathan Clark of The Artichoke Press and including drawings by artist Jessica Dunne, this publication brings together the excellence of craft—writing, fine printing, and art—that gives the California fine press tradition its unique quality and reputation. As former Book Club president John Crichton has noted: "Our members have always had access to great content but also to printers and fine press bookmakers. It's a fascinating convergence of books and content."

REPORT FROM THE TORONTO ANTIQUARIAN BOOK FAIR
NOVEMBER 8-10, 2013
by Bruce Whiteman

The Antiquarian Book Fair in Toronto has a somewhat checkered history, but recently it has been going strong. This year, for the first time, it was held at the Art Gallery of Ontario, in the heart of downtown Toronto, in an appropriately-sized room on the third floor, well beyond the throng lining up for a David Bowie show (of all things). There is some wonderful art at this great museum. The collections feature primarily Canadian art, but there are some fine pictures from the entire history of European art, beginning with stunning medieval ivories and progressing to Picasso, Franz Klein, and beyond. At one point, when I needed a respite from books, I wandered into a small "donor" show and happened upon a picture by Jules Pascin. A nude from 1920, the painting captivated me and kept me in its presence long after prudence dictated that I should move on. I didn't want to leave her, never, ever.

But the books called me back. There were thirty-two dealers at the fair, and while most were Canadian, there was a smattering of foreign dealers as well: three from the United States, two from England, and one from France. This may seem Lilliputian compared to the California fair, but all the same there were many interesting books to be found among the dealers' booths. Canadian Border Services does not make it easy for foreign dealers to participate. Any non-Canadian dealer bringing books into the country for the fair has to post a non-refundable bond, and has to collect and pay sales tax on every book sold *at its declared value*. Never mind that the \$7,500 book you bring to Toronto is sold to a fellow dealer for a 20 percent discount, or, in the dying hours, is wholesaled to a collector for an even deeper discount. You still pay the tax at the retail price. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that the foreign contingent was small. Kudos are due to Thomas Goldwasser, The Kelmscott Bookshop, Jeff Marks, two dealers from England, and Rudolphe Chamonal for braving the well-caparisoned horses of bureaucracy and coming to Dundas Street in spite of the difficulties.

A book fair is good or bad depending on the books there. For the dealers, a fair's success depends on whether or not they sell and buy books, of course, but for the gadfly fluttering from booth to booth without much

polymer in his wallet (the Canadian mint recently switched from paper money to this strange new slippery form), it remains fun if what is to be seen is stimulating and unusual. I am happy to report that there were lots of good books at the Toronto fair—Canadian stuff (as one would expect) but also other material. Among the Canadian offerings, I was struck by a copy of the poet E.J. Pratt's first book, a dull but quite uncommon study of St. Paul's views on the end of the world entitled *Studies in Pauline Eschatology* (1917). Pratt, who was an ordained minister, came from Newfoundland and helped introduce Modernism to Canadian literature, so this book, while not a thriller, nevertheless belongs in any collection of twentieth-century Canadian poetry. At \$825 (Spadina Road Books) it seemed relatively cheap. The first book by Morley Callaghan, Pratt's contemporary and an important Canadian novelist of the first modernist generation, seemed not just cheap but a true bargain. *No Man's Meat* was published in Paris (where Callaghan famously bested no less a person than Ernest Hemingway in a boxing match), by Edward Titus in 1931, in a signed and numbered edition of just 525 copies (Wilfrid de Freitas, \$100). There was also a good deal of antiquarian Canadiana, needless to say, including three copies of Mackenzie's *Voyage* (1801) but also, more unusual, a hand-colored copy of Thomas Heriot's well-known *Travels Through the Canadas*, 1807, not expensive at \$6,500 (David Ewens Books). And no Canadian book fair would be complete without a copy (two, actually, at \$1,200 and \$1,500 respectively) of *The Colophon*, the lovely American book-collecting journal, the fifth issue of which was illustrated with a hand-pulled print by the great Canadian artist David Milne ("Hill-Top"). Long gone are the days when Canadian dealers would buy this issue for \$5 in the U.S. and sell it in Canada for \$500, yet the print remains a beautiful, beautiful thing. But the Canadian book whose price most took my breath away was by none other than Mr. Leonard Cohen. His first book was a poetry collection entitled *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956, getting on sixty years ago). The Word, a Montreal bookstore, had a copy for—gulp—\$10,000. *That will take you down, Suzanne.*

There were many nice things apart from Canadiana, of course, even among the Canadian booksellers. Abelard Books of Toronto had a copy of the Baskerville *Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius* (1762), not a rare book by any means, but this copy from the library of Sir Thomas Phillipps (before he was a baronet), was priced attractively at \$750. The same dealer

had a nice copy of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, the second edition of 1554, at a more substantial \$15,000. D. & E Lake, also of Toronto, capitalizing on the recent film perhaps, offered a copy from the "Twentieth Thousand" of Solomon Northrup's autobiographical *Twelve Years a Slave* (1854, \$1,250), while Paul Foster from the U.K had a signed copy of Ian Fleming's rather better known spy novel, *Goldfinger*, at, yikes, \$30,000. (Apart from getting away scot-free with naming a character Pussy Galore, Mr. Fleming is most famous, of course, for helping to found *The Book Collector*.) Tom Goldwasser had many interesting books, but one that contained a tipped-in Emily Dickinson manuscript poem was perhaps the most striking and evocative, if not the most beautiful (\$65,000). Pretty books on other stands included a Paris-printed edition of Flamstead's important *Atlas coelestis* issued in 1795 and hand-colored (Alexandre Antique Prints, Maps, and Books, \$7,500), and a very handsome calligraphic manuscript of a poem called "Marpessa" by Stephen Phillips in an exquisite binding by the young Toronto bookbinder Robert Wu (The Kelmscott Bookshop, \$2,600). Most striking, perhaps, and one of the more expensive books at the fair, was a set illustrated by Jacques Gautier D'Agoty that the dealer brought no doubt for its inclusion of the earliest known color-engraved map of Canada. The work is a multi-part periodical entitled *Observations sur l'histoire naturelle, sur la physique, et sur la peinture* (1752-57), and it included a color-printed depiction of a Siren shown with a mermaid's fishy tail, a naked torso with female breasts, and a middle-aged male head with a beard, large ears (naturally, if one recalls the Homeric story), and male-pattern baldness! A wonderful item and a very strange image indeed (Rodolphe Chamonal, \$175,000).

Contact Editions (Toronto), which specializes in modern literary books, had a nice copy of an unusual Rider Haggard novel, *The Witch's Head*, in a copy presented by the novelist to his sister (\$30,000), while, among other Victorian books, Acadia Art and Rare Books offered a copy of Julia Margaret Cameron's wonderful photographic folio, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends* (1893, \$3,500). Every photograph Cameron took bespeaks the terror and sadness of mortality in the most profound way. Attic Books (London, Ontario) had another of the more expensive books at the fair in its copy of the 1493 German edition of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*. The two-leaf world map was intact and the copy was in an early binding but was rebaked. At \$145,000, the book was bracingly priced. As

though to provide a cheeky context for such a great and imposing book, the same dealer offered an old manual typewriter with a Cyrillic keyboard for a mere \$250 and a *Playboy* calendar from the early sixties—when sex was still largely undercover, so to speak—for a mere \$100. Perhaps the most amusing item at the fair was a medical pamphlet offered for sale by Greenfield Books of Winnipeg, Manitoba, entitled *Feeding Per Rectum: As Illustrated in the Case of the Late President Garfield and Others*, 1882 (\$100). Apparently Garfield's gunshot wound made it impossible for him to take solids and fluids in the normal manner, and he was kept alive over a period of some two and a half months by, well, feeding and watering him from the opposite end. Dr. D.W. Bliss, whose actual first name was Doctor, was a specialist in bullet wounds and treated Garfield after he was shot. (Bliss also supported Walt Whitman's attempt to gain a government pension after the Civil War.) The year after Garfield's death he published this little tract.

If there was anything about this year's Toronto antiquarian book fair that was less than wonderful it was the location—the room was a little hard to find and one had to pay the AGO admission ticket price (\$19.50) to get in. But this aside, the fair seemed busy and lively, and the books for sale were ample and interesting enough to make any bibliophile happy.

Bruce Whiteman is a Toronto poet and Head Librarian Emeritus of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library at UCLA.

BOOK ART OBJECT 2.

PETER RUTLEDGE KOCH & DAVID JURY, EDITORS.
THE CODEx FOUNDATION, BERKELEY & STANFORD
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, STANFORD, 2013. 524 PAGES.

A Review by Crispin Elsted

Although the death of the book is discussed these days with unseemly relish by those whose sense of bookmaking appears to have more to do with horses than literature (and the rear ends of horses at that), a quick look through *BOOK ART OBJECT 2* (The Codex Foundation, Berkeley, and Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, 2013) suggests that such obituaries have been greatly exaggerated. The Codex Foundation's biennial Book Fair and Symposium celebrates what I will call the "artisanal book," that is, books created by artisans for whom the crafts of book-making—page design, typesetting, presswork, illustration, papermaking, binding, and so on—are vital elements in the presentations of texts of every kind, and ideas of every description. To judge from what is presented here, this admittedly rarified area of book creation, so far from being moribund, seems to be in rude health.

BOOK ART OBJECT 2 provides a snapshot of the 2011 Codex book fair in a magisterial volume of over 500 pages, just as its predecessor, *BOOK ART OBJECT* (2010) gave an overview of the 2007 Codex fair. It includes a compelling introduction by Peter Koch in which he outlines the state of the book in the new millennium and emphasizes the skills and crafts embodied in the work which produces books. There follow five transcripts of talks given at the Symposium connected with the Codex Book Fair: three of them provide insights into the making of new artisanal books in the Netherlands, France, and Mexico, one is a personal apologia by Ron King of the Circle Press as he moves into retirement, and the last is a discussion by Richard Ovenden, Keeper of Books at the Bodleian Library, of the relationship between the "book arts" and research libraries. All are deftly presented and interesting. There follow five "dispatches" from Germany, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Italy, a manifesto of the Codex Foundation, and a summary of the six pamphlets comprising the first series of *CODE(x) MONOGRAPHS*. There is also a comprehensive index.

The centerpiece of the book, and in some ways its *raison d'être*, comprises more than 1,100 images of works displayed by the exhibitors at the Book Fair, accompanied by detailed descriptions of the materials and methods used to make them. The pieces are beautifully photographed by Douglas Sandberg, and have been digitally cut out from their backgrounds by the designer and co-editor of the book, David Jury, so that each image has its own gravity, and is not diminished by a superfluous necessity to fight with a setting. By avoiding a lock-step sequence of rectangular photographs we are given visually lively pages. And it is here, in these images, that the debate about the future of the book becomes palpable.

The reader leafing through these images is presented with a variety of expressions of the book—of “bookness”—that is staggering. The range runs from the sheepskin parchment pages of Petrarch Press’s *Canticle of the Creatures* to Enrique Chagoya’s *Pyramid Scheme* of beautifully reconstructed soup tins with satirically apt labels in a stack; from Jason Dewinetz’s *Alphabetum Romanum* after the letterforms of Felice Feliciano to Diane Jacob’s *Crimson Underwear and Pinky Bra*, featuring what my Edwardian aunts used to call “unmentionables” woven from paper printed with hand-set letterpress texts. In the middle ground are scores of books, like Peter Koch’s superb *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea*, Mark McMurray’s Caliban Press edition of *The Tempest*, and David Pascoe’s Nawakum Press edition of Herman Melville’s *Norfolk Isle & the Chola Widow*, which combine alert attention to text with diverse and imaginative elements in binding, paper choice, illustration, and book structure.

BOOK ART OBJECT 2 is excellently edited and there is such a range here that anyone who cares about books is guaranteed to feel delight, outrage, admiration, and titillation—in fact, all the reactions we look for in reading a fine book. On this evidence, the future of the book is assured. Although it is certain that fine press books and artists’ books are taking on a much broader range of character than has been the case until now, it will be interesting to see to what extent the experiments that the digital book has arguably freed designers of printed books to undertake will affect commercial publishing and printing in the next few years.

The Codex Foundation bids fair to become the international focal point for discussions of the book’s past and future, for the conservation of the book as a repository for our cultural memory, and as an index of our relation to tradition and cultural impulse. BOOK ART OBJECT 2,

seen in this light, must be recommended highly as a benchmark in our understanding of ourselves.

Crispin Elsted is a designer and typographer when he is not busy being a poet, translator, and essayist. With his wife, Jan, he owns and operates Barbarian Press in Mission, British Columbia.

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LIKE A MOTH TO A FLAME
by Bo Wreden

In San Francisco in early January, 2012, Bonham's previewed items from a forthcoming sale of property from Serendipity Books, Peter Howard's legendary Berkeley antiquarian bookstore. At the preview I was drawn to a group of screenplays written by Joan Didion and her Princeton educated husband John Gregory Dunne. While I examined them another visitor asked to see a guitar that had belonged to Carl Sandburg, and even briefly strummed its strings.

What interested me most, though, was a first edition of Gary Snyder's first book, *Riprap*, signed by him under a crossed out forgery of his signature. Accompanying the book was a letter from Snyder to Peter Howard explaining why the forgery wasn't very good, with several examples of the difference between the lettering of cursive writing and italic calligraphy, the latter being what Snyder uses to sign books. Tempted as I was, I did not bid on it. With the buyer's premium, it sold for \$1,625, more than double the high estimate, at the Los Angeles sale on February 12, 2012.

About six months later I learned of Bonham's first shelf sale, on location at Serendipity at 1201 University Avenue in Berkeley. I perused the shelves being offered, which were limited to those in the main front room, but found only one that tempted me. It was not far from where Peter's desk had once been located and contained about half a dozen large presentation binders, each filled with forty or so fine press ephemeral items, mostly Christmas, holiday, and New Year's greetings. I thought they might complement those of my parents, but I didn't place a bid. I did stop by a few days after the sale. Many of the shelves, which as I recall had a suggested starting bid of \$50, had not sold. The one that attracted me, though, was an exception, a highlight of the sale going for several hundred dollars.

In early December 2013, I heard from Faith Bell of Bell's Books in Palo Alto, and later John Crichton of the Brick Row Book Shop, that the bulk of Peter's stock had been sold to someone from out of state. I also saw posters around Berkeley advertising the final liquidation sale of some 20,000 remaining books at Serendipity, scheduled for Saturday and Sunday the 14th and 15th of December, for \$1 each, or \$5 a bag on Sunday.

Following my Saturday morning yoga class I stopped by and, along with many other book bargain hunters, began to comb the shelves. The first book to which I laid claim had no title on the spine, but opening it I discovered it was a Paris 1926 edition of an Armenian-English *Handbook of the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church*, edited by Bishop Leon Tourian. Laid in was a 1930s newspaper clipping describing how Tourian had survived death sentences at the hands of the Turks, later served as Bishop in Manchester, England, and was embarking for a new position in New York. With a holograph note in Armenian and English also laid in, the book was a perfect gift for Armenian collector Albert Nalbandian.

Next, I happened upon several copies of *Granta*, one of which included a story by Todd McEwen, "Drinking Men." I have collected Todd's works and read some but not all of them, since he worked in our Palo Alto shop in the mid-1970s. I hesitated about the following item, which I spotted in a series of William Andrews Clark Memorial Library Seminar Papers: *The Lady of Letters in the Eighteenth Century*, papers read in 1969 by Irvin Ehrenpreis and Robert Halsband. Laid in was a card reading, "With the compliments of [Librarian and Director] Robert Vosper." Vosper was an old friend of my father's. It will make a nice gift for a friend. On a nearby shelf lay a loose bookplate, "Ex Libris Carl Van Vechten," depicting a cat playing a fiddle and a camera on a tripod, before which an unclothed African-American woman, with her back to the viewer, stands with an open fan in her left hand and books at her feet. I sent it to former bookseller and former Book Club member, Richard Hilkert. I covered less than half the shelves in an hour and a half. Hungry for lunch, I headed home.

Sunday morning, former bookseller Marty Simmons called from Serendipity to tell me she had driven from Palo Alto to come see what was left and had found a few things for herself. She was surprised by the number of George Bernard Shaw titles remaining. I went back in the afternoon, dutifully working through the remaining shelves. I found an uncorrected proof copy of McEwen's *Who Sleeps With Katz*, his 2003 Joycean paean to Manhattan, and two art monographs for fellow Book Club member Elizabeth Rodgers: *Figure Compositions of China and Japan* from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and *Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting* by David Allen Brown published by the National Gallery of Art in 1979. The latter is prominently featured in Neil Harris's new book, *Capitol Culture: J. Carter Brown and the National Gallery of Art*.

I also found a 1986 *Calendar of Old-Fashioned Roses*, featuring original color photographs by Barbara Worl (a longtime employee of Bell's Books) from her Palo Alto garden. Unused, the calendar matches that of 2014, except for phases of the moon.

The following sunny weekend, December 22 and 23, driving along University Avenue, I noticed three large book-filled shelf sections on the sidewalk in front of Serendipity and two large signs overhead: "Free Books" and "Steal These Books." I did not stop.

Bo Wreden worked for many years in his father's antiquarian book business, William P. Wreden Books & Manuscripts.



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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SIGHTINGS

by Carolee Campbell

The view from The Getty Center was of a sun-spangled Pacific Ocean the day I met up with Nancy Turner and a few like-minded colleagues just outside the doors to an exhibition of two rare masterpieces of English medieval art, *Canterbury and St. Albans: Treasures from Church and Cloister*.

Nancy is Manuscript Conservator at the Getty and was charged with "reconstituting" every page of the disbound St. Albans Psalter we were about to see. (Nancy's areas of specialization include the conservation treatment of parchment and illuminations, the history of medieval bindings and book structures, the history and trade of medieval pigments, and painting techniques used in manuscript illumination.)

The Psalter, or book of Psalms, was completed circa 1130, in an era of great artistic renewal that followed the Norman Conquest of England. It was written and illuminated at St. Albans Abbey, just north of London, the site where Alban, England's first saint, was martyred. The abbey dates to the eighth century. In 2006 the book was removed from its binding and in 2012 it was sent to the Getty for scholarly examination and conservation.

Along with the St. Albans Psalter, the Getty was showing six monumental panels of stained glass from the Great South Window of Canterbury Cathedral that had been removed for repair.

Copious detailed information can be found, both on the Getty website and in two excellent catalogs of the exhibition—no need to go on with that here. But I will share a few tidbits from Nancy not covered by the Getty material. Nancy explained this was called an "exploded" book show, curatorial language for exhibitions of disbound books. There were forty folios of double-page illuminated spreads, twenty on each side. Halfway through the show, the folios were turned over to exhibit the other twenty spreads. All the pigments for grinding and making the paint were also on display. None of these originated in twelfth century England where the psalter was painted. Rather, the pigments, such as lapis lazuli, were imported from countries as far away as present-day Afghanistan. Nancy's job was to stabilize the fragments of pigment beginning to come away from the parchment—major surgery, done under a microscope, using fish glue. Fish glue, also known as isinglass, is made from the membrane

of the air bladder of certain species of fish such as the sturgeon. (And I haven't even described the stained glass.) The exhibition was on view from September 20, 2013 through February 2, 2014.



The 5th Annual L.A. Printer's Fair took place on Saturday, October 5, 2013, at The International Printing Museum in Carson. Those wanting to try their hands at printing, or have their name cast in metal on a linotype machine, see a '40s-era working print shop, or shop for anything print-related—metal type, heavy metal, inks, hand-printed greeting cards, or all things letterpress—could do so. Printing and printmaking organizations, along with graphic design services and makers of artists' books, had tables. Yuichiro Ohnishi of Nanikatsu Letterpress in Osaka, Japan traveled the farthest to take a table. The crowd was constant, ranging from families with Slurpees and baby carriages to collectors and book aficionados.

As I have in the past, I took a table myself, knowing that much of my work is priced beyond the reach of most attending the fair. But I took pleasure in speaking with folks who had never seen a handmade book. Many of the sixty-seven vendors return annually, indicating the degree to which they've been successful, either in sales or in terms of simple camaraderie. But, vendors aside, as keeper of one of the world's largest collections of antique printing machinery, The International Printing Museum's primary mission has always been educational. Fair day, with its multiple ongoing printing demonstrations and tours, was no exception. Details about the fair and a list of vendors can be found at www.printmuseum.org/printersfair. The next fair will be held on Saturday, October 4, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It promises to be even bigger.



An exhibition of thirty-seven books made by members of San Diego Book Arts opened November 17, 2013, at The Front Porch Gallery in the seaside town of Carlsbad, about thirty-five miles north of San Diego. It drew a large, congenial crowd of admirers. The books, in the main, lived up to the exhibition's title, *Metamorphosis*. It seemed that the majority of

the books were made by artists working in other media: painting, drawing, collage, fiber arts, and in one case, photography. Some of the books exhibited the artists' sewing machine skills. Overall, with some notable exceptions, the artists showed a rather limited grasp of technical skills in bookbinding—acquired perhaps at one of those weekend workshops that have exploded into existence in the last ten or fifteen years. That limitation hamstrings a deeper expression of the book's intention. (Let me repeat again—there were some exceptions.) Nearly all the books were unique or one-offs. Three were editioned works of five, six, and ten copies. Two pieces in the exhibition were not books but sculptures. About half were for sale. Happily, they could all be handled without those white gloves that can do damage to a book. The crowd, absorbed in looking at the books, was fascinated, complimentary, and delightfully surprised by their originality. One can only imagine what the crowd's reaction might have been if it had held a unique *and* well-crafted book. One hopes that the artists whose work would be strengthened by additional technical skill will search it out.



Art Center College of Design's South Campus in Pasadena is home to Archetype Press, which hosted a publication and printing party celebrating *The Sierra Nevada Suite* on December 2, 2013. As Club members know, *The Sierra Nevada Suite* is a Club publication consisting of thirty-one wood engravings by Richard Wagener. The book was designed and produced by Peter Rutledge Koch with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken. However, members may not know that *The Sierra Nevada Suite* was given a Judges' Choice Award at the 2013 Oxford Book Fair in England.

Surely, a working print shop has to be one of the most felicitous environments for a publication party. At one end of Archetype Press's large, open studio, was one of six Vandercook proof presses, inked up and ready for folks to try pulling a print. One of Richard's engravings had been printed earlier so that it could be given out as a keepsake honoring the evening. Each guest was encouraged to add text to his or her keepsake by printing the type lying on the press bed. The type had been set by Archetype Press director, Gloria Kondrup, who began the evening with a printing demonstration. At the other end of the shop, guests hovered

around another press that was being put to good use as well. It held the hors d'oeuvres.

Happily, the Club's Executive Director, Jennifer Sime, was there both to promote the Club and to introduce Richard. He followed the printing session with a slide presentation that included a thoughtful and engaging history of his life as a wood engraver, beginning in Los Angeles, very near where we were all gathered. He told us that his printing career began with a youthful, defiant refusal to learn the craft from any teacher or any book. He would do it on his own. And he did—masterfully.

Carolee Campbell is the proprietor of Ninja Press, which is now in its thirtieth year, in Sherman Oaks, California. Campbell designs, prints, and binds each limited edition at the press. The entire Ninja Press archive is held at the Davidson Special Collections Department of the University of California at Santa Barbara.

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NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY *by Henry L. Snyder, Chair, Library Committee*

The big news from the library is the completion of the major phases of our expansion honoring the Walter-Grabhorn gift. Since the last report in the *QN-L*, the new cabinets for the east end of the library have been installed. We moved the books in the two cabinets on the south wall and these now house what are called—for lack of a better term—our rare book collection. This rearrangement opened up room in the south cabinets, which now contain The Grabhorn Collection of Florence Walter, described in previous issues. Also new to the south wall is a fine stone plaque by Christopher Stinehour.

In November, the steel shelving for the workroom was installed, followed by a large table on which we can sort and catalog the boxes of ephemera that await assimilation into the collection.

John McBride and Henry Snyder attended the shelf lot sale of books at PBA Galleries on January 7, 2014. One of the more interesting lots contained books and pamphlets associated with Dr. Robert L. Leslie, a major figure in printing in New York City in the middle of the last century and Joyce Schmidt, the founding mother of paper art in Israel.

One item—Percy Seitlin's *About U.S.: experimental typography by American designers*, a series of sixteen-page inserts reprinted from *Der Druckspiegel* and published (circa 1960) by The Composing Room, Leslie's press—contains a laid-in letter from "Uncle Bob" (Robert L. Leslie) to Joyce.

While remarkably complete, the Florence Walter Grabhorn collection is missing about 10 percent of the items listed in the three-volume printed catalog of the Grabhorn Press. The following is a list of some of the items we seek. If any member has one or more of these items and wishes to contribute them to The Book Club of California Library, we would be most grateful. We hope in due course to complete the collection.

Missing Grabhorn Press Items

The numbers correspond to *Bibliography of the Grabhorn Press*, vols. 1-3, q.v.

- 653 Richard Elkus, *Alamos: A Philosophy in Living*. 1965
- 651 John B. Condliffe, *From Adam Smith to Keynes & After*: Lakeside talk, Bohemian Grove. 1965
- 649 James Cook, *Surveyor of Newfoundland*. 1965
- 637 Robinson Jeffers, *This Little Volume Pays Homage ...* 1962
- 602 Printed for Leslie and William Denman: *Hopi Ladder Dance*. 1958
- 527 Harvey Cushing, *William Stewart Halsted 1852-1922*. 1952
- 522 Wine list, Bohemian Club. 1952
- 499 Ansel Adams, *Portfolio Two: Two National Parks*. 1950
- 485 *Art at Stanford*. 1949
- 478 Brett Weston, *White Sands*. 1949
- 462 Ansel Adams, *Portfolio One: Twelve Photographic Prints*. 1948
- 438 Leo Eloesser, *Harold Phillips Hill 1877-1946*. 1947
- 344 Sarah Dix Hamlin & Van Ness Seminary School, *Keeping Posted*. 1941
- 283 George Sterling, *The Abalone Song*. Single sheet. 1937.
- 262 Douglas S. Watson, *Our First Christmas*. 1936.
- 240 *Address delivered by Judge Marcel Clef*, 1935
- 225 George Parsons, *Life and adventures of James W. Marshall*. 1935
- 214 *A Prophecy for 1935 & a Proclamation of 1660*. 1934
- 193 Alfred Sutro, *To N.R. Powley*. Broadside. 1933.
- 161 *This Leaf from Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass."* 1931
- 149 George Harding, *Pacific News: A Forgotten Episode in California Journalism*. 1931
- 104 Paul Claudel, *L'Enfant Jesus de Prague*. 1927



CORRECTION: The byline for Carol Snell Cunningham's obituary in the winter 2014 issue of the QN-L should have read "Jacquie Phelan with Henry Snyder."

NEWS & NOTES

"Come one, come all! Come into the big tent for the greatest show on earth! Ladies and gentlemen ... look up! He flies through the air with the greatest of ease, that daring young man on the flying trapeze. This is not Jules Leotard, memorialized in the 1867 song, but the star of our show, William Saroyan."

So "ringmaster" Bob Chandler kicked off the event, *The Art of William Saroyan: A Pop-Up Exhibition and Panel*, at the Club on Monday, January 13, 2014.

Saroyan is best known for his literature, short stories, novels, and plays—but the Armenian American was much more versatile than that. It turns out the Academy Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning scribe was also a visual artist, producing over 7,000 paintings and drawings in his lifetime. His art has been compared to that of Joan Miró and Jackson Pollack, and he was personally associated with and wrote about other artists with California connections, including Dong Kingman, Hilaire Hiler, and Suzanne Verrier, among others.

In 1959, Saroyan reflected on the swift, almost "instantaneous" drawings he had done over a lifetime, explaining, "My drawings seek a kind of perfection, a kind of sudden flawlessness, a word in a language, a whole language itself" ("My Drawing," *Evergreen Review*, Vol. 2, No. 8, pp. 147-151). He returned to this theme in an introduction he wrote for *The Paintings of Archie Minasian* (1971), asking of abstract art, "The non-real people and things ... were they not in fact a language worthy of careful study rather than ridicule?"

The exhibition of original drawings and paintings by Saroyan on display at the Club answered in the affirmative. They came from the collections of Jay Zil—a former Club director, renowned forensic psychiatrist, and avid collector who knew Saroyan—and Al Nalbandian—San Francisco flower vendor, former actor, and conservator of Armenian literature and art—and his family. The work was reviewed by Charles Janigian, a member of Saroyan's extended family and founder of Forever Saroyan, an archive based in San Jose.

Jay organized the event, along with Al Nalbandian; Charles Janigian; Charles's archivist, Mary Alexander; Judge Tomar Mason; and Club members Bo Wreden and Bob Chandler. With the exception of Bo, who

had to miss the festivities due to last minute circumstances, all spoke eloquently about their interactions with Saroyan—on the page and off.

For the grand finale, audience member and Renaissance man Alessandro Baccari, Jr. told of his day with William Saroyan, a friend of his father's. "You want me to teach him life? I'll teach him life," Saroyan had said, and proceeded to escort young Baccari to a Barbary Coast bar. They played poker—"Kid, you play cards?" Saroyan had asked—and, after the game, went upstairs, where "ladies of the night" entertained the boy with sweets. That evening at dinner, Saroyan's mother asked him to tell the assembled guests about his day with the genius writer. "Mommy dear," he reported, "it's tough being a whore. But Mr. Saroyan inspired me of the goodness of those ladies, who gave me cookies and ice cream ... so I've decided to help [them]." He loved Saroyan ever more.



The Sharp Teeth Press, a new job printing and publishing enterprise, has arrived on the Bay Area scene. The proprietor is David Johnston, a recent graduate from the monotype apprenticeship at the legendary Mackenzie & Harris Typefoundry in San Francisco.

Mr. Johnson recently explained to your editor that the publishing philosophy of the press is to print "useful books." The first from his press, *Why Beer Matters* by Evan Rail, is a lyrical essay on the making (and consuming) of craft beer. The second book, *Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau, is certainly a most useful text, especially for those gathering courage to face paying (or *not* paying) their taxes in April. The presswork on this example of American transcendental philosophy is crisp, the inking is even, and the typesetting is evidence that he graduated with honors from his recent apprenticeship. It is also evident from their website that the press welcomes printing job-work. Sharp Teeth is located in the American Steel Studios building at 1296 18th Street (Bay 5) in Oakland. David can be reached at sharp-teethpress@gmail.com and you can order his books here: www.sharpteethpress.com



Club member Mary Heebner has two exhibitions for her *Simplemente Maria Press* planned for 2014. The first, *Silent Faces / Angkor* is an installation of large format collages (2004-2013) and the eponymous artist's book (2013). The show was curated by Patrick Dowdey for The Mansfield Freeman Center for East Asian Studies at Wesleyan University and will be on display February 5–May 25, 2014. The second exhibition, *Mary Heebner and Simplemente Maria Press: A Selection of Artist's Books and the Paintings that Inspired Them*, March 7–28, was curated by Jeff Abshear for the Kalamazoo Book Arts Center in conjunction with Western Michigan University. Congratulations, Maria. See her work at: www.simplemente-mariapress.com



The newest addition to Arcadia Publishing's *Images of America* series is *Maritime Contra Costa County* by Book Club member Carol A. Jensen and the East Contra Costa Historical Society. San Francisco's "opposite shore" is showcased for its maritime role in securing the city's financial preeminence. Located minutes from San Francisco by ferry or automobile, Contra Costa County provided deepwater ports for shipping agricultural, mineral, and manufactured goods around the world. Pacific commodity traders made use of these ports to ship products, ensuring California's unique global economic role. Immense wealth was created from goods shipped from maritime Contra Costa County, securing a vibrant economy from the Gaslight Era to the days of Haight-Ashbury. The book is illustrated with over 200 vintage images depicting the shipping industry and the impact of its wealth and influence on the growth of the Bay Area.



The following recommendation just flew in the door from our newest member, Russell Maret, a highly accomplished private press typographer/printer and publisher in New York City:

Pentameter Press's inaugural publication, Poetry by Post, consists of four broadsides of contemporary poetry delivered roughly every month to subscribers. The broadsides are accompanied by a separate,

handsomely printed literary analysis of the poem, and both pieces arrive in a beautifully calligraphed chipboard mailer, artfully arrayed with a variety of stamps. All of the work is done by Laura Capp, a recent MFA Book Arts grad from the University of Iowa (Poetry by Post is her thesis project). Capp also happens to be a masterful calligrapher and a Ph.D. of English Literature, and she brings all of her talents to bear on Poetry by Post. Each installment (I have received two so far) is a delight, embodying the holy trinity of the private press: a love of literature, craft, and letterforms. At \$150 it would be a mistake to pass it up.

Poetry by Post. Pentameter Press. Iowa City, Iowa. <http://pentameterpress.com/poetry-by-post/>



USF Update

John Hawk, head librarian of special collections and university archives at the Gleeson Library, writes that the renovation of the Donohue Rare Book Room is making progress and it is anticipated that the room will reopen late this spring. The project began during the summer with the relocation of the collections to temporary storage in the Gleeson Library, followed by demolition in August. The renovation will add HVAC, expand storage, and improve security for the collections. The room will retain its “feel” with the existing built-in bookshelves and exhibition cases, but will be “refreshed” with new lighting, furniture, and carpeting. There will also be a new entrance to the Rare Book Room, which will give the space greater visibility on the third floor of the library. During the interim, collection materials are available by appointment. Stay tuned for future updates.



From the Archives

In the second issue of the *Quarterly News-Letter*, published in 1934, the Membership Committee chair, Flodden W. Heron, exhorted the Club to

grow to its maximum membership level so that, “With a full membership [of 500], the Club can promise the prompt sale of from 300 to 400 copies of every worthy publication.” Much has changed over the last eighty years and the membership maximum has been raised to 1,000 with only about a third of the members regularly buying books. This last is cause for some reflection. Shouldn’t we be selling twice as many books with twice as many members? As a concerned member of the Publications Committee I would welcome comments upon this matter. If the number of books sold were higher there would accordingly be a better price from the printer and those savings would be passed on to the collector. Seems like a matter that we might seriously consider, yes?



History Department

Copies of the Club’s twelfth title, *Lilith*, a play by George Sterling published in 1920, were still being offered to members at the original price of \$2 a copy as late as 1947. That play was in print for twenty-seven (or more!) years—some titles have a long life on publisher’s shelves.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

As a bookbinder, I am always on the lookout for interesting books to bind. Recently I was delighted to come across a copy in sheets of the collected letters of Frank Norris, which BCC published in 1986. It is much more satisfying to bind a fresh copy, rather than pull a bound book and rebind it.

As for its current publications, the Club does not reserve any copies in sheets. May I put in a plea to revive the former custom? I am sure I am not the only binder who would like to work on these excellent books. Perhaps Club members might like to have their own copies bound for them. Perhaps we could hold an exhibition of such bindings. Perhaps they could be hot items in a fundraising auction. Perhaps the Club could establish a binding competition, with a prize.

All sorts of possibilities come to mind, but first we need the sheets!

Sincerely,
Vanessa Hardy

Dear Vanessa Hardy,

Thank you for raising these topics for discussion. I will be certain to bring your comments to the attention of the Publications Committee meeting in the near future, and I hope that fellow readers will respond with their views on the subjects you raise.

Sincerely,
Peter Rutledge Koch

NEW MEMBERS

SUSTAINING

Leslie Prussia	Pasadena
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REGULAR

Michael Alexander	Oakland
Thomas John Clark	Menifee
Jean Dickinson	Berkeley
Claudia Feurey	Greenbrae
Stephen & Jeanette Grant	San Francisco
Linda Hinrichs	San Francisco
Georgianna Johnson	West Hills
Russell Maret	New York, NY
Alison Ong	San Francisco
Keri M. Schroeder	Oakland
Robert & Barbara Weigand	Tempe, AZ

APPRENTICE

Meghan Gillespie	San Francisco
Nicholas Sanders	Citrus Heights

Announcing A New Publication —

LOOM

Engravings by Richard Wagener

Poem by Alan Loney



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Forthcoming from The Book Club of California:

The Woods Were Never Quiet



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with drawings by Jessica Dunne

“Monique Wentzel is a writer of remarkable talent. Her stories incise the shell of daily life to reveal the strange, the heartbreaking, and the joyful.”

Anthony Marra, author of *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*, 2013 National Book Award nominee



THIS new collection of short stories by Monique Wentzel was designed and printed on the letterpress by Jonathan Clark at The Artichoke Press, and includes drawings by Jessica Dunne. Edition size: 300 copies. List price: \$110. BCC members' pre-publication price: \$99 (plus applicable sales tax and shipping). For more information, please visit www.bccbooks.org or contact us by phone (800 869-7656).