

WHY PUBLISH?



Notes on a collective obsession.

compiled by Darren Wershler-Henry

So: the latest issue of yr magazine is five months behind schedule &nd its going to co\$ you hundred\$ of dollar\$ which you don't really have cause you've been on pogeys all summer &nd yr layout person just quit so you'll have to do it all yrself &nd yr behind in yr mail &nd you promised an article on medieval concrete poetry to the editor of kool alternativ magazine 3 weeks ago &nd it was due last Tuesday... why do you bother?

It's a rhetorical question - because it opens up floors of rhetoric. The only thing that people who publish love to do more than publish is to write about it; writing only leads to more writing. In other words, there is no Answer to the question "Why Publish?"; only answers. Following are the words of a few of the people most active in textual composition (alternative publishing) in Canada today, interspersed with those of a few literary figures who haven't done much but decompose recently (interviewed with the aid of a Ouija board and a fifth of gin).

...
Publishing is a virus transmitted by written word. There is no cure but indulgence. (Mike Gunderloy, former publisher of *Factsheet Five*)

...
Publish and be damned. (The Duke of Wellington)

...
There's a certain freshness and urgency to a published work when you realize that it is both privately funded and not the product of a vanity press. Knowing somebody is going short a few bucks to allow

you to read something ain't a sign of selfless nobility; rather, it's political in the best sense. Real live freedom of expression, real live agitation. (Michael Holmes, *cos=sinovertan*)

...
It would be nice to publish alternate realities. (Gerry Garcia, *Grateful Dead*)

...
delere licebit quod non edideris; nescit vox missa reverti [you may destroy whatever you haven't published; once out what you've said can't be stopped]. (Horace, ungrateful dead Roman)

...
Why publish? Because maybe we're terminally obsessive: we fester in an unstoppable monster of a magazine. Because we got to meet or at least write to other people who(m) share a common root of "curiosity" (about the only word that seems to fit) about everything. Because we go where the winds take us. Because we all need ADoSA reality. (Bruce & Eric Fletcher, Alberta Dept. of *Spiritual Affairs/Virus 23*)

...
No publisher should ever express an opinion of the value of what he publishes. That is a matter entirely for the literary critic to decide... A publisher is simply a useful middleman. It is not for him to anticipate the verdict of criticism. (the ever-objective Oscar Wilde)

...
Mental Radio locates itself in the

tradition of small press publishing. For us, this means publishing that refuses to accept the hegemony of literary publishing in this country, a hegemony that is content to rely on unexamined notions of "quality" and "literature" to produce grants-fueled (and ever-so-perfect looking) magazines and books. What we wanted to do was seize the means of (literary) production... [A]vant-garde publishing and experimental writing... must somehow refuse to be packaged and contained, made palatable for arts bureaucrats and newspaper reviewers. (Clint Burnham, self-described "dorky grad student/hip publisher," *Mental Radio*)

...
It is clear that a novel cannot be too bad to be worth publishing... it certainly is possible for a novel to be too good to be worth publishing. (George Bernard Shaw, professional smartass)

...
To say is a supplement & everything is simulacric, & I am a context. It's the ongoing art/life inseparability. "[We] must understand what is happening" but what's happening is a PROCESS. Trying to teach myself to "debunk by lucidity." (Adeena Karasick, poet & former editor of *Anerca/Compost*)

...
Take an idiot man from a lunatic asylum and marry him to an idiot woman, and the fourth generation of this connection should be a good publisher from the American point

of view. (Mark Twain, American publisher)

...
Open your mouth, move your pen. Observe, hear, read posters, listen to cassettes, and realize that people



...
exist, that the messages, as enlightened or demented as they may be, are far more direct and honest than scripts put together by many, many people, filtered by many, many more, and designed to serve the interest of a meagre few. (Ich Neuman, *Sensoria From Censorium*)

...
Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. (2 Samuel 1:20)

...
If anyone bothered to ask me, what I thought about the whole thing (they didn't, but I'm going to tell you anyway), I'd say what the hell: publish. It's time the daughters of the uncircumcised had some fun anyway.

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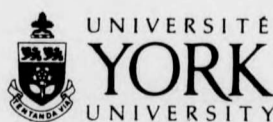
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