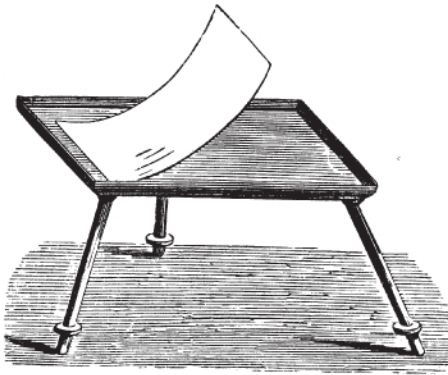


BURNING DECK

ANYART /



Burning Deck at 50 A Short History:

1. Magazine:

Burning Deck began in 1961 as a magazine. In 1961, poets were supposed to be in opposing camps, often inelegantly - and inaccurately - labeled 'academics' or 'beats'. The two most widely noted anthologies of the time (Donald Allen's and Hall-Pack-Simpson's), both representing the period 1945-1960, contain not a single poet in common. Burning Deck (the magazine) disregarded this split, printing and presented a spread of poets wide enough that on occasion an author would complain of being published in such unprogrammatic company. Though advertised as a 'quinterly', the magazine (after only 4 issues in 5 years), gave way to a series of chapbooks and — later — books of poetry and occasionally of short fiction.

In 1984, Burning Deck merged with ANYART: Contemporary Arts Center, becoming the literature program of this non-profit organization.

2. Editorial Choices:

Our aesthetic direction also changed or, rather, narrowed somewhat. Considering the limited resources of a small press, we realized that a narrower focus made more sense than our original inclusive impulse. We focused on innovative, "avant garde" work, which had always been what we were most interested in. If we still seem eclectic it is because we believe that the history of poetry cannot be clear before the poems are written.

As Keith Waldrop has put it: "It is not denying the importance of 'movements', to insist that there is another importance in moving beside or apart from them. After all, there are many judgements, none of them the last."

We periodically print a well-known writer (Hawkes, Abish, Creeley) to attract attention to our list, but our commitment has from the beginning been to less established and unknown authors — to the kind of work that commercial publishers are reluctant to take chances on.

While we have concentrated on American work, we have tried to throw some bridges across national borders by publishing at least a few British and Australian authors. In 1992, we widened the scope of cultural interaction by adding the annual *Série d'écriture* (current French writing in English translation) which was begun by the British Press, *Spectacular Diseases*, but edited from the start by Burning Deck editor Rosmarie Waldrop. Burning Deck has so far published numbers 6 through 24, plus 5 chapbook supplements. In 1994, we added translations from German, which began with the Austrian Friederike Mayröcker and has so far 13 issues.

3. Production Method:

Until 1985, we printed all Burning Deck publications on our own letterpress. In the beginning it seemed the only way to afford publishing, and in spite of the drudgery involved, it remains a source of satisfaction. Since 1985, however, the automation of bookbinding has made it financially more feasible to print full books offset and reserve letterpress work for the smaller chapbooks. We admire fine printing (under no illusion that ours is such) and admire any press that prints good work, even by mimeo. Our own practice—a middle way—is to design and print books with care, in permanent form (smyth-sewn, acid-free paper), but at a price that will not keep them on closed shelves.

4. NEA and Growth:

In 1973 the National Endowment for the arts began to support independent publishing, and Burning Deck was able to grow. (We received 10 grants between 77-95).

Anthony Barnett's *Poem about Music* was our first "full length" book of poems, in 1974. In 1977 we started adding the occasional fiction book, in 1992 "*Série d'écriture*" for current French writing, in 1994 "*Dichten =*" for writing in German.

By the end of this year (2011), we will have published 231 titles (111 books + 120 chapbooks). Of the full books, 86 are poetry, 25 fiction. 45 are translations, and 49 first books. 51 by RI authors, 74 by women.

5. Recognition:

A number of writers we published first or very early in their career have become noted writers (e.g. Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Lyn Hejinian, Ron Silliman, John Taggart, and the British poet Anthony Barnett).

Prizes include an American Book Award of the Before Columbus Foundation (*The Heat Bird* by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, 1984), a San Francisco Poetry Center Award

(*Paradise* by Ron Silliman, 1985), a Norma Farber First Book Award of the Poetry Society (*Parts of the Mass* by Catherine Imbruglio, 2008), a PEN Award for Poetry in Translation (Rosmarie Waldrop's translation of *LINGOS I-IX* by Ulf Stolterfoht, 2008), and several Pushcart prizes.

Exhibitions of Burning Deck before the current one at PO Gallery in Providence have been held at Wesleyan, Brown, and Long Island Universities, at art centers like Intersection in San Francisco and Woodland Pattern in Milwaukee, at the Centre Internationale de Poésie in Marseille as well as the Paris Salon du Livre (1984) and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

Some of our books were included in exhibitions at The American Institute of Graphic Arts ("50 Books of the Year," 1969), Stedelijk Museum ("Klangteksten, Konkrete Poezie, Visuelle Teksten," 1971), and Kensington Art Association, Toronto ("Language & Structure in America," 1975),

Articles on Burning Deck Press have appeared in publications like *Margins*, *Providence Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Rain Taxi*, *American Book Review*, and the magazines *Prétexte* in France (#7, 1996) and *Fire* in England (#23, 2004) have published special issues on Burning Deck.

In November 1991, Burning Deck was the focus of a weekend-symposium at Fondation Royaumont, in France. In 2001, Brown University's Writing Program held a 3-day Festival for Burning Deck's 40th anniversary. In 2006, Boogcity's "Celebrating the Renegade Press" presented Burning Deck's 45th anniversary in New York City, and "The Adventure Burning Deck" was part of the festival "Lettres sur cour" in Vienne, France, July 2010.