



ARSENAL
PULP PRESS

A BRIEF HISTORY

Arsenal began life in 1971 as Pulp Press Book Publishers, founded by a collective of university students and associates (among them, Stephen Osborne, current publisher of *Geist* magazine) disenchanted by what they perceived to be the academic literary pretensions of Canadian literature at the time. The early '70s were a fertile and exciting period in alternative arts and literature, and life at Pulp was no exception. Run as a co-operative, Pulp printed its first publications on a duplicating machine; its first book was a poetry chapbook by Tom Osborne, *Please Wait for Attendant to Open Gate*. Later, Pulp set up a printing press and a typesetting operation to help subsidize its publishing activities, which included broadsheets and pamphlets as well as books.

Pulp's fiction, poetry, and drama titles tended toward gritty urban literature typical of the Vancouver literary scene at the time, such as *Class Warfare* by D.M. Fraser and *Crossings* by Betty Lambert. Humour was also part of the Pulp persona; *Three-Cent Pulp*, a monthly literary magazine that sold in bookstores for three cents, was published for some years in the late '70s. Also during this time, Pulp initiated the 3-Day Novel Contest, a literary marathon held during the Labour Day weekend. The contest, in which contestants attempt to write a novel over the course of three days, was conducted annually by Pulp until 1991, when it was handed over to Anvil Press of Vancouver (it is now run by the 3-Day Novel Contest Ltd., and in a nod to our past, their books are now distributed by Arsenal). During the years that Pulp ran the contest, winners included such acclaimed writers as poet b.p. nichol (*Still*), playwright and novelist Tom Walmsley (*Doctor Tin*), and playwright and novelist Marc Diamond (*Momentum*).

Pulp became Arsenal Pulp Press in 1982, having survived the bankruptcy of its national distributor by selling off its typesetting and printing operations. It was still primarily a literary press, but there was an increasing interest in literary non-fiction, particularly in the areas of cultural, gender, and multicultural studies. Multicultural books published during the 1980s included *Children of the First People*, a photographic essay of Native children of the west coast, by Dorothy Haegert (no longer in print); *Stoney Creek Woman*, the award-winning biography of Carrier elder Mary John, by Bridget Moran (a tenth-anniversary edition was published in 1998); *Resistance and Renewal*, a BC Book Prize-winning study of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, by Celia Haig-Brown; and *New Canadian Kid*, a play for young people about racism, by Dennis Foon (no longer in print). Other titles published during this period include *A Hard Man to Beat*, the biography of BC labour union leader Bill White by Harbour Publishing founder Howard White (no relation) (no longer in print); and *Anhaga*, the late Jon

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Furberg's beautiful reinterpretation of the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Wanderer" (no longer in print). In 1988, Arsenal established the "Little Red Books," a series of tiny (three-by-four-inch) books of quotations and anecdotes on provocative issues and personalities; the first title, *Quotations from Chairman Zalm*, the collected witticisms of then-BC premier Bill Vander Zalm, sold 25,000 copies in its first few months. The wide range of subject matter in the series ran the gamut of popular culture, from men and women and Don Cherry to old age and film noir.

In the 1990s, Arsenal further shaped its publishing program to reflect its increasing interest in urban literature and cultural studies. Daniel Francis's *The Imaginary Indian* (1992) deconstructs the Indian image in Canadian popular culture. His 1997 bestselling book *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History*, takes on the icons of Canada's past, from the glorious Mountie to the Last Spike, and reveals them in an entirely new light. (In 2004, Daniel won the City of Vancouver Book Prize for *LD*, his biography of legendary Vancouver mayor Louis D. Taylor.)

Arsenal has become well-known internationally for its gay and lesbian publishing program. Its first book in this subject area was 1993's *Queeries*, the first book of gay male prose ever published in Canada, edited by Dennis Denisoff (author of the novel *Dog Years*). In 1995, *Queer View Mirror*, an international anthology of gay and lesbian short short fiction, edited by James C. Johnstone and Karen X. Tulchinsky, was published. His-and-her short fiction anthologies on gay desire, *Quickies 1, 2, and 3* (for men) and *Hot & Bothered 1, 2, 3, and 4* (for women) have frequently appeared on bestseller lists across the US. Other titles published in this genre include *Contra/Diction*, a contemporary queer men's fiction anthology, *Queer Fear I and II*, a collection of gay horror fiction which together were nominated for four Lambda Literary Awards (and winner of one), and books on the history of gay male imagery by Concordia University professor Thomas Waugh: *Out/Lines* (winner of an award from the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America), *Lust Unearthed* (shortlisted for a Lambda Literary Award), and 2006's *Gay Art*, a new edition of a groundbreaking 1972 book produced with its original author, Felix Lane Falkon.

In 2005, Arsenal, with the help of editor Mark Macdonald (author of the novel *Flat*), started the Little Sister's Classics series, a collection of classic gay and lesbian novels from the past that had gone out of print, resurrected for a new generation of readers. Produced in conjunction with Vancouver's legendary gay and lesbian bookstore Little Sister's (who have survived a fifteen-year battle with Canada Customs fighting for the rights of writers and readers everywhere), the books include an introduction by a contemporary author or publisher placing each book in its proper historical context. Titles published in the series include *Song of the Loon* by Richard Amory (a gay frontier romance that was the bestselling gay novel of the 1960s), *The Young in One Another's Arms* by Jane Rule (winner of the Canadian Authors Association Award for Best Novel in 1978), *Patience & Sarah* by Isabel Miller (a classic novel of lesbian love in nineteenth-century New England), *Empathy* by Sarah Schulman ("The lesbian novel comes of age," according to Fay Weldon), and *Finistère* by Fritz Peters (acclaimed by Gore Vidal and the *New York Times* when first published in 1951).

In recent years, Arsenal has published numerous books on the visual arts, often in conjunction with art galleries and other institutions. *The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture*, about the representation of the cyborg in literature and art, and *A Modern Life*, a history of post-World War II art and design in British Columbia, were produced with the Vancouver Art Gallery; *First Son*, an acclaimed book on the early twentieth-century photography of Asian Canadian C.D. Hoy (no longer in print), and *Facing History*, a book on Vancouver portrait photography, were co-published by Presentation House Gallery of

North Vancouver. The prestigious Whitney Museum of American Art and Printed Matter, Inc. (an esteemed artist-run center in New York) co-published the Ways series of faux novels written by various collectives of artists, writers, and curators, the brainchild of American artist Rita McBride. *Stan Douglas: Every Building on 100 West Hastings* (co-published by Vancouver's Contemporary Art Gallery), a stunning examination of Vancouver's most notorious block based on artist Stan Douglas's acclaimed photograph of the same name, won the 2003 City of Vancouver Book Prize. Arsenal has also published visual art books with Artspeak, the Morris & Helen Belkin Art Gallery, and the Kamloops Art Gallery.

Cookbooks are another Arsenal speciality, in particular those dedicated to vegan fare (which eschews all animal products). *How It All Vegan!* by Tanya Barnard and Sarah Kramer, published in 1998, is now considered a vegan cookbook classic and is in its twelfth printing as of 2006; their follow-up, *The Garden of Vegan*, is in its fifth printing, and *La Dolce Vegan!*, Sarah's first solo cookbook, has been printed three times. *The Everyday Vegan* and *Vive le Vegan!* by Dreena Burton have also enjoyed multiple printings; her books are heavily influenced by her experiences as a vegan mom. We've also produced cookbooks by restaurant chefs, including *As Fresh as It Gets*, by the owners of Vancouver's Tomato Fresh Café; *Tongue Twisters*, by Gord Martin, proprietor of Vancouver's Bin 941 and Bin 942; and *The Real Jerk*, Caribbean recipes by the owners of the Toronto restaurant of the same name.

Arsenal also publishes the Unknown City series of alternative city guidebooks, which provide offbeat information and historical tidbits on North American cities, designed for visitors and residents alike. Books in the series include *New York*, *San Francisco*, *Montreal*, *Toronto*, *Vancouver*, *Victoria*, and *Calgary*.

Arsenal's fiction titles—both novels and short-story collections—are atypical narratives that often challenge the very definition of what constitutes a story. Ivan E. Coyote, whose disarming tales often deal with issues of gender, has written four books published by Arsenal, including the short-story collection *Loose End* (shortlisted for the US Ferro-Grumley Women's Fiction Prize) and *Bow Grip*, her first novel. Michael Turner's *Hard Core Logo*, about the reunion of a punk rock band, was turned into a feature film by director Bruce McDonald in 1997. Clint Burnham's *Smoke Show*, written almost exclusively in dialogue, and Elizabeth McClung's *Zed*, a visionary novel set in an abandoned tenement building, tell their stories from unexpected points of view. And Ashok Mathur's *Once Upon an Elephant* and *The Short, Happy Life of Harry Kumar*, comic novels that play with Indian legend; Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand*, a beautiful evocation of Chinese myth set against a contemporary landscape; George K. Iisley's *ManBug*, about a closeted entomologist with Asperger's syndrome; and Suzette Mayr's *Venous Hum*, a hilarious novel about a vegetarian bisexual vampire, are typical of Arsenal fiction titles that gleefully tear down narrative and cultural icons.

These are just a sample of what Arsenal Pulp Press books have to offer. No matter what the genre, no matter who the author, they speak loudly and confidently and with great aplomb, asserting their rightful place in the world. We think they matter, and hope you do too.