

Black Scat Books

written by Entropy | February 23, 2016



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Interview with Norman Conquest, Président-Fondateur & Chairman

How did Black Scat Books start?

The press evolved from an idea for a series of chapbooks—the Absurdist Texts & Documents series, which had been brewing in the back of my brain for years. A friend in New York—artist & collaborator Farewell Debut—provided moral & financial support to help get Black Scat off the ground. (Don't ask what it was doing on the ground.) The press was officially born in the San Francisco Bay Area on July 4th, 2012, with the launch of *Masks*, a pataphysical text by the French humorist Alphonse Allais.

Today, there are 31 titles in the series (all but a few out of print); 13 issues of the magazine, *Black Scat Review*; and dozens of trade paperbacks—novels, plays, translations, anthologies, as well as our New Urge imprint which is devoted to erotic fiction.

The penultimate absurdist Alphonse Allais is the guiding spirit of Black Scat Books. I'm extremely proud to have published Doug Skinner's numerous translations of Allais's works—all first publications in English.

Tell us a bit about Black Scat. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?

If I may quote from the series description, our books are designed "...to disrupt, disorient, and smash boundaries – academic, cultural, literary, and philosophical." In short, sublime art and literature you won't find anywhere

else. That is the goal and the underlying desire. I think we've been fairly successful in our mission, thanks to authors and artists such as Allais, Alain Arias-Misson, Terry Southern, Tom Whalen, Suzanne Burns, Cami, Terri Lloyd, Opal Nations, Witkacy, Mark Axelrod, Yuriy Tarnawsky, and many others.

I grew up amid books published by avant-garde presses like Grove, City Lights, New Directions, Gaberbocchus, Olympia...all of these houses were inspirational.

Can you give us a preview of what's current and/or forthcoming from your catalog, as well as what you're hoping to publish in the future?

I'm very excited to be publishing two collections of plays, one by D. Harlan Wilson, and one by Eckhard Gerdes; a new collection of short stories by the incomparable Doug Skinner; a book of absurd/inspirational art posters by Terri Lloyd; and a pseudonymous collection of photographs: *PISSOIRS, BIDEETS, CRAPPERS & THRONES*. We're not called Black Scat for nothing.

What about small/independent press publishing is particularly exciting to you right now?

I can answer that with a single acronym: POD (print on demand). It's the most important force in publishing in my lifetime. It has inadvertently disrupted the corporate monopoly, leveled the playing field and democratized what was essentially a closed (and rigged) system. POD makes it possible for anyone to be a small press publisher and produce quality editions that can potentially reach a worldwide audience. It's also environmentally friendly.

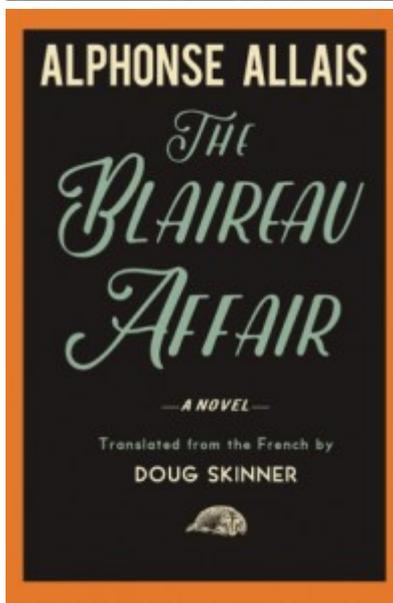
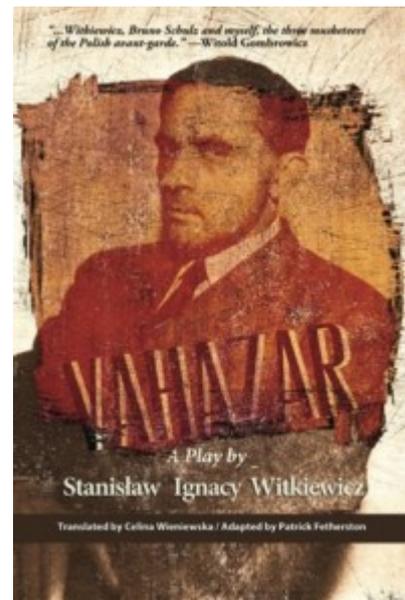
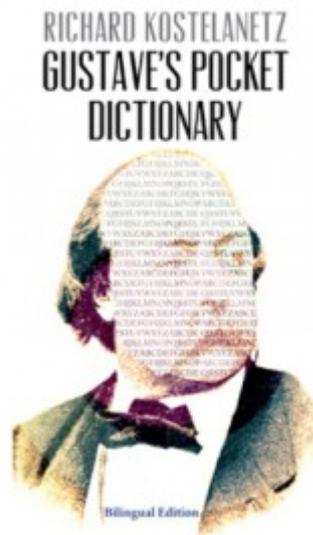
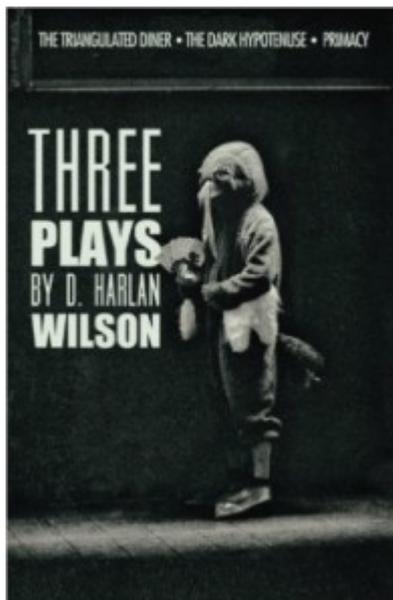
Those who oppose POD are sociopathic snobs and crypto-fascists. Around here, POD stands for Power of Democracy.

How do you cope? There's been a lot of conversation lately about charging reading fees, printing costs, rising book costs, who should pay for what, etc. Do you have any opinions on this, and would you be willing to share any insights about the numbers at Black Scat Books?

It's against my religion to charge reading fees. And as a writer, I would never pay a fee to have someone read my words when then should be paying *me* for the privilege.

That said, I'm a terrible businessman and am clueless as to how to survive as a small press publisher, short of begging, borrowing, and stealing. I publish because it is a deep-seated urge, an uncontrollable passion. I've been hooked on the publishing drug since I was 15. For me, it has never been about making money. Thus, you have to be slightly insane to do it. One must find other ways to bring in the moo to survive. I have never expected to make money from small press publishing. In fact, when I founded Black Scat the world was moving away from printed books to digital, yet I decided to fuck the trend. [Holds up empty hands.] And here's what I have to show for it.

Recent releases from Black Scat Books:



Black Scat Books on Entropy:

[Review of *An Erotics of Seeing* by Doug Rice](#)