

## Dorothy, a publishing project

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**Categories :** Small Press

**Date :** 16-12-2014

*This is the first in a series of small press interviews Entropy will be conducting into the indefinite future. We'll ask editors about their origins, their mission, and what it's like to run a press. As we continue the series, we'll be creating a small press database containing all of these interviews and more, available [here](#) and under the Resources tab at the top of the page.*

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### *Interview with Danielle Dutton, Editor*

*How did Dorothy, a publishing project start?*

I started the press in 2009 (with help from my husband, Marty) and the first two titles came out in 2010. It's so hard to come up with a cohesive origin story, since ideas and life are both messy . . . but the basic gist is that I'd been working at Dalkey Archive Press for about two or three years and had started to get the itch to start my own publishing thing. The itch had something to do with a utopian ideal of community and collaboration (and feeling isolated in rural Illinois post-PhD and pregnant). I toyed with the idea of a journal, which seemed less intimidating, but what I loved about working at Dalkey was the actual work of making a book (I was doing design and production) and so it just made sense to start a press. The question was: why? It felt really important to me to not start something until I'd come up with an answer to that super basic question, an answer beyond: I just want to.

Then in 2009 I found out that Renee Gladman had a book or a series of books she was writing about this invented city-state called Ravicka. I was a huge fan of Renee's earlier work, so I got in touch with her and I basically said: If you will let me publish your book(s) I will start a press. She knew me from my own books and a reading I'd done at Brown, where she taught, and she knew I worked at Dalkey. I guess I didn't seem totally unreliable. She said: yes.

So Dorothy, a publishing project very much began with Renee and her work. She even helped me with the name, vetoing some earlier iterations. Anyway, things just started to fall into place after that. For practical and financial reasons, I decided on two books a year; for aesthetic reasons, I decided that those two books would come from different literary traditions (so, in that first year, it was Renee's *Event Factory* and a reprint of Barbara Comyns's delightfully gruesome 1954 novel *Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead*); for personal and political reasons, I decided to focus on work by women.

The answer to the question of *why* wasn't only Renee's work, but her work was the actual, real-life catalyst.

*Tell us a bit about Dorothy. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?*

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I was influenced at the outset by presses whose lists I loved and whose commitment to publishing serious, innovative, difficult, necessary, quixotic work inspired me: Dalkey, of course, New Directions, the now defunct Clear Cut, etc. Also presses whose books are/were consistently beautiful objects: Hogarth, Flood Editions, Ugly Duckling Presse, etc.

I'm going to quote our website in regards to our mission, since I spent a long time thinking about the extent to which I wanted to articulate any mission; this is what we came up with: "Dorothy, a publishing project is dedicated to works of fiction or near fiction or about fiction, mostly by women."

Again to quote the website, this time on our aesthetic: "We work to pair books that draw upon different aesthetic traditions, because a large part of our interest in literature lies in its possibilities, its endless stylistic and formal variety."

*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 really hoping I get to keep publishing incredible books. I'm still in love with every book we've published, and I hope I always feel that way.

We just published, this fall, Nell Zink's *The Wallcreeper* and Joanna Ruocco's *Dan*. Both are novels. Both are hilarious and weird. Other than that, they're very different, but we sell them together at a discounted price through our website in hopes that someone who is initially interested in one will also check out the other.

In terms of what I'm specifically looking to publish in the future: an essayistic/critical book about fiction, or literature more generally, which isn't academic but is nevertheless deeply serious (if playful). Something along the lines of Amina Cain's essay [here](#) or Gregory Howard's essay [here](#), or Kate Zambreno's essay in the recent anthology *ICON*. These are all essays that energize me to think about writing and writers in new ways. I said in a different interview not long ago that I want a book that does for fiction what Maggie Nelson did for blue. If that makes perfect sense to you then you know exactly what I'm looking for. Please send it!

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

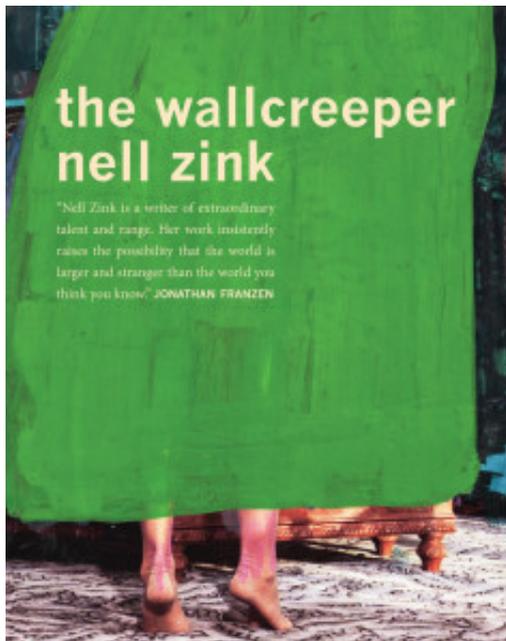
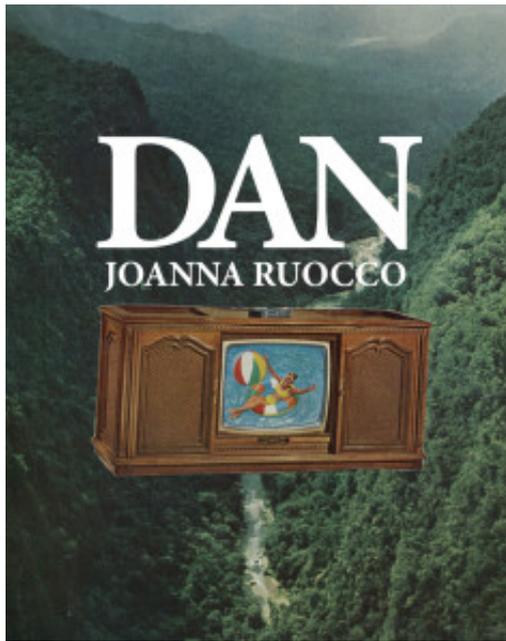
I think it's what has always been exciting about it: people committed to publishing books they believe *need* to be in the world . . . and the range of voices and writers and projects and ideas we have access to that we wouldn't without the work that small presses do and have done.

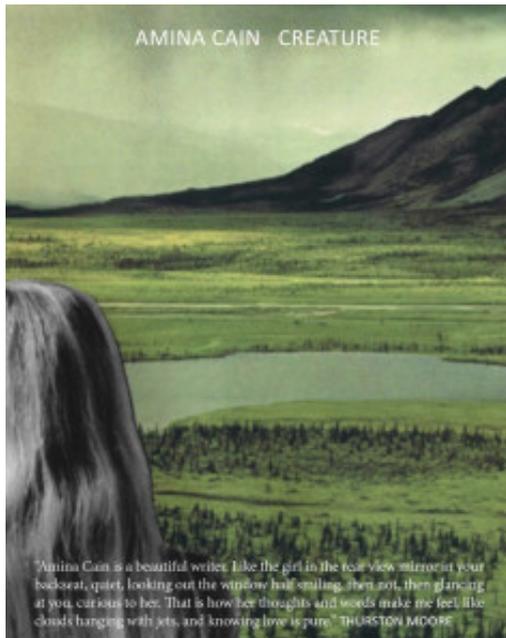
*How do you cope? There's been a lot of conversation lately about charging reading fees, printing costs, rising book costs, who should pay for what, etc. Do you have any opinions on this, and would you be willing to share any insights about the numbers at Dorothy?*

The thing that's hardest for us, no question, is the time commitment, which is huge. I'm not interested in charging reading fees or running a contest or doing a Kickstarter campaign, though I'm pleased those things work for other publishers. As for how we manage money: my husband and I invested a chunk of our (puny) savings to get the press going. Since then, it has thankfully managed to keep itself afloat. Maybe one day we'll get back our initial investment, but that's not a huge concern. We never started the press to make money, but we are certainly thankful to not be losing it.

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**Recent Dorothy releases:**





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*Dorothy on Entropy:*

[Review of \*The Weight of Things\* by Marianne Fritz](#)