l'appui, les différents critères de sélection, le traitement et l'exploitation des livres de la réserve. C'est un classique. Ensuite, avec un brin d'humour, elle nous entraîne dans le fameux Enfer de la Bibliothèque nationale. Elle retrace la genèse, l'évolution et les tribulations de cette partie 'honteuse' de la B.N. Le recueil se termine par la biographie d'un collectionneur important du 19e siècle, François Rasse des Neux.

Ce livre a la qualité de rassembler en un seul recueil plusieurs articles dispersés dans des revues ou périodiques. Disons tout de suite qu'à part quelques textes, il s'agit d'un ouvrage de référence et non d'un livre de lecture pour débutants. Les articles sont très bien écrits, dans un style clair et vivant, et même les plus techniques ne sont jamais ennuyeux. Les illustrations sont indispensables à la compréhension des éléments les plus difficiles du texte.

En résumé, ce qui fait l'originalité et la qualité de la contribution de Mme Veyrin-Forrer, c'est l'heureuse combinaison de l'approche française et anglaise à l'histoire du livre. Les chercheurs français ont traditionnellement traité des aspects religieux, politiques et sociaux de l'évolution du livre. Ils ont surtout favorisé l'approche historique en examinant l'évolution des thèmes, l'influence des grands imprimeurs, les habitudes de lecture, etc. La monumentale *Histoire de l'édition française* est un exemple de l'approche française. Ceci n'est pas une critique car tous reconnaissent la grande utilité de cette publication. Ce n'est que depuis quelques années que les historiens français du livre se sont vraiment attaqué au problème de la bibliographie matérielle (la 'descriptive bibliography' des anglais) pratiquée surtout dans les pays anglo-saxons. Mme Veyrin-Forrer est certainement une des pionnières en France dans ce domaine et une des plus compétentes.

En terminant, voici un excellent ouvrage utile surtout aux spécialistes mais aussi apprécié par les néophytes pour quelques textes généraux. Ceux et celles qui continuent à penser que l'étude sérieuse des livres anciens est simple seront facilement convaincus du contraire en parcourant cet ouvrage. Pour vous dérider après une lecture sérieuse, examinez la photographie de l'auteur sur la couverture arrière de l'ouvrage. C'est un bijou.

*MICHEL BRISEBOIS*  
*Michel Brisebois est un libraire montréalais.*


In 1887 John Lane and Elkin Mathews jointly established in London's Vigo Street an antiquarian bookstore called The Bodley Head. The fascinating story of how this small business was transformed into an important publishing house is hardly new. The early years of the company, which lasted until 1894 when Lane and Mathews went their separate ways, have been chronicled in detail in James G. Nelson's *The Early Nineties: A View from The Bodley Head* (1971). The most famous Bodley Head periodical, the *Yellow Book*, has been carefully examined by Katherine Lyon Mix in her book *A Study in Yellow* (1960). J. Lewis May, who was a stock boy at The Bodley Head, has recorded his reminiscences in *The Path Through the Wood* (1931).
There are two biographies of Allen Lane, John Lane’s nephew and successor: W.E. Williams’s *Allen Lane: A Personal Portrait* (1973) and J.E. Morpurgo’s *Allen Lane, King Penguin: A Biography* (1979). In 1970 the director of The Bodley Head’s design and production departments, John Ryder, published a short account of the firm from its founding to its acquisition by Max Reinhardt. Notwithstanding this previous work, at closer scrutiny one discovers large gaps in the firm’s written history. This book attempts to fill in those gaps with a complete narrative of the firm’s century of activity.

The major author of this company history, J.W. Lambert, was a broadcaster and journalist and the literary and arts editor of the *Sunday Times*. He died in August 1986 after finishing three-quarters of the manuscript, reaching 1957 in detail and 1973 in outline notes. The manuscript was shortened and edited by Michael Ratcliffe, who was Lambert’s assistant at the *Sunday Times* during the 1960s and is currently the theatre critic for the *Observer*. Ratcliffe wrote several chapters based on Lambert’s notes for the period 1957 to 1973, and then, with the assistance of The Bodley Head’s editor, Guido Waldman, he completed a final chapter that brings the story down to the present.

Their book consists of twenty-eight chapters, divided into three parts: I John Lane and the nineties; II John Lane, Allen Lane and the Unwin years; and III the Reinhardt image. Considering the fact that this company history has been published by The Bodley Head, it is remarkably frank in discussion of past members of the firm. At one point, for example, John Lane is referred to as a ‘fat white slug.’ Lane’s ghost cannot prosecute for libel, and in any event, the quotation comes from Gertrude Atherton’s memoirs *The Adventures of a Novelist*. In chapter 13, entitled ‘New Recruits,’ the reader is introduced to Arundel Dene, who edited the *Bodleian* from 1909 to 1911 and then went with Lane to look into the affairs of the New York office. Witty, charming, and impudent, Dene was notorious for his misconduct, and Lambert and Ratcliffe take great delight in regaling the reader with tales of his impropriety. For events closer to the present, the authors are certainly more discreet about the behaviour of company employees. Nevertheless, one learns a good deal about the various corporate takeovers of the firm. An especially interesting chapter concerns Graham Greene becoming a director of the board in the late 1950s.

It is perhaps inevitable in a history of this kind that certain parts of the story that are well known should be retold and that other parts that are not well known should be merely sketched. Particularly in the early stages, the book is encumbered by many tangential sentences and paragraphs. For example, do we really care about the religious beliefs of John Lane’s landlady when he first came to London? Similarly, one wonders, how does Reinhardt’s ability to play squash and tennis relate to publishing?

Given the many authors that The Bodley Head has dealt with, it is understandable that this history can only delve into these relationships superficially. As Lane’s first author, Richard Le Gallienne embodied the decadence and *joie de vivre* that The Bodley Head ascribed to around the turn of the century. More than a chapter of commentary on him appears excessive, however. Although John Lane Co. of New York issued two of Bernard Shaw’s political tracts *Socialism and Superior Brains in
1910 and *The Commonsense of Municipal Trading* in 1911, The Bodley Head did not publish any of his books until after his death. The authors do not mention these American issues of Shaw’s books. They spend two paragraphs on inquiries he made about possible publication of his plays. No one doubts Shaw’s importance, but why should he even be mentioned when other authors whom The Bodley Head published get short shrift?

With the exception of the American branch [which was sold to Dodd, Mead and Co. in the early 1920s], there is nothing in this history on the company’s activity in other countries. Did the company bargain for rights outside of Britain, did it distribute its books internationally through agents, or did it export its sheets to other publishers? This history provides no answers to these questions.

Of Canadian interest there is some information on the young John Buchan, who contributed to the *Yellow Book* and was engaged by John Lane as a reader of fiction. Buchan left behind 172 reader’s reports which collectively paint an intimate portrait of his literary tastes and judgments. Disappointingly, nothing new is revealed about Stephen Leacock’s relationship with The Bodley Head. The accepted view is that on a return voyage to Britain in 1910 Lane read the vanity edition of Leacock’s *Literary Lapses* and cabled him with an offer of a regular trade edition. Lambert and Ratcliffe contend that Leacock was discovered by Lane’s associate, Frederic Chapman, who happened to read ‘My Financial Career’ in the *Spectator* in 1908.

One could make a number of other criticisms of this book. The sources that have been consulted are insufficiently cited. An appendix containing an annotated list of Bodley Head booklets issued between 1961 and 1984 appears as an awkward afterthought. Yet, for all its faults, this company history imparts an enormous amount of information on contemporary British publishing. Written with flair and enlivened with wit, this is an enjoyable and entertaining book.

**Carl Spadoni**

(*Carl Spadoni is the Research Collections Librarian, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University.)

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This beautifully produced bibliography carries on the study of smaller twentieth-century English publishers which J. Howard Woolmer began with his checklists of the Hogarth Press (1976, 1986) and his bibliography of the Samurai Press (1986). The present work can in fact be seen as a sequel to the Samurai Press volume, for it was there in the years 1907-1909 that Harold Monro, the guiding light of the Poetry Bookshop, first met John Drinkwater, Wilfrid Gibson and other young English poets and began to learn the craft of publishing.

As the novelist Penelope Fitzgerald tells us in her eloquent and informative introduction, Harold Monro was an influential figure in English poetry circles from