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# Publishers Weekly

## Godine Readying Black Sparrow Imprint

by Judith Rosen -- 5/12/2003

One year after John Martin closed Black Sparrow Publishers—home to many of the 20th century's best-known avant-garde, Beat and Neo-Beat writers—David R. Godine Publisher in Boston announced that it has obtained the rights to publish under the Black Sparrow name. Godine, which took over the bulk of Black Sparrow's list, 185 titles, will launch its Black Sparrow Books imprint this fall. Christopher Carduff, most recently an editor with Counterpoint and Houghton Mifflin, has been named publisher and editorial director.

"Black Sparrow is just a great franchise," David Godine told *PW*. He anticipates that the addition of the Black Sparrow imprint "will help us both. It will help Godine get into accounts that buy poetry and Black Sparrow get into general bookstores." It's a good fit in other ways, since both Godine and Black Sparrow rely heavily on backlist sales. "Our bestselling book last year was Peter Bowler's *The Superior Person's Book of Words*," said Godine. "It's 15 years old, and it still sells 25,000 to 30,000 copies a year." Godine publishes between 30 and 40 new books a year; he plans to publish 12 to 15 Black Sparrow titles, primarily in trade paperback. Carduff will handle all aspects of the Black Sparrow imprint, sharing only shipping and billing with Godine.

Carduff sees his mission as "a continuation of what John Martin did. There's a core of 25 or so books that will always be in print, and I'll be acquiring new books that fit the Black Sparrow aesthetic. We are not making a quantum leap; we are continuing in much the same tradition." The first Black Sparrow list very much reflects Carduff's concerns. It includes a first novel, which was originally self-published in the U.K., *Mirage* by Bandula Chandraratna, a 1999 Booker Prize favorite; Alfred Chester's novel *The Exquisite Corpse*, which is being published for the first time in paperback; a reissue of Diane Wakoski's *Emerald Ice: Selected Poems 1962–1987*; and two new poetry collections previously under contract with Martin, [Lyn Lifshin's \*Another Woman Who Looks Like Me\*](#) and Clayton Eshleman's *My Devotion*. At the same time, Godine will continue to sell all Black Sparrow books it acquired from John Martin as long as stock remains available.

Four other Black Sparrow authors that were transplanted to other houses are also thriving. Ecco Press bought the works of Charles Bukowski, Paul Bowles (it already published some of Bowles's books) and John Fante. Ecco's purchase included five previously unpublished Bukowski books, which it began issuing in January with *Sifting Through the Madness for the Word, the Line, the Way: New Poems*. It plans to release one new book a year. In what editorial director Dan Halpern termed "a perfect Bukowski twist," these books contain the poems that Bukowski deemed his best work, but which were never published. "Every time he turned in a book, he would mark the poems he liked best. They were not published in the books; he asked John Martin to publish them posthumously," Halpern explained.

Wyndham Lewis's work went from Black Sparrow to Gingko Press in Corte Madera, Calif., and Gingko editor David Lopes says the books are a good fit. "They overlap very well with the Marshall McLuhan books we're doing," he noted. "At this point, we haven't had to reprint."

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