



# QUEER BETWEEN THE COVERS

**15 January–16 June 2018**

A free exhibition at Senate House Library



UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON  
SENATE HOUSE  
LIBRARY

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# Queer Between the Covers

Literature, Queerness, and the Library

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## Literature, Queerness, and the Library

A warm welcome to Senate House Library and to *Queer Between The Covers*, an exhibition exploring the power of literature in understanding 'queerness' through the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its role in the campaign for LGBT equality.

The exhibition of over 50 books in our collection is on display in the Convocation Hall of the iconic Senate House Library. The library houses and cares for more than two million books, 50 special collections and 1,800 archival collections. It is one of the UK's largest academic libraries focused on the arts, humanities, and social sciences. It holds a wealth of primary source material from the medieval period to the modern age.

I hope that you are inspired by the exhibition and accompanying events that explore works of satire, autographed manuscripts, book designs and illustrations as well as showcase rare works of famous authors such as Oscar Wilde, WH Auden and Virginia Woolf.

**Nick Barratt**

Senate House Librarian

This exhibition will examine the diverse ways in which literature has been central to the culture's handling and understanding of what queerness might mean, used equally to educate and celebrate and to mock and denounce, with works by queer writers repeatedly taken not as art but as primary data on the nature of homosexuality. A representation of Senate House Library's holdings, this exhibition does not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of queer books, but it does reflect how one library collected these works and with what emphases and omissions. Embracing forms from the pornographic to the melodramatic, it will demonstrate that despite a legal insistence on sexual activity, it has been between the covers of books that struggles for acceptance, liberation and repression have been waged.

**Richard Espley and Leila Kassir**

Exhibition Curators

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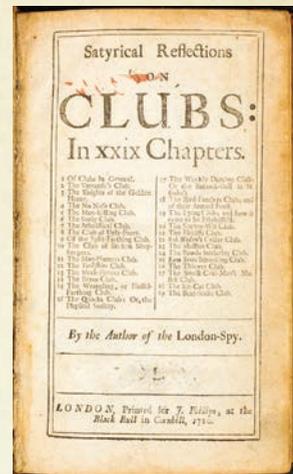
# Before Wilde (pre-1850)

There persists a notion of 'merrie England' where all sexual and gender identities were broadly tolerated, with occasional repressive puritan interludes. This section will explore the falsehoods and the ambiguities in this conception, beginning with the early and still perpetuated critical horror at the idea of a gay Shakespeare. Other key works include eighteenth-century satirical and dismissive depictions of 'Mollies,' men whose desires we might now class as transgender, and banned and still technically illegal copies of *Don Leon*, an autobiographical poem describing gay encounters and (erroneously) ascribed to Byron.

## Satirical Reflections on Clubs

The Author of the London Spy  
 London: printed for J. Phillips, 1710  
 [B.L.] 1710 [Satirical]

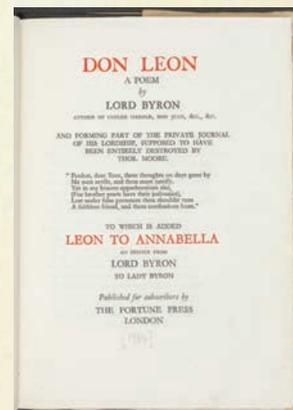
Amongst the numerous clubs outlined by the London Spy (aka writer and publican Ned Ward) is the Mollies Club, one of the first English literary descriptions of a gay club. The tone is predominately hostile and sneering as the general Bacchanalian activities of the club are commented upon, the members drink and gossip, and the men 'on each other doat' [sic]. Most of the emphasis centres on 'Festival Nights'; during these December events the club members dressed as women and performed mock births, complete with nurse and midwife roles, and mimicked the 'merry society of good wives'.



## Don Leon: a Poem by Lord Byron

London: Fortune Press, [1934]  
 [Craig] 399

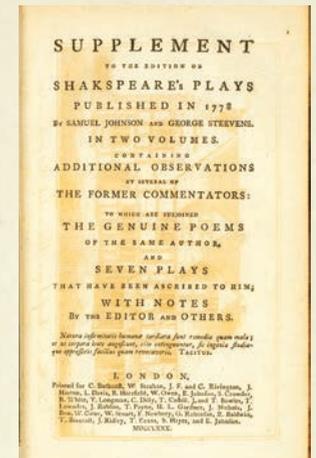
This poem is both a cry for the reform of the law that hanged homosexual men and also a homoerotic love poem describing the gay love affairs of Lord Byron. Upon publication in 1866 the poem was ascribed to Lord Byron – a claim that has been discredited, particularly as the poem includes events that occurred subsequent to Byron's death. Despite this, the poem was republished in 1934 by the Fortune Press, with the same authorial attribution. This edition of 1000 copies was declared obscene and copies were seized and destroyed. Some survived, including this copy, collected by Alec Craig.



## Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays Published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens

Ed. by Edmond Malone  
 London: printed for C. Bathurst, W. Strahan, J.F. and C. Rivington [and 27 others], around 1780  
 [Rare] YH 778 Vol. 1

The first lines of Sonnet XX, describing the 'master-mistress of my passion', are central to the debate concerning Shakespeare's sexuality, and more particularly the potential expression of his gay desire. The 'disgust and indignation' Edmond Malone, the editor of this 1780 supplementary edition, feels at reading these lines is complemented in the introduction by the comment 'to this person, whoever he was, one hundred and twenty of the following poems are addressed'. Argument still continues regarding this and others of the Sonnets, and the potential for a queer reading of Shakespeare's works and the man himself.



## 'The Funny He-She Ladies', in Curiosities of Street Literature

[Ed. by C. Hindley]  
 London: Reeves and Turner, 1871  
 [G.L.] 1871 fol

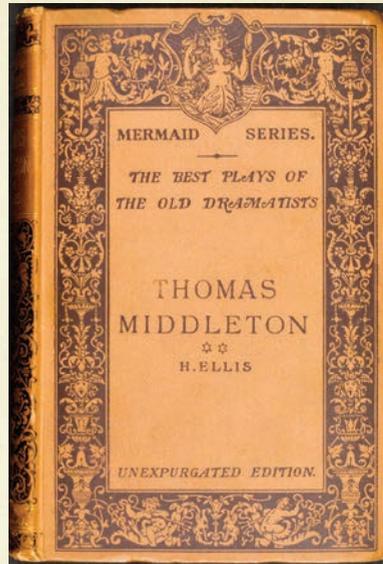
Frederick Park and Earnest Boulton, famously known as Fanny and Stella, were theatrical performers who kept a home in Wakefield Street, Bloomsbury, and became a cause célèbre when they were arrested in 1870 for wearing women's clothes in public. Upon examination, the charge was altered to include sodomy, then deemed a serious felony. Unable, however, to prove they had engaged in sodomy, or that wearing women's clothes was indecent, the court acquitted them. This broadside is an account of their trial.



## ***Roaring Girl*, in *The Best Plays of the Old Dramatists*: Thomas Middleton**

Ed. by Havelock Ellis  
London: Vizetelly, [1890?]  
[M.M.C.] 952

The subject of this play is Mary Frith, known as Moll Cutpurse, the notorious pickpocket and fence, who challenged contemporary gender roles by wearing men's clothing and regularly smoking a pipe. This edition, published by Vizetelly & Co in their Mermaid Series of reprinted plays, is edited by Havelock Ellis, the co-author of the first English text on homosexuality, *Sexual Inversion* (1897). The publication of the Mermaid series was interrupted in 1888 when Vizetelly was prosecuted for obscenity for publishing Zola's *The Earth*; taking advantage of this scandal, the Mermaid texts were alluringly advertised as 'unexpurgated'.



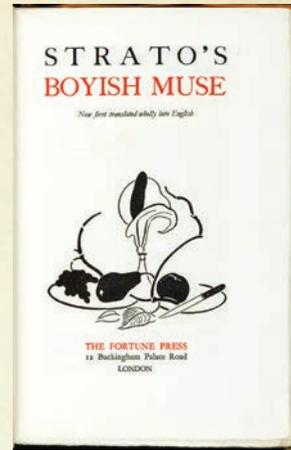
## **'Uranians', 1880–1930**

It is tempting to plot the change in literary expression of queer lives as a slow evolution from repression and camouflage to freedom and celebration, with multiple labels and restrictive identities being embraced into the concept of queerness. However, amidst the constant fluctuation of what categories such as invert, homosexual or androgyne might mean, were broadly accepted currents of desire that lie at best antagonistically with societal acceptance today. Indeed, the most freely expressed queer sensibility in late-nineteenth century print was arguably that which remains most problematic: adult male writers depicting a passionate yearning for adolescent and younger boys that now seems inescapably paedophilic. Most evidently, a coterie of 'Uranian' writers developed, claiming Classical antecedents, whose works became increasingly libidinally charged, although the extent to which such currents were conscious is certainly open to discussion. Senate House Library is puzzlingly rich in these scarce works, alongside flyers for similar books which, whatever their content, were being insidiously marketed as offering pederastic sexual content. Aspects of these documents may be troubling, but they are potent reminders that any historical discourse that cannot look beyond poles of tolerance and prejudice is incomplete.

## Strato's Boyish Muse

[Straton of Sardis; trans. by Shane Leslie]  
London: Fortune Press, [1932]  
[Craig] 378

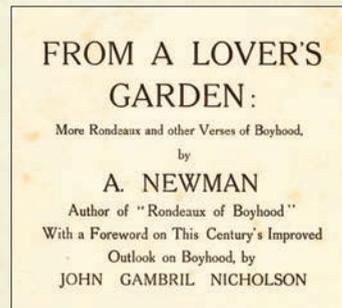
This Greek text assigned to Straton of Sardis, though its textual history is corrupt, 'now first translated wholly into English,' had previously been sold in the original Greek or translated into Latin to limit the readership because of its erotic content. The introduction is lightly apologetic for this, but identifies its theme as homosexuality broadly defined, rather than addressing its inescapable paedophilia, albeit from a culturally remote era. The publisher's device of selling an expensive limited edition (with 400 copies embellished with etchings by Jean de Bosschère) did not save it from being banned by a Westminster magistrate in 1934.



## Francis E. Murray, Advertisement flyers

Craig Archive MS1091/3/3

These advertisements for 'paedophil verse' and the like were assembled by anti-censorship campaigner Alec Craig, and include notices of works by authors represented elsewhere in this section. Where extant, the content of these works is often abstracted or implied rather than explicit, but to a modern reader the language employed here, and the fact that this Ramsgate bookseller specialised in works expressing adult men's longing for boys, is troubling. In total, it is a reminder that at one historical moment, queer literature largely meant such libidinous descriptions of boyhood.



## The Spirit Lamp: an Aesthetic, Literary and Critical Magazine, vol. 4, no. 1, May 1908

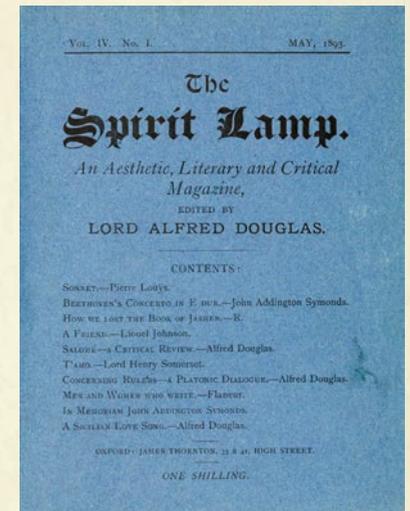
Ed. by Lord Alfred Douglas  
Periodicals PR Bc

and

## A Problem in Greek Ethics: Being an Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion...

John Addington Symonds  
London: privately printed for the  
Areopagitica Society, 1908  
[Craig] 429

Symonds' work, published privately, was an expression of his own sexuality that he was unable to make in his own lifetime, and was arguably the very first published use of the word 'homosexual'. However, it again championed the feasibility of mutual sexual relationships between men and boys. It is shown here alongside *The Spirit Lamp*, an undergraduate Oxford magazine featuring Symonds and other 'Uranian' works, including the poetry of its editor, Lord Alfred Douglas. Douglas also received original work from Wilde to publish here, long before his trial. However, the magazine also featured many canonical authors who could not be defined in any way as queer, and it underlines the central place in literary culture occupied by a short-lived 'Uranian' clique.



## Rydal Mount Plays

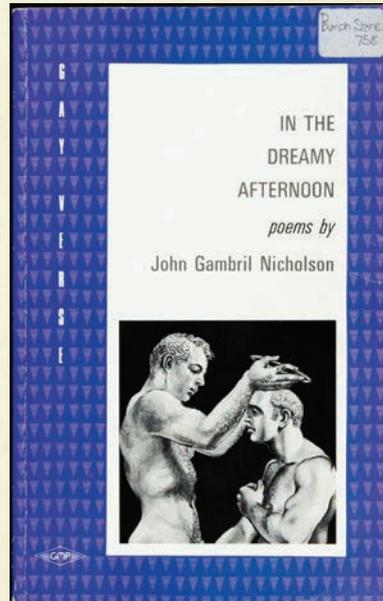
John Gambriel Nicholson  
London: Murray, 1922  
H 82-1

and

## 11) In the Dreamy Afternoon

John Gambriel Nicholson  
London: Gay Men's Press, 1989  
Pamph Store 758

John Gambriel Nicholson, a private schoolteacher all his life, is arguably the most representative and ubiquitous 'Uranian,' writing dedications and introductions to works by others, in addition to much prose and poetry published by specialist Francis Murray, including this book. Nicholson explored in his writing a tension between sexual desire for boys and the consequences, or impossibility, of its expression. While moral relativism is undoubtedly a danger when considering such expressions of desire, it is striking to read the back cover of the 1989 Gay Men's Press edition of his verse, which openly states that it deals with 'a sexuality rarely expressed and socially scorned; the love of men for boys'. In this context, the photograph of Nicholson's charges at his school, roused from bed to rehearse, remains troubling.



## Extracts from the Letters and Journals of William Cory

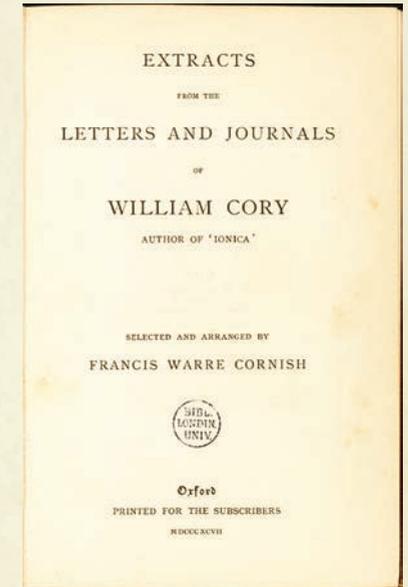
Selected and arranged by Francis Warre Cornish  
Oxford: privately printed, 1897  
B 275-5

and

## Rhymes After Horace: Six Verse Translations

William Johnson Cory  
Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1982  
XIL (P.C.1)

William Johnson Cory is perhaps the most discussed 'Uranian' in terms of his sexual intentions and actions. A schoolteacher at Eton, he was, alone amongst all of the writers included here, censured for immorality and inappropriate intimacy with boys, losing his position and voluntarily exiling himself. The exact extent of his guilt has been argued, and the fact that he was still held in extremely high regard is evidenced by this rather lavish private printing of his letters and journals, which includes several references to, and indeed letters to, the boys with whom he had been accused of being 'intimate'. However, he remained unread and unpublished for decades before, as with Nicholson, being republished in the 1980s, here in a limited edition pamphlet from the Tragara Press.

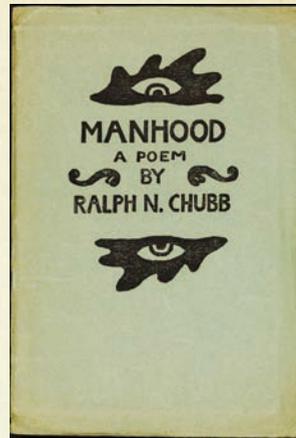


## Manhood: a Poem

Ralph N. Chubb

Curridge, Berkshire: R. N. Chubb, 1924  
[S.L.] III [Chubb – 1924]

Ralph Chubb already had a successful career as a painter behind him when he began to develop a lifelong interest in fine printing, woodcuts and lithography. Seen here is the first work he typeset himself, and there is a certain naivety and even clumsiness to the presentation. The verse here is homoerotic, but it marks only the beginning of Chubb's development as an artist, which ultimately raised a sexualised longing for adolescent boys to a quasi-mystical level, expressed through a dense allegorical and symbolic repertoire arguably only understood by Chubb himself.

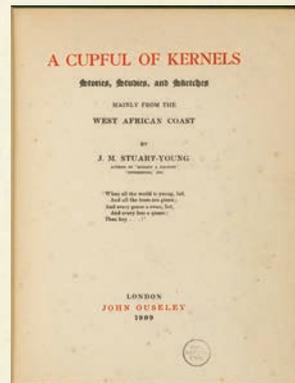


## A Cupful of Kernels: stories, studies, and sketches, mainly from the West African coast

John Moray Stuart-Young

London: J. Ouseley, 1909  
YO S9465G

This carefully constructed assemblage of 'quaint' stories with a colonial setting was written by John Stuart-Young, a palm-oil merchant who lived in Africa for decades. However, before this phase of his life, and after a period in prison for theft, Stuart-Young had first been published with an almost certainly entirely false account of his eroticised friendship with the recently deceased and widely derided Oscar Wilde. His life in Africa, despite at least two marriages to English women, was marked by a series of intense relationships with 'houseboys' which it is impossible to interpret as anything but abusive and paedophilic.



## The Age of Wilde

The trial of Oscar Wilde was a seminal moment in the discussion of homosexuality, and it has been argued that 'our stereotypical notion of male homosexuality derives from Wilde' (Sinfield, 1994). The Library has numerous items showing Wilde's extraordinary cultural presence before the trial, and his marginal readership afterwards. The banned *Salome* is iconic in this respect, and we hold a copy shakily autographed by Wilde to Aubrey Beardsley, and the worn acting scripts used by the performers in a very rare private, thus legal, production. In séance transcripts we even have Wilde repudiating his homosexuality from beyond the grave. In contrast to this recrimination and repudiation, we hold richly decorated works by Michael Field, actually Katharine Harris Bradley and her niece and ward Edith Emma Cooper, a gay couple. This section also notes the symbolic power of *Salome* to disrupt in the figure of dancer Maud Allan, who sued for libel in 1918 after being accused of representing a German plot, known to the press as the Cult of the Clitoris, to send 47,000 gay men and women to Britain to seduce the population and sap moral fibre.

## Stories and Essays, including advertisement flyer

Mrs. Havelock Ellis

Berkeley Heights, N.J.: privately printed by the Free Spirit Press, [c1924]  
[S.L.] II [Ellis – 1924] Vol. II

A novelist, biographer and campaigner for women's rights, Edith Lees's identity is subsumed into that of her husband here. Recent commentary has suggested that her openly lesbian identity was similarly forced upon her by her husband, who misinterpreted less easily categorised feelings. Reminiscent of Havelock, Edith here accounts for Wilde's queerness by suggesting that 'his mother had longed for a girl,' leaving him cursed with 'misguided femininity' and somehow 'a woman as well as a man'. Such thoughts remind us that even those who campaigned for understanding of LGBTQ+ lives, and lived them, are still prone to reductive stereotypes.

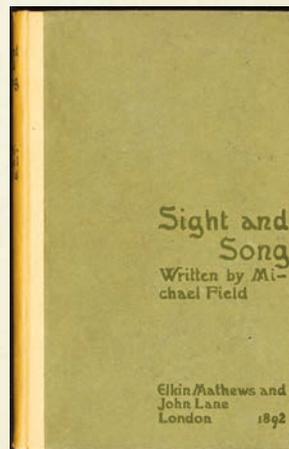


## Sight and Song

Michael Field

London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1892  
[Rare] (XIX) Bc [Field]

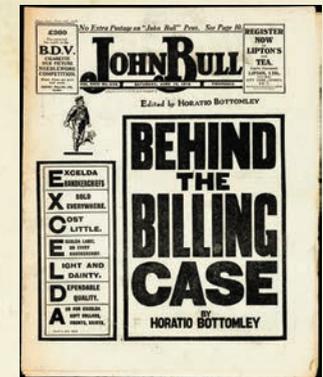
Michael Field was a pseudonym for the couple Katherine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper, who published dozens of volumes of poetry. They lived together for decades and remained devoted to one another, using the term 'marriage' to describe their relationship, although alongside periods of passionate Paganism and equally devout Catholicism, they occasionally repudiated the physical expression of their sexuality. This volume of verse, published in a limited edition and not reprinted for many decades, portrays a clear, if somewhat arch, longing for the female body, the queer savour of which was obscured by the male name on the cover.



## John Bull. Vol. XXIII, nos. 627 & 628, June 1918

Playne Archive, MS1112/160

Published by MP, bankrupt and convicted fraudster Horatio Bottomley, John Bull was an ostentatiously nationalist tabloid newspaper that delighted in lengthy, scandalised accounts of sexual depravity. In this case, the controversy over the case of Maud Allan had been ignited by a rival newspaper, Vigilante, and so Bottomley avoided its mention until it became unavoidable, at which point he rounded on the case with characteristic outrage and passion. As well as increasing readership, Bottomley was also using Allan's distress to raise his profile and prepare for a triumphant return to Parliament after the war.



## My Life and Dancing

Maud Allan

London: Everett & Co., [1908]  
793.3 [Allan]

This autobiography by dancer Maud Allan was published in a year in which she gave over 250 solo performances in England. Pictured here as Salome, Allan became synonymous with the role, arguably capitalising on the sinful aura attached to Oscar Wilde. Allan appears to have always lived as a gay woman, but in 1918 she was mentioned in print by Noel Pemberton Billing MP as part of a bizarre claim of a German plot to seduce the youth of England into a degenerative and incapacitating homosexuality. She lost a suit for defamation in a ludicrously prejudiced trial that destroyed her career.

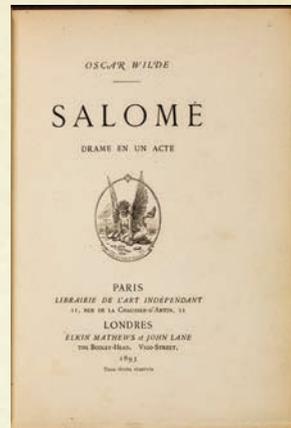


## Salomé: Drame en une Acte

Oscar Wilde

Paris: Librairie de l'Art Indépendant;  
London: E. Matthews et J. Lane, 1893  
[S.L.] I [Wilde – 1893]

This was a gift from Oscar Wilde to Aubrey Beardsley, inspired by an illustration to Salome which he had recently seen published. It marks the intensification of their friendship, leading to Beardsley illustrating the English edition of Salome with a vigour and intensity that amounts to a collaboration. The densely suggestive and yet evasive dedication, that Beardsley is the only other artist who 'knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance,' toys with notions of forbidden knowledge and the supremacy of aesthetic appreciation that ultimately became linked to stereotypical understandings of queerness.



## Psychic Messages from Oscar Wilde

Hester Travers Smith

London: T.W. Laurie, [1923?]  
[H.P.L.] Smith

This is a commercially published volume of messages received seemingly from the spirit of Oscar Wilde after his death; to a non-believing eye, it reads as an uncomfortable pastiche of Wilde's voice. The recorded voice avoids discussing his literary work in any detail, though it somewhat surprisingly contains a damning critique of Joyce's *Ulysses*. When the voice mentions Wilde's queerness or his trial, it is tinged with regret and a confusion at his own actions. Given that Wilde was broken by societal attitudes towards gay love, it seems inescapably cruel to then portray him as a briefly misguided heterosexual.

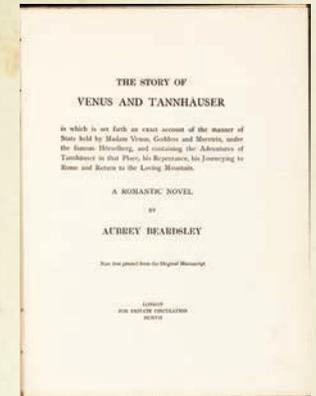


## The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser

Aubrey Beardsley

London: For Private Circulation, 1907  
[Rare] (XIX) Bc [Beardsley]

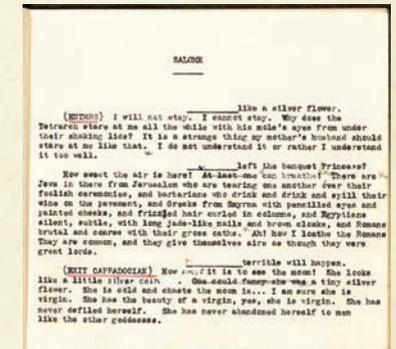
Beardsley's unfinished erotic novel originally appeared in a heavily censored form in the magazine *The Savoy*, but this limited edition volume containing the unexpurgated text was issued anonymously by publisher Leonard Smithers, who also released pornographic titles under false company names. Without illustrations from Beardsley, the book is a little unimpressive, and the text itself would be unlikely to have achieved literary fame were it not for Beardsley's reputation as an artist. Largely constituted of descriptions of sexual acts, the book is open at what has often been claimed as the first English language published depiction of male anal sex.



## Acting Scripts for a Private Performance of Salome

Sturge Moore Archive MS978/2/8/2  
and MS978/2/8/3

This is the original acting script for the second-ever production of Wilde's *Salome* in English, presented to a private audience in the King's Hall, Covent Garden, in 1906. Banned by the Lord Chamberlain in 1892, the play could not legally be performed to paying British audiences until 1931. While not marked by any explicitly queer content, it has been argued that Salome's sexuality is masculinised and that there are shades of homoeroticism present. Regardless, becoming so associated with Wilde and his criminalised homosexuality, the play developed a great disruptive cultural power, as is glimpsed in the case of Maud Allan.



## The Trials of Oscar Wilde newspaper serialisation, Evening Standard, April 1960

Craig Archive MS1091/2/8

Collected by librarian Eric Dingwall, who had a lifelong interest in social attitudes towards LGBTQ+ lives, these are cuttings of a series in London's *Evening Standard* following the making of a film of Wilde's fall, starring Peter Finch. In common with the 'psychic messages,' the film and this press coverage are notable for depicting Wilde as a happily married heterosexual, who is tragically led astray by Lord Alfred Douglas. It is evidence that some 65 years after Wilde's trials, and as the efforts to decriminalise consensual sex between men were gathering real momentum, the relationship could still seem so transgressive.



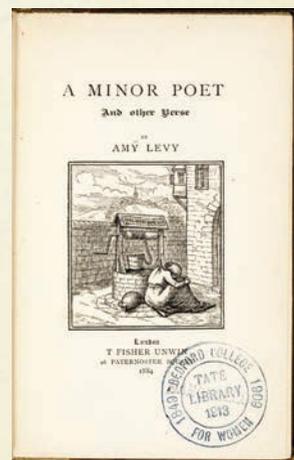
## A Minor Poet and Other Verse

Amy Levy

London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1884

H 83-1

Amy Levy has been described as a 'New Woman poet with Sapphic interests'. Levy also authored novels and short stories, two of which were published by Oscar Wilde in his *Women's World* magazine. Levy expressed her lesbianism through her poetry, sometimes in a coded manner such as in 'To Lallie', where the language suggests the poem is written by a man ('I bowed...and raised my hat'). Levy's death by suicide at the age of 27 was mourned in an obituary written by Oscar Wilde in which he regretted that 'the world must forgo the full fruition of her power'.



## Publishing Queer in the Twentieth Century

The year 1928 saw the trial of *The Well of Loneliness*, later cited for decades as an accurate depiction of non-heteronormative women's lives. Our copy, printed in Paris in a clumsy attempt by publisher Jonathan Cape to avoid prosecution, tells its own narrative of repression. An original copy of Djuna Barnes' bawdy *Ladies Almanack*, printed privately in Paris, provides a counterpoint that evaded prosecution by its informal sale on the streets and by its thinly veiled language and antiquated style. We also hold the original manuscript of James Hanley's *Boy*, heavily censored in print not as a novel showing queer lifestyles, but perhaps more for its message that sexuality was fluid, and also brutal. Together, they demonstrate a broad range not only of attempts to escape censorship, but also the clear emergence of radically differing perceptions of what queer identities might be.

## Ladies Almanack

Djuna Barnes

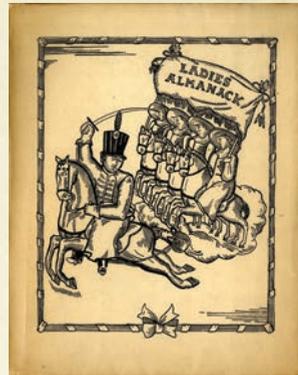
Paris: Printed for the Author

Sold by Edward W. Titus, 1928

YTP B262G

Barnes's faux-medieval chapbook is a satirical but affectionate portrait of the Parisian lesbian salon of Natalie Clifford Barney, here renamed Dame Evangeline Musset. Insistently bawdy, with the most lightly veiled descriptions of a wide variety of sexual contact between women, it nevertheless evaded legal censure by its indirect language.

In contrast to other works in this section, Barnes rigorously avoids defining the sexual identity of her characters, focusing rather on their pleasures; she similarly refused to define herself through her own most significant relationship, with artist Thelma Wood, insisting 'I'm not a lesbian, I just loved Thelma.'



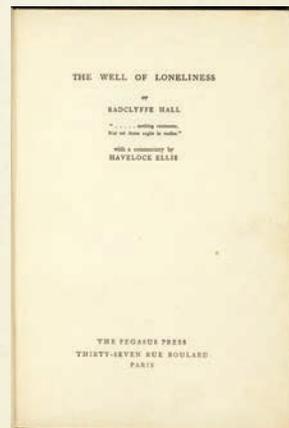
## The Well of Loneliness

Radclyffe Hall

Paris: Pegasus Press, 1928

[H.P.L.] Hall

Published in the same year as Barnes' *Ladies Almanack*, this novel is radically different both in its avoidance of any sexual content and in its insistence that 'inversion' in women was a distinct and all-encompassing category of being. While its redemptive power is questionable, depicting its heroine as mannish and tragic, the work undoubtedly raised the cultural consciousness of non-heterosexual lives. Ironically, this was only amplified by campaigns against it; having initially withdrawn the novel under governmental and media pressure, Jonathan Cape clumsily attempted to have the edition here printed in Paris and reimported, ultimately leading to a successful prosecution.



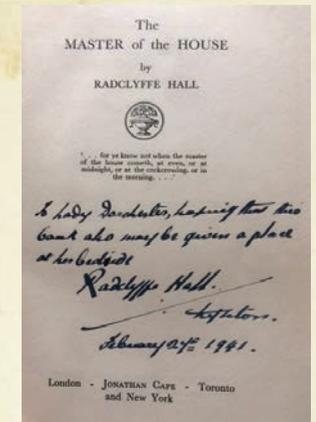
## The Master of the House

Radclyffe Hall

London: Jonathan Cape, 1932

From a private collection

While Radclyffe Hall is synonymous with *The Well of Loneliness*, she wrote six other novels that largely avoided questions of sexuality. Hall is rumoured to have written this deeply conservative religious novel partly in horrified response to the caricature nearby of herself crucified, as expiation at having caused such a blasphemous image. In direct contrast to this devout intention, it is fascinating to read the mildly flirtatious inscription to Lady Dorchester in this example, where Hall, clearly referencing an earlier conversation, explains that she is 'hoping that this book also may be given a place at her bedside'.



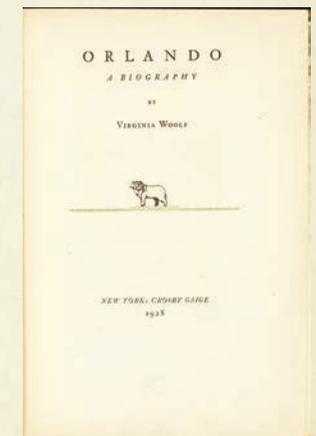
## Orlando: a Biography

Virginia Woolf

New York: C. Gaige, 1928

[S.L.] II [Woolf, V.- 1928]

Orlando is dedicated to Vita Sackville-West, poet and garden designer, who had passionate relationships with men and women, including Woolf. It envisages a central character reminiscent of Sackville-West who lives for over three centuries, once changing physical sex from male to female, but then repeatedly altering her outward gender in dress and behaviour. The novel has famously been described as the 'the longest and most charming love letter in literature' but outside of its reflection of the author's personal life, it is perhaps above all for Woolf a rather uncharacteristically riotous celebration of the fluidity of sex, sexuality and gender.



## The Sink of Solitude

Beresford Egan  
London: Hermes Press, 1928  
Pamph Store 800

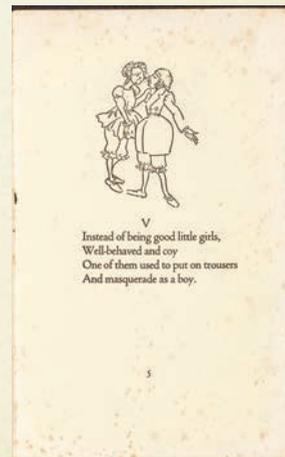
This satirical pamphlet comments on the controversy over *The Well of Loneliness*; a verse response, highly critical of all sides in the case, is accompanied by Beardsley-inspired illustrations by Beresford Egan, novelist and illustrator. This image depicts an immediately recognisable Radclyffe Hall crucified, with the Home Secretary William Joynson-Hicks watching on, embellished with a tail, while the figure of Sappho leaps across the page in abandon. While defending Hall to some extent, the whole publication is opportunistic in comparison to her novel's clear purpose, and arguably contained more that might be classed as obscene than her writing ever would.



## The Well of Sleevelessness: a Tale for the Least of These Little Ones

Percy Reginald Stephensen  
London: Scholartis Press, 1929  
Pamph Store 638

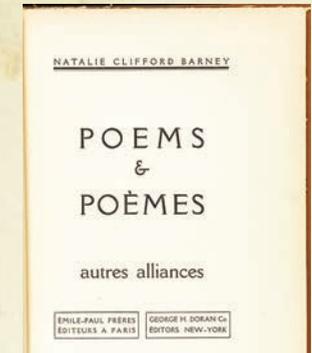
By journalist P. R. Stephensen, who also wrote the text of *The Sink of Solitude*, this pamphlet responds to the obscenity judgments on both *The Well of Loneliness* and Norah C. James' *Sleeveless Errand*. While it reserves most of its anger for the representatives of the government (one of the girls is named Jixie, the nickname of Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks), the book also renders the two female characters as rather ludicrous and simply misguided. As a period piece, it reflects very clearly the prominence of these texts and their prosecutions.



## Poems and Poèmes: Autres Alliances

Natalie Clifford Barney  
Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1920  
XTT B259G

Natalie Clifford Barney lived her life as openly lesbian, and her sexuality was consistently entwined with literature from the moment that her first known affair, with Liane de Pougy, became transformed into a bestselling novel. While she wrote consistently throughout her life, in a multitude of forms and experimental styles, it is as the leader of a salon that she is most remembered, and perhaps predominantly, through the writings of others, including Djuna Barnes. While her writing was largely forgotten and untaught, it is intriguing that the Library purchased this bilingual and mildly erotic work, held in only four libraries in the country.



## Boy

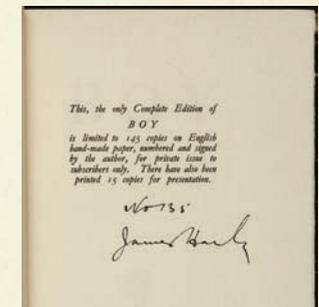
James Hanley  
London: Boriswood, 1931  
[S.L.] II [Hanley - 1931]

## and

## Boy, holograph manuscript

James Hanley  
1930  
Sterling Library SLV/59

*Boy* was ultimately prosecuted for obscenity on the basis that it contained references to 'intimacy between members of the male sex,' but sexuality here is not intimate but brutish, violent and destructive, where the sex of those involved is of little importance. Its plot sees a young adolescent flee an abusive workplace to work on a ship, where he is raped by a member of the crew, and, on developing an unspecified infection, is thrown overboard to drown. It was only prosecuted when printed cheaply, the expensive limited edition seen here having sold without censure for three years. Its claim to be 'entirely unexpurgated' is belied by Hanley's original manuscript, which contains a long account of sexualised violence that he himself removed before having the novel typed for a publisher's consideration, and has still never been published.



## True Yokefellow

Humphrey Lancaster  
London: Fortune Press, 1937  
YP L245G

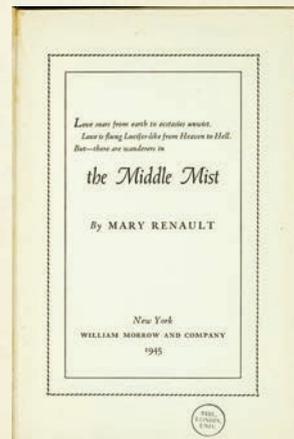
This novel is included as an example of the manner in which some sort of queer writing was created and distributed, without the strident sincerity of Radclyffe Hall or the libidinous energy of Djuna Barnes. Humphrey Lancaster wrote several novels for The Fortune Press, which published poetry and classics but also material bordering on pornography, with a distinct preference for flagellation and bondage. The press also had an unusual tolerance of queer content, anecdotally indicated by yellow dust wrappers; this tale of a Roman slave features at least one recognisably queer character, and much threat of corporal punishment.



## The Middle Mist

Mary Renault  
New York: William Morrow and Co., 1945  
YP R425G

Mary Renault is chiefly remembered for her novels set in Ancient Greece, themselves often cited as offering glimpses of a tolerance of queer lifestyles by gay male readers. However, Renault's second novel, seen here in its American edition, had a contemporary setting and allowed her to give a fictional rendering of her own happiness in a lifelong relationship with Julie Mullard. Renault specifically sought to use the book to resist the tragedy and despair of novels such as *The Well of Loneliness*, and its light, often humorous, tone subtly but convincingly insists that no love should be discounted.



## Postwar

After the obscenity trials and controversies of the interwar period, it is easy to suggest that legal and cultural intolerance of queer lives began to wane in the decades after the Second World War, with even quasi-official support in the Wolfenden Report of 1957. However, the published manifestations of queer identities continued to be constrained by forces other than liberated expression. While recognisably queer characters appeared in fiction with less equivocation, this was frequently in the guise of homosexual relationships that closely mirrored ideals of monogamous heterosexual marriage, in the beautiful and yet restrained fiction of Rodney Garland or James Courage. Even here, such works were not beyond censure, as witnessed by a flyer for Courage's play *Private History*, prevented from transferring to the larger theatres of the West End. Simultaneously, the cynical commercial packaging of queerness for readers' titillation gave birth to whole genres of pulp novels that promised lurid content through their cover art and delivered fearful moral judgments on characters left broken or deranged by their desire.

## Private History theatre programme

James Courage  
1938  
Craig Archive MS1091/3/5

and

## A Way of Love

James Courage  
London: J. Cape, 1959  
YP C755G



The annual Day of the Imprisoned Writer, 15 November, is known in New Zealand as 'Courage Day' in honour of Sarah Courage and her grandson James.

Born in New Zealand, James Courage spent much of his life in England where he studied at Oxford, managed a bookshop in Hampstead, and wrote. His only staged play was *Private History*, which ran at the Gate Theatre in 1938. Despite playing to packed houses, its theme of a gay relationship at a boarding school prevented it being granted a transfer to the West End.

Courage's seventh novel, *A Way of Love*, centred on the London gay scene of the 1950s, particularly the relationship between a middle-aged man and his younger partner. The novel was banned in Courage's native New Zealand for perceived indecency and lack of redeeming literary merit.

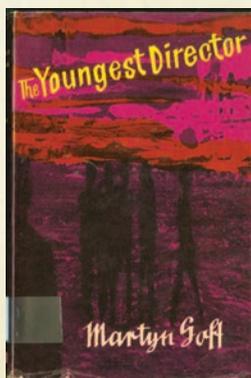
The UK edition of *A Way of Love* is displayed open at a statement, placed before the title page, which seems to exist to reassure the reader that a novel about gay love is 'as valid a subject for a serious novel as any other in our modern world'.

## The Youngest Director

Martyn Goff  
London: Putnam, 1961  
YP G627G

Martyn Goff was an influential figure in the UK book trade, originally as a bookseller and later as the director of the National Book League and administrator, for 34 years, of the Booker Prize.

Goff's own literary career of nine novels included this story of Leonard Bissel, the titular youngest director, whose relationship with his boyfriend is as important to him as marriage is to his straight colleagues. The publication of this novel encouraged a young man, Rubio Lindroos, to write to Goff and the two became lovers; the copy on display is inscribed from Goff to Lindroos.



## Packaging Queer Novels

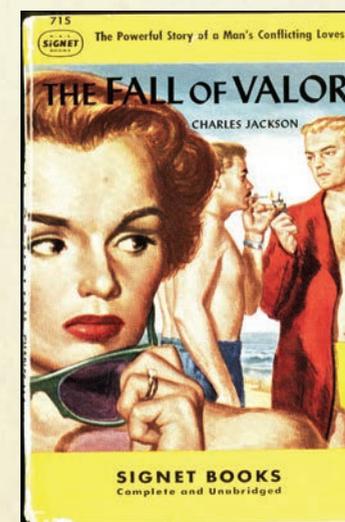
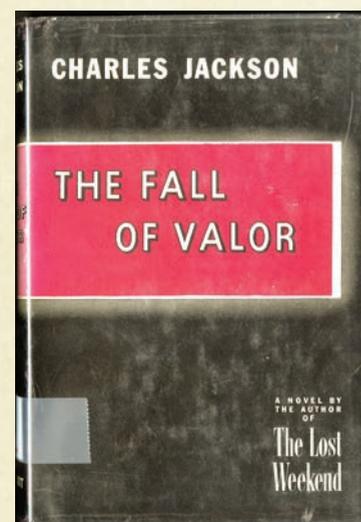
During the first half of the twentieth century, a number of lesbian and gay novels were published in the US and UK, some of which are on display here.

The cover design of these novels falls into two distinct strands and styles, aimed at different audiences: the serious literary reader, and the consumer of titillating pulp fiction. The same novel could be marketed in both styles; this difference of approach can be seen clearly in the hardback and paperback editions of *The Fall of Valor* and *End as a Man*.

The gay and lesbian content of the novels of this period is rarely mentioned directly, rather it is alluded to both linguistically and visually.

The dust jackets of the hardback editions occasionally suggestively declare, either in words or pictures, that the book is 'strange'. Alternatively, some of the covers opt only for the austerity of title and author, leaving the reader to peruse the dust jacket for hints to the book's content, using words such as 'courageous', 'subterranean', and 'sensitive'.

The pulp paperback editions, with their garishly coloured and personified covers, take these hints one step further by creating a visual language of suggestion that, when seen en masse, begins to speak clearly to the reader. Body language and gaze are used to imply suspicion or despair; love triangles are depicted, with one member kept in the dark; one figure dominates another. Nobody is allowed to look happy.





## The Gobble Poem: Snatched from the Notebooks of W.H. Auden...

W.H. Auden

London: Fuck Books, 1967

[Rare] (XX) Bc [Auden, W.H.]

and

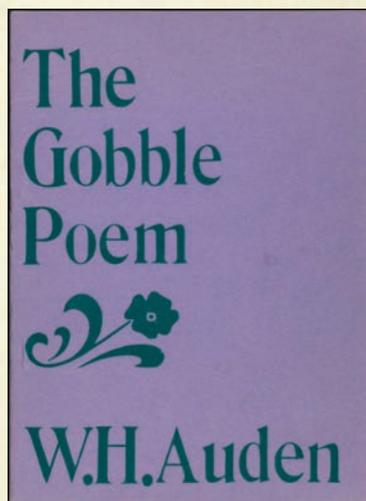
## The Daily Telegraph Magazine, no. 201, 9 August 1968

From a Private Collection

Never officially published or accepted into the Auden canon, *The Gobble Poem* was first printed in pirated form in 1965 as *The Platonic Blow*, by Ed Sanders' underground press, Fuck You. The edition on display is the 1967 UK printing. The title page of *The Gobble Poem* states in an elusive manner that it was 'snatched from the notebooks of WH Auden and now believed to be in the Morgan Library' despite the Morgan Library disputing this assertion.

Auden only once alluded publicly to the possibility of this poem's existence, in an interview for the *Telegraph* magazine on 9 August 1968. Perhaps encouraged by the poem's relatively recent counter-cultural appearance, Auden 'uneasily ... mentions that some time ago he wrote a piece of pornography to amuse a few friends'.

Whilst the poem's publishing history is ambiguous, its content is anything but: it is a clear expression of the poet's desire of, and pleasure in, the act of fellatio.



## Tell me the Truth About Love: Ten Poems

W.H. Auden

London: Faber & Faber, 1994

Pamph Store 3444

and

## Stop All the Clocks, revised manuscript

W.H. Auden

1937

MS1206

In 1996, books of Auden's poetry, repackaged into a *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) film tie-in volume, were selling around 100,000 copies per year, a not-insignificant quantity for a poetry book.

These sales were due in large part to the role 'Funeral Blues' plays in one of the film's most well-remembered scenes; the poem is read by one character, Matthew, at his boyfriend Gavin's funeral.

Despite the popularity of this scene and its role in the Auden revival, the cover of the tie-in book denies the gay influence, showing instead Hugh Grant's straight leading man.

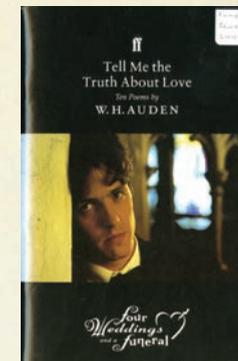
Alternatively known as 'Stop All the Clocks', the poem is also displayed here in a rare manuscript form. Following a few iterations, the poem was published as 'Funeral Blues' in the 1940 collection *Another Time*, which Auden dedicated to his partner Chester Kallman.

This 1937 manuscript is accompanied by a letter written by Auden to a Miss Boyd, who is scouting for poetry to include in a school's anthology; Auden presumably suggested this poem, although he also states how difficult it is to write poetry for children.

## Section 28

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, alternatively Clause 28, was introduced by the then Conservative government and included a ruling that there be a 'prohibition on promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material'. Despite widespread, vociferous campaigns against Section 28 it remained on the statute books until 2000 in Scotland and 2003 in England and Wales.

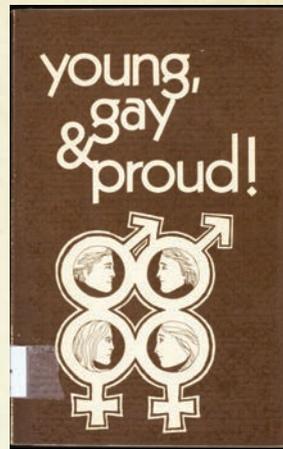
Much Conservative ire in the 1980s, an anger that fed into the formation of Clause 28, was centred on the publication and use within schools of literature that normalised lesbian and gay relationships. A selection of these books is on display.



## Young, Gay and Proud!

Ed. by Sasha Alyson [et al]  
Boston, Mass.: Alyson Publications, 1985  
KCUH You

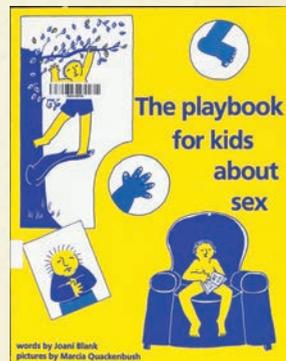
Along with *The Playbook for Kids About Sex*, also on display, and *Police: Out of School!*, this title featured in a 1987 Conservative Party election poster condemning Labour's comprehensive school education policies, which the Conservatives believed to be dangerously liberal. The reality of the book, however, is rather different than the fear-mongering poster suggested, as its pages provide a supportive and practical guide for young gays and lesbians on subjects such as coming out, health, relationships and sex.



## The Playbook for Kids About Sex

Joani Blank and Marcia Quackenbush  
San Francisco, Calif.: Yes Press, [1980]  
Folio JBY Bla

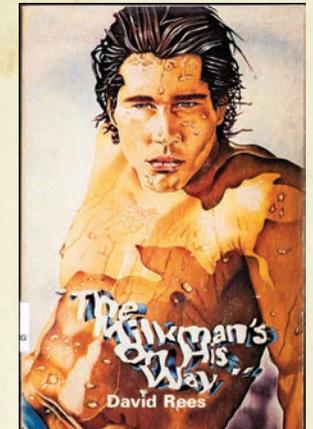
This interactive book for pre-pubescent children aims to provide information on sex beyond the act of procreation, thus moving past the bounds of sex education often described in young children's books. One section of the book deals with gay, lesbian and bisexuality, doing so in an open, descriptive and communicative way, encouraging the children reading the book to consider for themselves by repeatedly asking 'what do you think?'



## The Milkman's on His Way

David Rees  
London: Gay Men's Press, 1982  
YQ R3563G

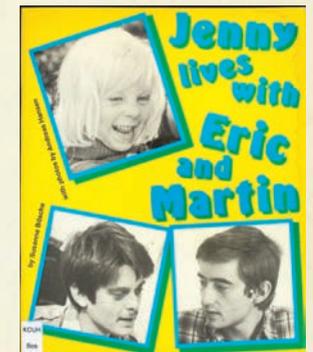
Published by the Gay Men's Press, and using a verse of Auden's 'Musee des Beaux Arts' as an introductory quote, this novel was written by Carnegie medal winner David Rees. Whilst not the first of Rees' young adult novels to include gay characters, it was this book that was mentioned in a 1999 Section 28 debate in the House of Lords as not only promoting but 'glorifying' gay sex.



## Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin

Susanne Bösché  
London: Gay Men's Press, 1987  
KCUH Bos

This 1981 Danish children's book was published in English in 1983 by the Gay Men's Press. Author Susanne Bösché hoped children with gay parents would identify with five-year-old Jenny, who lives with her father and his partner, and their daily routine of cooking, sleeping and going to the launderette. Homophobia is explained as the product of ignorance. Despite the gentle simplicity of the tale, the inclusion of the book in a London Education Authority teacher centre was enough to enrage the UK press, an anger that fed into the ideology of Clause 28.

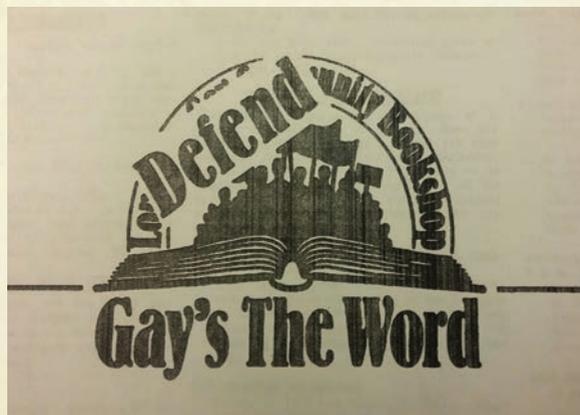


## Gay's the Word archive and impounded books

Gay's the Word, an independent LGBT bookshop at 66 Marchmont Street, is a Bloomsbury institution. On 10 April 1984, the shop was raided by UK Customs and Excise, who seized its imported books. What became known as Operation Tiger saw the eventual confiscation of 144 titles consisting of thousands of pounds worth of stock, with works by Jean Genet, Gore Vidal, Djuna Barnes and Jean-Paul Sartre included amongst those deemed obscene. Under the guise of the Victorian Customs Consolidation Act, the shop's directors were charged with conspiracy to import indecent books, with eight titles specifically referred to in the criminal charges.

A defence and fundraising campaign to support the shop was launched and supported by a range of publishers, bookshops and writers, who assisted the shop in fighting this act of state censorship. On display are selections from Gay's the Word's own archive of the campaign, including information on the titles seized, letters from supporters and a photograph of the shop's staff and directors holding some of the titles.

Alongside this archive are displayed copies of some of the titles that were seized, including *Now the Volcano*, which was one of the eight titles that were directly referenced in the criminal charges. These copies are from Senate House Library's own collections, and were on the shelves here during the period of the raids on Gay's the Word; just a short walk from the bookshop, these supposedly obscene works were available for reading, which makes a mockery of Customs and Excise's attempts to repress queer literary works.



### Acknowledgements

Our thanks to members of the QBTC Advisory Group for their invaluable assistance in framing the narrative and scope of the exhibition: Martin Dines, Jim MacSweeney, Brooke Palmieri and Gregory Woods. Our grateful acknowledgements to the many people who have contributed to the season: Alea Baker, Stuart Beatch, Grace Beckett, Justin Bengry, Amy Bowles, Gemma Buckley, Alex Bruce, Paul Burston, Maria Castrillo, Theresa Easton, Alison Gage, Dan Glass, Nell James Grace, Charles Harrowell, Daniel Horseman, Dave Jackson, Robert Kelly, Russell Kennedy, Neil Pearson, Simon McCallum, Séamus McGrenera, Graham McKerron, Mark Mitchell, Tanya Peixoto, Richard Nevell, Rebecca Simpson, Emily Stidston and Kristan Tetens.

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