A barrier of illiterate policemen and officials stands between the tender Australian mind and what they imagine to be subversive literature (H.G. Wells)
Books are intrinsically connected with the history of ideas, and one of the particular joys of collecting historic books is that they serve as time capsules, providing a direct link, intellectually and physically, with our often turbulent past. This is particularly true of books that were once the subject of bans or other forms of suppression.

These books are of special interest to collectors not only because they are imbued with the wider historical significance that controversy thrusts upon them, but also for their literary or artistic value. They have the additional lure of rarity, for in many cases their prohibition meant the destruction of significant stocks of the original edition.

Australia is, unfortunately, no stranger to intellectual and artistic repression, and indeed, was once so accomplished in the art of censorship that it is impossible to offer even an overview of the subject in the confines of an article such as this. The focus here is on the banned literature of Australia.

It was not until the nineteen sixties that the happy state was reached where few, if any, serious works of literature were withheld from the eyes of adult Australian readers. The turning point came in 1957, when the then Minister for Customs, Senator Denham Henty, ordered a major overhaul of Customs censorship practice. Whilst the immediate trigger for this action was the public reaction to a particularly stupid and infantile ban enforced by his department, it was also the consequence of a vigorous campaign, spanning nearly three-quarters of a century, by those opposed to censorship.

Whilst most of the banned literary works were written by overseas authors, the censorship of books by local writers tended to attract the greatest interest and spark the most vigorous debate. The reasons for this extended beyond mere parochialism, and were rooted in a quirk in the system which effectively meant that penalties for local transgressors were more severe and the fight against prosecution more intense.

This disparity in penalties resulted from the division of Australian legislation into the two distinct realms of state and federal. Most liable to seizure and destruction, but also their authors, publishers and stockists could end up facing criminal proceedings, generally—in the case of literary works—on grounds of 'obscenity' or 'indecency'. These charges could, and sometimes did, result in imprisonment.

Such serious aspects aside, history must record that from its very inception, the exercise of censorship in this country has been an extremely silly business! Prior to federation, the primary targets of the censors—aside from the little magazines which mocked and libelled the gentry—were mainly non-fiction. Prosecution was usually on one of three grounds: 'obscenity' (the advocacy of birth control, sex education and such like, i.e. works by rationalists and 'Freethoughters'), 'blasphemy' (largely irreverent works by rationalists and 'Freethoughters') and 'seditious' (advocating political change, especially works by anarchists and, yes, rationalists and 'Freethoughters').

It was not until the 1880s that the police and customs departments of the various colonies suddenly came to the realisation that all manner of objectionable sentiments might be garbed in the cloak of literature. In N.S.W., the discovery appears to have been made by a vigilant police officer who, busy mopping up the usual pernicious birth control literature during a raid on a Freethought bookshop, lit upon a copy of Zola's Nana. Close examination proved that it was without doubt obscene, a discovery which launched a virtual open season on French literature. In the years that followed the police and customs departments throughout the colonies slapped numerous bans on works by authors such as Alphonse
The Norman Lindsay paintings on these pages caused censors to take a close look at the special number of Art in Australia.

Daudet, Guy de Maupassant and Emile Zola.

The year 1883 also saw the seizure by Tasmanian police, during a raid on a Hobart Freethought bookshop, of an odd little volume entitled The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk. Although it is debatable whether the florid account of the depravity that the eponymous Canadian author claimed to have experienced during a stay in a nunnery deserves to be graced with the title literature, there is little doubt that it is fiction purporting to be fact. Subsequent to the raid, the book was banned by customs, becoming a prohibited import.

The bank on The Awful Disclosures was circumvented by E.W. Cole—a noted freethinker and founder of the Cole's Book Arcade—by the simple stratagem of printing an Australian edition. Being locally produced, this new edition fell outside the jurisdiction of Customs and back into that of the local police departments, but by this time not even the Tasmanian police seemed keen on bringing fresh charges. Despite this Customs felt obliged to enforce their original ban, and the public was occasionally treated to the curious spectacle of Customs officers carefully sorting through booksellers' displays of The Awful Disclosures and dutifully confiscating any imported copies that had slipped through, whilst leaving untouched the all-but-identical Australian edition.

Naturally the ban attracted tremendous publicity, sales of The Awful Disclosures rocketed, and the book became favourite furtive reading material for several generations of Australians. As a consequence The Awful Disclosures is neither difficult to find nor expensive (except in the almost unobtainable first edition), but is still worth picking up as an interesting example of the diversions of the age of Victoria.

With the coming of Federation most of the censorship powers devolved upon the newly-formed Federal Customs department. After an enthusiastic if misguided start which attracted widespread ridicule, the department seemed to lose its zeal for prosecution, and in the next quarter century barely a handful of (mainly French) literary works were banned.

As the majority of literary works were imports, they were therefore the chief (although not exclusive) domain of customs, leaving the various state police departments to content themselves with the regulation of such material as magazines, pamphlets and postcards. They were particularly concerned with suppressing works by various 'subversive' political organisations and individuals, although the definition of what was objectionable was sufficiently broad to include material from all manner of well-intentioned and basically harmless eccentrics.

The doyen of these must have been William James Chidley, a would-be reformer of food, dress and sexuality, who haunted Sydney's Domain and other public speaking venues. One of Chidley's many unusual beliefs was that sexual intercourse, as commonly practised, was not only unnatural but injurious to the health, with the constant trauma the body suffered from the 'shocks' of the sexual act ultimately leading to physical and mental degeneracy, reflected by a permanent distortion of the facial features. Unfortunately for himself, Chidley felt it his duty to share this knowledge with the world through his book The Answer: An Essay in Philosophy, first printed in Melbourne around 1910.

A long series of prosecutions followed, first in Melbourne and then in Sydney, with Chidley in and out of prison and the asylum on charges of lunacy, offensive behaviour and selling an obscene book. In 1914 a Sydney magistrate handed down a suspended sentence and ordered the destruction of copies of his book. Chidley appealed, claiming that the book was not obscene and the work was then examined by two judges and the Chief Justice. Despite the latter's dissenting vote,
The Answer was deemed to be obscene by recommendation of the judges, and such copies as were at hand were seized and consigned to the flames. Over the next two years, a judiciary without humour or compassion continually condemned Chidley, either to prison or an asylum. In October 1916, whilst awaiting transfer from the Reception House to the asylum, Chidley was injured when, either by design or accident, he doused his clothes with paraffin and set himself alight. He recovered from his burns only to die suddenly, perhaps of a heart attack, some two months later.

Although Chidley continually revised and reprinted The Answer, its sometimes ephemeral nature and constant suppression have ensured the rarity of original editions of the work of this fascinating and tragic figure.

Parallel with, and perhaps partly as a consequence of the onset of the Great Depression, the Federal Government developed a concern for the preservation of traditional Australian values, and an important part of their crusade was the proscription of books perceived as inimical to their cause.

The first work of literature to be targeted was James Joyce's Ulysses, banned in 1929, but it was not until the following year that the campaign really gathered momentum. Crucial to this was a change in the practical definition of what constituted an 'indecent book', with new guidelines suggesting the qualification could be any work that would not be well-received in the average Australian household—the so-called 'householder test'.

Various wits were quick to point out that such a definition would virtually eliminate all literature, and as it happened they were not far wrong. With Governmental, and often popular encouragement, the Customs Department embarked on a veritable frenzy of censorship, and before long Joyce'sDubliners joined Ulysses on the banned list, along with the works of authors as diverse as Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Colette.

With so much censorial activity, it was obviously only a matter of time before a literary work by an Australian author was netted. This happened late in 1929, the book being New Zealand-born Jean Devanny's novel The Butcher's Shop, a grim exploration of brutality and repression in rural New Zealand. The justification for the ban was supposedly the novel's emphasis on sex and violence, but it seems certain that the feminist and socialist ideals which carried the narrative were the censor's real target. In company with Australia, the novel was also banned by censors in New Zealand, where it was feared the book might deter people from settling in that country, then in Boston, and a few years later, Nazi Germany.

In April 1930 the disapproving eyes of Customs fell on Norman Lindsay's Redheap, a rather scathing chronicle of life in a small Victorian town. The attack on Redheap, led by a Mr. Richardson of the Victorian Legislative Council, started soon after its publication in England, so soon in fact, that copies were unavailable in Australia at the time. This posed certain logistical problems for the puritans and Lindsay delightedly told how representatives of the Melbourne Herald tried to wheedle a manuscript copy of Redheap out of me with the obvious intention of getting in first with an attack on it, a 'tempting offer' which he had little difficulty in refusing.

The ban went ahead anyway and not long after another work of Lindsay's The Cautious Amorist joined Redheap on the prohibited list.

The actions of the Customs Department were not unchallenged, and a vigorous defence campaign divided both press and public. Lindsay was at his caustic best when he publicly stated that 'the average decent Australian' whose views Customs were supposed to represent, was 'a slug and a moral

Rosaleen Norton's 'Fohat', blacked out in some copies of her book.
Martin Sharp's distinctive cover design for Richard Neville's Playpower. The poster included, but not the book, was deemed offensive.

coward whenever the noisy minority starts making a fuss over any frank statement of life and love. Strangely such frank expression failed to dislodge the ban and Redheap remained an exile until 1958.

Perhaps encouraged by the activities of their colleagues in Customs, the New South Wales police decided to try their hand again at literary censorship and in January 1930 launched a raid on a Martin Place bookshop. Their haul could fairly be described as miscellaneous, for it included yet more birth control literature (this time, Marie Stopes), several classics—plays by Shaw and Shakespeare, and E.M. Remarque's bitter anti-war novel All Quiet on the Western Front. When the case came before the court, the magistrate found that the books were indeed obscene and imposed a £10 fine on the bookseller and ordered that the books be destroyed. According to the magistrate, the worst feature of the case was the way the bookseller had sought to boost sales by 'extra-illustrating' the volumes, by inserting 'pictures of nude women'. Last others should form the mistaken impression that this alarming practice was the sole reason for the action, the Chief Secretary issued a statement announcing that anyone selling All Quiet on the Western Front would be prosecuted. This policy was not pursued, however, and was abandoned when Labor came to power some months later.

The Martin Place bookseller proved incorrigible, for later that year he landed yet another publication in trouble by dressing it up in such a way that it would appeal to the prurient. This time it was the journal Art in Australia, whose December 1930 number was devoted to the art of Norman Lindsay. In an effort to stimulate his own sales of the issue, the bookseller decided to offer it for sale through the post (presumably in plain wrappers), stressing in his advertisements the number of nudes it featured, which were described as 'Pictures for Men Only'.

Inevitably one of the men attracted by the offer was a police officer who, doubtless in the course of duty, ordered and was sent a copy. In July 1931 police raided the offices of Art in Australia and two of its stockists, seizing copies of the December issue and any material relating to it. Summons were served against all concerned, but after consultations between the publishers, the Chief Secretary and the Attorney-General, the charges were dropped and the confiscated material returned. Even before the attempted prosecution the 'Norman Lindsay Special' had sold over 5,000 copies, making it, one suspects, the bestselling issue ever of Art in Australia. The sales continued to boom after the charges had been dropped and a second edition was printed.

The New South Wales police were undeterred by their failure and, in August 1934, placed a ban on John M. Harcourt's novel Upsurge. Written in the grim, unfinishing style of social-realism, Upsurge certainly contained language and
description which could have offended the faint-hearted, although it is now generally agreed that the novel was banned for political reasons rather than for the purported obscenity. Harcourt was unabashedly leftwing and his scornful treatment of various Australian institutions (not least the police) outraged official sensitivities.

Copies of *Upsurge* were seized from bookshops and libraries, thereby giving it the dubious honour of being the first Australian novel to receive such treatment from State police. Oddly, no actual charges were laid as a result of the ban, but in line with then-current policy, customs picked up the police ban and prohibited the import of any more copies, whilst destroying those at hand. As a consequence copies of *Upsurge* are not easy to locate, although if a copy could be found it would probably not be expensive, as Harcourt never achieved prominence, and the role of his novel in our literary history is not widely known.

The rising tide of censorship did not go unopposed with Victorian objectors rallying in 1934 under the banner of the Victorian Book Censorship Abolition League. The League was mainly concerned with ending political censorship, but as the borderline between political and moral censorship was often ill-defined, and its ultimate aim was the abolition of all censorship, it added its considerable weight to the mounting clamour for increased literary freedom. For reasons unknown, attempts to found a branch of the League in N.S.W. were a failure, but the voice of the Victorian branch, combined with those of individuals in other states, was sufficiently influential not to be ignored.

Already in 1933 the Customs Department had sought to counter the claims of philistinism by the foundation of the Book Censorship Advisory Committee, an advisory panel comprising several academically accredited ‘experts’. The Committee managed to curtail some of the excesses of the previous years, but their charter was too restricted for them to be able to effect any real change. In 1937 the Committee was replaced with the larger and more powerful Literature Censorship Board, but this too was hampered by its purely advisory nature. Whilst it succeeded in lifting a number of earlier bans, the heads of Customs tended to ignore its existence and continued to ban books with apparently gay abandon. The effective impotence of the Board was highlighted in 1941 when the Minister for Customs, Mr. E.J. Harrison, perfunctorily ordered that the ban on *Ulysses* be reimposed, despite it having been lifted four years earlier at the Board’s recommendation.

Throughout the war years, state and federal censors concentrated their attentions on any work they felt could be detrimental to morale or the war effort. Despite the magnitude of their self-dictated brief, they still managed to indulge in the ludicrous prosecution of Max Harris.

The Autumn 1944 number of the journal *Angry Penguins* is famous as the issue in which Harris innocently published the poems of one Ern Malley. These turned out to be the work of two hoaxers, Harold Stewart and James McAuley, who thereby sought—and to some extent succeeded—in bringing ridicule upon Harris and his fellow ‘modernists’. What they could scarcely have anticipated is that it would also land the hapless Harris before the courts.

That is exactly what happened, though when Detective J.A. Vogelsang of the Adelaide Police read the magazine, sniffed obscenity and referred the matter to the Crown Prosecutor who decided to press charges. In all, thirteen poems were deemed to be suspect: seven by Ern Malley, three by Max Harris, and one each by Peter Cowan, Dal Stivens and Peter Collinson.

When the matter came before the Adelaide Police Court, on September 5, Max Harris pleaded ‘not guilty’ to the charge of selling, offering or distributing certain indecent printed matter. Much of the attention focused on poems by the non-existent Ern Malley, with Detective Vogelsang appearing as the sole, rather preposterous, witness for the prosecution. He took exception to the Malley poem ‘Night Piece’ because it was set in a park at night, and ‘I have found that people who go into parks at night go there for immoral purposes’. Anticipating defence objections, he added candidly. ‘My experience as a police officer might, under certain circumstances, tinge my appreciation of poetry.’ Despite this ‘experience’, he confessed he did not know the meaning of the word ‘incestuous’, although he felt there was ‘a suggestion of indecency about it’, and therefore disapproved of the poem in which it was mentioned: ‘Egyptian Register’.

Even given this rather farcical testimony, the magistrate still found that certain passages of the poems were indecent, and fined Harris £5 with costs of £21.11s. For his part in securing the prosecution, Detective Vogelsang, the butt of considerable ridicule in court, was awarded ‘Special Mention’ by the Commissioner for Police.

Oddly, all parties seemed to overlook the fact that Harris had republished the poems in book form in *The Darkening Ecliptic*, and despite the prosecution, no ban appears to have been placed on either the Ern Malley issue of *Angry Penguins* or the book.

The end of the war witnessed a boom in local publishing and, apparently, a rise in the number of people dedicated to pouncing on ‘objectionable’ books.

In the two years following the war, two of the most notorious police prosecutions occurred: those of Lawson Glassop’s *We Were the Rats* and Robert Close’s *Love me Sailor*.

*We Were the Rats* was Glassop’s fictionalised account of the life of a soldier who serves during the siege of Tobruk, marries whilst on leave in Australia, and is then shipped off to fight in the Pacific campaign. At the time of publication in 1945, the book received considerable critical acclaim, and during the following
year sold in excess of 15,000 copies. Later that year, the book was brought to the attention of the N.S.W. Crown Solicitor, and in 1946 came before the courts.

The police case was based on five pages, two of which contained that most popular of Australian adjectives, 'bloody'. The chief witness for the prosecution was a sergeant from the Vice Squad, who made the unlikely claim that reading it had offended him. The publishers were prosecuted, fined £10 and forbidden to reprint the book, which by now was in short supply. On appeal, Judge Studdert, who considered the occasional 'irreverent use of the name of the founder of Christianity' by the characters 'one of the most objectionable features of the book', upheld the conviction.

When asked if Victoria was also going to implement a ban on We Were the Rats, a police spokesman stated rather disdainfully: 'We have more important things to do than look for 'obscenity'. This was not exactly truthful, for later the same year the Victorian police initiated a prosecution the consequences of which were the most shameful of all those in the history of Australian literary censorship. The writer prosecuted was Robert Close and the book, Love me Sailor.

Published by Georgian House in Melbourne in 1945, the novel is about the voyage of a cargo-carrying windjammer, the 'Annabella', en route to San Francisco, and of the disastrous repercussions when a demented young woman comes aboard. By the standards of the time, the book was disturbingly frank, and triggered a considerable outcry, with booksellers refusing to stock it and libraries returning copies they had purchased. In South Australia, the redoubtable Detective Vogelsong spearheaded a prosecution which saw three booksellers fined £3 each for selling an indecent publication.

It was in Victoria, however, that the campaign against Love me Sailor reached its zenith. As the book had already been circulating for two years, police were unable to prosecute on the usual grounds and therefore both author and publisher were charged with having published an obscene libel and were sent for trial before jury in the Criminal Court in Melbourne. In April 1948 both were found guilty as charged, and Mr. Justice Martin, presiding, ordered that Close be kept in custody while he contemplated the sentence. The author was placed in manacles and taken off to H.M. Pentridge Prison.

Four days later, Justice Martin passed sentence: Close was sentenced to three months' imprisonment and fined £100, and the publisher Georgian House, given a hefty £500 fine. Immediately the price of the book on the black market in Sydney jumped to £5.

The severity of the sentence was condemned by various individuals and groups, including student unions and the Fellowship of Australian Writers. Close appealed, and was released on £50 bail pending a hearing. The appeal court upheld the conviction, but eliminated the prison sentence, not because it was deemed to be excessive, but on grounds of the author's poor health. His fine was increased to £150 and that imposed on the publisher reduced by £200. In 1950, a disgusted Robert Close who was 'tired of living in an atmosphere of parochial suburbanism', left Australia to live in France, where a translation of Love me Sailor had been well received.

The year of Close's departure saw the unfolding of yet another criminal libel case in Victoria. This time the author was Frank Hardy and the book Power Without Glory, his thinly-veiled narrative of the life and racketeering activities of millionaire power-broker John Wren. Knowing full well that the book was going to be controversial, Hardy divided up the printing and binding amongst a number of small companies (legend has it that the sheets were sewn together by members of the Seamen's Union) and published it himself under the imprint of the Realist Printing and Publishing Company. When sold, the book
was often accompanied with an 'under the counter copy' of 'the list', a handwritten or typed glossary identifying the real-life names of central characters.

Interest in Power Without Glory grew steadily, and by the time Wren's wife, Ellen, launched a criminal libel action against the book it had already reached its second edition. The Victorian Government took over the action from Ellen Wren, the Communist Party stepped in to orchestrate a very effective defence campaign, and a trial began which was to last some 9 months. The result was an acquittal for Hardy, and a resounding slap in the face for the Wren family. Power Without Glory went on to become one of Australia's all-time best-selling books.

Back in N.S.W., artist Rosaleen Norton and her post-companion Gavin Greenlees probably knew there was something amiss when the first review of their book, The Art of Rosaleen Norton, appeared in the Sunday Sun under the title 'Witches, demons on rampage in weird Sydney sex book'. It was September 1952. Cold War puritanism was at its peak, and the pair surely knew that someone would take offence at the esoteric symbolism, biting satire and skilfully drawn if sometimes bizarre nudes which filled Norton's work. They probably did not expect a reaction quite as intense as that of Mrs. Woodward of the Progressive Housewives' Association who appealed to the Chief Secretary, Mr. Kelly, to ban the book and then went on to tell the Daily Mirror: 'Banning isn't good enough; all copies should be burnt and the plates destroyed.'

Shortly thereafter the Postmaster-General advised the publisher, Walter Glover, that he was barred from sending copies through the post on grounds of obscenity. New South Wales police then served summonses on him for publishing and selling an obscene book, and on Tonecraft Pty. Ltd. for having printed it. Glover pleaded 'not guilty' to both charges, and a long drawn out series of hearings began.

In court, each picture was subjected to intense scrutiny and debate, and on one occasion the artist was in the witness box for two hours, explaining the symbolism behind them. Defence Counsel, Mr. Shand, contended that the obvious intention of the book was to convey ideas, through symbols: 'The book must be taken as a whole, and the drawings studied with the written matter beside them. The book has a logical story, told in a graphic way, of various opposing influences.'

On February 5, 1953, Mr. Solling S.M., ruled that two of Rosaleen Norton's drawings, 'The Adversary' and 'Fohat', were 'obscene and an offence to chastity and delicacy' and Glover was fined £5 plus costs for having sold the book. The other charge—of publishing the book—was later withdrawn. Tonecraft Pty. Ltd. who had pleaded guilty to having printed the book, were fined the token sum of £1. Glover planned an appeal but had to back down because of lack of funds. In 1953, Customs also took up the ban on the book, preventing the return of copies that had been sent to an overseas publisher.

The mechanics of the N.S.W. ban were such that Glover was not prohibited altogether from selling the book; legal advice suggested that all he had to do was black out the offending pictures. He subsequently got to work on some of the copies, running a roller dipped in printer's ink neatly over the two offending plates so that they were completely obliterated, thereby fulfilling both the legal requirements and none-too-subtly drawing attention to the fact that the book had been censored.

His heart was not in these unexpected alterations, which proved ultimately to be unsuccessful, as he was still barred from sending the book through the post and not many local booksellers were interested in taking mutilated copies of a book torred with the brush of 'obscenity'. The project was financially ruinous for Glover, and he drifted into bankruptcy. Ironically, amongst the assets that were taken over by the government receiver were the rights to the supposedly obscene book.

In 1957 when Customs placed a particularly idiotic and undiplomatic ban, the repercussions of which led to a major reshuffle of the censorship apparatus. The book in question was Salinger's Catcher in the Rye, and the ban had been approved by some departmental bureaucrat who had not, as all too often happened, troubled to ask the opinion of the
Literature Censorship Board. The problem was that the book had already gained something of the status of a classic, and attendant publicity over the ban threatened to make a laughing stock of the department, not only locally but also internationally.

The new Minister for Customs promptly sent the book for consideration by the Censorship Board, who recommended that the ban should be lifted. In the shake-up that followed, the Minister ordered that in future all literary works under review must be referred to the Board. At the same time he requested the Board to examine and pass judgement on all previously banned books. The result was that an enormous number of long-suppressed works, including Lindsay's Redheap, were at last released.

The new policy by no means spelt the end of literary censorship in Australia, and battles and skirmishes continued throughout the sixties. The year 1965 was particularly busy one for the censors, who succeeded in proscribing Barry Humphries' surreal literary collage, Bizarre, but lost in their endeavour to censor a book on censorship. The book was C.H. Rolph's appropriately titled The Trial of Lady Chatterley, and the four-year-old Customs' ban on it was finally overcome by the remarkable A.W. Sheppard, who reused E.W. Cole's stratagem of republishing the book locally. The same year also witnessed the Oz magazine trial, which saw editors Richard Neville and Richard Walsh and illustrator Martin Sharp all given gaol sentences for their part in publishing Oz No.6, an issue infamous for its vivid description of the pillage of a North Shore party and a cartoon of a number of men urinating on a respectable Sydney wall. Mercifully common sense prevailed, and Judge Levine upheld the men's appeal.

By the late sixties and early seventies changing moral standards effectively sounded the death knell of literary censorship in Australia. The final lashings of the beast were almost pathetic. In 1969, the Postmaster-General had to be dissuaded from refusing to register Cinderella Dressed in Yella, a collection of children's rhymes edited by Ian Turner, and not long after Customs forbade the import of The Adventures of Barry McKenzie, a ban which author Barry Humphries claimed to support on grounds that 'Australia isn't ready for that sort of thing yet!' Customs censors also found a chance for a swipe at an old adversary, Richard Neville, when they prohibited the import of a 'game' (more like a poster history of the counter-culture) which was enclosed in a pocket inside the back cover of his 1970 book Playpower.

Attitudes changed, Customs became more concerned with drugs and hard-core pornography, and aside from the odd, aberrant outburst, the literary censors faded into well-deserved oblivion. The books that were once the centrepiece of their attention remain as fascinating collector's items, quiet reminders of more turbulent periods in Australia's social history, when freedom of choice in literature could not be taken for granted as it is today.

Keith Richmond

Notes:

Maria Monk: The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk. First published in New York (?!) in 1836. Later editions are reasonably easy to find, including that published by E.W. Cole.

William Chidley: The Answer, An Essay in Philosophy. First published in Melbourne as a booklet, The Answer went through a number of editions, the final revision (Sydney) appearing as a solid, cloth-bound book. The Answer is a scarce book in any edition, including a posthumous one (also banned), published by one of his followers in the 1920s.

Norman Lindsay: Redheap. As Redheap was banned in Australia virtually before publication, very few copies of the true first edition (Faber, 1930) ever made it to our shores. Later editions, which feature a different dustwrapper, are also difficult to find, although those dating from after 1958, when the ban was finally lifted, are comparatively common.

Art in Australia, Norman Lindsay Special number, December 1930. This was immensely popular irrespective of the action against it.

John M. Harcourt: Upsurge. Poor sales and an effective ban make this a very difficult book to track down.

Angry Penguins, Autumn 1944 issue: Quite sought-after as it contained the first publication of the Em Malley poems. For a journal it is quite stoutly bound, so a large number of copies appear to have survived, although it is never cheap. In the 1970s, a facsimile was issued, which the unwary might mistake for the first edition. It is most easily identified by the statements (not present in the original printing) which appear on the cover and front endpaper and describe it as a limited edition.

Lawson Glassop's We Were the Rats and Robert Close's Love me Sailor (Georgian House 1945) both had considerable sales before they were banned, so first editions of both are relatively easy to locate. However, as their court case attracted so much attention, copies tended to be passed around and copies in good condition in their dustwrappers are not easily come by.

Frank Hardy's Power Without Glory (Realist Printing and Publishing Company, 1950), is another book which seems to have suffered at the hands of zealous readers. Although attempts to prosecute it were unsuccessful, and it went on to become a bestseller, copies of the first edition are difficult to find in good condition, as they were both crudely bound and tended to be read to death. Some copies of early editions still contain copies of the list identifying the real-life names of the characters. An interesting historical curio.

Rosaleen Norton and Gavin Greenlees: The Art of Rosaleen Norton (Walter Glover, 1952). Despite the ban, first editions still surface occasionally in several variant bindings, including one in paper wrappers. Strangely, unensored copies are more common than those with the plates blacked out.