

In an era when gay books are widely published and available, it can easily be forgotten that not so many years ago — well within the span of a single lifetime — gay subject matter was taboo in the publishing industry. The breakthrough came during and after World War II, when gay writing suddenly emerged from the shadows to enlighten and scandalize a naive public. The Homophile Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was accompanied by an unprecedented surge of gay literature, gay novels in particular, in both Britain and America. At a time when gay magazines reached only a small number of people and gay themes seldom made their way into radio or film, gay novels provided just about the only public information on homosexuality apart from sensationalist newspaper accounts of prosecutions and scandals.

Students of gay history have become aware of the problems gay writers in the West had to face in those days. Gore Vidal's postwar gay novel *The City and the Pillar* was denied advertising space; James Baldwin's agent refused his *Giovanni's Room*; gay books and magazines were put on trial for obscenity. Though these were relatively minor matters compared to the travails of writers (gay or otherwise) in the East Bloc, new voices in both camps strained to be heard.



Charles Jackson. *The Fall of Valor*. NAL (Signet), 1949. The earliest mass-marketed paperback cover depicting a gay encounter.

The vicissitudes of advertising policy, the timidity of literary agents, and even the attitudes of the courts were at the time unknown to all but a tiny segment of the American public. Most people in small (or even large) towns knew nothing of these matters and seldom saw any of the notorious books in question; that is, not until they came out in paperback and showed up on a rack in the local drugstore, soda shop, or dime store. For many isolated young gays, that eye-catching 7" x 4 1/4" cover of *Whisper* or *Rough Trade* provided their first window into the gay world.

Significantly, the rise of gay activism in the United States and Britain occurred at the same time as the American and British paperback explosion. The wide availability

The Paperback Explosion: How Gay Paperbacks Changed America

IAN YOUNG

of cheap paperback books helped spread the word about a sexuality and way of life that, until the war years, had been largely hidden from public view. Postwar paperbacks played an important role in the social and political developments of the Cold War years, and strongly reflected and influenced the emerging gay consciousness. Cheap, easily available paperbacks were as important to changing attitudes in the pre-Stonewall era as gay magazines and poetry chapbooks were in the gay liberation years that followed.

In the totalitarian societies of the East Bloc, tight legal censorship was countered by a lonely, fearful trek backward to make innovative use of the technology of the past: *samizdat*, where forbidden texts were retyped and circulated secretly in carbon copies. In the West, looser (largely de facto) censorship could be surmounted by using innovative technology to deliver the goods in a new way — and consequently, to produce a new kind of goods.

The difference was in the distribution. In the West, where the means of distribution remained in private hands, new entrepreneurial approaches had a chance to develop. In the East Bloc, with distribution centrally controlled by government, what new ideas emerged did so at enormous personal and social cost. America and the West prospered. The East Bloc stultified.

In Cold War America, the union of the Queer and the Beat, with a little help from the Junkie, produced the Freak. The liberated, post-Stonewall Gay was a late-blooming variety of Freak — the only one, as it happened, hardy enough to last — at least until 1981 when a death sentence was pronounced on him in the form of AIDS.

The notorious gay books of those Cold War years of DPs (displaced persons), JDs (juvenile delinquents), McCarthyism,

and Vietnam included, in 1948, Truman Capote's Southern gothic *Other Voices, Other Rooms*; in 1950, *Quatrefoil*; in 1951, *The Homosexual in America* and *Finistère*; in 1952, *Hemlock and After*; in 1953, *The Heart in Exile*; in 1956, *Giovanni's Room*; in 1959, *Sam* and *The Feathers of Death*; in 1961, *The Leather Boys*; in 1963, *City of Night*; in 1964, *A Single Man*; and in 1966, the "Phil Andros" hustling stories of *\$tud...* From *Other Voices, Other Rooms* to *\$tud*, then, all within the lifespan of an eighteen-year-old!

All these titles were initially published in hardcover, but relatively few people had a chance to hear of them, and many bookstores and even libraries did not stock them. An early example of this new species of American literature, Charles Jackson's *The Fall of Valor*, a somber study published in 1946, was one of many never to make it through the gauntlet of censorious librarians. "Subject, and especially bluntness of presentation," warned the *Library Journal*, "limit library use." Three years later, *Kirkus Reviews* sniffed that as Nial Kent's treatment of the gay theme in *The Divided Path* was "overt" rather than "fastidious," it was therefore a novel "for the sensation seeker," who presumably should not be encouraged to ascend the steps of the library.

Busy pharmacists, Woolworth's proprietors, malt shop managers, and owners of general stores, however, were for the most part not burdened by these high-minded considerations. If a rack of garish paperbacks showing guys with guns, busty babes, and an occasional pair of half-naked men could boost profits (and a monthly turnover of titles), there were few objections. Paperbacks — both original titles and reprints from previous hardcover editions — were an innovation that allowed the new gay literature to proliferate and find readers outside the traditional bookshops and lending libraries. When

reprinted in paperback, all the titles listed above, and many more, found a larger, younger, more diverse readership.

Relatively inexpensive paperbound books had circulated in Europe as early as the seventeenth century.

The invention of the steam rotary press and the proliferation of railroad lines in the nineteenth century allowed books to be produced and distributed cheaply and in large numbers. Penny dreadfuls and dime novels became enormously popular. And more dignified literary productions like the simple, elegant Tauchnitz and Albatross lines were promoted to the new breed of continental and intercontinental traveler, the jet-setters of their day. The invention of the typewriter led to the clacking sound of many hacks and an even greater outpouring of fiction. The Library of Congress has nearly forty thousand different nineteenth-century dime novels from 280 different series and countless authors, many using several pen names. Horatio Alger published his influential morality adventures in this format — paperbound on cheap stock that tended to discolor, turn brittle, and crumble with time.

By the 1890s dime novels were beginning to be superseded by the many so-called pulp magazines like *The Black Mask*, which provided the young H.L. Mencken, among others, with an editorial desk. The heyday of the pulps and pulp authors like Cornell Woolrich lasted into the 1940s, when World War II brought mass-market paperbacks into their own again. In 1929 the American publisher Charles Boni pioneered a modest paperback line using a subdued, tasteful format and striking cover illustrations by Rockwell Kent. Haldeman-Julius's Little Blue Books and the orange-jacketed titles of Britain's Left Book Club each filled a specific need.

But the real twentieth-century breakthrough into mass sales was made by the Englishman Allen Lane with his Penguin

Books in 1935. The Depression had caused sales of Lane's publishing firm, The Bodley Head, to plummet, and the first ten titles of the now-famous paperback line were introduced to turn things around. Lane's experiment was a great success. The original Penguins employed superior type, paper, and ink, and plain but distinctive covers. Savings came through large print runs and sales at newspaper kiosks and railway stations all over Britain. Pan, Corgi, and Foursquare soon joined Penguin as important postwar British paperback houses.

Then Penguin opened a U.S. office, and the foundation for the postwar paperback boom was laid. Soon publishers like Popular Library, Fawcett Gold Medal, and Ace (which published William S. Burroughs's first book, *Junkie*, bound back-to-back with another title) were all competing in what had quickly developed into a hot new market.

The war itself, which changed so much for America — and for Britain — gave paperbacks an enormous boost. To satisfy the Allied troops' hunger for portable reading material, the official Armed Services Editions (ASEs) were devised, with titles ranging from Melville, Whitman, and Housman to useful tracts like *Danger in the Cards: How to Spot a Crooked Gambler*.

ASEs were distributed free to the troops, with 1,322 titles produced, many in print runs of over ten thousand copies. From this experiment, many men who had never before read for pleasure developed a taste for literature of one sort or another. The ex-servicemen who helped form the first homophile organizations (and the first leather clubs) were among those readers. Women too, nudged by war out of their traditional roles, were ready to read. And the greater freedom young people discovered after the war involved a wider range of available reading material.

All this helped fuel the paperback revolution of the 1940s through the 1960s, the era when America's traditional sexual mores were straining to free themselves. The Kinsey Reports, released in 1948 (*Male*) and 1953 (*Female*), shattered the silence that had allowed so many misconceptions about homosexuality to persist. Old attitudes about the Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name were quickly becoming passé.

But homosexuals — publicly discussed now, yet not truly visible — were at the same time becoming targets of Cold War paranoia. Whispers of homosexuality surrounded the Hiss-Chambers espionage case in 1948. Three years later, the revelation that the defecting British diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean were homosexual or bisexual added fuel to a fire that reached its height in 1953. In that year, American Senator Joe McCarthy included homosexuals in his political witch hunts — aided by attorney Roy Cohn and secretly assisted by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover (all three of whom, as it happened, were themselves closet cases).

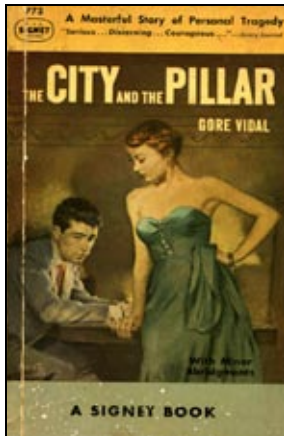
At the same time, Britain saw an alarming rise in antigay frame-ups and prosecutions, culminating in the notorious Lord Montagu case. Gay campaigner Allan Horsfall has described the atmosphere of the time: “One felt that the police were ubiquitous and omniscient with their spy-holes and the secret surveillance and their agents provocateurs and their trawls through people's private diaries and letters.” Many gay men fled abroad (if they could afford it) or destroyed incriminating personal papers.

Parallel to these events was the steady, year-by-year appearance of a series of revelatory gay novels. In 1951, Pyramid Paperbacks issued a revised version of *The Divided Path*, and two years later *The Heart in Exile* appeared at the

height of the scandals. Many gay titles peppered the paperback racks in the years following as the new Homophile Movement grew in the United States and homosexual law reform started to be discussed in Britain. The 1950s also saw a profusion of lesbian pulp novels (documented in Jaye Zimet's *Strange Sisters*), and in the 1960s erotic gay paperback fiction became more widely available. The American public was first introduced to the realities of homosexual life not by radio or TV, not by the *New York Times* or the Mattachine Society, but by the paperback revolution that brought gay and lesbian books into every American town. In 1966 there were even two books called *The Homosexual Explosion*.

These new mass-market paperbacks were not sold by reviews, literary critics, librarians, or educators. Produced in standard 7" x 4¼" format and displayed on stout, rotating wire racks or face-out on store shelves, their covers served as their advertisements. Many pulpy reprints of Zola's *Nana* and Balzac's *Droll Stories* were sold by garish cover illustrations of well-endowed females bursting out of their bodices. Then, as now, living authors had no more control than dead ones over cover art. Sometimes, gay novels were given hetero covers: James Colton's *Lost on Twilight Road* (National Library, 1964) showed a half-naked woman ripping the clothes off a stunned-looking man. Only the code word “twilight” in the title suggested what it was all about. But most publishers soon abandoned this approach. Paperback covers were more explicit, sometimes more attractive, and often better designed than their hardcover equivalents.

Gay paperbacks might reflect the prejudices of the day in either text or cover — or both. Or they might not. Either way, they popularized the subject by disseminating millions of images of homosexuals. These images were at once public and



Gore Vidal. *The City and the Pillar*. NAL (Signet), 1950. Artist: James Avati.

private since a book, especially a paperback designed to be carried in the pocket (one of the leading publishers was Pocket Books), was first seen publicly on the drugstore rack and later looked at and read in private or even in secret, often at night. Many dreamboys had their origins in paperback cover art. Perhaps the most notorious of the gay novels of the 1940s and 1950s was Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, which so unnerved the *New York Times* that it refused even to print the publisher's ads. Nonetheless, this story of an itinerant tennis player who eventually murders his boyhood friend did well in paperback as its numerous editions incorporated a series of textual revisions by the author. The 1950 Signet edition bore a cover painting by the best of the paperback artists, James Avati. It showed a petulant woman in a tasteful, low-cut dress looking down at a pensive young man.

This motif of the Concerned Woman was frequently used: Dean Douglas's *Man Divided* (Gold Medal, 1954) and Dyson Taylor's *Bitter Love* (Pyramid, 1957) were among many whose covers showed eye-catching dames displaying concern for depressed-looking fellows. The prototype was an early, undated paperback reprint of Richard Meeker's 1933 novel *Better Angel*, retitled *Torment*, it showed a woman reaching out to a man in a suit who appears to be hiding his head in the curtains.

For some reason, Signet dropped Avati's painting from its 1955 edition of *The City and the Pillar* and replaced it with a cropped version of a picture it had used on a gay novel from 1952, Fritz Peters's *Finistère*. On Peters's novel ("A Powerful

Novel of a Tragic Love...doomed from the first!") the male half of a straight couple necking on a sofa looks out onto a balcony where a somewhat green-faced youth leans over a railing. On the version adapted for the Vidal cover ("A Masterful Story of a Lonely Search") only the green youth remains. The couple has been replaced by a quotation from a review. The Concerned Woman is only one of a number of frequently recurring gay cover motifs. The Looming Presence is another: A young man appears in the foreground, sometimes with a woman. Another (usually older) man looms or lurks menacingly in the background — suggesting a homosexuality that is predatory

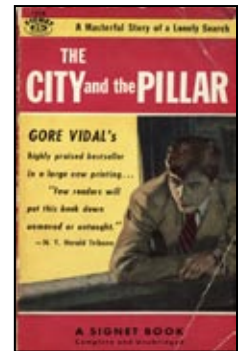


Fritz Peters. *Finistère*. NAL (Signet), 1952.

rather than reciprocal. For Signet's 1959 edition of *Giovanni's Room*, Daniel Schwartz cleverly brought the Looming Presence out of the shadows and into the foreground, to be revealed as the tall, dark, and handsome Giovanni, with his thumb in his belt and very large feet. An unmade bed and a half-finished bottle of liquor lie behind the doorway.

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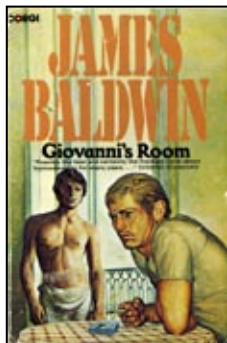
Gore Vidal. *The City and the Pillar*. NAL (Signet), 1950 (1955 printing).



Dyson Taylor. *Bitter Love*. Pyramid, 1957. Artist: George Zeal.

(By the way, a copy of *Giovanni's Room* appeared as a prop in the Jeremy Thorpe murder conspiracy case in 1979. Thorpe, leader of the British Liberal Party, stood accused of conspiring to have a talkative ex-boyfriend disposed of. Thorpe was acquitted after a somewhat campy trial. His loan of a copy of Baldwin's novel to the alleged victim and their subsequent night together were detailed in court. Would the book gently tossed on the bed have been a dusty old hardcover without its jacket that had been hanging around Thorpe's library for years and trotted out on appropriate occasions? Or would the recently reissued Corgi edition be a more likely candidate? It shows two scantily dressed young men, one looking at the other, who is looking away. The Corgi seems somehow appropriate.)

Looking Away, as it happens, is another of the most frequent of repeated motifs on gay paperback covers. One man looks at another, but the second looks away — toward a woman or at the reader or off into space — never returning the longing gaze. This motif was popular for several decades, cropping up again and again on titles that included *Finistère* in the 1950s, Sean O'Shea's *Whisper* and Ben Travis's *The Strange Ones* in the 1960s, and Patricia Nell Warren's *The Front Runner* in the 1970s. Pyramid's 1963 edition of Eric Jourdan's steamy tragedy *Les*



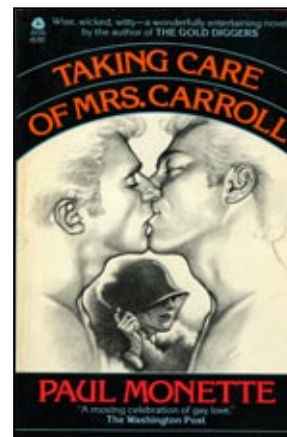
James Baldwin. *Giovanni's Room*. Corgi (UK), 1977.



Eric Jourdan. *Two*. Trans. Richard Howard. Pyramid, 1963. Artist: Mort Engel.

Mauvais Anges (which it retitled *Two*) provided an additional suggestive touch. The cover painting of two boys shows the darker of the two (the predator, presumably) eyeing the other and smoking a cigarette, while the blond — gay, but still a virgin — is pretending to be fascinated by a daisy.

An improvement on Looking Away was the Cruising motif. Here one man looks at the other, who turns, perhaps about to exchange glances. Images of male couples actually face-to-face were rare. Avon's 1971 paperback reprint of Gordon Merrick's *The Lord Won't Mind* was quite revolutionary; a romantic realist painting depicted two handsome blond men face-to-face, reaching out as though about to hold hands, almost touching. Men embracing or holding hands were seldom shown, and men kissing one another remained taboo. One exception was Adonis's 1975 title *Stud Joint* by Ross Holden, which shows a handsome sailor in the foreground and, through an open saloon-type door, a male couple kissing in the back room. The kiss prominently displayed on Avon's 1979 edition of Paul Monette's *Taking Care of Mrs. Carroll* ("A moving celebration of gay love") furthered the paperback publisher's reputation as a pioneer in gay paperback cover design.



Paul Monette. *Taking Care of Mrs. Carroll*. Avon, 1979.

The rise of the Hippie movement in the mid to late 1960s was reflected only slightly in the gay paperbacks of the time. Dick Dale's *The Price of Pansies* (Phenix, 1968) came adorned with a reclining teenager with a pansy on his crotch and a FOR SALE sign: "He was a gay flower child!" And the cover of Bert Shrader's *Gay Stud's Trip*, published by French Line the same

year, attempted an approximation of the psychedelic style in its red and blue drawing of two naked guys sharing a cigarette. But truckers, bikers, and servicemen seem to have remained more popular than hippies — or the well-groomed gay winos amusingly depicted on Gene (or Jean, the publishers weren't sure) North's *Skid Row Sweetie* (Greenleaf Classics).

In the 1960s and 1970s, movie and TV tie-ins began to appear, sometimes screenplays but more often novelizations of films or TV shows, displaying photos of the stars and sometimes including several pages of (usually black-and-white) stills. One of the first of these was *Victim*, William Drummond's 1961 Corgi novelization of a powerful Dirk Bogarde film about a blackmailed gay lawyer. Later tie-in titles included *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (Bantam, 1971), *Fame* (Fawcett, 1980), *That Certain Summer* (Bantam, 1973), *Making Love* (Ballantine, 1982), and that gay movie for straight people (or was it a straight movie for gay people?) *Can't Stop the Music* (Pinnacle, 1980).

The solitary Handsome Young Man or Pretty Boy was, of course, a staple of gay cover design for both erotic and literary titles. Some of the most stunning were featured on James Purdy's *Eustace Chisholm and the Works* ("The Sensational Novel of Perverse Love," Bantam, 1968), Angus Stewart's school romance *Sandel* (Panther, 1970), Jonathan Strong's story collection *Tike* (Avon, 1970), Richard Amory's detective story *Frost* (Olympia, 1971), and Jonathan Melburn's *Billy Stud* (Greenleaf/Adonis, 1975). On Andre Dubus's *The*

Lieutenant (Dell, 1968) the pretty, shirtless enlisted man is joined by an older, crew-cut martinet type with a swagger stick, presumably the lieutenant of the title. Another spectacular pretty boy is discreetly but enticingly nude on John Rechy's *Numbers* (Grove/Black Cat, 1968).

Occasionally a symbolic approach was favored. Signet's 1966 edition of Sanford Friedman's gay novel of the Korean War, *Totempole*, featured a salamander with its tail cut off, implying a perhaps unsuccessful attempt at castration. But as the gay liberation era approached, these negative assumptions began to ebb, and fewer novels ended in tragic death. Kennedy replaced Eisenhower in the United States, the Swinging Sixties got under way in Britain, and things started to loosen up. A number of important censorship trials overturned the outright ban on published erotic writing. The golden age of gay erotica began.

Some early gay erotic novels had been published by outfits on the cusp of legality like the Guild Press, which for a time was operated from a mental institution where its eccentric proprietor was hiding from the police. But as censorship slackened, porn publishers proliferated. Most authors of gay erotica used pen names ("Billy Farout," for example, was the poet William Barber; "James Colton" later made his reputation as Joseph Hansen, author of the Dave Brandsetter detective novels), but a few (like the Englishman C.J. Bradbury Robinson) used their own names. One of the first and best writers in the field was Samuel M. Steward, whose "Phil Andros" stories were published by Greenleaf Classics and Frenchy's Gay Line.

Piracy was sometimes a problem for such legally dubious material. Steward's *San Francisco Hustler*, for instance, was ripped off by Cameo Library, which reprinted it as *Gay in San Francisco*



Richard Chopping. *The Ring*. Bantam, 1970.
Artist: James Bama.

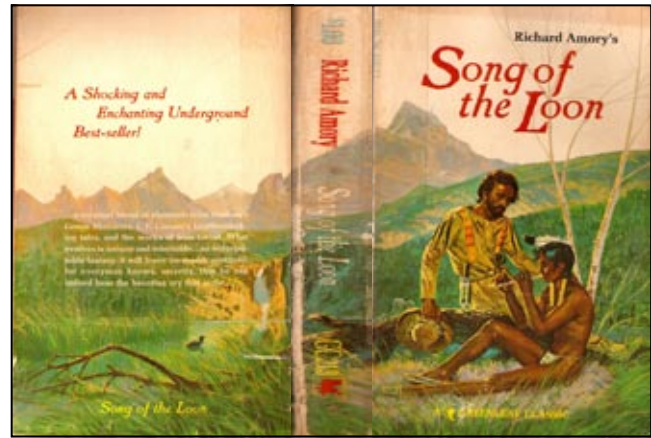
by “Biff Thomas” — though the fact that the pirated edition included a chapter excised from the original edition raises unanswered questions.

While Steward/Andros dealt with rough trade, hustlers, and S/M, another writer of 1960s erotica, Carl Corley, specialized in romantic stories of boys from the country. He adopted a distinctive camp/kitsch style to illustrate his own covers, which bore titles like *Cast a Wistful Eye* (French Line, 1968).

The well-known French publisher Maurice Girodias issued a number of English-language gay books that made their way to America. An edition of *The Young & Evil*, the classic novel of New York gay life in the 1930s by Parker Tyler and Charles Henri Ford, featured a wraparound cover with a delicious black-and-white photo of a reclining near-naked young man. Later, around the time of the Stonewall Rebellion, Girodias’s U.S. imprint issued the nonfiction gay guide *The Homosexual Handbook* by “Angelo d’Arcangelo.” Threatened retribution by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and conservative columnist William F. Buckley Jr. led to their names being removed from “Uncle Fudge’s List of Practical Homosexuals Past and Present” for the book’s second edition. Girodias took great care with the appearance of his books, whose covers were often elegantly conservative in appearance.

The leading publisher of gay erotica in the 1960s and 1970s was Phenix/Greenleaf Classics, whose later productions adopted a distinctive H-format cover style. It was Greenleaf that, in 1970, issued the first post-Stonewall anthology of contemporary gay literature, E.V. Griffith’s *In Homage to Priapus*.

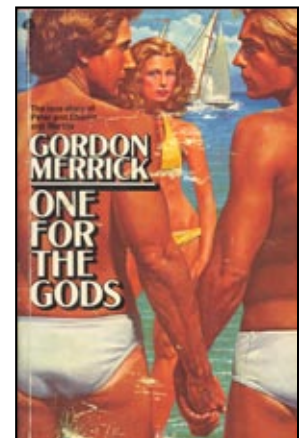
Greenleaf was also responsible for Richard Amory’s 1966 *Song of the Loon*, a “gay pastoral” about love and sex between white men and red in the American wilderness. This Leatherstocking tale with the sex put back in became the most



Richard Amory [Richard Love], *Song of the Loon*. Greenleaf Classics, 1966. Artist: Robert Bonfils. First volume of a trilogy.

famous of all gay erotic novels, at least prior to the arrival of John Preston’s unbearable *Mr. Benson* fourteen years later. *Song of the Loon*’s wraparound cover design avoided both the old “people of the shadows” stereotype and the blatantly sexual approach that would become standard for later gay porn. It showed a bearded white man in buckskins kneeling by a young, flute-playing Indian against a backdrop of mountains, reeds, and white willows. The book was such a hit, it even inspired a paperback parody called *Fruit of the Loon*. There were also several sequels and a movie.

The popularity of the Amory books indicated a mass market eager for gay romance, and semiretired novelist Gordon Merrick stepped into the breach. *The Lord Won’t Mind* and its various follow-ups featured soap-opera plots and gay heroes gifted with spectacular endowments, both physical and financial. All but the



Gordon Merrick. *One for the Gods*. Avon, 1972.

first of these were published as paperback originals, and it fell to them to break completely the Looking Away fixation. Avon's matching romantic-realist covers for the series, featuring men reaching out to each other or showing affection, were displayed in supermarket book racks all over America.

With even a respectable house like Avon venturing into soft-core gay erotica, a number of companies came along to rival Greenleaf's hard-core efforts. Surree House's HIS 69 series featured drawings of near-naked boy-next-door types, usually in pairs. Rough Trade's leather and S/M titles were distinguished by the publisher's trademark black-and-orange covers, which often incorporated the drawings of the well-known illustrator Rex. Another of the 1970s erotica publishers was Blueboy Library, associated with the then-popular magazine of the same name. It was Blueboy Library that published a number of titles by John Ironstone that combined erotica with gay political themes. The cover of Ironstone's *To Be Gay* showed gay-lib banners ("I Am Proud To Be Gay! Now I Want To Be Free!") vying with Anita Bryant placards outside an orange juice stand.

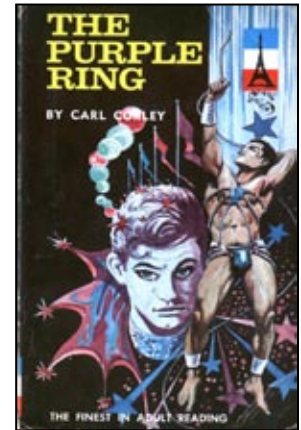
But by the early 1980s the tide had begun to turn for gay paperback porn. A changing legal and economic climate led to the demise of the leading 1970s publishers. AIDS altered sexual attitudes, and more gay-oriented novels were published by commercial presses. When Larry Kramer's *Faggots* appeared in paperback (Warner Books, 1979), you could choose from several cover colors, perhaps to coordinate with your living room's decor. But in the 1990s Masquerade Books' Badboy and Hard Candy editions took over where Greenleaf and the others had left off and began publishing reprints and more literary books as well.

Nowadays more gay books are published in the larger trade paperback format (approximately 8½" x 5½"), though some still appear as mass-market paperbacks. But some of the old

gay paperbacks have survived and are still to be found cheaply in junk shops and secondhand bookstores. They are starting to be recognized as important cultural artifacts, their changing images of gay men faithfully documenting the evolution of popular views and beliefs.

These vintage paperbacks gave homosexuality enormous public visibility at a time when public images of gay men were rare, ugly, and frightening. At as little as 35¢, they were, like paperbacks overall, priced to appeal to a broad public. Today, the ones that have not fallen apart or been discarded have become highly collectible as interest in their cover art and social significance increases. A first edition of Carl Corley's *The Purple Ring* (French Line, 1968) can cost as much as \$100, and the price for a first edition *Song of the Loon* can be even higher. Savored when they appeared, often taken for granted or discarded later, gay paperbacks are beginning to acquire a nostalgic, *Antiques Roadshow*, "I found it in the attic" glamour even as they retain all their initial pulpy "reach out and buy me" appeal.

Gay paperbacks have been part of my own life since before I walked out of a dime store, listening to my heart beat, with a copy of *Two* in my pocket (together with a Signet Classics *Walden* — one never bought *only* a gay book!). I was eighteen. And years later, wandering around Greenwich Village at night, I usually had a paperback in my jeans or coat. (I liked — or



Carl Corley. *The Purple Ring*. Publisher's Export Co. (French Line), 1968. Artist: Carl Corley.

rather, enjoyed and admired — *City of Night*, but I thought *Mr. Benson* was a jerk.)

Let's end with a pair of very different quotes, one suggestively macabre, the other combining the joys of the orgy with the pure sentiment of the pastoral romance. Both are from gay books published as paperback originals.

The first sentence of William Talsman's *The Gaudy Image* (Olympia Press, 1958):

I regret that I shall be unable to spend my eternity listening to the rain as it falls upon my casket roof.

And the ending of Jack Evans's *The Randy Young Runaway*, published, undated — with explicit color photos — by a nameless company:

Come flew in every direction, reaching as high as their faces. They fucked and fucked, and afterwards they all felt like brothers. When it was over they headed for the river to wash off. Then they all sprawled out on the ground for a quick snooze, leaving only Ted and Hank sitting together on the bank. 'I love you, you know, Ted,' Hank suddenly blurted out... They held hands without saying a word; what else was there to say?