



Stories of a Life

What does it mean to record experiences? This week we offer a group of biographies, memoirs, and manuscript material documenting the extraordinary lives of women. From eulogistic commemorations to accounts of salacious exploits, these texts chronicle historical women in all their complexity. Not only do these publications offer a window into lives long past, but they become objects for studying the development of the biographic genre.

Please reach out if there is something that is a complement to your collection—we can always accommodate libraries' fiscal year needs, and are flexible on invoicing and shipping given the closures affecting some acquisitions departments. We are available via phone or email Monday-Friday should you have specific collecting goals and would like to discuss them with us.

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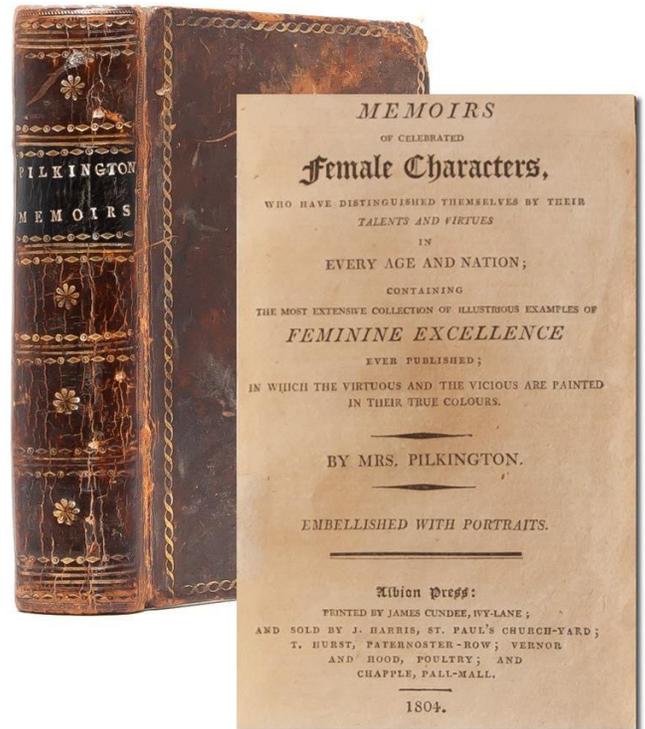
A pocket-sized reminder of the hundreds of women role models girls could look up to

2. Pilkington, Mrs. [Mary Susanna].

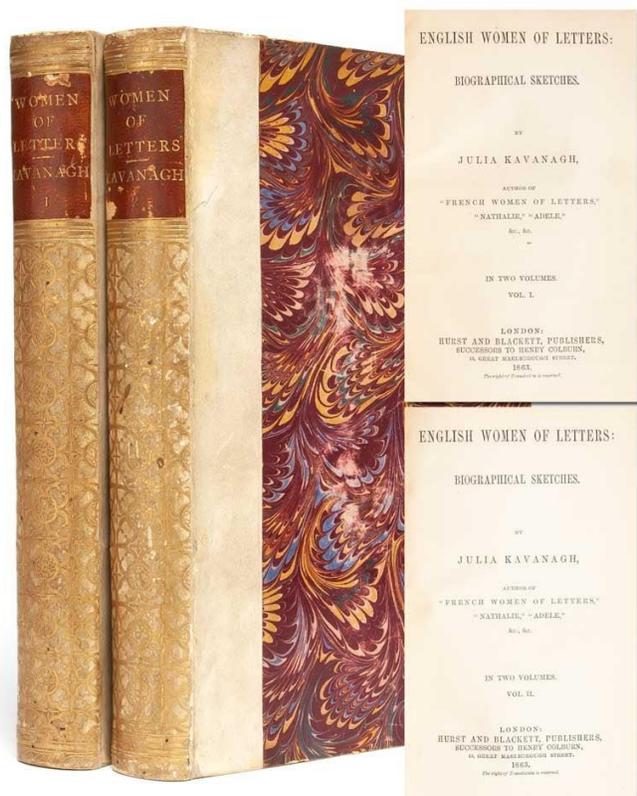
Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters, who have Distinguished Themselves by their Talents and Virtues in Every Age and Nation...Embellished with Portraits

London: Albion Press, 1804. First edition. Contemporary calf with black morocco label to spine, and embossed in gilt. Front joint starting but firm; upper front corner rubbed. Early ownership signature of E. Griffith to front pastedown, else unmarked. Front and rear endpapers a bit loose but holding well. Measuring 102 x 92mm and collating [10], 346: complete, including all 12 engraved portraits inserted in the order called for by the instructions to the binder (though with Mrs. Cowley's used as a frontis rather than facing page 126). OCLC reports only 14 copies at U.S. institutions, with this being the only complete copy on the market.

A prolific author, Mary Pilkington drew on her firsthand experiences as an orphan and a governess to create her most important work. While the majority of her writing centered on fiction (she produced over 40 novels leading up to 1825), she was also deeply invested in the education of girls. Early works such as *A Mirror for the Female Sex* (1798) addressed the practicalities of education for parents and schoolmistresses as well as the girls themselves. This later work, pocket-sized and documenting the true-life contributions of hundreds of women, pushed even further. By providing the biographies of women -- royals, actresses, educators, activists, authors -- Pilkington provided historical role models for girls to look up to and be inspired by. "Example moves where precept fails and sermons are less read than tales'...A Female Biography is an excellent subject, and likely to be perused by the youthful part of the community...I trust it will be an useful lesson," she writes in the Preface. These women had already broken ground, laying a foundation for future women's work. To that end, Pilkington makes a point not only of including women from antiquity, but contemporaries as well -- women such as Hannah More, Hester Piozzi, and Sarah Trimmer. (Item #4030) **\$1,480**



Documenting women's influence over the development and rise of the novel



3. Kavanagh, Julia.

English Women of Letters: Biographical Sketches (In Two Volumes)

London: Hurst & Blackett, 1863. First Edition. Contemporary half vellum over marbled boards, with gilt to spine and top edges. Mild shelfwear to extremities and small split to the crown of Vol I holding well. Marbled endpapers with the bookplate of Robert Heysham Sayre, chief engineer of the Lehigh Valley Railroad (1824-1907) and the ownership signature of the same on the front endpaper of each volume; Volume II extra-opened between the title and table of contents, but text block tight. Collates: (Vol I) iv, 331 pages, (Vol II) iv, 353: complete, but for the publisher's adverts at the rear of Vol II. Internally, both volumes are exceptionally clean, neat, and pleasing examples of this rare book, which appears twice in the auction record, in 1978 and 1958.

Written as a companion piece to *French Women of Letters*, Kavanagh's *English Women of Letters* became an influential reference guide for literary

scholars. Rather than focus broadly on women's historical accomplishments, as her predecessor Mary Hays did, Kavanagh narrowly honed the focus of her female biography. "My object is, namely, to show how far, for the last two centuries and more, women have contributed to the formation of the modern novel in the great literatures of modern times." By considering writers from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen to Amelia Opie, Kavanagh encouraged readers to see how women influenced the novel's form from its inception. She further urged them to consider how women continued shaping the literary canon through their ongoing engagement with the form. An exceptionally important work in the feminist canon.

Feminist Companion to Literature 598. Near Fine (Item #2336) **\$1,000**

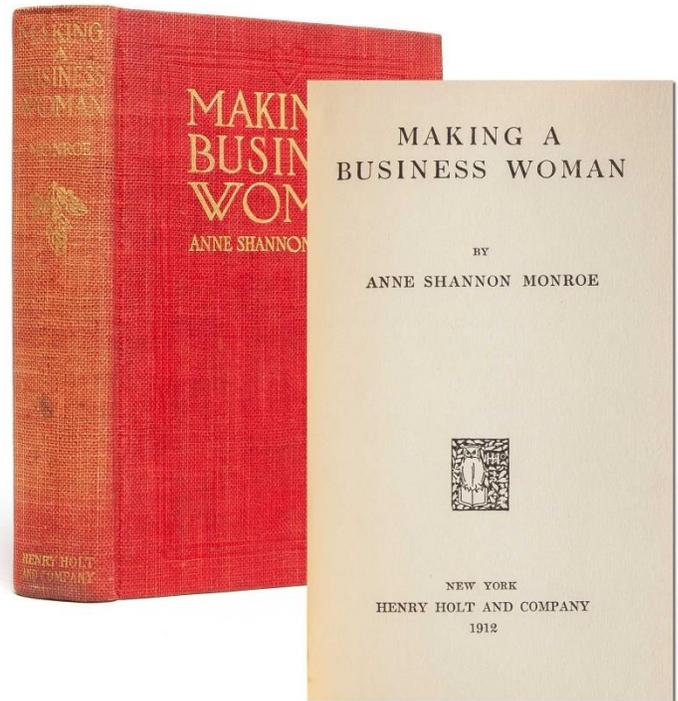
A young woman rises from secretarial pool to entrepreneurship, providing readers with a new role model

4. Monroe, Anne Shannon.

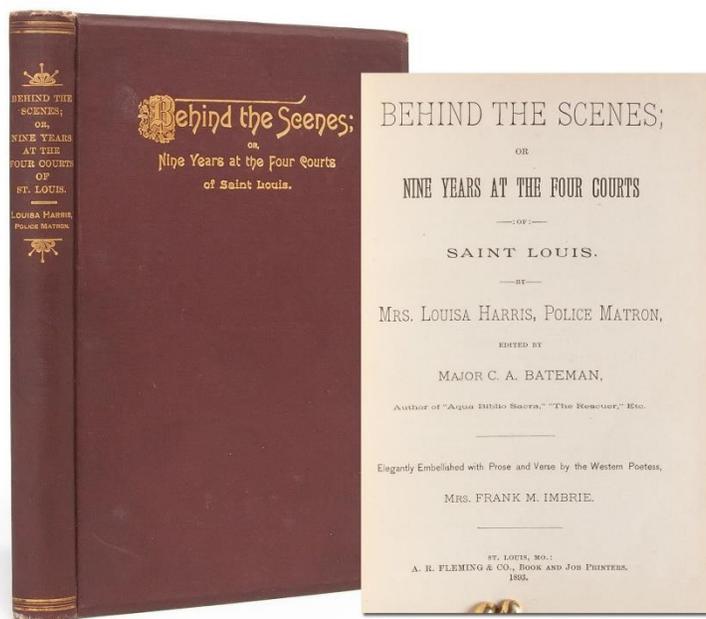
Making a Business Woman

New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1912. First edition. Original red publisher's cloth binding with bright gilt and a bit of sunning to the spine. Lacking the scarce jacket. Internally clean and unmarked with the exception of an early ownership signature to front pastedown. Retaining the two page publisher's adverts at rear featuring "New Books Primarily for Women." First appearance in book form, following the four-part serial in *The Saturday Evening Post* (The Bittner Stories). Scarce on the market, Monroe's semi-autobiographical novel was one of several that gave young women a role model who could inspire their own career ambitions.

Anne Shannon Monroe enjoyed a successful career in advertising as well as publishing. The author of magazine fiction and non-fiction, she became most popular for writing self-help pieces in *Good Housekeeping*. The present novel, dedicated to her mother and written in the first-person, draws on Monroe's experiences; the result is a lively and interesting depiction of an independent-minded young woman's rise through the professional ranks. From the book's opening, there is no mistaking that Miss Gale represents a new and outspoken generation of women. "I was downright tired of being poor. I was equally tired of hearing my past-generation relatives complacently remark: 'No one of our blood was ever in business.'" Casting off old-fashioned notions of class and gender, she decides she will take on office work; under the guidance of Miss Krog and the office owner Mr. Bittner, she overcomes challenges, grows in ambition, moves through the ranks of her Chicago book-publishing company, and ultimately moves toward opening her own advertising firm. Near Fine (Item #5504) \$680



The first book published by a policewoman in America



5. [Women's Employment] Harris, Louisa.

Behind the Scenes; or, Nine Years at the Four Courts of Saint Louis

St. Louis: A. R. Fleming & Co., 1893. First edition. Original publisher's cloth binding with gilt to spine and front board. Brown coated endpapers. A square, tight copy with just a bit of rubbing to extremities and light shelfwear to bottom edges of boards. Internally clean and unmarked, collating viii, 9-220: complete including frontis. The first book published by a policewoman in America, it is difficult to acquire in collectible condition.

Despite assumptions to the contrary, "women have served in organized law enforcement in the U.S. almost from the beginning. The first police departments in America were

established in the 19th century, and in 1845 women began working as matrons in New York City jails" (Smith). The practice rapidly spread across the country, where police forces needed assistance in supervising female prisoners and dealing with the specific challenges faced by this population. Women's clubs -- particularly the American Female Moral Reform Society and the Women's Christian Temperance Union -- urged recognition for the widespread violence perpetrated on female prisoners and called for meaningful change. "It was these women's groups that fought for these distinctly female positions, demanding there was a need for women to take care of women...and they provided police departments with funds for paid matron positions until the government could be convinced of the necessity of having women in the police force" (Maiorano).

Louisa Harris, having served in the prisons and courts of Missouri for nearly a decade, became the first of these women to publish about her experience. The resulting narrative reflects an awareness of the social forces that often put women at a disadvantage, driving them toward arrests or recidivism. Domestic violence, poverty, and the stigma placed on sex work all do damage to women; and according to Harris, these women should not be treated as or placed with violent offenders when they could, with proper assistance, find safety or build more secure lives. This is the motivation for Harris' memoir. In the introduction she explains that while she hesitated to publish the book which might in some readers awaken a "morbid curiosity," she ultimately moved ahead because "I reasoned that if the world knew more about the unfortunate and their revolting experiences, together with the causes that promote misfortune, there might be more true sympathy exhibited...While I have from personal observation become familiar with so-called criminals, I have had the opportunity to learn many of the causes of the committal of crimes. The law seldom recognizes the palliating influences, but humanity should." Harris calls for reforming the handling of juvenile offenders, advocates for therapeutic programs for young women, and taps into a number of other systemic issues of concern within policing today. Near Fine (Item #5679) **\$960**

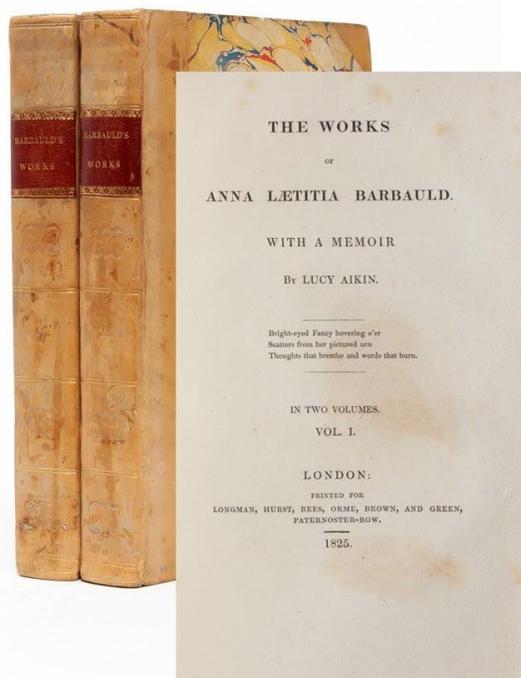
A second generation Bluestocking's work, celebrated and released to the public posthumously by her historian niece

6. Aikin, Lucy.

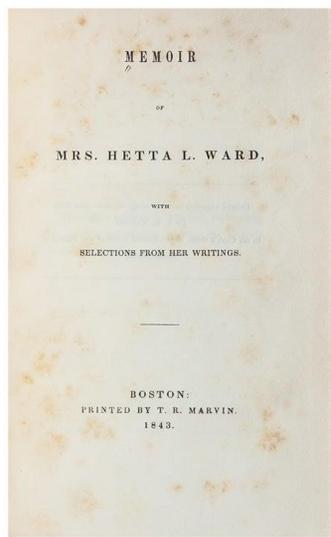
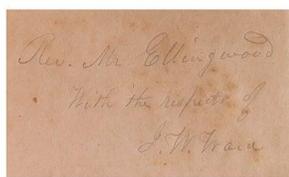
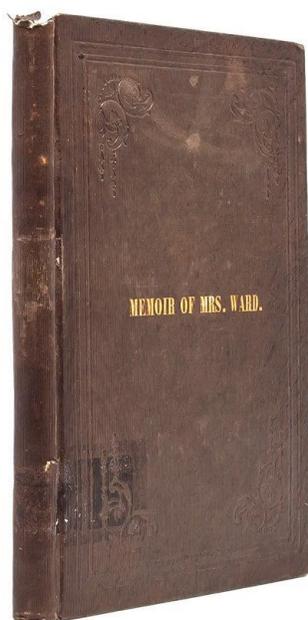
The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld with a Memoir (in 2 vols.)

London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825. First edition. Contemporary half calf over marbled boards with morocco labels to spines. All edges speckled red. Armorial bookplates of Vane Londonderry to front pastedowns. Internally with some mild offsetting from frontis, else fresh and surprisingly without the foxing common to the period. Collating lxxii, 344; vi, 470, [2, adverts]: complete, including half and full titles to both, frontis to Volume I, and adverts to rear of Volume II. A lovely set difficult to find in a collectible contemporary binding.

An influential teacher, essayist, and women's activist, Barbauld was one of the later generation members of the Bluestocking Circle which had included Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More. The daughter of Presbyterian dissenters, she was trained early on in classical and modern languages, history, and literature; this access to education shaped her work as she pushed for the expansion of women's education. The present title was a celebration of her life and writing, edited and brought to the public by her niece, Lucy Aikin, herself a successful biographer and historian who focused on women. Following her aunt's death, Aikin dedicated herself to ensuring Barbauld's legacy was recorded and proclaimed, and she released a number of Barbauld's unpublished or incomplete works to the public. "Anna Laetitia Barbauld is a name long dear to the admirers of genius and the lovers of virtue...To claim for this distinguished woman the praise of purity and the elevation of mind may well appear superfluous. Her education and connections, the course of her life, the whole tenour of her writings bear abundant testimony to this part of her character. It is a higher, or at least rarer, commendation to add that no one ever better loved "a sister's praise"...She was acquainted with almost all the principal female writers of her time; and there was not one of the number whom she failed frequently to mention in terms of admiration, esteem, or affection." For Aikin, someone picking up the mantle of female empowerment, Barbauld offers a standard around which to rally. Narrating this woman's education by women, her close-knit female community, her commitment to expanding women's education, and her promotion of rather than rivalry with other female writers, Aikin nearly canonizes her relative. In the process, she urges the next generation to follow and improve upon Barbauld's example by taking her lessons to heart. (Item #3982) **\$960**



A scarce published example of a family's intimate mourning, celebrating the life and contributions of an intellectual woman



7. [Women's Education] [Companionate Marriage] Ward, Hetta L.; Reverend Ward; Susan Hayes.

Memoirs of Mrs. Hetta L. Ward with Selections from her Writings (Presentation Copy)

Berkeley: T.R. Marvin, 1843. First edition. Original publisher's cloth binding with gilt to front board. Minor loss of cloth to crown of spine. Faint residue of removed library label to spine and front board. Peach endpapers. Light scattered foxing as is typical of the period. Inscribed on the front endpaper by Ward's husband, the compiler: "Reverend Mr. Ellingwood with the respects of J.W. Ward." Bookplate on the front pastedown reveals that the recipient Rev. Ellingwood went on to donate the volume to the Theological Seminary of Bangor, Maine. A scarce and important example of a published American elegiac volume, produced in this case by an eminent family to mourn the loss of an educated woman. Memoirs is unrecorded by OCLC and has never appeared at auction.

In their marriage, James Wilson Ward and Hetta Lord Hayes Ward united two prominent Northeastern families. A senator and Congregationalist minister, James descended from the founders of Plymouth and had attended Andover and Amherst. Hetta, the daughter of a judge and niece of a Dartmouth president, was herself a graduate of Miss Grant's Seminary Academy. The present volume, released "exclusively for private circulation among the friends of the deceased," is a testament to Hetta's value not as a daughter who married well or a wife who effectively managed a house, but as a companion, an intellectual, and an individual. In this sense, it deconstructs the period's expectations of separate spheres or hierarchy between sexes. With an opening letter by Susan Hayes, Hetta's mother, as well as a copy of the eulogy conducted by her husband, the book reveals vast details about who Hetta was as a person. Both describe her as tender and affectionate; but time and again, emphasis is placed on her mind. Though Hetta was skillful with a needle as a child, according to her mother, "her numberless questions interested and surprised me...She acquired a fondness for poetry...She became as much interested in the study of the exact sciences as in the works of imagination, making herself acquainted with the higher branches of Mathematics, Algebra, Geometry, etc." James, similarly, eulogizes his wife. What becomes clear is that he is grieving the loss of a companion and equal. "If we have found a friend of distinguished excellence, and for years rejoiced with that friend in mutual interchange and warm affections, it is natural when death intervenes and separates us from the dear object of our love, to contemplate their virtues...First characteristic which I would notice which she possessed in an eminent degree is an ardent love of truth...She possessed great powers of abstraction...She saw with great clearness the point of an argument and was quick to distinguish between sophistry...She loved to trace the workings of the human mind." Not satisfied simply to have their own testaments to Hetta's extraordinary mind, the compilers included to the last half of the book a collection of her own poetry and prose.

A scarce work, in a genre underappreciated in American literature and history. Such coterie publications of intimate mourning were uncommon for the time, particularly for a woman.

National Cyclopaedia of American Biography 148. Very Good + (Item #4025) **\$1,480**

8. [Abolition] [Women's Suffrage] Ames, Mary Clemmer.

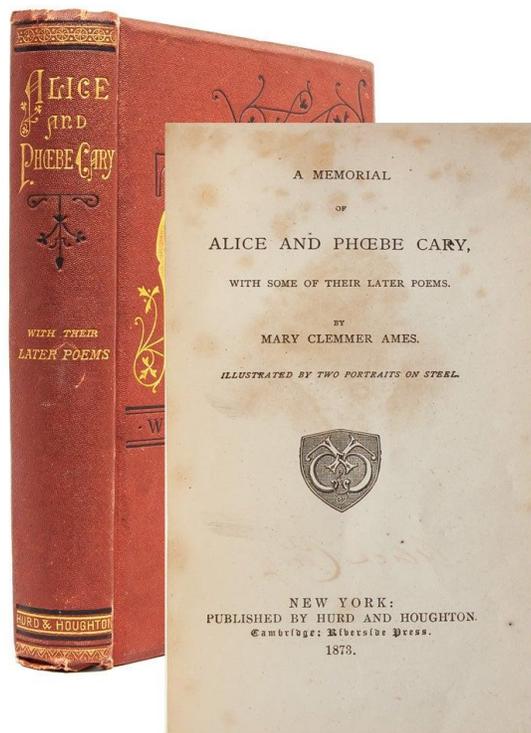
A Memorial of Alice and Phoebe Cary. With Some of Their Later Poems

New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1873. First edition. Original publisher's cloth binding embossed in gilt, black, and blind (BAL terra cotta P. cloth). Blue coated endpapers. Complete with frontis and inserted plate. A bit of shelfwear to corners. Bookplate of Bacon to front pastedown; small binder's ticket of Riverside Press to rear pastedown. Light scattered foxing to endpapers, else an internally clean and unmarked. A just about Fine copy of this activist biography. Setting aside digital copies, it is surprisingly scarce institutionally, with OCLC reporting only 6 hardcopies of the first edition.

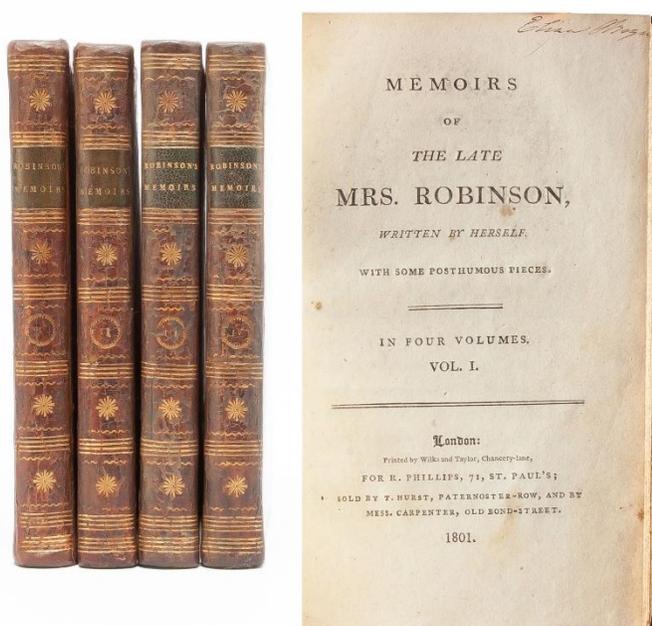
Prolific poets who began publishing at a young age, the Cary sisters used their literature to promote the causes of abolition and women's rights. Alice, the first president of the first woman's club in America, was perhaps the most public in her activism; although Phoebe too was invested in these missions, serving as an assistant editor to Susan B. Anthony's suffrage newspaper *The Revolution*. Ohio-born, the sisters moved to New York in 1851, leaving behind the responsibilities of running their father's household and caring for their younger siblings. "Neither woman ever married, and they developed a symbiotic relationship. Alice was responsible for providing an income for the household" while Phoebe managed their home and assisted in running their Sunday salons, which were frequented by Horace Greeley and William Lloyd Garrison (ADNB). Critics have noted that the most interesting personae of the Cary sisters' poetry are the women. "A recurring figure is that of the unmarried but pregnant woman...Consistently they urge understanding, offering poverty as both an explanation and excuse that stands quietly on the woman's side. A second figure is the strong woman, who although she looks happily upon marriages retains her own identity" (Faust). Indeed, they depict a wide range of female experience; in Phoebe's poem *A Woman's Conclusions*, the female narrator looks back on an unmarried life without children, concluding "I am what I am, and my life for me is best."

Their lives closely entwined, so too were the sisters' deaths: they passed within months of each other, in 1871, leaving behind a devastated network of friends and family. The present biography was composed by Mary Clemmer Ames, a fellow writer who resided with the sisters in New York while estranged from her husband. One of the highest paid women journalists of the age, Ames applies her training here: "months were consumed in writing to, and waiting for replies from, long time friends of the sisters" and working through "the mass of Alice and Phoebe's unedited papers." The result is a comprehensive memorial of the women's life, attempting to ensconce the sisters within the American literary canon as well as celebrating their activist contributions.

BAL 2850. American Women Writers 99. Near Fine (Item #3858) **\$1,000**



Begun by the famous courtesan and completed by her daughter, the Memoirs are a feminist project about alternative paths open to women



9. [Sex Work] [Robinson, Mary "Perdita"] [Robinson, Maria Elizabeth].

Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson, Written by Herself. With Some Posthumous Pieces (in 4 vols.)

London: Wilks & Taylor, 1801. First edition. Contemporary tree calf with gilt and morocco to spines. All edges speckled blue. Joints professionally secured and spine ends renewed. Retaining original labels to volumes I-II and with labels replaced to style on volumes III-IV. Measuring 160 x 90mm and collating complete with frontis to volume I: [8], 192; [2], 187, [5]; [4], 184; [4], 196. Containing her memoirs in the first two volumes, and her literary works previously unpublished in the final two volumes. Armorial bookplates of William O'Bryen, Marquis of Thomond to front pastedowns; ownership signature of Eliza O'Bryen to header of title to volume I. Small bookseller's ticket to front pastedown of volume I. A bit of foxing and

offsetting to endpapers, but internally a crisp, fresh copy. Scarce institutionally and in trade, this exemplar of the scandalous memoir genre is held at a modest 20 libraries in the U.S. and has only appeared twice at auction in the last half century. The present is the only example on the market.

Following the death of the famed actress, writer, and courtesan Mary "Perdita" Robinson, it was her daughter Maria Elizabeth who accepted the commission of completing her mother's life story and bringing it to print. Robinson had begun her memoirs in the late 18th century, inspired in part by her close friendship with Mary Wollstonecraft. Like Wollstonecraft, she had a complex self-identification wherein being a professional, an intellectual, and a mother were not at odds but instead wove together. Critics have noted that Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796) -- the first memoir of a woman traveling on business -- resonates within much of Robinson's own prose as she tells her life story.

Having come to notoriety first on the stage, most famously as Shakespeare's Perdita, and then as courtesan to the Prince of Wales, Robinson later "reinvented herself as a member of the radical intelligentsia and established a highly successful literary career that secured her place within the history of British Romanticism...and her *Memoirs* provides a rich source for considering the complexities of family relationships, collaborative authorship, female patronage, and artistic networks" (Culley). The *Memoirs* are indeed dominated by members of her female community; and her reflections on the women artists, writers, and sex workers who surround her "provide alternative models of female creativity from the maternal" (Culley). Robinson and her cohort are not entirely defined by their biological ability to bear children; and for those who do incorporate maternity into their lives and identities -- Robinson notable among them -- this is a choice rather than a given. Robinson revels in motherhood and her relationship with her daughter. In commissioning her own daughter to cap her literary legacy, Robinson was able to firmly insert Maria Elizabeth into this alternative feminine economy as well -- exposing her to the glories and pitfalls of celebrity based in intellectual and sexual reputation.

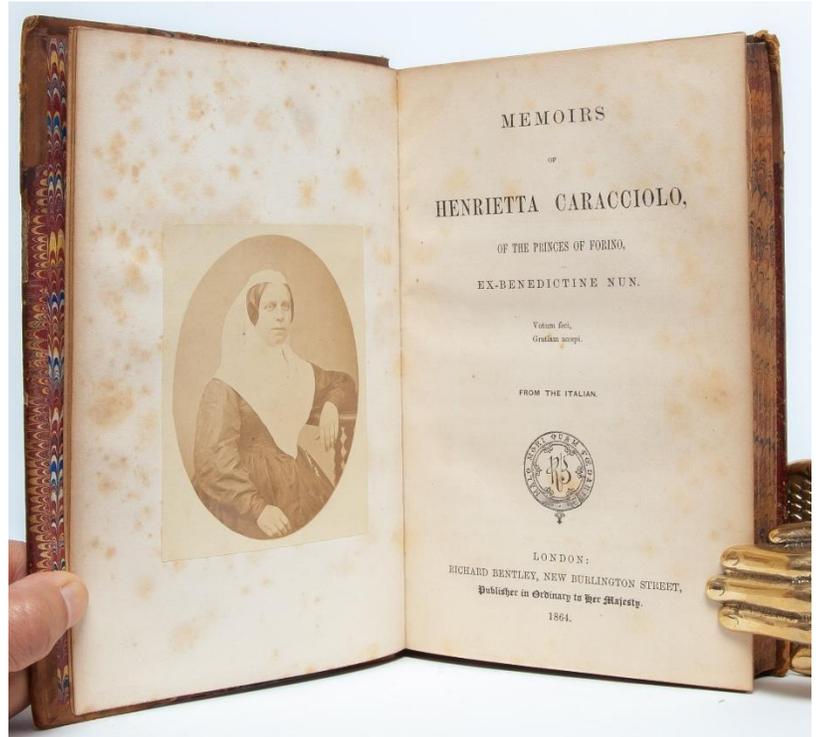
A Memoir and a historical figure that have gained traction in recent scholarship, and which deserve continued attention in dialogues about the scandalous memoir and women's life writing more generally. (Item #4986) **\$2,800**

A memoir participates in Victorian anti-Catholic convent fetish by exposing the violence of forced ministry

10. [Erotic Literature] [Caracciolo, Henrietta].

Memoirs of Henrietta Caracciolo, of the Princes of Forino. Ex Benedictine Nun

London: Richard Bentley, 1864. First English language edition. Contemporary half calf over marbled boards with morocco label to spine. All edges marbled. Marbled endpapers. Measuring 179 x 119mm and collating complete including photographic frontis: x, 374. A square, tight copy with some loss to upper spine label and gentle rubbing to boards. Amorial bookplate to front pastedown. Light scattered foxing largely confined to preliminary and terminal leaves; pages 161-162 partially detached but holding. A female-authored memoir that participates in both anti-Catholicism and convent-fetish eroticism, it is somewhat scarce institutionally but is a rarity in trade with its most recent appearance at auction occurring a century ago. The present is the only example currently on the market.



Frank in her delivery, Henrietta Caracciolo recounts how her rise to young womanhood under the jealous eye of her mother -- combined with the untimely death of a sympathetic father -- led to her unwilling confinement in a Benedictine convent. Denied early opportunities for engaging in the courtship and marriage economy she longs to be a part of, Henrietta Caracciolo instead is forced by her mother to repress her sexual identity and disappear into a life of solitude and chastity. What she finds there instead is a space of sexual abuse, unexplained deaths, illicit affairs, physical abuse, and theft. "My sole aim in writing these Memoirs has been to confirm," she writes in the preface, "as far as lay in my power, with the arguement drawn from fact, the opportune and just decree of the Italian government in the suppression of Convents, and to disabuse the minds of those (if haply any such remain) who deem these places the repositories of religious virtues." Timely social commentary in her native Italy, her memoirs hit a different note in Protestant England where Catholic convents and monasteries had long been closed; indeed, it participated in the anti-Catholic fetish fantasy of convents and monasteries as bastions of deviant and violent sexuality. She herself, by the memoir's end, emerges to a new and more promising life -- one which participates in popular Victorian cult of domesticity and motherhood, which she positions as far more godly and fulfilling. Yet it also leaves open the door of female desire and sexual fulfilment. "By the side of a husband who adores me, and to whom I respond with equal love, I am where the Almighty placed woman at the close of Creation's first week."

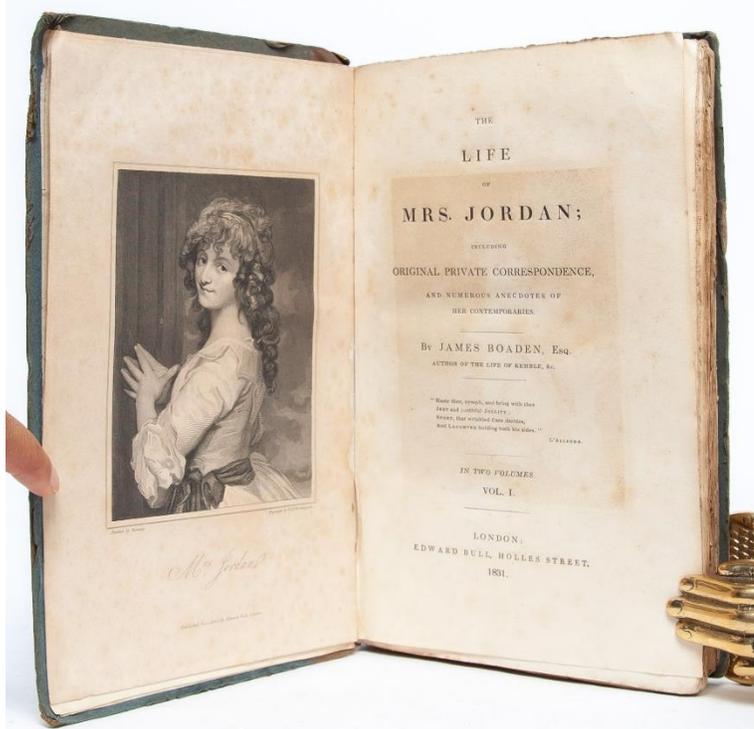
Register of Erotic Books 2950. (Item #5626) **\$1,320**

A courtesan rises in the ranks, but even patronage from the future king can't save her from the shifting times

11. [Sex Work] Boaden, James Esq.

Life of Mrs. Jordan; including original private correspondence and numerous anecdotes of her contemporaries (in 2 vols.)

London: Edward Bull, 1831. First edition. Unsophisticated and bound in original publisher's quarter brown paper over drab boards with paper labels to spines. Measuring 220 x 140mm and collating complete including half titles to both, frontis to volume I, folding frontis to volume II, and adverts to rear of volume II: [6], xv, [1, blank], 368; [6], xiv, 364, [4, adverts]. Spines rubbed with chipping to paper labels and loss to extremities; outer joints cracked but holding well. Boards somewhat rubbed to volume I with some sunning to front board of volume II. Internally pleasing with volume I surprisingly fresh and unmarked; occasional scattered foxing to volume II. 1" closed tear and small paper loss to upper corner of folding frontis in volume II with no text loss. The only copy on the market in original boards of this stunning memoir of the life of courtesan and



theatrical "comic muse" Dorothea "Dora" Jordan.

Born to an actress mother, Dorothea Jordan made her own stage debut in 1777 at the age of 16. Soon after, she began taking comic roles at the Smock Alley Theatre; the decision would put her under the control of manager Richard Daly, whose assault left her pregnant in 1782. Like so many women before her, Dora's entrance to the sex trade was a result of patriarchal violence -- the abandonment by her father that left her family in financial straights, and an assault by an older man that ruined her chances on the traditional marriage market. Fortunately for Dora, she had a supportive maternal influence. "Eager to help Dora escape from the abusive Daly, [her mother] took the family to Leeds, where her sister was an actress in Tate Wilkinson's Yorkshire company" (Regency History). Now visibly pregnant, she adopted the name Mrs. Jordan for respectability and to liken her own escape to the Israelites crossing the River Jordan.

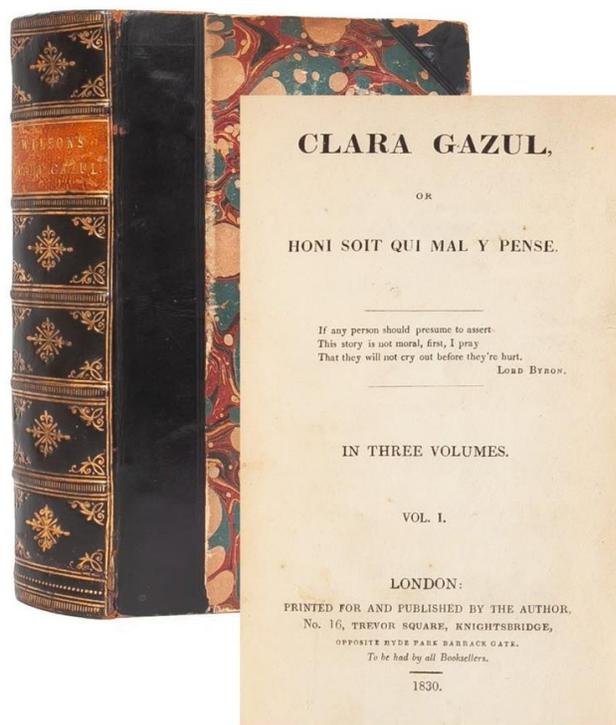
As the present memoir shows, early theatrical success and a position as a well-known courtesan and mistress provided only an unstable life by the 19th century. As the era of London's Great Impures faded and the Georgian era gave way to the Regency, sex workers lost the rich and supportive community as well as the sparkling fame they once enjoyed. Dora became the mistress of increasingly more wealthy men -- moving up the ranks from Richard Ford, a theatre investor and Parliamentary hopeful, to William, Duke of Clarence who would become King William IV. Together the couple lived at Bushy House with their children, which would ultimately include ten of their own. During this period Dora founded a free school for girls, the Female Friendly Society, as well as ensuring substantial dowries for her daughters in an attempt to ensure bright futures (Regency History). But time, age, and finances would eventually shift her life again. On the Duke's decision to pursue marriage, Dora found herself without a patron and confronted with "a financial settlement...laying out what Dora would get for herself and the children, part of which was dependent on her not returning to the stage" (Regency History). Insufficient to support her long term, Dora instead opted to leave her children in the Duke's care and return to the stage. Burdened with debts and suffering from bad press after years of being sustained by the Duke, Dora fled to France where she died in poverty. (Item #5101) **\$960**

In a follow-up to her unrepentant memoir, a famed courtesan answers the question she previously left unaddressed: how she entered the sex trade at age 15

12. [Sex Work] [Wilson, Harriette].

Clara Gazul, or Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense

London: Printed and Published by the Author, 1830. First edition. Three volumes bound in one. Contemporary half calf over marbled boards, with gilt and morocco to spine. All edges speckled red. Green endpapers. Measuring 180 x 110mm and collating [2], civ, [2, half title], 196; [2], 313, [1, blank]; [2], 282: with half title of volume I bound out of order and without half titles to remaining volumes, else complete. A tight, square copy with a bit of shelfwear to extremities and some rubbing along rear joint. Internally with occasional marginal staining to volumes I and II; heavier staining to pages 117-21, 160-66, and 196 of volume I and to pages 20-21 of volume II with all text remaining legible. Volume III largely fresh and unmarked. A scarce book institutionally and in trade, the last copy appeared at auction nearly 70 years ago. The present is the only example on the market.



Published five years prior, Harriette Wilson's notorious memoir promised readers a controversial and unapologetic take on the famed courtesan's life. "I shall not say how and why I became, at the age of fifteen, the mistress of the Earl of Craven. Whether it was love...or the depravity of my own heart, or the winning arts of the noble Lord which induced me...does not now much signify," she states in her opening line. Henceforth, Wilson departed her father's household and embarked on a storied career in sex work, counting among her patrons "the most distinguished men of the day, from the Duke of Wellington to Lord Byron. She held court in a box at the opera, attended by statesmen, poets, national heroes, aristocrats, and members of the beau monde who hoped to be immortalized by her glance" (Blanch). Written and published as she began showing signs of age, and thus began a fall out of favor, Wilson used her words to remain in the public eye, reveling in the life she had built. Unrepentant, Wilson cast herself as "spirited and single-minded...ducking and diving through society, making sure, in a world heavily weighted towards men, she was always on the winning side. Her life story, although controversial, set the early nineteenth century alight by holding up a mirror to the double standards that riddled male and female behavior" (Dangerous Women Project).

Clara Gazul followed the Memoirs as a clear attempt to continue keeping her name in society. Though the majority of the work is presented as fiction, Wilson opens the introduction by connecting the two books and teasing their autobiographical contents: "Though my Memoirs have long been before the public, I have not yet explained how or why I became the mistress of Lord Craven at the age of fifteen...I am now disposed to gratify curiosity, provided the reader has the grace to "a plain and unvarnished" statement of facts." In the lengthy introduction that follows, Wilson narrates childhood abuse at the hands of her father and various boarding school mistresses, learning feminine graces and more humanistic pursuits from her eldest sister and a fascination with men and romance from the remaining four sisters. Ultimately, the relationship with Lord Craven becomes a mere afterthought in the Introduction's final pages, as he offers her an escape from loneliness and neglect. It is a sympathetic and not at all scandalous chapter, and one that Wilson strategically uses to set up her novel -- likely drawn from the famed acquaintances and scandals of her own life. (Item #4836) **\$2,280**