

OTHER

John Osborne



PENGUIN
BOOKS

PLAYS
UNPLEASANT

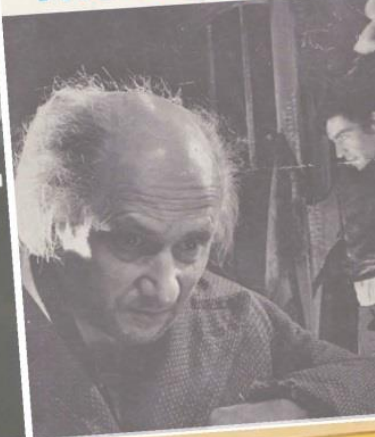
BERNARD
SHAW

WASTE

Harley Granville Barker

Harold Pinter

The Caretaker



I am required by
the Lord Chamberlain
to inform you...
50 years of the
Theatres Act



GHOSTS

Henrik Ibsen

a new version by Richard Eyre

THE HAPPY LAND: A
BURLESQUE VERSION OF "THE
WICKED WORLD"....

WILLIAM SCHWENCK GILBERT, GILBERT & BECKETT



Oberon



Modern
Playwrights

THE
REPRESENTATIVE

BEN TRAVER



A CUCKOO IN THE

A CENSURED
PLAY

The Breaking Point, With
Preface and a Letter to the Censor

by
Edward Garnett



Jean Genet
The Maids

translated by
Benedict Andrews and Andrew Upton

SAMUEL
BECKETT
WAITING
FOR GODOT



Libraries
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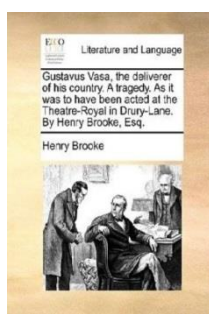
ISLINGTON

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Theatres Act, an act to abolish censorship of the stage in the UK, Islington Council's Library and Heritage Service working with The British Library have produced a list of plays that were either refused, modified or unlicensed by Lord Chamberlain's office. We particularly liked the rebuke to Lionel Bart and Frank Norman regarding their play *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be* of 1959:

"The builder's labourer is not to carry the plank of wood in the erotic place and at the erotic angle that he does and the Lord Chamberlain wishes to be informed of the manner in which the plank is in the future to be carried."

The list is part of Banned Books week UK and mirrors the United States initiative and aims to highlight the importance of ensuring freedom to read, write and publish. Libraries, book shops, schools and reading groups are encouraged to hold events celebrating the freedom to read and to challenge voices and ideas being silenced.

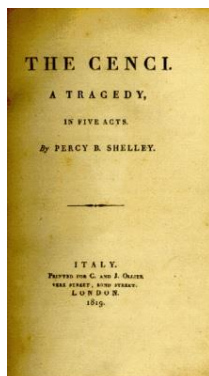
For more information visit www.bannedbooksweek.org.uk



Henry Brooke
Gustavus Vasa
(1737)

Refused

In 1737 Prime Minister Robert Walpole, stung by personal attacks from Henry Fielding, got Parliament to pass an Act giving the Lord Chamberlain responsibility for licensing public performances of plays. *Gustavus Vasa* was the first play to fall foul of the new regime, as Walpole felt that the villain in the play resembled him.



Percy Bysshe Shelley
The Cenci (1819)

Refused

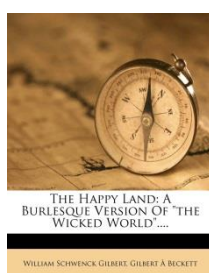
Shelley's verse drama of incest and murder caused problems for the Lord Chamberlain's Office (LCO) from its publication and the play only received a single private performance in 1886. Even in the 1920s when the play was finally licensed, it provoked vigorous correspondence with the London Council for the Promotion of Public Morality.



Mary Russell Mitford
Charles the First
(1825)

Refused

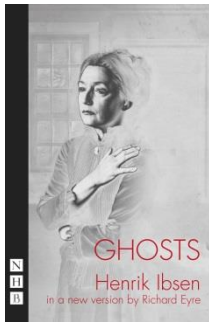
Mary Russell Mitford's historical drama raised a number of issues including blasphemous language and the lurid description of the King's execution. However, the main issue was the subject matter. The play was written at a time when the Hanoverian monarchy was unpopular and the Lord Chamberlain was not about to put revolutionary thoughts into the minds of the public.



W.S. Gilbert
The Happy Land
(1873)

Modified

Gilbert's play gave rise to a rare example of censorship post performance. The play featured actors dressed up as Prime Minister William Gladstone and several of his Liberal colleagues. This was a definite no-no but had not been picked up when the licence was granted and caused the Lord Chamberlain much embarrassment.



Henrik Ibsen
Ghosts (1881)

Refused

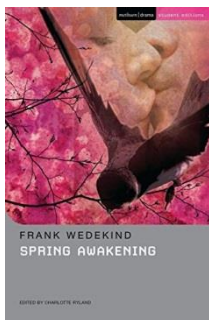
The wave of new plays that came from Northern Europe in the 1880s often baffled the LCO and their open discussion of social issues provoked outrage. The subject matter also posed problems in granting licences. Ibsen's play with its frank consideration of venereal disease and illegitimacy meant *Ghosts* was refused a licence for over 30 years.



August Strindberg
Miss Julie (1888)

Refused

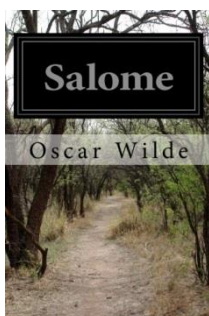
Because of its subject matter, *Miss Julie* was not granted a licence until 1938. The main issues were the portrayal of Miss Julie as the protagonist, and love and desire between classes - as one member of the LCO wrote "Then there is the very questionable theme...of the relations between masters and servants, which this play tends to undermine."



Frank Wedekind
Spring Awakening
(1891)

Refused

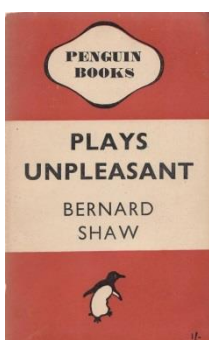
With its portrayal of the first stirrings of sexual desire in a group of teenagers and its consideration of masturbation, abortion and suicide, *Spring Awakening* was refused a licence for many years. Even as late as 1963 when The Royal Court Theatre applied for a licence it could still be described as "...one of the most loathsome and depraved plays I have ever read."



Oscar Wilde
Salome (1891)

Refused

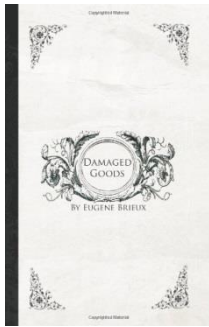
Salome was due to be performed as part of Sarah Bernhardt's 1892 London season until the LCO refused a licence. Wilde's play fell foul of the censor due to a blanket ban on the depiction on stage of biblical characters and *Salome* had to wait for almost 40 years before it reached the London stage.



George Bernard Shaw
Mrs Warren's Profession (1893)

Refused

In *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Shaw dealt with organised prostitution not as a moral issue but as a business transaction – one which could sometimes pay and bring financial security. This was too much for the LCO and despite support from other leading dramatists; *Mrs Warren's Profession* had to wait until 1924 before receiving a licence.



Eugène Brieux
Damaged Goods
(1901)

Refused

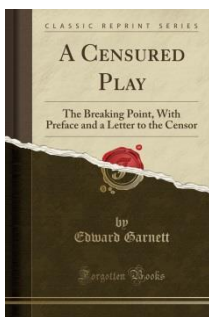
Brieux's didactic play with its frank discussion of venereal disease was refused a licence on several occasions up to 1914. However, the advent of the First World War led to a marked increase of venereal disease in British troops and by 1917 was considered to be a major threat to the war effort. In view of the situation, opposition to the play was dropped.



Harley Granville Barker
Waste (1906)

Refused

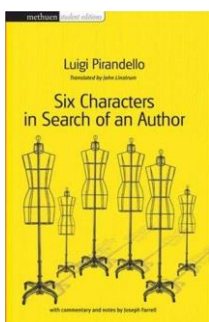
Waste tells the story of a married woman who has an affair with an ambitious politician and, when she becomes pregnant, is pressured into having an illegal and fatal abortion. Amongst the objections to the play, it was the discussion of abortion that most exercised the LCO. Granville Barker was invited to remove "all reference to a criminal operation." He refused, and a licence was declined.



Edward Garnett
The Breaking Point
(1907)

Refused

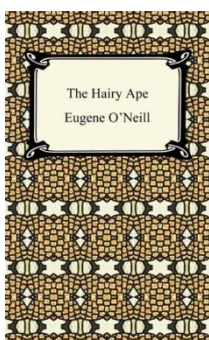
In *The Breaking Point* Grace, a young woman, is manipulated by two strong men – her father and her married lover - with tragic consequences. Grace may be pregnant and it was this that caused the censor to refuse a licence. Garnett published the play and used the opportunity to vent his feelings in a preface that fiercely denounced the Lord Chamberlain.



Luigi Pirandello
Six Characters in Search of an Author
(1921)

Refused

The taboo subject of incest was the problem for Pirandello's ground-breaking play. Several members of the LCO recognised the play's significance but the Advisory Board was not impressed. "This is neither tragedy nor comedy it is plain filthiness" thundered Lord Buckmaster. Theatre goers had to wait until 1928 before the play was licensed.



Eugene O'Neill
The Hairy Ape
(1922)

Modified

A licence was twice refused for O'Neill's expressionist drama because of indecent language. When it came up a third time, the LCO agreed to a licence providing the language was toned down. An exchange of letters followed around the use of bloody and bleedin' and their substitution by blinkin', bloomin' and blarsted. The LCO was immovable and got its way.



Marie Stopes
Married Love /
Vectia (1923)

Refused

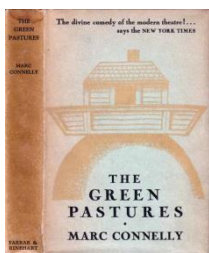
Marie Stopes' autobiographical play *Married Love* is an examination of the failure of her first marriage. The play's discussion of sex and male impotence led the LCO to refuse a licence. Stopes reworked *Married Love*, gave it a new title – *Vectia* and re-submitted the play the following year. The answer from the LCO was still the same.



Ben Travers
Cuckoo in the Nest
(1925)

Modified

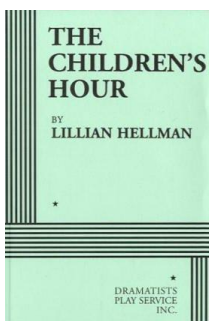
The Vortex came up for a licence just after the election of the first Labour Government and the LCO was nervous of allowing *The Vortex* to be staged at that time. The Advisory Board however, came down strongly the other way arguing that suppression would be counterproductive. A licence was granted with only minor alterations to the text.



Marc Connelly
The Green Pastures
(1930)

Refused

The Green Pastures, a retelling of stories from the Old Testament, was the first play to feature an all-black cast. One of the iron rules of the LCO was not to allow the portrayal of any deity. Constrained by its own rules and the opposition of successive heads of the Church of England, it wasn't until the 1960s that *The Green Pastures* made it on to the public stage.



Lillian Hellman
The Children's Hour
(1934)

Refused

In *The Children's Hour* assertions of a lesbian relationship are made against two teachers at a girls' school. Because of the subject matter, the play was repeatedly refused a licence over several decades, only being granted a licence in 1960, over 25 years after it was written.



Terence Rattigan
Follow my Leader
(1938)

Refused

In the year of the Munich Agreement, Terence Rattigan sought to stage a farce which poked fun at Hitler and Mussolini. The LCO sought the advice of the Foreign Office which expressed the view that it would rather not see *Follow my Leader* staged. A licence was duly refused until 1940 and Italy's entry into the war.

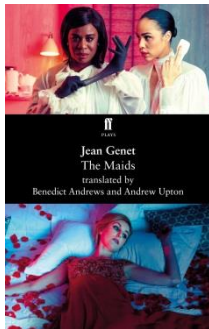


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Madge Pemberton
The Querulous Queens (1945)

Refused

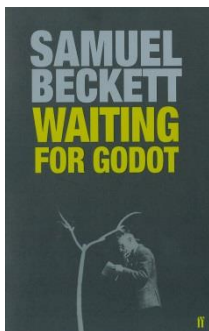
In *The Querulous Queens* a writer of popular history is brought before the Goddess Clio and charged with making inaccurate statements in her books. The witnesses are several Queens of England. Unfortunately, one of the witnesses is Queen Victoria and the LCO had a ban on the portrayal of Victoria and her descendants in anything other than a serious historical play.



Jean Genet
The Maids (1947)

Refused

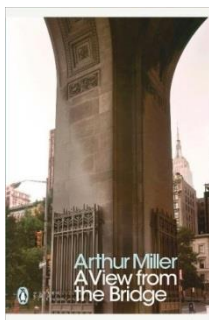
When Genet's intense exploration of power and sexuality was submitted to the LCO by the Royal Court Theatre, the response was not favourable "Unwholesome and macabre," with a "suggestion of lesbianism" commented Lord Scarborough, the Lord Chamberlain. Strangely audiences could see the play in the original French but had to wait until 1956 for a performance in English.



Samuel Beckett
Waiting for Godot (1953)

Modified

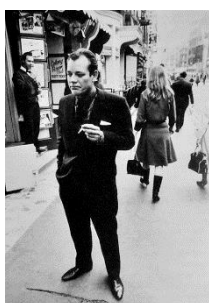
Beckett's towering absurdist play met with blanket incomprehension from the LCO. A licence was recommended but with a number of cuts. In the end the argument boiled down to one line "who farted?" with the LCO proposing its replacement with "who did that?" Beckett suggested replacing "farted" with "belched" The Lord Chamberlain was happy and a licence was granted.



Arthur Miller
A View from the Bridge (1955)

Unlicensed

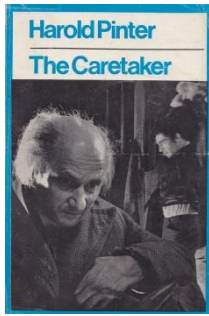
Although a licence was recommended, a number of cuts, including two male characters kissing on stage, were required. This was not acceptable to Miller and a group of West End producers decided to exploit a loophole in the law to turn the Comedy Theatre into a private theatre club as the New Watergate Theatre Club. This allowed them to stage the play without a licence.



Lionel Bart & Frank Norman
Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be (1959)

Modified

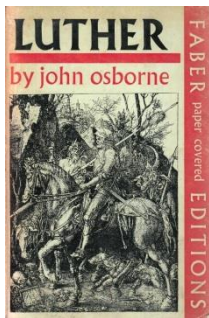
This musical about the Soho underclass started life at the Theatre Royal Stratford under the direction of Joan Littlewood. Although the licence was granted, Littlewood added extra bits of stage 'business' and after its transfer to the West End, the LCO was alerted to 'queer goings on'. Officials were dispatched and demanded changes including modifying some erotic business with a plank of wood.



Harold Pinter
The Caretaker
(1960)

Modified

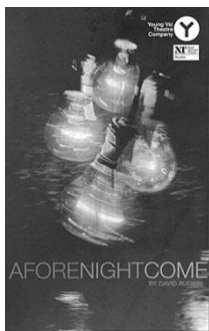
“A piece of incoherence.” was how the licence report described *The Caretaker*. Although the play was approved, language was a problem with several cuts being required including “from arsehole to breakfast time” and “would you like me to have a look at your body?” which was deemed to be an invitation to indecent exposure.



John Osborne
Luther (1961)

Modified

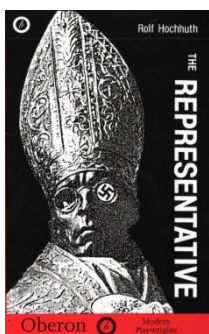
When Osborne’s historical play about the Reformation was submitted the LCO decided that major cuts were required. Osborne was furious and refused to accept the changes. Lawyers were involved and faced with this intransigence the LCO surprisingly backed down and agreed to restore most of the passages that had been deemed inappropriate a few weeks before.



David Rudkin
Afore Night Come
(1962)

Unlicensed

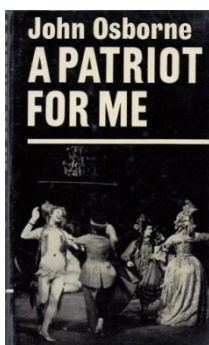
Rudkin’s debut play with its earthy language, gay love and ritual violence was always likely to run into trouble. Included in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 1962 season of experimental plays, the RSC decided not to waste time applying for a licence and scheduled its run at the members only Arts Theatre – a theatre club where unlicensed plays were frequently performed.



Rolf Hochhuth
The Representative
(1963)

Modified

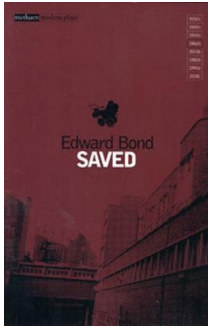
Hochhuth’s play, which examined the role played by Pope Pius XII during the Second World War, resulted in the LCO consulting government officials for the first time since the war. A compromise was agreed with a licence being granted provided the Catholic Church was given space in the theatre programme to refute the charge that Pius did not speak out against the Holocaust.



John Osborne
A Patriot for Me
(1964)

Refused

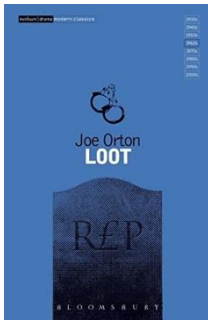
John Osborne’s tale of male prostitution and transvestism meant that, despite a recent relaxation of the portrayal of homosexuality on the stage, a licence was always going to be refused. When the inevitable happened, the English Stage Company decided to turn the Royal Court into a theatre club. The play opened to a great fanfare in August 1965.



Edward Bond
Saved (1965)

Refused

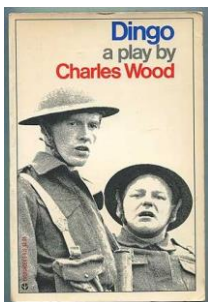
Saved was scheduled for performance at the Royal Court in November 1965. The script did the rounds of LCO officials who agonised over the language and the violence. As matters dragged on the theatre informed the LCO that if a licence was refused, a private performance would go ahead. A prosecution was brought under the 1843 Theatres Act and the Royal Court was fined 50 guineas.



Joe Orton
Loot (1965)

Modified

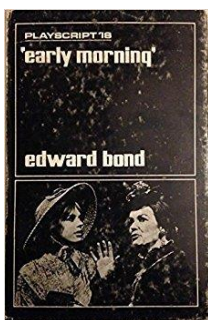
Orton was in hot water with the LCO with his 1965 play *Loot*. The play gleefully poked fun at the Catholic church, the police and the family. Above all it was the problem of the corpse and the thought of it being played by an actor which appalled the LCO. A licence was agreed, providing a suitable approach to the body was found.



Charles Wood
Dingo (1967)

Unlicensed

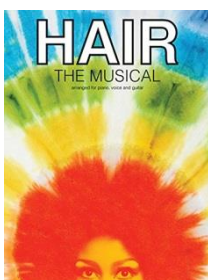
It had been planned to stage Charles Wood's play at the National Theatre but its pungent satire, its questioning of British valour in war and a less than flattering portrayal of Winston Churchill led it to be withdrawn and, much to the LCO's frustration, replaced with a 3-week season of members only performances.



Edward Bond
Early Morning
(1968)

Refused

Set in a surreal version of Victorian Britain where Queen Victoria is in a lesbian relationship with Florence Nightingale and a heaven, where eating people is looked on with approval. The Lord Chamberlain refused to licence a play in which the Queen's ancestors were mixed up with "various unsavoury practices." Two private club performances were scheduled, the police were called but the performances were uneventful.



**Gerome Ragni
& James Rado**
Hair (1968)

Refused

Hair with its permissiveness, nudity and men and women revelling in sexual freedoms was one of the defining plays of the 60s and was the last play to be refused a licence. The day after the Theatres Act became law on 26 September 1968 *Hair* triumphantly opened at the Shaftesbury Theatre and ran for 1,997 performances.