

Those Awful Books

MRS. MILLER: That reminds me, Nat. I've been meaning to speak to you about Those Awful Books Richard is reading. You've got to give him a good talking to...

Richard's mother worries about what scandalous material he is reading; books alluding to sex or promoting political and social ideas contrary to the conservative status quo were considered improper for a young man in 1906. Excerpted here are passages from some of Richard's taboo books.

From *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (a classic 12th-century Persian poem)

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread— and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh Wilderness were Paradise enow!

...

Yesterday This day's Madness did prepare;
Tomorrow's silence, Triumph, or despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

From *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (1890)

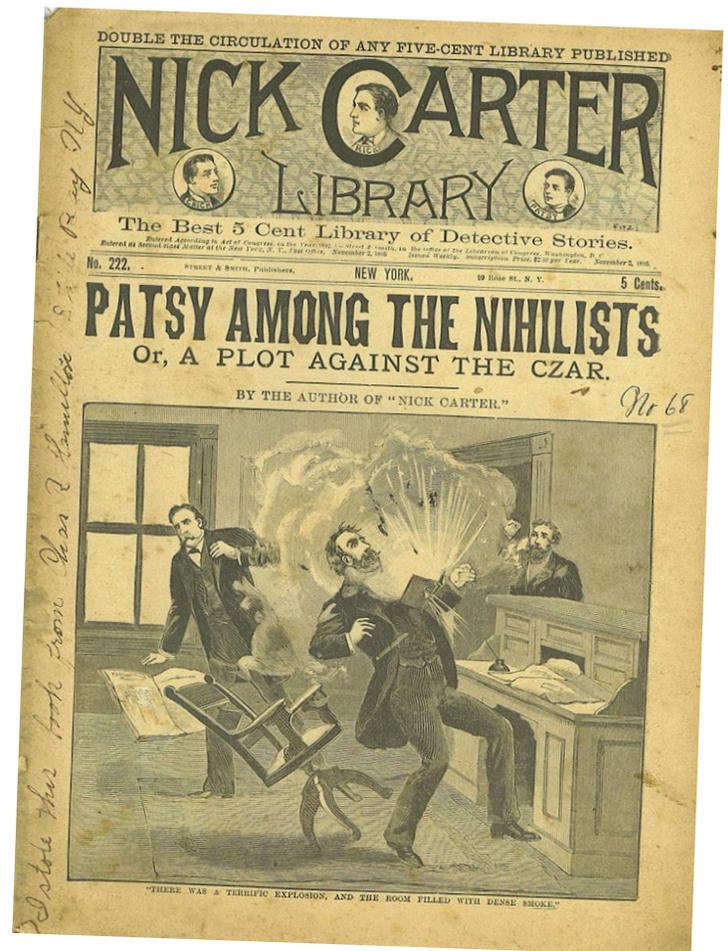
Lying back in the hansom, with his hat pulled over his forehead, Dorian Gray watched with listless eyes the sordid shame of the great city, and now and then he repeated to himself the words that Lord Henry had said to him on the first day they had met, "To cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul." Yes, that was the secret. He had often tried it, and would try it again now. There were opium dens where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new.

From *Anactoria* by Algernon Swinburne (1866)

My life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs
Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound

...

That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts as honey! That from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consume,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!



The Steam Man of the West

From *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by Oscar Wilde (1898)

I only knew what hunted thought
Quickened his step, and why
He looked upon the garish day
With such a wistful eye;
The man had killed the thing he loved
And so he had to die.
Yet each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!
Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.
Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.