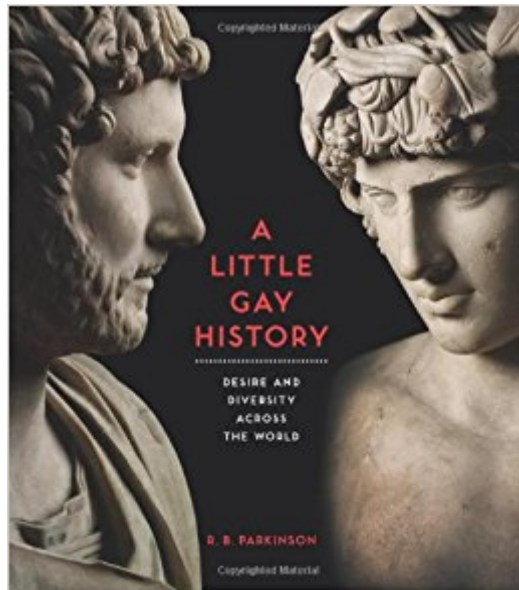




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# A Little Gay History: Desire And Diversity Across The World



## Synopsis

When was the first chat line between men established? Who was the first "lesbian"? Were ancient Greek men who had sex with each other necessarily "gay," and what did Shakespeare think about crossdressing? A Little Gay History answers these questions and more through close readings of art objects from the British Museum's far-ranging collection. Consulting ancient Egyptian papyri, the Roman Warren Cup's erotic figures, David Hockney's vivid prints, and dozens of other artifacts, R. B. Parkinson draws attention to a diverse range of same-sex experiences and situates them within specific historical and cultural contexts. The first of its kind, A Little Gay History builds a complex and creative portrait of love's many guises.

## Book Information

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press (September 3, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 023116663X

ISBN-13: 978-0231166638

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 0.6 x 7.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #730,505 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #103 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > Literature & Fiction > Literary Criticism](#) #344 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Bisexuality](#) #378 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > History](#)

## Customer Reviews

Through meticulous research and compassionate narration, British Museum curator Parkinson (Voices from Ancient Egypt) brings to light a collection of art objects from the British Museum's collection that illustrate same-sex desire, many of which had previously been censored or concealed from historians. These 40 objects come from various civilizations and eras, some being clear-cut examples of same-sex love, such as Grecian urns decorated with homoerotic scenes, the poetry of Sappho, and the Roman Emperor Hadrian's well-documented affair with the young Antinous. Other pieces are more ambiguous: artistic renderings that suggest love between Samurai warriors; an Ancient Egyptian tomb that may have been made for a same-sex couple; and Shakespearean sonnets that allude to bisexual relationships. The book also includes brief, captivating profiles of gay and lesbian artists, including the sculptors Hedwig Marquardt and

Augusta Kaiser, and novelist Virginia Woolf. The long history of intolerance is interwoven through the artwork as well, and while facts surrounding the persecution and execution of sodomites are unsettling, the book is not overtly political. Parkinson successfully shows that same-sex love and desire are an integral part of human history: On a long view, no one occupies the centre. It belongs to all of us. 80 color photos. (Sept.)

Moving and fascinating. (Simon Russell Beale *The Sunday Times*) Illuminating... Parkinson's book reminds us there is nothing new about homosexuality. (*The Times (London)*) [The book] draws on 40 objects, ranging from ancient Egyptian papyri to images by modern artists, including David Hockney. (*The Bookseller*) Parkinson successfully shows that same-sex love and desire are an integral part of human history. (*Publishers Weekly*) [A Little Gay History] scans the Museum's collections for objects that show the complexity of desire in world cultures. From Indian gods to Emperor Hadrian, it proves that, if you swear by ancient tradition in matters of love and sex, you'll end up in the queerest spots. (*The Independent*) [The book] explores artistic portrayals of what it means to be gay and the difficulties in finding records of same-sex desire. (*BBC News*) This little gay history is a little terrific book...highly recommended. (*Library Journal*)

There are few LGBT History Books out there and I have read quite a few of them that are more heart-warming and charming. For one thing, the compactness of this little book makes it unique; yet, even though everything here is obviously condensed and reduced to a few examples taken from 9,000 BC to the present day, you never feel the story being told is superficial or in any way lacking. What I personally really loved is the fact that it's the British Museum London that issued this book as a sort of catalogue for their visitors, guiding them to the "gay" goodies in their collection. I wish all museums in the world would highlight the LGBT pieces in their collection like this and make them interesting and attractive for all (!) visitors of the museum, demonstrating that the story of same-sex desire is a part of the general history of mankind. Curator R. B. Parkinson has written a beautiful intro: balanced, clear, straightforward (if that's the right word here), and an ideal outline of what LGBT History is, and what it isn't. The artifacts themselves that are shown in this book, and briefly described with regard to their relevance to LGBT History, are amazing. I found the self-sucking Egyptian gods (950 BC) and the "Warren Cup" (Palestine, 10 AD) especially thrilling, also the broadsheet on executing sodomites in the Netherlands, 1730. But

it's the mix of Egypt, Ancient Rome, Middle Ages, India, Asia, modern day movies and items that truly set the tone. The story of "straight ally" John Wolfenden at the end of it is special, and makes for a great finale. In terms of museum programs this must be a ground breaker and a positive example that hopefully many others around the world will follow soon.

If you are well read, aware of history and the arts, this may be pleasant diversion-- but brief. This is a book to give to a non gay friend who would appreciate or need a touch of education on same sex love. It is dipping one's toes in calm waters giving one a smile. If you are an academic in the realm of GLBT history, you may feel a bit drowsy and learn little. So much is relative in this case--- a little may be good for Mother or Aunt; for the more sophisticated, one might long for bigger guns to be fired into the depths of history.

This was very enjoyable to read but very brief with only one page of pictures and one page of text for each location like Classic Greece, Rome or Egypt for instance, one page, and as such a disappointment. The commentary was interesting, it's just a shame there wasn't more of it.

It did not take long to read it but found it very interesting with a perspective of the museum in the UK.

Omg!!! I loved loved this book and couldn't put this down!!! Lovely little book

A really interesting and well written historical novel.

Excellent

A survey of art featuring homoerotic themes and general same-sex desires. Parkinson does a great job of describing each artwork, but also the place of same-sex desire in each society that produced the works. It makes a brief survey of the changing opinions of same-sex relationships, from high-institutionalized in ancient Rome and Greece, to villified in the dark and middle ages, and finally nearing acceptance in the modern day. The "Little" in the title is right, though. The book goes fast, and it leaves you wishing it was a bit longer. It's short to go along with other little history books, though, so it's understandable. This could be a fairly good pick for a queer friend, perhaps along with

a little model of one of the artworks. Or tickets to go to Britain and its museums. :)

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