

ANNA WELCH

Recent acquisitions from the Women Writers Fund

Since its creation in late 2021, the Women Writers Fund has added over 100 works by women to the State Collection dating from the 17th century to the present. Supported by founding donors Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Helen Sykes, joined by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, these acquisitions bring women's voices to the fore. Some are famous voices, others lesser known – all add to the Library's representation of the depth and diversity of our shared written heritage. The following three titles are a small sample of the many books readers can now enjoy at the library thanks to the Women Writers Fund.

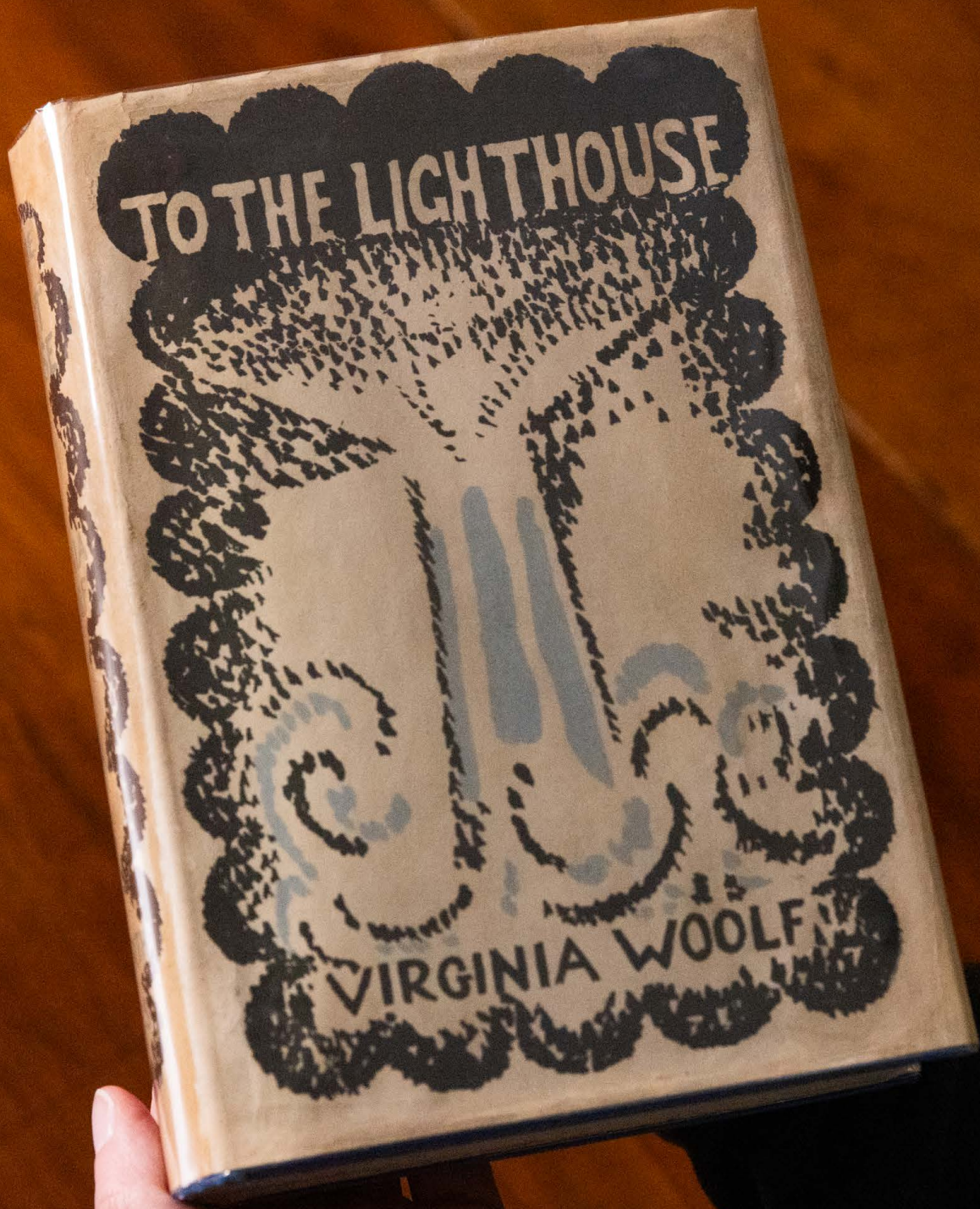
Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, London: Hogarth Press, 1927, RARES 823.912 W88L.

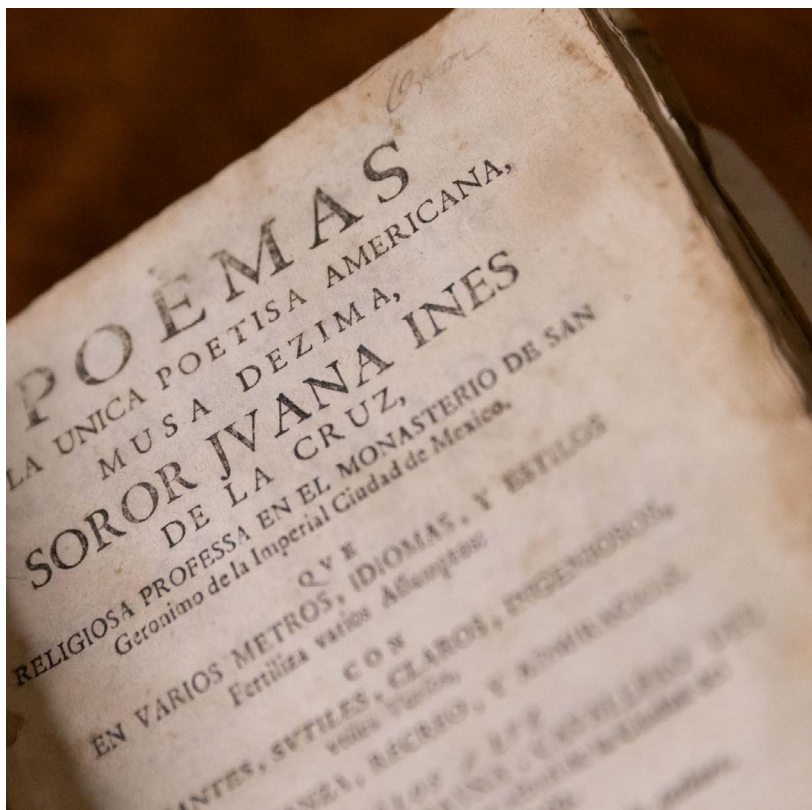
'For now she need not think of anybody. She could be herself, by herself.' Virginia Woolf's modernist masterpiece *To the Lighthouse* broke new literary ground in its focus on female interiority and the complex tapestry of personal narratives within a family. Published by the Hogarth Press, which Woolf and her husband Leonard established in 1917, it features (as did many of her books) a dustjacket designed by her sister, post-impressionist painter Vanessa Bell. The novel explores the life of the Ramsay family as they take their annual holidays on the Isle of Skye. It is highly autobiographical, echoing Virginia and Vanessa's own family holidays as children at St Ives in Cornwall, their

The cover of Virginia Woolf's modernist masterpiece, *To the Lighthouse*, was designed by her sister Vanessa Bell.

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

VIRGINIA WOOLF



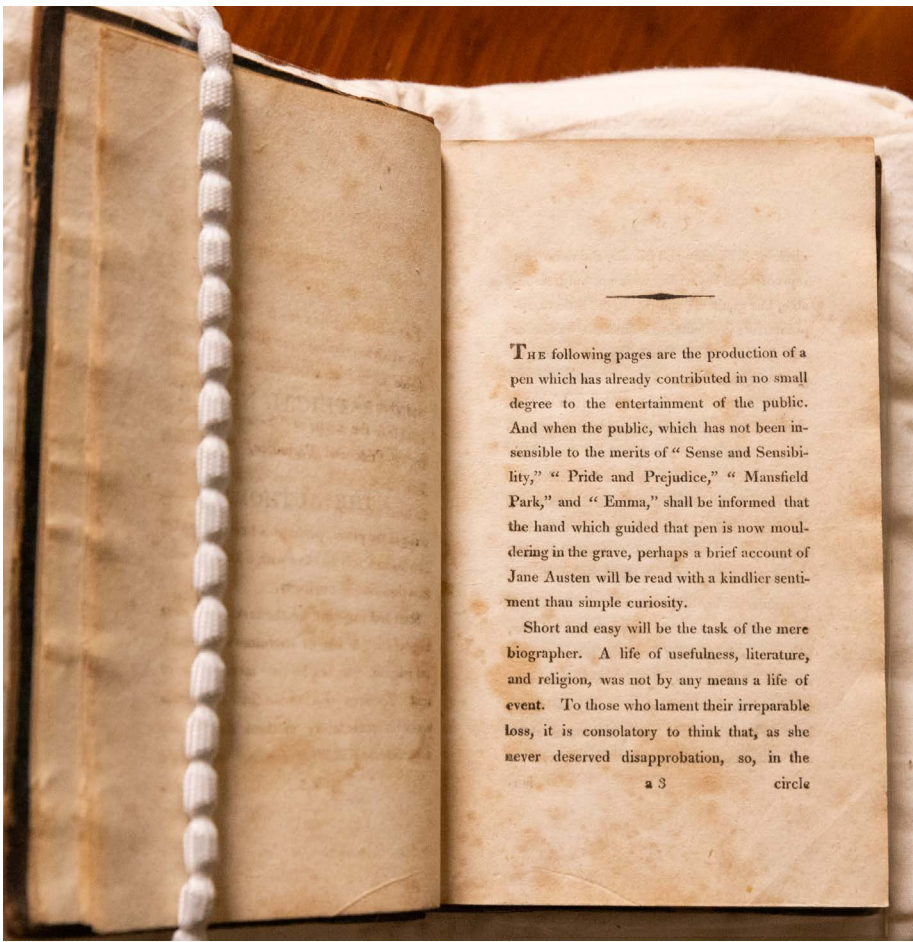


The title page of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Poemas de la unica poetisa Americana*.

grief at the premature death of their mother, and their complex relationships with their demanding father. Library readers are indebted to Helen Sykes and Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM for the acquisition of this watershed work of literature in a beautiful first edition.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Poemas de la unica poetisa Americana*, Valencia: Antonio Bordazar, 1709, RARES 861.3 J87P.

Philosopher, poet and nun Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695) is a figure of great significance in the history of Spanish-language literature and women's experience of the Spanish colonial period. Born in Mexico to Spanish parents, she was fluent in Spanish, Latin and Nahuatl. After self-educating through a personal library inherited from her grandfather, she joined a discalced (or barefoot) Carmelite convent at age 19 and spent the rest of her life writing prose and poetry on the themes of women's rights, the environment, love and (of course) God. Though highly regarded in her day, de la Cruz's reputation faded over later centuries until it was revived by Mexican poet and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz (1914–1998). Thanks to the support of Christine Bell, the Library has acquired this early edition of de la Cruz's poetry in its original limp vellum binding.



The posthumous biographical note to the first editions of *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* was the first time Jane Austen was publicly recognised as the author of her much-loved novels.

Jane Austen, *Persuasion and Northanger Abbey*, first edition, 4 vols, John Murray, 1818, RARES 823.7 AU74N.

A first edition of a novel by iconic Regency novelist Jane Austen (1775–1817) has been on the Library’s desiderata list for decades. The absence of such seminal female authors from the shelves of our Rare Books Collection was in fact the inspiration for the establishment of the Women Writers Fund in 2021. Thanks to the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, we have been able to acquire the first editions (published together) of *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*, Austen’s final novels. They were first published in 1818, just six months after her early death aged 42 in December 1817. Her brother and sister arranged the publication of both novels in a four-volume set, which seems to have been Austen’s intention for the works. The books are accompanied by a biographical note by Austen’s brother, the first time she was named in print as the author of these and her other works, which had been published anonymously.