

BOOKSHOP.ORG PRESENTS

Bookshops

A Bookshop Manifesto

Across the UK, there are countless bookshops with a mission; bookshops that shape Britain's literary culture, whose owners are intent on enlightening, educating, and recommending progressive reads. These are the resolute bookshops; the bookshops with a political edge that promote marginalised viewpoints and are undeterred by the mainstream.

The political bookshops of today are part of a long history of radical bookselling and publishing. One of London's best known LGBT bookshops, *Gay's The Word* in Bloomsbury, was raided in 1984, a third of its stock was taken, and the owners were charged for importing prohibited goods. Although the case was eventually overturned, it is hard to imagine something similar happening today.

Bookshops that have championed marginalised books have also been pioneers in the history of distributing and promoting the work of writers of colour; Silver Moon women's bookshop in Charing Cross was one of the only bookshops that welcomed Toni Morrison to the UK in 1988 when larger bookshop chains simply weren't interested. Once again, thankfully, this seems inconceivable today.

It is also the independent bookshops that have historically been somewhat more open to take a chance on the small, independent publishers

who print avantgarde writing and uncover new voices. With a need to stay attentive to shifts in contemporary culture, these bookshops are not only the voice of progress, but they also play a fundamental role in influencing the changes that unfold around us.

To celebrate the radical bookshops in this country, we have curated a selection of the resolute and radical bookshops amongst our ranks, spotlighting the important work they do for both the local and wider community, as well as the authors they platform through their efforts. From feminism to queer to left-wing ideologies, the bookshops we have selected are vital in shedding a light on new perspectives and deconstructing dominant modes of thinking.

B Bookshop.org

NB IS PARTNERED WITH
BOOKSHOP.ORG TO BRING
YOU CONTENT DEDICATED
TO THE INDEPENDENT
BOOKSELLERS WE ALL
KNOW AND LOVE.

"These are the
resolute bookshops;
the bookshops
with a political
edge that promote
marginalised
viewpoints and are
undeterred by the
mainstream."



**Darran
McLaughlin**

BOOKHAUS MANAGER

Timeless classic

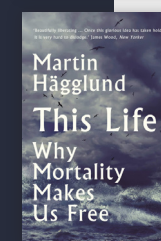
State and Revolution by Vladimir Ilich Lenin. A concise, brilliant, powerfully written book composed quite literally as the revolutionary ideas Lenin was proposing were about to be enacted in the Russian Revolution.

Current read

I recently finished *This Life* by Martin Hagglund – a brilliant work of philosophy written in support of a secular humanist outlook, arguing that it is the only perspective that makes life truly valuable and worthwhile. It concludes by arguing that only a Democratic Socialist political and economic system are capable of delivering the 'good life'.

Top of your book pile

Hurricane Season by Fernanda Melchor. Every book I have read that is published by Fitzcarraldo Editions has been really good, and I have been keen to read this novel by the acclaimed Mexican author for a while, so it's right at the top of the book pile.





The Feminist Bookshop

The Feminist Bookshop is a radical independent bookshop and vegan coffee shop based in Brighton. The concept for the shop was born through the owner Ruth's time running a feminist book club. One thing led to another, her living room was transformed into a retail space, and The Feminist Bookshop came into being.

We sell books for all ages, across a variety of genres, fiction and non-fiction, prioritising books by women, non-binary writers, and otherwise marginalized voices, typically with feminist and political themes. We believe everyone should have access to these books, which is why we have several schemes in place to increase accessibility, including a Pay-It-Forward scheme, and a small library.

The Feminist Bookshop hosts book clubs, in-conversation style events, poetry nights and many

more creative and/or political events that allow us to connect with our wonderful local community. Our ethos is trans-inclusive, anti-racist and in support of sex workers; we have zero tolerance towards any discrimination, but also want to serve as a space for people to arrive with an open mind and a desire to learn.

Everyone is welcome to The Feminist Bookshop to grab a coffee, made from beans roasted by Girls Who Grind, browse our floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, spend time in our reading room or sun-trapped garden and escape from reality for a moment with a brew and a book. We hope that readers, writers, creatives, and anyone in Brighton and beyond can come together here in solidarity to think about ways to change the world.

The Bookish Type

The Bookish Type is a queer indie bookshop in Leeds run by Ray and Nic, who started out by running pop-up bookstalls in 2019 before setting up a website and finally opening a bricks and mortar shop in September 2020 in the Merrion Centre.

We sell a range of queer literature: fiction, children's books, young adult, memoirs, poetry, short stories, zines, non-fiction, colouring books, and graphic novels. We champion LGBTIQ+ authors and books with queer themes and characters because we know the importance of seeing yourself, and your community, represented. There is so much amazing queer literature out there that we want to celebrate!

We're a community bookshop so we aim to actively support and work with the local queer community in a variety of ways; we have a Pay-It-Forward scheme which is a way of making queer books available to those who can't afford them, we run Queer History Tours around Leeds so that everyone can learn about the rich LGBTIQ+ history of our city, we hold Second Hand Sundays where we sell pre-loved queer books to raise money for local grassroots LGBTIQ+ groups, we run Bookish Stroll, an outdoors book group where you can chat about a queer book as you amble round a park, we promote local LGBTIQ+ events and groups, and we offer discounts to members of local queer book groups.



Housmans Bookshop

Housmans is not just a bookshop, it's part of a larger radical network based at 5 Caledonian Road in London – affectionately known as 5 Cally Rd – which has been a home to generations of alternative groups and organisations since 1959.

Just a quick walk from King's Cross station, Housmans is the bookshop to go to for any activist, campaigner or reader interested in a fairer and more progressive society. Housmans also stocks the largest range of radical and alternative periodicals, magazines, and zines in the UK. The shop is always a bustling hive of activity; on any given day, the meeting room is in use by climate change and environmental activists, left-wing political groups, and podcasters, to name just a few. In the evening, the shop hosts various book groups, including the Feminist Sci-Fi book group, the Housmans Queer book group, the Black Feminist book group, and the QPOC book group.



"Bristol has long been a hotbed of radicalism, and in the past few years has seen very high-profile protests and demonstrations"

Bookhaus

Bookhaus is an independent bookshop on the Harbourside in the heart of Bristol. It was opened in August 2021 by Kevin and Jayne Ramage, who met the manager of the shop, Darren McLaughlin, through their involvement in Labour Party politics.

"Bristol has long been a hotbed of radicalism, and in the past few years has seen very high-profile protests and demonstrations, from the Youth Strikes and Extinction Rebellion to Black Lives Matter and Kill the Bill. However, there wasn't a bookshop that reflected this spirit in the city, so we could see an opportunity that aligned with our interests.

Bookhaus is a general interest bookshop which strongly caters towards radicalism and politics, rather than being straightforwardly a political bookshop. We want people to come to us to explore and enjoy all sorts of genres and books. As such, we sell lots of poetry, fiction in translation, children's books, and cookbooks, so it isn't all politics. And we also host a different reading group every week covering contemporary fiction, 20th Century classics, 'weird' fiction, and political non-fiction, and we regularly host a variety of events."



Five Leaves Bookshop

Five Leaves started out as a publisher in 1995, and the bookshop opened in 2013, operating on a much wider canvas. We still publish – seven books and six pamphlets last year(!) – but the bookshop is our priority. That, and events, of which we hold about a hundred a year, including some big names alongside a lot of smaller events, included evening classes on women and art, anarchism, and Irish literature.

We're still one of the few bookshops with feminist, Jewish, Romani, Irish, Disability and Refugee sections, but our current bestselling areas are literary fiction and LGBT+ fiction for young/new readers, fantasy fiction, and (what is happening to us?) paganism. At least half our children's section features people of colour as the main characters.

All our staff can and do buy stock, which adds variety, but we are often customer-led on what we stock. Last year, we were very involved in a successful campaign to save three Nottingham libraries, working with local authors, library users, and customers. Helping keep them open was the best thing we did all last year.

"Helping keep [three Nottingham libraries] open was the best thing we did all last year."

