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Photography by Martin Messik

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“Bad Boy of Music” in Paris
CAROL Z. ROTHKOPF

The most acclaimed and revolutionary American musician in Paris in the 1920s was George Johann Carl Antheil. Ezra Pound touted Antheil’s work, which was scored for such “instruments” as player pianos, car horns, and airplane propellers, as creating “a musical world...of steel bars, not of old stone and ivy.” James Joyce encouraged Antheil to collaborate with him in the creation of operas. T. S. Eliot was only one among hundreds of notable figures who attended his concerts. Still other well-known expatriates such as Margaret Anderson and Sylvia Beach went out of their way to help him. For a time, Antheil was a star in the most glamorous and welcoming city in the world.

Paris in the twenties was as different as is imaginable from Tren-
ton, New Jersey, where Antheil was born in 1900. In his auto-
biography, Bad Boy of Music, Antheil described his birthplace as “across the street from a very noisy machine shop, thus...giving ammunition into the hands of those who claim there is such a thing as prenatal influence.” In other ways, Antheil’s youth was, by his own account, “Penro" and “singularly sane.” The fact that he studied both violin and piano did not set him apart from his schoolmates because most of them also were learning to play an instrument. What made Antheil different was that he liked to practice. And, in an early demonstration of the flair for which he was to become famous, Antheil gave a concert of his own compositions for his friends. The audience responded with cheers and whoops to his first piano sonata, “The Sinking of the Titanic,” which Antheil wrote had “great rolling chords in the bass and a touching version of ‘Nearer My God to Thee’ as a finale.”

Antheil’s formal musical education continued in Philadelphia, where he studied with Constantine von Sternberg (who had

Opposite: George Antheil returning to his Paris apartment above Shakespeare & Co. as Sylvia Beach looks on.
Antheil with Margaret Anderson at the "musical colony" in Bernardsville, New Jersey.
himself been a student of Franz Liszt's), and then in New York, where he studied with Ernest Bloch, whom Antheil regarded as "the then greatest teacher of composition living in America." When Bloch discovered that Antheil could not afford both to take music lessons and to eat, he refunded the tuition he had been paid. This money essentially bought Antheil six months in which to live at home without working at anything but his music.

At the same time a rather curious "musical colony" had settled in nearby Bernardsville, New Jersey. The permanent residents were Margaret Anderson, the founder of The Little Review; Georgette Leblanc (Maeterlinck), the singer; and Allen Tanner, the pianist. Having somehow heard of Antheil, the group invited him for a weekend. In My Thirty Years' War, Anderson described Antheil then as "a young composer of promise" who was personally "unprepossessing except for his vitality and his air of concentration." The weekend stretched into two months during which Antheil wrote music and established himself in Anderson's eyes as "a master of harmony" who "used the piano exclusively as an instrument of percussion. . . ."

It was probably in this congenial atmosphere that Antheil decided that he must get to Europe. His first stop was Philadelphia where his former teacher introduced him to Mrs. Mary Louise Curtis Bok, who was sufficiently impressed by the young man's work to give him a stipend and to enroll him in the Curtis School since she saw his future as that of a concert pianist. By the spring of 1922, Antheil had persuaded the New York impresario Martin Hanson to become his manager on a European tour. He also obtained much needed funds for the venture from Mrs. Bok by writing her a letter that biographer Hugh Ford in Four Lives in Paris calls "a masterpiece of persuasion, self-congratulation, and cringing deference." Antheil said of himself at this stage that he had an "innocent visage" and "a tremendous amount of sheer unadulterated brass. . . ." Both descriptions neglect to mention his extraordinary musical gifts.

Antheil's trans-Atlantic tour began with a concert at Wigmore Hall in London in June 1922. It was sufficiently successful for Hanson to book him for concerts in "Germany and points southeast." The
response to these performances, which always included the most modern music, was often so violent that Antheil equipped himself with a small thirty-two automatic that he wore Chicago gangster-style in a tailor-made silk holster under his arm or, on occasion, laid on his piano in admonitory fashion.

It was in the course of this tour that Antheil met the beautiful young Hungarian woman, Boski Markus, who was to become his wife. By the spring of 1923, the couple had had enough of “concertizing in central Europe,” which Antheil saw as “a licked, defeated place.” Like so many artists before them, they decided to move to Paris. And, like so many of his compatriots, Antheil headed straight for Shakespeare & Co., the bookshop run by Princeton-born Sylvia Beach, who had just published James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. The fact that Antheil was from New Jersey, was gifted, and confided that he wanted to make an opera of *Ulysses* delighted Miss Beach who promptly rented the Antheils the tiny apartment above her shop at 12, rue de l’Odéon.

Antheil was now strategically placed at the heart of what Margaret Anderson called “the cultural feast”: Paris in the twenties. Anderson, who was by now in Paris as well, arranged for Antheil to meet Ezra Pound. Antheil believed that Anderson must have described him to Pound as a “genius,” a move calculated to interest a man who “was at that time the world’s foremost discoverer of genius.” One result of this and later meetings between the two men was the publication of Pound’s pamphlet, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony* (1924), which proclaimed that “the Vorticist Manifestoes of 1913–1914 left a blank space for music” that was now filled by “the authentic genius” Antheil, who had “purged the piano” and used “actual modern machines, without bathos.” According to Pound, Antheil’s complete modernity was obvious since he “insisted that music exists in time-space.”

Antheil’s first public performance in Paris was to play before the opening of the Ballet Suédois on October 4, 1923. His program, which included his “Sonata Sauvage,” “Airplane Sonata,” and finally his “Mechanisms,” was shrewdly calculated to interest the artistic beau monde that was in attendance. Antheil recalled the response
to his "Mechanisms" as including "fighting in the aisles, yelling, clapping, hooting! Pandemonium!" Before the police arrived to restore order, Antheil heard the arbiter of French music, Erik Satie, applaud and shout, "Quelle précision! Quelle précision! Bravo! Bravo!" and saw Darius Milhaud "clapping, definitely clapping."

Ezra Pound and Antheil, ca. 1924; photograph by Boski Markus (Antheil).

Antheil's remarkable concert (which, incidentally, was filmed as part of Georgette Leblanc's L'Inhumaine) made him a sensation, literally overnight. Many of Sylvia Beach's customers and friends were now curious to meet her lodgers. Four-thirty tea became a custom upstairs at the Antheils'. The composer's awe at the world in which he now lived is evident from his recollection that "I can truthfully
state that for one afternoon at least we simultaneously entertained James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ford Madox Ford, Ernest Hemingway, Wyndham Lewis...and Ezra Pound.”

For a time, the young composer and the music-loving Joyce were drawn together by their common interests and shared ambitions. Both were so fond of the music of Purcell that they successfully contrived (with scripts devised by Joyce) to gate-crash two concerts of his music at a wealthy French lady’s home. On their third visit, their lack of invitations was discovered, and they were forbidden entry. Antheil was certain that he had “never been thrown out of a better place and in better company.”

By now Antheil had narrowed his concept of an operatic Ulysses to the slightly more manageable one of an opera based only on the Cyclops episode. Joyce himself seems to have been intrigued by the idea. Antheil told the press that he planned to have his score played by twelve electric pianos attached to a thirteenth that contained the master roll. There were to be drums, xylophones, and other instruments as well. The young composer seems to have recognized that memorizing, let alone singing (among other things), the hilariously long catalogues in the episode would be immensely difficult. Accordingly, the singers were to be offstage using microphones as ballet dancers depicted the action onstage.

Since this project came to nothing, one can only imagine with awe how Joyce and Antheil would have mounted such scenes as “the last farewell”:

From the belfries far and near the funereal deathbell tolled unceasingly while all around the gloomy precincts rolled the ominous warning of a hundred muffled drums punctuated by the hollow booming pieces of ordnance. The deafening claps of thunder and the dazzling flashes of lightning which lit up the ghastly scene testified that the artillery of heaven had lent its supernatural pomp to the already gruesome spectacle.

Add to this a “torrential rain,” “the assembled multitude...of five hundred thousand persons,” a “posse of the Dublin Metropolitan police,” and “the York street brass and reed band,” plus much more, and it is easy to see why even Antheil was daunted.
Meanwhile, Antheil was causing more news in musical Paris, including performances with Pound’s friend, the violinist Olga Rudge; the debut of his First String Quartet on New Year’s Day 1925; and on June 19 of that year, the first public performance of Ballet Mécanique, attended by what Sylvia Beach described as “the entire ‘Crowd,’” including the Joyces, T. S. Eliot, Sergei Diaghilev, Constantin Brancusi, Serge Koussevitsky, and many others, such as Pound who was in the top gallery leading the claque. The ballet, which was performed with an airplane propeller that chilled some of the audience and lifted off at least one wig, was a succès de scandale. But, at the 1927 Carnegie Hall debut of Ballet Mécanique, the New York press headlined their opinions: “Don’t make a mountain out of an Antheil” and “Forty million Frenchmen CAN be wrong.”

On his return to Paris after this fiasco, Pound sensibly advised Antheil to ignore these “yawps.” Joyce also continued to support and encourage Antheil. Correspondence between Joyce and Antheil, which has been presented to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library by Peter Antheil, the composer’s son, makes it clear how very interested Joyce was in Antheil and how much he still hoped to work with him.

In a letter Joyce sent on September 23, 1930, to Antheil, then in the south of France, there is evidence of just how their cooperative ventures might go. Joyce carefully critiques the music Antheil has written for “Nightpiece” in Pomes Penyeach, asking such things as, “Why have you put such strong musical stress on the preposition in the phrase “Arches on soaring arches” this gives the idea that for the Almighty the construction of the Heaven was a work of great difficulty.” Joyce then went on to inquire about Antheil’s Anna Livia symphony, which apparently had supplanted the two operas they had considered earlier.

Much of this and subsequent letters, however, concern two of Joyce’s pet projects at the time. One was finding suitable work for an Irish tenor, John Sullivan, whose voice Joyce considered to be of unequaled quality. It followed that the best showcase for such a voice was an opera. Joyce suggested that it be based on Byron’s Cain, which,
as Joyce’s biographer, Richard Ellmann, noted, “anticipated Joyce’s interpretation of Cain and Abel as light-bringing Shem and conforming Shaun” in *Finnegans Wake*. In early December 1930, Joyce wrote Antheil that “People here think that the combination of Cain-Byron-

Antheil arriving in New York for the 1927 premiere of *Ballet Mécanique*.

Antheil-Sullivan with myself thrown in as scissors-man would be the greatest event in the artistic future.”

Later letters make it clear that Antheil either did not see such a glorious future for the opera or, perhaps, felt overwhelmed at the idea of tackling it while he was working on his own new compositions. On January 1, 1931, Joyce wrote to Antheil that he had
heard from Miss Beach that Antheil thought the project hopeless unless the libretto was written by Joyce, adding that he "would never have the bad manners to rewrite the text of a great English poet." Joyce concluded:

It would be most unfair on my part to try to influence you in any way as to your future plans so please discount me altogether. I offered this suggestion to you because you asked me for one and because certain parts of your music seemed to me to be akin to the voice which is causing all this unnecessary correspondence. If you feel that you cannot write this opera at once, with enthusiasm and with spiritual profit to yourself and your art without any consideration for the veering tastes of impresarios please say so without hesitation and allow me to offer poor Byron and poorer Sullivan elsewhere.

It is plain that Joyce recognized but wanted no part of the problems of still poorer Antheil since the last paragraph of the letter added:

One point more. You will be in error if you imagine that I have any real influence with the wealthy musicophiles in London and New York who control the destinies of opera in those cities. My experience of them so far is that they are uncommonly pleased to accept from me signed editions de luxe of my literary works and that when they are told what notes a singer is actually emitting at any give moment, their faces express the most sympathetic interest.

Antheil's response was apologetic, pleading illness and overwork, but assuring Joyce that "the idea of doing a work together with you is the most idealistic and sympathetic idea for my talent that I know of..." Joyce was not appeased, as the last mention of Antheil in his published correspondence, a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, dated November 11, 1932, makes clear. Joyce mentions that Antheil is in Paris "in an expensive American automobile...I merely asked if he had completed the score of Ulysses to which I got the answer that he was engaged to make a tour of the Western States."

By 1937 that tour had taken place, ending in Hollywood, where Antheil lived until his death in 1959. By writing movie scores, Antheil was able to support his family properly and to write his own music—a body of work that ultimately included five operas and the music for a ballet based on Hemingway's short story, "The Capital of the World."
Rupert Brooke’s “Gathered Radiance”

DALLAS PRATT

A mile or two north of Linaria Cove, on the Aegean island of Skyros, the main road branches to the east. A sign, lettered in Greek and English, reads: “We Sell Honey.” We were many hundreds of miles from the Old Vicarage at Rupert Brooke’s Grantchester:

...oh! yet
Stands the Church clock at ten to three?
And is there honey still for tea?

but the coincidence struck me as our party of six, in two taxis, set out for the poet’s Greek island grave. After a few miles the road lost its paving, and on this rough red dirt surface edged with tumbled marble boulders, we drove for half an hour to reach our destination. At first there were occasional white-washed houses, then these disappeared, and we were in a treeless mountain landscape, intersected by shallow ravines, some of them overflowing with masses of pink oleanders. The ground cover was chiefly dwarfish Kermes oak, its tough, prickly bushes bent by the wind and chewed into grotesque shapes by the many goats which wander over these slopes. From a thousand feet up we looked down on the sea spread out in two bays. The farther one was Port Trebuki—in Greek, Tris Boukes—with two guardian islands. About a mile from its shore, in an olive grove, lies the grave of Rupert Brooke.

Three days before his death from an insect bite causing blood poisoning, on April 23, 1915, the poet, then a sub-lieutenant in the British Navy, had visited the place with several fellow officers. They were on maneuvers with the fleet en route to Gallipoli. They had rested in the shade of the olive trees, and Brooke had remarked on the peace and beauty of the valley. In the seventy-two years since his death, the only change in the surroundings is the new dirt road, which now runs past the gravesite. On the long drive out and back we met just two vehicles, farm trucks carrying goats. The place is
well off the tourist track, and, aside from visits from representatives of the Anglo-Hellenic Society, which maintains the grave, it’s unlikely that many of the generation that reverenced this hero of the First World War, or of the few who still read him, are able to make the pilgrimage.

The author at Brooke’s grave on the Aegean island of Skyros, June 1987.

We were fortunate to have arrived in a yacht and had intended to anchor in Port Trebuki. We hoped to walk up the hill in the footsteps of Brooke and his friends and to trace the course of the nighttime funeral procession. The party from the troop transport Grantully Castle had taken two hours to negotiate this stony path, even though men with lamps had been posted every twenty yards to guide the bearers of the coffin. Unfortunately, a heavy surf prevented our landing at Port Trebuki, so we sailed on to Linaria Harbor. The rough road brought us back across the southern end of Skyros, and eventually we reached a spur landing down the bay.
We turned here and in a few minutes saw the tomb on the left, a rectangle of marble gleaming whitely through the olives.

The drivers waited in the taxis while the six of us walked to the grave. Brooke's name and dates are inscribed on the stone, as is the sonnet "If I should die, think only this of me..." We read the lines in silence, the words so familiar to the older ones present, but unknown to at least one younger member of the party, and to a French guest. The mental image I'd had for so many years of "...Some corner of a foreign field/That is forever England" ("crosses row on row"; poppies... ) dissolved as in a slide show, and in its place came another, this real one of olive trees on a lonely hillside, shading a ground cover of scrub oak and wild sage.

At the burial, a Greek interpreter had been present and, in Greek, had written an epitaph in pencil on the back of a wooden cross at the head of the hastily assembled cairn of stones. His words, still in Greek, are now carved in the marble of the new tomb erected by Brooke's mother after the war: "Rupert Brooke, a sub-lieutenant of the British Navy, is buried here—a servant of God." The interpreter had added, "who died for the deliverance of Constantinople from the Turks," but these words no longer appear.

Placed horizontally on a stone platform, the oblong monument tapers at the foot and has a cross carved on the upper surface. It is surrounded by an iron railing painted dark green. Interlaced between the rails are the initials "R. B."

Sub-lieutenant Brooke, when his life was cut short, was eagerly looking forward, in spite of a warning of heavy casualties, to the imminent invasion of Turkey. Its purpose was to force a passage through the Dardanelles, destroy Gallipoli, and open the Black Sea to beleaguered Russia. As he wrote to his friend Violet Asquith, the Prime Minister's daughter, "I've never been quite so happy in my life, I think. Not quite so pervasively happy, like a stream flowing entirely to one end."

In just over twelve months, the poet's life had been dramatically transformed. A year before, he was saying farewell to Tahiti, after eight months in the South Sea islands, leaving behind "those lovely
places and lovely people... going far away from gentleness and beauty and kindliness and the smell of the lagoons and the thrill of that dancing and the scarlet of the flamboyants and the white and gold of other flowers..."

More tangible than these soon-to-fade memories were the manuscripts of poems he had brought home with him, or had already sent back, including "Tiare Tahiti," "The Great Lover," and "Heaven." The last is a gentle satire on orthodox religion, in which the fish put forth their idea of Heaven. An excerpt is worth quoting to show how the poet, who was shortly to write the magnificent elegies of 1914, was also a master of seriocomic verse:

\[
\ldots \text{Somewhere, beyond Space and Time,} \\
\text{Is wetter water, slimier slime!} \\
\text{But there (they trust) there swimmeth One} \\
\text{Who swam ere rivers were begun,} \\
\text{Immense, of fishy form and mind,} \\
\text{Squamous, omnipotent, and kind;} \\
\text{And under that Almighty Fin,} \\
\text{The littlest fish may enter in.} \\
\text{Oh! never fly conceals a hook,} \\
\text{Fish say, in the Eternal Brook,} \\
\text{And more than mundane weeds are there,} \\
\text{And mud, celestially fair;} \\
\text{Fat caterpillars drift around,} \\
\text{And paradisial grubs are found;} \\
\text{Unfading moths, immortal flies,} \\
\text{And the worm that never dies.} \\
\text{And in that Heaven of all their wish,} \\
\text{There shall be no more land, say fish.} \\
\]

Brooke arrived back in England on June 6, 1914. Six pleasant weeks passed seeing old friends and meeting new ones. The simple joys of Tahiti were exchanged for the sophisticated pleasures of lunch with Henry James and a memorable dinner with G. B. Shaw, J. M. Barrie, Yeats, Chesterton, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell. There was also a dinner, two days after Austria had declared war on Serbia, at 10 Downing Street. Brooke sat between Prime Minister Asquith and the latter's daughter Violet, and opposite Winston
Dallas Pratt

Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. Further contacts with Churchill and the discreet assistance of his close friend Edward Marsh, Private Secretary to the First Lord, resulted in Brooke's receiving a commission as sub-lieutenant in the Second Naval Brigade. In less than a week, on October 4, the Brigade sailed for Dunkirk in an effort to save Antwerp from the advancing Germans. They were too late: surrounded by thousands of refugees fleeing from the stricken city, the British retreated and were back in Dover just five days after leaving that port.

The declaration of war, the casualty lists which now included the names of many of his school friends, either killed or missing, and the tragedy he had witnessed in Belgium, fired Brooke with a new moral purpose. As Christopher Hassall writes in his admirable biography of the poet, "Everything he was once so passionately concerned about had dwindled in significance... It was a sensation as of 'swimmers into cleanness leaping'; the forlorn tangle of his private existence, his obsessive disgust, the sense of futility and failure, were all resolved in the realization of one purpose." His discovery of this filled him with exultation; as he wrote to his friend in New York, Russell Loines, "Apart from the tragedy, I've never felt happier or better in my life than in those days in Belgium. And now I've the feeling of anger at a seen wrong—Belgium—to make me happier and more resolved in my work. I know that whatever happens I'll be doing some good, fighting to prevent that.''

But he was not destined to fight. Instead, in the last four months of 1914, he wrote five sonnets which rank among the most moving elegiac poems in the English language. Although they are about death, and death in a very poignant form, that of young men in war, still, grief for the agony, the broken body, the pouring out of "the red sweet wine of youth" is always tempered by an image of peace or of ultimate victory. So the poet writes of honor "come back, as a king, to earth," of "the laughing heart's long peace," of "safety with all things undying," and, again, of the heart, which

...all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given.
In Sonnet IV, Death is symbolized as frost, staying “the waves that dance,” but leaving

... a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

“'A gathered radiance': in this phrase the poet unconsciously summed up the effect he produced on many of his contemporaries. People were dazzled by his brilliance of mind and poetical gifts, his legendary life and death, and, inseparable from these, his charm of manner and physical beauty. H. W. Garrod said that ‘no one ever met him without being sensible that he belonged to the company of the gods.’ In Homer, disguised gods often revealed their divinity by a burst of radiance at the moment of departure for Olympus; so Rupert Brooke ‘gathered radiance’ by the nature of his death and the classical appropriateness of his burial place, as if he too were
passing into the company of the immortals. One of the burial party, F. S. Kelly, noted in his journal, “One felt the old Greek divinities stirring from their long sleep. . . . It was as though one were involved in the origin of some classical myth.”

The Brooke memorial statue by Michael Tombros, erected on Skyros, symbolizing “Poetical Inspiration.”

In the last chapter of his biography, Hassall has written very perceptively of the transformation of “man into marble” which occurred after Brooke’s death. Just as the war had changed the romantic “young Apollo” and passionate rebel into a poet-soldier willing to die, as Winston Churchill put it, “for the dear England whose beauty and majesty he knew;” so his death and the publication a few months later of 1914 and Other Poems produced a second metamorphosis: that of Brooke into a heroic figure. Many of his friends and a minority of critics deplored the blurring of his “human” attributes, but the radiant myth appealed to a nation groping through the dark years of war. In the first decade after Brooke’s death, the popularity of his poems challenged the records
Rupert Brooke's "Gathered Radiance"

set in the previous century by Byron and Tennyson. Sales, not counting those in America, amounted to something like 300,000 copies.

Inevitably, a reaction set in as the memories of the war dimmed. In the edition of *Twentieth-Century Writing*, published in 1969 and edited by Kenneth Richardson, David L. Parkes writes:

As a war poet Brooke is limited by the fact that he died in 1915 and did not succeed to the disillusioned realism of Owen and Rosenberg. He left behind a group of sonnets titled 1914 which upon his death gained immense popularity from a combination of almost jingoistic patriotism and a sense of the sentimental in the eclipse of youth.

Indeed, Brooke's "war" poetry might appear thus to the youth of the 1960s, whose ingenuity was not directed, as Brooke's was, to getting accepted for military service, but more often to avoiding it. Today a more discerning reader will find not only the 1914 sonnets but also much of the earlier work vigorous and interesting. In addition to the poems already mentioned, a touch of genius is in "Clouds," "The Fish," and "Dining-Room Tea," to name just a few.

Wherever one places Brooke among the British poets, one cannot stand by his quiet and lonely grave, the silence broken only by the stirring of leaves and the footfall of a passing goat, and not be deeply moved. Invisible waves of the hero-poet mythology and metaphors from the "If I Should Die" sonnet fill the mind, only to be shattered against the uncompromising Englishness of the conventionally carved marble. Words could not resolve the paradox; all we who stood there last June could do was to gather some olive leaves and a few wild flowers and lay them on the grave. As we did so, I noticed that a dove bearing a sprig of olive had been carved on the stone. The poet's mother had done well to substitute this symbol of peace for the omitted phrase, "who died for the deliverance of Constantinople from the Turks."

The bugle that sounded the last post over the grave and the "Blow bugles, blow!" of the third of the 1914 sonnets are now silent for us, but much of Rupert Brooke's poetry, as well as his letters and the vivid story of his life, wait to be rediscovered by a new generation of readers in this centennial year of his birth. It is true
that some of his poems speak of death, and for the dead, but equally they speak of love and of the joy of living; of war, and of peace. He combines these opposites with a rich subtlety rarely surpassed in English literature, perhaps never better than in the sonnet entitled "Safety":

Dear! of all happy in the hour, most blest
He who has found our hid security,
Assured in the dark tides of the world at rest,
And heard our word, "Who is so safe as we?"
We have found safety with all things undying,
The winds, and morning, tears of men and mirth,
The deep night, birds singing, and clouds flying,
And sleep, and freedom, and the autumnal earth.
We have built a house which is not for Time's throwing.
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain forever.
War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,
Secretly armed against all death's endeavor;
Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall;
And if these poor limbs die, safest of all.
Much Ado About "Nothings"

ROBERT A. WOLVEN

Shakespeare’s King Lear would have it that “Nothing will come of nothing,” but in the year 1857 a different Shakespearean reference must have seemed more apposite. For, in the February 7 issue of the fledgling Harper’s Weekly that year, there appeared an anonymous poem with the title, “Nothing to Wear.” In the months that followed, a great deal would come of this particular “Nothing,” including no fewer than five full-length satires, rejoinders, and imitations, all capitalizing on the “Nothing to” formula.

In its initial appearance in Harper’s, “Nothing to Wear” is a simple, unadorned poem of some 330 lines. It tells the story of how Miss Flora M’Flimsey of Washington Square Has made three separate journeys to Paris all, apparently, for the purpose of acquiring a rich and extensive wardrobe. Yet, on every conceivable social occasion, she declares she has “nothing to wear.” While it is essentially a one-joke poem, the situation is elaborated with considerable verve and verbal wit, and with many gentle attacks on fashionable society. The central idea, now a cliché, at the time was seen as fresh and original.

The poem had an immediate and enormous success. Besides selling in tremendous quantities in Harper’s (the publisher estimating 80,000 copies sold), it was extensively reprinted in newspapers in this country and was republished in England, France, and Germany. Republication in book form was a natural suggestion, but Harper & Brothers apparently feared that its already wide circulation would interfere with any further sales. The rights of publication were therefore granted to the publishing firm of Rudd & Carleton.

Rudd & Carleton was a new firm whose birth dates from that same month of February 1857. Nothing to Wear was brought out
in June, as the firm’s featured publication. This first book publication (located in the Park Benjamin Collection) was a slim volume of sixty-eight pages, selling for fifty cents, with illustrations by Augustus Hoppin. The new firm made the most of its popular

Augustus Hoppin’s illustration for Nothing to Wear, the first of the “Nothing” books.

acquisition, promoting it heavily, and the work was again a huge success. Within a month the bandwagon had begun to roll.

Before the wagon could gather speed, though, a dispute arose over whose name should be put on it. The poem was still appearing anonymously, but it had become known, at least in literary circles,
that the author was William Allen Butler, a prominent young New York lawyer. Butler was quite at home in Miss M'Flimsey's social circle, his father having been Attorney General under Presidents Jackson and Van Buren, as well as a former law partner of the latter.

The younger Butler was also no stranger to versification, having been class poet at the University of New York, and a contributor to literary periodicals. In 1850, he had published *Barnum's Parnassus: Being Confidential Disclosures of the Prize Committee on the Jenny Lind Song*, containing a series of parodies on popular poets.
In July, however, another claimant to the authorship of the new poem came forward. The Reverend Isaac Peck asserted his daughter’s claim that the beginning and ending sections of the poem were hers, but that she had lost the lines a year earlier on a visit to New York. Her father’s respectability gave Miss Peck some claim to consideration, but Butler now admitted his own authorship, and, with his literary and social background, his claim was certainly the more probable. His friends and Harper & Brothers supported him, and his neighbor, Horace Greeley, repudiated Miss Peck’s claim in an editorial in the New York Tribune. In the end, nothing came of the controversy, despite a certain prominence given to it by Rudd & Carleton, who knew the value of publicity.

Others, too, knew the value of association with a popular work, and by July, two successors were already in the works. The first, Nothing to Do, was published in late July or early August, by James French & Co., in Boston. It was written on assignment by a young Harvard graduate, trying to eke out a living as a journalist and author. Horatio Alger, Jr., had had a very modest success thus far, having published several pieces in newspapers and a few stories in the better literary periodicals. The year before, he had produced a volume of collected poetry and stories, Bertha’s Christmas Vision, but sales were not encouraging. For his contribution to the literature of “Nothings,” Alger takes as his theme the idleness of the idle rich, who, despite their wealth of opportunity and the abundant need around them, can find “nothing to do.” He makes frequent and fond references to Butler’s poem, and the new work is clearly intended as an extension of it. Indeed, Alger marries his hero to Butler’s heroine:

The alliance I hold to be every way proper,
Since Flora M’Flimsey, in wedding the heir
Of two millions in prospect (not bating a copper),
May hope to have something, in future, to wear.
While Augustus Fitz-Herbert, Sir Arthur’s
descendant,
In paying her bills for dry goods and bijoux,
With all the etceteras thereto attendant,
Will find quite as much as he wishes to do.
Alger’s verse contains some of the easy smoothness of Butler’s; after the original, it is the most enjoyable of the series. It failed to bring its author the success he hoped for, though, and by the autumn of the year, he had returned to divinity school, giving up for a time his literary aspirations.

A second Nothing to Do, written and illustrated by J. H. Howard and published almost simultaneously with the first, is another matter altogether. Although it proclaimed itself, “an accompaniment to ‘Nothing to Wear,’ ” it was clearly more of a rejoinder and defended the ladies by attacking the gentlemen. Again, the idleness of the young man-about-town is the theme, but this time the dominant tone
is one of indignation. If women are vain in their dress, it is only in attempting to please those equally affected men with "nothing to do." The poem has little to recommend it as literary or social satire. The verses are awkward, the rhymes infelicitous, and the indignant tone ill-suited to an attempt at humor. Still, the publishers, Wiley & Halsted, promoted it throughout the summer as their lead item, and it at least found favor with the *Home Journal*, which called it, "so good-natured and graceful that it cannot fail to please, and so true that it deserves to find a place on every family table."

The next entry, published anonymously by the firm of Dick and Fitzgerald, appeared in mid-September with much less fanfare. A thoroughly pedestrian effort, *Nothing to Eat* weighed in against Mrs. Merdle, the banker’s wife who gives costly and lavish dinners, all the while apologizing that there is "nothing fit to eat" in the house. The theme is promising, but the treatment is heavy-handed and the verse so awkward as to be sometimes obscure. The poem also fails to paint the contrast with the have-nots that gave moral point to its predecessors.

By this time, Rudd & Carleton had decided to reenter the fray, and for their venture they turned to the premier author on their list, the immortal Philander Q. K. Doesticks. Doesticks was the nom de plume of Mortimer Thomson, a journalist for the *New York Tribune* who had made his name three years earlier with a series of humorous sketches of New York life appearing in the *Tribune* and other papers. His success had continued with articles on police court proceedings and a parody of "The Song of Hiawatha" called "Plur-i-bus-tah." Rudd & Carleton had already republished all three works that spring.

Doesticks, now almost forgotten, was then near the height of his popularity. The kind of praise lavished upon him can be seen in another quotation from the *Home Journal*:

> Things so copied, so talked of, so pulled out of every pocket to be lent to you, so quoted and so relished and laughed over as Doesticks' Writings never were launched into print.

With this kind of attention, it is hardly surprising that the new publishing house should try to combine its two greatest successes.
The new work, *Nothing to Say*, was announced in mid-August and finally appeared in the week of September 19th. It was similar in format and style to its predecessors. In theme, however, it took a fresh approach, for once defending the wealthy and refuting the earlier criticisms:

Charity, really, not merely in fables,
May apparel herself in satins and sables,
And costliest ribbons and fragilest laces,
Like the daintiest beauties of Madison Square,
And may take up a home in the loftiest places,
With those who've, satirically, "Nothing to Wear."

As in the original, the tone is light and easy, and the novel approach comes as a relief after the repeated scenes of idleness, vanity, and affectation in high society. Defense is decidedly not Doesticks' métier, however, and the poem lacks the high spirits and broad satire of his earlier prose efforts.

By now, the summer was drawing to a close, and the public appetite for "Nothings" may have been fading, too. There was yet one more example to come, though. Around the end of September, Wiley & Halsted issued *Nothing to You*, by Knot-Rab (K. Barton). This was very like the other Wiley & Halsted production in its defense of the women, and took all of the others to task. In stilted verse, and at considerable length, it told everyone to "mind your own business!"

Apparently, everyone listened. At least, no new "Nothings" appeared in 1857 or in the years that followed. Except that, almost as a coda to the whole affair, Harper & Brothers republished the original poem in the November issue of *Harper's Monthly*, apparently having reconsidered their earlier decision that there was nothing more to be made from it.

While the fad faded as quickly as it arose, several of the principals proved more durable. Doesticks kept his popularity for a while longer, working as a reporter with Thomas Nast and editing the *New York Picayune*. Horatio Alger, of course, proved more successful as a writer than as a clergyman, and his name became a by-word for success. G. W. Carleton survived the retirement and demise of the Rudds,
continuing the firm under his own name, and publishing such later humorists as Artemus Ward and Josh Billings. Butler continued his successful law practice and became a figure of some social prominence and civic importance in his new home of Yonkers, New York. He also kept up his penchant for verse, though he never again reached the level of success he had found with Nothing to Wear.

The "Nothings" of 1857 are unusual chiefly for their interconnections and cumulative effect, for parodies of popular works were not uncommon in themselves. Butler's gentle satire seems to have touched a nerve and sparked agreements and rebuttals in uniform fifty-cent volumes of verse about every two weeks. The year 1857
was not an encouraging one for publishers. It was a time of depression and financial panic, and publishers' lists were noticeably shorter than in better times. At such a time, the chance to issue, at little cost, a hasty production with a ready-made audience must have been attractive. Whatever the economic reasons for the phenomenon, it was "Nothing to Wear" itself that created an audience that would not stop at "nothing."
Our Growing Collections

KENNETH A. LOHF

Anshen gift. Dr. Ruth Nanda Anshen has presented, for addition to the collection of her papers, a group of fourteen letters written to her by Jacques Maritain from 1947 to 1962. Many of these extensive and detailed letters contain commentary on: the essays and books he is writing for the various series edited by Dr. Anshen, the translation of his writings into English, his lecturing and teaching in France and America, and numerous personal matters that indicate the close understanding and affection between the two philosophers.

Bonbright gift. The papers of the late Professor James Cummings Bonbright (Ph.D., 1921) have been presented by his widow, Mrs. Martha Bonbright. Included among the more than two thousand items are files of correspondence, manuscripts, and reports which document Professor Bonbright's teaching career, his research and writing, primarily for his landmark book Valuation of Property, and his important work as a consultant on the finance of public utilities. The extensive correspondence in Mrs. Bonbright's gift is with academic colleagues and officials of federal and state utility commissions and public utility companies, such as the Commonwealth Edison Company, Interstate Commerce Commission, Tennessee Valley Authority, and New York State Power Authority. Among the major correspondents are Louis D. Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, Herbert H. Lehman, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Borchardt gift. A gift of forty thousand letters, manuscripts, and publishing documents, dating from 1958 to 1980, has been received from Mr. and Mrs. Georges Borchardt for addition to the papers of their literary agency. French and English publishers are heavily represented in the gift, as well as files of correspondence of authors, such as John Gardner, Meyer Levin, William Plomer, Ruth Rendell, A. L. Rowse, Alan Sillitoe, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.
Our Growing Collections


Brown gift. Mr. James Oliver Brown has made a major addition to the collection of his papers with his recent gift of 216 inscribed first editions of books by authors for whom he has served as literary agent. Prominent among them are: sixty-four inscribed editions, virtually a complete bibliography, of the novels and nonfiction works by Louis Auchincloss, among which are the author's first novel, The Indifferent Children; the well-known collections of stories, The Injustice Collectors and The Romantic Egoists; and such later works as Portrait in Brownstone and The Rector of Justin. The gift also includes thirty-two inscribed first editions and later printings of the novels of Herbert Gold, including Fathers and Salt; and books by Erskine Caldwell, Lonnie Coleman, Joseph Hayes, and Mary Renault, among many others.

Coover gift. A group of seventeen English and American first editions has been donated by Mr. Christopher Coover (M.S. in L.S., 1983), among which are works by John Burroughs, Anna Katharine Green, Robert Hichens, Algernon C. Swinburne, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and Nathaniel Parker Willis.
Cranmer gift. Ms. Linda Bradley Cranmer has presented the papers of her aunt, the late Helen Worden Erskine Cranmer, reporter and columnist for The World, later the New York World-Telegram, 1926-1944, writer of the “Dorothy Dix Column,” 1959-1964, and the author of books and articles on New York City. Included are more than forty thousand letters, manuscripts, photographs, and printed materials, which document her researches and writings, especially those pertaining to Prince Charles of England, President and Mrs. Dwight Eisenhower, Paul Niehans, Jovanka Tito, President and Mrs. Harry Truman, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and the Morgan twins, Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt and Thelma Furness. There are also files of correspondence with Eleanor Robson Belmont, Guy Bolton, Winifred Bryher, Lillian Gish, Stephen Graham, Fannie Hurst, Zora Neale Hurston, and numerous other prominent political and literary figures; of special importance is the file of 174 letters written to her by John Erskine, who was married to Mrs. Cranmer from 1945 until his death in 1951.

Curtis Brown, Ltd., gift. The literary agency, Curtis Brown, Ltd., has added to the collection of its papers approximately 75,000 pieces of correspondence, manuscripts, and contracts, as well as publicity files, all of which document the past forty-six years of its activities as one of New York’s largest agencies. Among the notable English and American authors represented by extensive files are Louis Auchincloss, Elizabeth Bowen, John Cheever, John Le Carré, Noel Coward, Lord Dunsany, Lawrence Durrell, Nicolas Freeling, Robert Graves, C. S. Lewis, Thomas Merton, A. A. Milne, Ogden Nash, Sean O’Faolain, Mary Renault, A. L. Rowse, C. P. Snow, Julian Symons, and Angus Wilson.

Finkbeiner gift. Mr. David Finkbeiner has presented the original pencil and charcoal portrait of Robert Wilson that he drew in 1974. Measuring $11\frac{1}{8}$ by $10\frac{3}{8}$ inches, the haunting and sensitive portrait of the prominent theatrical director and artist is signed by Mr. Finkbeiner and further inscribed and dated by him on the mat.
Our Growing Collections

*Forest Press gift.* Through the courtesy of Mr. Peter J. Paulson, Executive Director of Forest Press, founded by Melvil Dewey in 1911, the Press has presented two of Dewey’s account books covering the years from 1884 to 1895, during which Dewey served as Librarian of Columbia College and founded the first library school at Columbia. In these volumes Dewey and his wife Annie recorded daily personal expenditures, investments, cash accounts, and financial records of the College Library, American Library Association, Library Bureau, and other library organizations with which he was associated. In

David Finkbeiner’s portrait of Robert Wilson, 1974. (Finkbeiner gift)
making the gift on behalf of Forest Press, the publisher of the Dewey Decimal Classification, Mr. Paulson called attention to the Library School’s current centennial celebration and the reuniting of these important account books with the extensive collection of Dewey’s papers already at the University Libraries.

*Halper gift.* Mrs. Marjorie Windust Halper has presented two works of art that have interesting literary associations: a haunting and moving watercolor by Jack B. Yeats, “The Zither Player,” measuring 14 by 10 inches, signed by the artist; and a pastel from her own series of paintings on themes from James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake,* illustrating page 21 from the novel and entitled “So her grace o’malice kidsnapped up the jimminy Tristopher.”

*Handler gift.* Professor Emeritus of Law Milton Handler (A.B., 1924; LL.B., 1926; LL.D., 1965) has presented more than one thousand letters, documents, and printed materials for addition to the collection of his papers in the Law School Library. A leading authority in the fields of anti-trust and trademark law, Professor Handler has included in his gift the manuscript and printed copies of his briefs, memoranda, opinions, and public lectures. Among the many jurists and public officials represented in the correspondence files are Harlan Fiske Stone, William O. Douglas, Herbert Lehman, and Jacob Javits. There are also some papers relating to Professor Handler’s involvement in establishing the American Friends of Hebrew University.

*Kovács trustees gift.* The trustees of the Imre Kovács papers, through the courtesy of Messrs. Béla Király, Béla Varga, and László Varga, have presented the papers of the Hungarian writer and statesman, who was a member of the Hungarian Parliament, 1939–1947, Secretary General of the Hungarian National Peasant Party, staff member of the National Committee for a Free Europe in the 1950s, and President of the International Center for Social Research, 1962–1963. Included among the 25,000 letters, manuscripts, and documents are files relating primarily to his activities from 1947 to his death in 1980, such as his work with Hungarian émigré organiza-
tions and the Hungarian service of Radio Free Europe, and his lectures, writings, and publications.

Lamont gift. On June 22, the centenary of the birth of the noted humanist and scientist Sir Julian Huxley, Dr. Corliss Lamont (Ph.D., 1932) presented to University Librarian Mrs. Patricia Battin, in a ceremony held in the Donors Room of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the file of letters which he received from Sir Julian over nearly five decades. The thirty-four pieces of correspondence, dated from 1927 to 1974, comprise twenty letters from Sir

![Image of Dr. Corliss Lamont presenting his collection of Sir Julian Huxley letters to Patricia Battin, with Kenneth Lohf and Professor Frederick Warburton looking on. (Lamont gift)]
Julian, thirteen copies of letters written to him by Dr. Lamont, and an invitation to the golden wedding celebration of Sir Julian and Lady Huxley in 1969. Dr. Lamont was a graduate student at Oxford University when he met Sir Julian, and their first letters are concerned primarily with the study of philosophy; later correspondence deals with a variety of subjects, such as the importance of science, Dr. Lamont’s writings on humanism, Sir Julian’s autobiography, philosophical concepts, and other topics of mutual interest. Several of the later letters comment on Dr. Lamont’s successful legal challenges to Senator Joseph McCarthy’s investigative committee and to the U. S. Postmaster General’s censorship of incoming foreign mail.

Marshall estate gift. As a gift from the estate of James Marshall (LL.B., 1920), we have received approximately 2,150 letters and manuscripts for addition to the papers of his wife, Lenore Marshall (A.B., 1919, B.), including letters to her from Malcolm Cowley, Babette Deutsch, John Dewey, John Dos Passos, Max Eastman, Albert Einstein, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Hubert H. Humphrey, Josephine Johnson, Sinclair Lewis, Thomas Mann, Marianne Moore, Elmer Rice, Lola Ridge, Muriel Rukeyser, Leonara Speyer, Adlai Stevenson, Norman Thomas, and Dorothy Thompson. The majority of the correspondence is concerned with Lenore Marshall’s writing, especially The Latest Will, a book of poems published in 1969, and with anti-war movements following World War II.

Parsons gift. Professor Coleman O. Parsons (A.B., 1928) has donated a fine copy of a rare four-page leaflet: Epilogue to the Theatrical Representation at Strawberry-Hill. Written by Johanna Baillie, and spoken by the Hon. Anne S. Damer, November, 1800.

Plimpton gift. Mrs. Francis T. P. Plimpton has presented a number of important historical manuscripts and original portraits of writers and authors. Of paramount significance among the former are: an eleven-page memorandum survey book kept by George Washington from March 10 to 14, 1769, in which he recorded his survey of the land that he purchased from the estate of George Carter in the north-
George Washington’s memorandum survey book in which he recorded notes on the land that he purchased from the George Carver estate. (Plimpton gift)
west part of Virginia; and a three-page manuscript by Aaron Burr on the subject of honorable character which he wrote in the 1760s while a schoolboy. In addition, the gift includes letters and documents relating to education written by Claudius Arnoux, Freidrich Froebel, and Lindley Murray. Among the art works donated by Mrs. Plimp-ton are: a pencil portrait of Washington Irving, ca. 1828–1830, possibly drawn by the English artist William Brockedon after an engraved portrait by H. B. Hall of David Wilkie's well-known portrait; a pen and wash portrait of Emily Brontë based on Bramwell Brontë's painting, "The Gun Group," done after 1879 for publication by Smith and Elder; and a watercolor and pencil portrait of Oscar Wilde drawn in the mid-1890s by the English artist and illustrator George Finch Mason.

Spangler gift. For addition to the Rockwell Kent Collection, Mr. William J. Spangler has donated a group of eighteen printers’ proofs for the covers of Vanguard Records designed by Kent during the 1950s. Included are those done for “The Three Ravens,” “Car-

Joseph Urban’s watercolor drawing for the opening scene of the 1927 Broadway production of Show Boat. (Gretl Urban gift)

mina Burana,” “The Creation,” and “Erich Kuntz Sings,” among others.

Urban gift. Miss Gretl Urban has made a major addition to the collection of her late father, the internationally renowned theater and interior designer and architect Joseph Urban, with her gift of ten watercolor drawings of various theater productions of the 1920s. The most important component of her gift is the group of seven drawings that he made for the 1927 Broadway production of Show Boat, the operetta by Edna Ferber and Jerome Kern. There are also single drawings of his designs for Golden Dawn (1927), Hawthorne of the U.S.A. (1926), and Rio Rita.
Activities of the Friends

Finances. General purpose contributions for the twelve-month period ended on June 30, 1987, totaled $35,799. Special purpose gifts, designated for book and manuscript purchases and for the establishment of new endowments, reached $177,419. These totals represent new highs for the third consecutive year. The value of gifts in kind was $239,862 for the same period. The total of all gifts and contributions since the establishment of the association in 1951 now stands at $6,781,835.

Fall reception. A reception to open the exhibition, “The Library of Alan H. Kempner,” will be held on Wednesday afternoon, December 2, from 5 to 7 p.m., in the Kempner Exhibition Room in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. On display will be a selection, from the gift by Mrs. Margaret Kempner, of rare editions from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, early illuminated manuscripts, master prints from Dürer to Grant Wood, fine illustrated books, and press books bearing the Aldine, Baskerville, Bodoni, Elzevier, and Kelmscott imprints.

New Council member. Mr. Frank S. Streeter has been elected to serve on the Council of the Friends as a member of the Class of ’88.

Future meetings. A members’ preview will open the winter exhibition, “The Double Lives of Ellery Queen,” on Wednesday afternoon, March 2, 1988, in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library; and the annual Bancroft Awards Dinner will be held in the Rotunda of Low Memorial Library on Wednesday evening, April 6, 1988.
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