Welcome to the ‘20s (1920s)

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SCARCE PORTFOLIO OF WWI LITHOGRAPHS BY AMBULANCE DRIVER OLIVE MUDIE-COOKE, 1921

1. Olive Mudie-Cooke. With the V.A.D. Convoys in France, Flanders, Italy. [Cambridge, 1921].

$12,500.

First and only edition of this collection of World War I lithographs by ambulance driver and war artist Olive Mudie-Cooke (1890-1925), signed and dated on the printed plate list.

In 1916, London art student Mudie-Cooke enlisted as an ambulance driver on the Western Front, driving for both the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) and the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD).
For the next two years, she transported wounded soldiers along the front lines in France, Flanders, and Italy, occasionally working as a translator for the British Red Cross.

Throughout her service, Mudie-Cooke sketched and painted what she saw around her: field hospitals, stalled tanks, “Hun pillboxes,” blasted trees, ruined churches, a line of ambulances parked in a dark forest, “standing by for orders.” Her work is characterized by a documentary eye, with close attention paid to the logistics of the relief effort and the precise damage inflicted on buildings, vehicles, and bodies at the places she names: the Somme, Ypres, Paschendael. Landscapes are eerily depopulated, compositions spare and controlled.

After two years at the front, Mudie-Cooke returned to London, where her work was acquired by the newly founded Imperial War Museum. After the Armistice, the British Red Cross asked Mudie-Cooke to return to Europe to document the VAD units still in operation there, and in 1921, the Cambridge University Architectural Society held an exhibition of her wartime work. It was then that these lithographs were produced. “The artist explained to the Imperial War Museum . . . that she was creating the portfolio *With the VAD Convoys in France, Flanders, Italy* ‘chiefly as a souvenir album for the VAD ambulance drivers with whom I worked during the war’” (*50/50: Fifty Works by Fifty British Women Artists*).
These stark lithographs would be the only published work by Mudie-Cooke, who took her own life in 1925.

The signed plate list includes thirteen images, all present here (“Caricatures, Etc.,” a group of three small images mounted together, counted as a single work), with fourteen additional lithographs included as well. It seems likely that Mudie-Cooke assembled and signed portfolios as needed, pulling prints that were ready or requested at that time. We locate four institutional holdings of With the V.A.D. Convoys in France, Flanders, Italy, each with a different plate count: two at the Imperial War Museum (one with 26 lithographs, one with 40), Southern Illinois (29), and Brown (35).

Over the past decade, Mudie-Cooke’s work has received renewed critical attention, usually in the context of art by women, but also in the Turner Contemporary’s 2018 “Journeys with The Waste Land” exhibition. All of her recorded original art is held by the Imperial War Museum, so the handful of surviving VAD portfolios (and the individual lithographs pulled from them) are likely the only other lifetime examples of her work extant.

A powerful eyewitness document of the Great War.
Collection of twenty-seven lithographs of varying sizes, ranging from 3 x 4.5 inches to 9.5 x 15 inches, printed on grey or white paper, some with additional hand-coloring, some with original mounts. Original list of thirteen plates, printed in red, signed and dated “1921” by Olive Mudie-Cooke in pencil, crudely mounted to remnant of original portfolio (not present). Original tan wrapper with pastedown title label. Some soiling and edgewear to surviving mounts; loss to top right corner of “Italian Convoy: The Crush at 11B Hospital, Genoa” (not touching image). Lithographs, mounted plate list, and wrapper housed in a custom box.
KAREL CAPEK’S TOVARNA NA ABSOLUTNO, 
A MODERN SCIENCE FICTION CLASSIC, 1922, 
INSCRIBED IN THE YEAR OF PUBLICATION


$3000.

First edition of this biting science-fiction satire by a major Czech modernist, inscribed by Capek in the year of publication to an actress at the national theatre.

Capek’s plot is set in motion by an invention. A new carburetor uses nuclear fission to create clean, cheap energy, but also releases a byproduct of “Absolute,” a “God particle” that produces an intense spiritual experience: “It must be some kind of poisoning.” Capek explores the unexpected pairing of limitless energy and unrestrained inspiration with black humor: “There have been some serious cases of enlightenment.” The climax of the book reflects the cynicism produced by World War I, as an absurd Great War breaks out between competing religious groups: “you should not listen to those people when they proudly say what they lived through was the greatest war of all time. We all know, of course, that in a few decades’ time we will manage to create a war which is even greater.”
The novel is illustrated by Karel Capek’s brother Josef, an important modernist illustrator and book designer. The two brothers were central members of the Czech avant-garde between the wars: their intellectual circle promoted the modern renaissance of written Czech, publishing works like *Továrna Na Absolutno* in the vernacular rather than German. Josef Capek would die in a concentration camp in 1945, victim of an “even greater” war.

Capek inscribed this copy in Czech to the actress Tána Cuprová, later art director of the national theatre in Prague where *R.U.R.*, Capek’s most famous play, introduced the word “robot” to the world. Text in Czech. A wonderful inscribed copy of an important early science-fiction novel.

Octavo: 219, [5]. Original tan pictorial wrappers with blue and orange design by the author’s brother Josef, spine and lower wrapper lettered in blue, text block uncut, many individual signatures unsewn and laid in (as issued). Title page printed in blue and black, twenty full-page illustrations. Manuscript prices in blue and grey pencil to verso of upper wrapper. Ink inscription by Capek in year of publication to front fly leaf. Small chip to head of spine, closed tear at top joint of front wrapper.
AN UNDERAPPRECIATED AMERICAN PHOTOBOOK:
E.B. WHITE’S LESS THAN NOTHING, 1927,
PUBLISHED IN-HOUSE AT THE NEW YORKER


$2800.

First and only edition of E.B. White’s first book, a pitch-perfect series of comic advertisements for The New Yorker, published in-house as a giveaway to friends and advertisers of the magazine.

Founded in 1925, The New Yorker aimed to be “a reflection in word and picture of metropolitan life,” a smart modern magazine “not edited for the old lady in Dubuque.” Writing anonymously, young staff writer E.B. White produced a series of short features about an attractive young couple of astonishing stupidity, Sterling Finny and his wife Flora. Deftly parodying the melodramatic “halitosis style” of advertising, in which a seemingly trivial oversight leads to personal disaster, White describes ten scenarios in which Sterling and Flora are saved from social death by a regular reading of The New Yorker.
“Perhaps you, too, have failed at a summer colony because you left everything to your gorgeous body. Have you ever been spoken of in whispers as ‘the man with a physique only’? Why can’t you realize that there is an easy way to avoid all this -- simply by having your copy of *The New Yorker* sent to your summer address?"

Each advertisement is illustrated with a photograph of the striving couple, played by a pair of mannequins that White encountered in Wanamaker’s department store. Hall A1. A near-fine copy of a modernist rarity.

*Octavo: [28]. Original green cloth spine, orange and black batik paper boards with green pastedown label to front board. Illustrated with ten black-and-white photographs staged and shot by White. Hinges reinforced, lightest edgewear to binding.*

$650.

Broom’s history was complicated: published first in Rome (1921-1922), then in Berlin (1922-1923), and finally in New York City (1923-1924), the magazine operated continually on the brink of financial collapse. Even so, by 1923 Broom “had become virtually synonymous with ‘cosmopolitan’ American modernism” (Transatlantic Avant-Gardes). This issue features a cover design by Polish painter Alice Halicka, writing by Virginia Woolf and William Carlos Williams, and an English translation of Guillaume Apollinaire’s “The Poet Assassinated.” It also includes the first appearance of the final section of Jean Toomer’s “Kabnis,” the story that concludes his groundbreaking collection Cane.


$950.

Signed first trade edition of one of the great American immigrant novels, the story of the clash between a poor Talmudic scholar and his headstrong youngest daughter in New York's Jewish ghetto: “Should I let him crush me as he crushed them? No. This is America, where children are people.” Bread Givers is in large part based on Yezierska's own struggle for independence: she was born in a Polish shtetl, and settled with her large family on the Lower East Side as a child. At seventeen, she left home to work her way through school, and began to publish the stories that launched her writing career as “the Cinderella of the sweatshop.”

Trade editions signed by Yezierska are less common than examples of the signed limited edition of Bread Givers issued for booksellers. A high spot of both Jewish and feminist fiction.

DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS
BY A NEW YORK CITY ART TEACHER, 1927


$850.

Mixed group of forty-two drawings and nine watercolors, some double-sided, many disbound from a sketchbook. Front board of sketchbook present, with ink ownership inscription: “Emily Ryon - 1927.” Two drawings mounted, one tissue-guarded, several signed by Ryon. Housed in an archival box.

Delightful collection of artwork, ranging from the most casual pencil sketches to finished compositions, by Emily Ryon, a New York City art teacher in the 1920s. Ryon’s subjects vary widely: landscapes and portraits, costume and botanical studies, sketches from life at the zoo and the theater. Most interesting are the images of Emily’s social circle, including her older sister Winnie, identified as a “welfare worker” in the 1925 census: Winnie at her typewriter in a tenement flat (kitchen bathtub in view), bohemian young women smoking and lounging, “Susie” from the Art Students League asleep at the bar, Winnie reading in bed. A compelling primary document of the 1920s.

$85.

Early printing of novelist Wallace Thurman’s first book, an opinionated guide to Harlem first issued as a series of articles in 1927, collected here in the long-running Little Blue Book series: “Harlem has been called the Mecca of the New Negro, the center of black America’s cultural renaissance, Nigger Heaven, Pickaninny Paradise, Capitol of Black America.” Editor of the quarterly *Fire!!*, Thurman surveys Harlem’s geography, demographics, and economy. He is openly skeptical of the Harlem Renaissance: “there are many never-will-be-top-notch literary, artistic and intellectual strivers in Harlem as there are all over New York. Since the well-advertised ‘literary renaissance,’ it is almost a Negro Greenwich Village in this respect.” Thurman would go on to publish two satiric novels set in Harlem, *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *The Infants of the Spring* (1932). A very good example of an ephemeral book.

*Side-stapled pamphlet: 64. Original blue printed wrappers with union label on rear wrapper. Light edgewear, wrappers and text block toned.*
THE BOOK OF AMERICAN NEGRO SPIRITUALS, INSCRIBED BY JAMES WELDON JOHNSON TO RING LARDNER

8. James Weldon Johnson (editor); J. Rosamond Johnson (arranger); Lawrence Brown (arranger); [Ring Lardner]. The Book of American Negro Spirituals. New York: The Viking Press, 1925.

$2800.

First edition of this Harlem Renaissance anthology of more than sixty spirituals, a collaboration by the talented Johnson brothers, inscribed by James Weldon Johnson to Ring Lardner.

In his introduction, James Weldon Johnson observes that the spirituals, created under slavery and kept alive by generations of unrecorded singers, are “America’s only folk music and, up to this time, the finest distinctive artistic contribution she has to offer the world.” The songs collected here include “Go Down Moses,” “Swing Low Sweet Chariot,” “Deep River,” “Roll Jordan, Roll,” “Steal Away to Jesus,” and “Nobody Knows de Trouble I See.”
Most of the musical arrangements are by composer J. Rosamond Johnson, best remembered for writing “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” still considered the African-American national anthem.

This copy is warmly inscribed by James Weldon Johnson to another master of American dialect, the popular writer Ring Lardner, who once scandalized his Great Neck neighbors by hosting a party for J. Rosamond Johnson, the hit composer from Harlem. A near-fine copy, with an excellent literary association.


$55.

First American edition, bound from the English sheets, of *Gold Coast Customs,* Edith Sitwell’s fantasy of African and English dockside barbarism, often considered a response to T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land.*

“I have seen the murdered God look through the eyes / Of the drunkard’s smirched / Mask as he lurched / O’er the half of my heart that lies in the street / Neath the dancing fleas and the foul news-sheet.”

The collection also contains a group of shorter lyrics, including “Metamorphosis.”

Octavo: 64. Original textured gilt paper boards, dust jacket, text block uncut and partially unopened. Frontispiece portrait by Pavel Tchelitchew; three pages of endnotes.
IRELAND’S LITERARY RENAISSANCE, 1922,
INSCRIBED BY JAMES JOYCE TO HIS BROTHER


$20,000.

“New Revised Edition” of Ernest Boyd’s classic survey of the Irish literary revival, the first to include James Joyce as a subject, inscribed by Joyce to his younger brother.

Boyd published the first edition of Ireland’s Literary Renaissance in 1916. Moving away from celebrated Anglo-Irish writers like Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, Boyd focused on the late nineteenth-century revival of interest in Celtic history, folklore, and mythology, with three chapters on William Butler Yeats at the center. Joyce’s Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man were already well-known to serious readers on both sides of the Atlantic, but Boyd dismissed Joyce’s writing in a single line: “curious studies of lower-class city life.” His decision to write Joyce out of Irish literary history was noted by critics like John Quinn, who expressed his hope that “Joyce would be given a separate chapter in a second edition” (Kiely, “The Go-Between,” 27).
In this revised edition of 1922, Boyd admits Joyce (and his experimental new novel *Ulysses*) to the modern Irish literary pantheon, although he characterizes fiction as “the weak point of the revival.” Writing in the wake of the Easter Rising and Bloody Sunday, Boyd notes that the recent political turmoil has distracted the Irish from literary concerns altogether: “There is no sign of the influence of James Joyce in his own country, although his daring technique has manifestly arrested the attention of some of his English contemporaries.” Still, Boyd concedes that “no Irish writer is more Irish than Joyce,” given the “almost incredible faculty of detailed material observation” that informs his depiction of Dublin: “the matter is as local as the form is universal.”

Ever sensitive to slights from the Irish, Joyce seems to have appreciated his belated inclusion in *Ireland’s Literary Renaissance*, making a gift of this new edition to his beloved younger brother, Stanislaus Joyce, and signing his name as he did for his family alone: “To Stannie / Jim / Paris / 6 September 1923.” A great association copy, and a decisive moment in Joyce’s critical reception.

*Octavo: [2], 456, [6]. Original green cloth lettered in gilt, some signatures unopened. Ink presentation inscription from James Joyce to his brother Stanislaus on front free endpaper; a few words in Joyce’s hand, indecipherable, on rear pastedown. A few pencil annotations. Bookplate of Alexander Neubauer. Hinges split, closed tear to page 405, lightest shelfwear. Housed in a custom chemise and slipcase.*
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