

THE JAPOS BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER OF JOURNALISTS, AUTHORS, AND POETS ON
STAMPS

The JAPOS BULLETIN is published quarterly. DUES are \$7. Remit dues to the JAPOS Secretary-Treasurer (address below) by December 31 to subscribe for the following calendar year. JAPOS is a study unit of the American Topical Association, an affiliate (#68) of the American Philatelic Society, and a chapter (#54) of the American First Day Cover Soc.

SPRING 2021

Whole Number 181

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JAPOS WRITERS ARE GETTING PUBLISHED

Lifetime member DAVID SCHLOTTMANN has mailed me a copy of his “Wolf—’21: JACK LONDON on Stamps.” David has been publishing his Jack London annual since 1973! The 2021 annual contains an extended version of his article in the autumn issue of The JAPOS BULLETIN along with 20 pages in color of stamps, postmarks, and other philatelic material commemorating London. If any JAPOS member would like a copy of his booklet, send \$2 just to help with postage to David Schlottmann, 929 South Bay Road, Olympia, WA 98506 [ookkees@comcast.net]

JAPOS treasurer, CHRISTOPHER COOK, has published DANTE on STAMPS: A Septicentennial Catalog, “the most comprehensive survey to date of postal stamps and stamp-like items depicting the Italian poet DANTE ALLIGHIERI (1265-1321).” 2021 marks the 700th anniversary of Dante’s death. His catalog contains detailed, fully illustrated descriptions of over 120 postage stamps and nearly 100 cinderella and poster stamps. Silver Anchor Press is the publisher. For more details such as cost, etc., email Christopher at cdcook2@gmail.com.

JAPOS member DANA GIOIA, a published poet (see his bio on Wikipedia), emailed me an interesting youtube video excerpt from his “Studying with Miss Bishop: Memoirs from a Young Writer’s Life.” In the excerpt, Dana remembers his encounter with Bishop, who was his instructor in his Studies in Modern Poetry course at Harvard in 1975. www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NyMHb4ahl

The voting for the best JAPOS article of 2020 was far from hot and heavy, but it was very close. The winner was William Pederson’s “Abraham Lincoln as Journalist/Author/Poet. Congratulations, William!



Criteria for Postal Recognition *by James Byrne*

Editor Delvaux's comments about Holmes the Poet and Holmes the Jurist and Jeff Dugdale's article "The British Romantic Poets" in the Winter 2021 issue of *The JAPOS Bulletin* raise some issues for JAPOS members to contemplate.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809-1894) and William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) are the two major Fireside Poets who have not been honored on a United States postage stamp. Holmes was a noted medical doctor who taught anatomy at Dartmouth and Harvard and was dean of the Harvard Medical School. His study of puerperal fever was considered to be among the best medical articles of his age. He was highly regarded as an essayist, especially through the "Break-fast Table" series. He was also one of the Boston elite and the person who established the term "Brahmin" as a description of people like him. Therein is an explanation of why he never reached the postage stamp. He is an aristocratic writer whose popularity was heavily rooted in the Boston area. Even in his own age, his essays were all too temporal and regional. As the New Critics, the Modernists, and the Postmodernist rose in literary circles, the conventional meter and rhyme which made the Fireside Poets pleasant to read and hear and easy to memorize passed from favor. Literary fame is at least in part a matter of marketing and academic politics. There is only so much time for literary study in the curriculum. Newer poets displace older ones as criteria for recognition change. One could argue that poetry itself has become a genre of minority voices which have displaced the shared literary experience which once characterized a national cultural identity.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935), the jurist known as "The Great Dissenter," resigned his commission in the 20th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry after being seriously wounded in action for the third time and studied law at Harvard. He edited the *American Law Review*, served on the Massachusetts Supreme Court (1882-1902) and the U.S. Supreme Court (1902-1932). His *The Common Law* (1881) was highly regarded and his articulation of the concept of "clear and present danger" with respect to freedom of speech is still a pillar of our legal system and may be an issue in the 2021 Trump impeachment.

Dugdale's article on the British Romantics raises the possibility that the quality of poetry may not be the primary quality for recognition on stamps. British stamps recognize Mary Robinson and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who are not even mentioned in Russell Noyes' authoritative *English Romantic Poetry and Prose* (Oxford University Press, 1956), but no stamp has been issued for the Lake Poet who was Coleridge's brother-in-law and the poet laureate of England (1813-43), the writer who brought to our attention the three bears associated with Goldilocks. Of course, one does not need to read all of "Cataract of Lodore" to wonder why Robert Southey was ever the poet laureate of England.

On what grounds do we recognize writers and for what? Is it for their literary merit or do other criteria leverage reputations? How many JAPOS members can readily identify Julia Constanca Burgos García (Scott 4476) or have read her poetry? How many of us can name the poet laureate of the state in which we live or how a poet attains such a position? Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., Phillis Wheatly, and Anne Bradstreet never made the postal honor roll, but they are still worth reading. And read them we will.



Putative stamp designs by James Byrne



The Dumas Family on Stamps of Haiti

By James E. Byrne

Readers today are unlikely to connect the writers Alexandre Dumas *père* (1802-1870) and Alexandre Dumas *fil* (1824-1895) with Haiti, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic era. Indeed, readers today are unlikely to have even read *The Three Musketeers* (1844) or *La Dame aux camélias* (1853), preferring instead the 1921 film with Douglas Fairbanks to a tedious slog through nineteenth-century prose or a fine recording of *La Traviata*. Collectively, however, the lives of four generations of the Dumas family are perhaps worthy of a BBC mini-series.

Students of literature distinguish between the two writers with the same name as Alexandre Dumas *père* (father) and Alexandre Dumas *fil* (son) rather than as “senior” and “junior.” Linguists have also suggested that the Dumas name was not an inherited family surname, but a reference to the status of the mother and grandmother of the two writers as a slave – Marie-Céssette Dumas (*du mas*; “from the farm”). Biographers and literary historians agree, however, that the two generations which preceded Dumas *père* were influential in shaping the familial context in which each writer developed.

Marquis Antoine-Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie (1714-1786) descended from a family of nobility which had fallen on financial hard times. In the eighteenth century, careers in the church or the military were socially acceptable for impecunious young noblemen, and Antoine-Alexandre and his brother Charles chose the latter. It was military service which sent the two brothers to what is now known as Haiti, a French Caribbean possession which did not become independent until 1804. Both brothers resigned from the military and became part of the plantation culture of the region. Antoine-Alexandre purchased Marie-Céssette Dumas, a personal slave of African origin reputed to be of some beauty, and by her sired a son, Thomas-Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie (1762-1806). Under the law at that time, the son of a slave was a slave regardless of the race of the other parent. When Antoine-Alexandre took Thomas-Alexandre with him to France in 1776, after selling his Haitian possession, including the slave by whom he sired the son, the status of Thomas-Alexandre was resolved. French law did not recognize slavery and the son became a freeman. By seeing to it that his son received a good education and by using his military and social connections, Antoine-Alexandre was also able to pave the way for his illegitimate son’s entry into the military. In the lives of just these two men, there is enough material for an engaging historical romance – faded nobility, the military, exotic settings, illicit sex, illegitimacy, betrayal, social intrigue, and family loyalty.



In 1935, Haiti issued a set of three stamps on the occasion of a visit of a French delegation to Haiti recognizing the accomplishments of three generations of the Dumas family. The three stamps with a common design (Scott 335, 336, C10) which paid two surface postage rates and an air mail rate depicted General Dumas, Dumas *père* and Dumas *fil*. Although the design using three panels in a single unified frame was not unusual, the subjects chosen made an interesting trio. One was born a slave without rights of citizenship; two were born out of wedlock; and all three attained fame in France, not Haiti. The issue was perhaps of more political than postal value for the Caribbean nation in its dealings with France.



In 1961, Haiti issued a set of six stamps (Scott 472-74, C177-C179) once again honoring the Dumas family. The lowest denomination in the set depicted the birthplace of General Dumas with a background map showing its location in Haiti. Because he was educated and the son of a nobleman with military connections, Thomas-Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie had advantages not typically open to a person of Afro-Caribbean descent, and it was in the military that he adopted his mother's name, becoming Thomas-Alexandre Dumas. He rose to the rank of general by age 31 and with his promotion to the General-in-Chief of the Army of the Pyrenees became the highest ranking officer of African ancestry in Europe. In spite of his distinctive service in the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, he fell from favor with Napoleon in 1800, and on his return to France was captured by Italian forces and imprisoned. When he was released, his health was ruined, and he died in poverty in 1806.



General Dumas' wife, Marie-Louise Élizabeth Labouret, the daughter of an innkeeper, kept the family going and was an especially important figure in keeping the family history alive in her son, the child who would become the writer Alexander Dumas *père*, who was only four-years-old when his father died. She also encouraged his voracious reading and made sure that he was educated in spite of the lack of funds for formal schooling. The father's fame, moreover, opened doors for the son, who was able to use his education in law to enter the service of the Duke d'Orleans, the future King Louis-Philippe.



The 10th February 1961 Haitian set contained three stamps commemorating best-known romantic novels of Alexandre Dumas *père*, *The Three Musketeers* (1844) its sequel *Twenty Years After* (1845) and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844-45), but none for his dramatic works. Before focusing on romantic fiction, Dumas *père* wrote sensational, melodramatic romantic plays which appealed to audiences in the 1820s and 1830s but have not earned the respect of literary critics or modern audiences. He turned to romantic pseudohistorical fiction as a way of supporting his lavish lifestyle, producing over 300 works. Modern literary critics recognize their appeal as popular action fiction but do not recognize them as fiction of quality because of their shallow characters and plots which are improbable and too heavily reliant on coincidence. The reputation of Dumas *père* has also suffered because of the way in which he produced so many pieces. In order to produce fiction at a rate which would support his lavish life, Dumas *père* hired assistants and collaborators, the most famous of whom was Auguste Maquet. It is claimed that Maquet wrote the original drafts of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* which Dumas *père* then embellished and edited. However, supporters of the reputation of Dumas *père* dismiss Maquet as a literary hack who merely assisted his employer and the controversy continues today.





The 1961 Haitian set also contained stamps showing father and son together with the French and Haitian flags behind them and a stamp for what critics generally agree is the most important work of Dumas *fil*. Dumas *fil*, like his grandfather, was illegitimate, the son of an affair between Dumas *père* and Marie-Laure-Catherine Labay, a dressmaker. Dumas *père* took the son away from his mother and made sure that he was well educated, but the experience influenced the writings of Dumas *fil*, who wrote frequently about morality, family values, marriage, and tragic women. His plays *Le Fils naturel* (1858; *The Natural Son*) and *Un Père prodigue* (1859; *A Prodigal Father*) were clearly rooted in his relationship with his father, and *La Dame aux camélias* (1848), upon which Giuseppe Verdi based his opera *La Traviata*, has a strong connection to his own mother's experience as the woman who was separated from her family. Of the two Dumas writers, Dumas *fil* was certainly the more serious, and modern literary critics credit his influence in the emergence of the problem play as a genre.

Today, the Dumas family is still of interest and two of the romantic novels of Dumas *père* continue to be known at least by title and by classic films and television mini-series. *The Three Musketeers* has been the basis of at least eleven films with the earliest dating to 1914. *The Count of Monte Cristo* has at least six film versions with the earliest filmed in 1908. The works of Dumas *fil* have not attracted the same attention by filmmakers, but Verdi's *La Traviata* continues to pack opera houses around the world. Dumas family members, and especially Dumas *père*, have also been featured on the stamps issued by several countries, but the two Haitian issues are of special interest because they draw attention to four generations of a family and invite a critical examination of familial influence in literature.

Some Other Stamps Referencing *La Traviata* (*The Woman Who Strayed*)



Ireland 1991 depicts the "brilliant party" which is seen as the curtain rises on Act One.

San Marino 2001 also shows a stage scene between Violetta and Alfredo, singing the tender love duet. "Amami, Alfredo".



Nicaragua 1975 and Australia 1961 both celebrate Dame Nellie Melba as tragic heroine Violetta whilst Canada 1980 shows Emma Albani in the role, Belgium 1991 Clara Clairbert and Moldova 2007, Anastasia Dicescu.



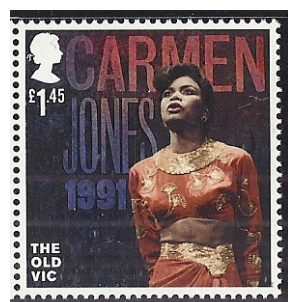
Canada 2006 shows Leopold Simoneau and wife Pierrette Alarie as Alfredo and Violetta (*La Traviata* being suggested by the rose motif).

Familiar and Unusual Plays from The Old Vic Jeff Dugdale 9.2018

The major literary set from Royal Mail in 2018 was a celebration of the famous London Theatre The Old Vic situated in the suburb of Lambeth, near Waterloo railway station. The theatre has had many identities, originally being called The Royal Coburg when it opened 200 years ago, then fifteen years later The Royal Victoria and, rebuilt in 1871, The Royal Victoria Palace by which time it had gained its familiar nickname “The Old Vic” the reason for which you will quickly deduce.

Today it is a not-for-profit producing theatre and has a well deserved reputation for featuring famous productions put on by well known producers and actors, which the eight stamp set reflects.

Each stamp features the name of such a play in the theatre’s history along with principal actor(s). The four Shakespearean plays referenced, which need no plot summary are *King Lear* (produced in 2016) with Glenda Jackson as Lear (sic), *Hamlet* from 1975 with Albert Finney in the title role, the 1960 *Romeo and Juliet* starring John Stride and Judi Dench and *Henry V* from 1955 with Richard Burton as the King.



Of the other four plays featured two you will probably know well. *Carmen Jones* is a musical, updated and reimagined version of the plot of *Carmen*, made famous as a grand opera by Charles Bizet and first produced in 1875. It was based on an 1846 novella by Prosper Mérimée (1803-70 shown on France 1970) the plot of which is very well known. The 1991 production depicted stars Sharon Benson. *Carmen Jones*



was first seen on Broadway in 1943 with an all-black cast.

Hedda Gabler from 1970 starring Maggie Smith is a very dark tragedy by the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906 shown on Norway 1978) first produced in 1891 and regarded as a classic of realism in the history of world theatre.



Hedda, the daughter of a famous aristocrat and soldier has returned from honeymoon, having just married the younger George Tesman, an academic, in a marriage of formal convenience. When Tesman’s former rival Eilert Løvborg, a “recovering”

alcoholic turns up unexpectedly chaos begins to develop as it soon becomes clear that he and Hedda who seems driven by demonic energy were once in a relationship. Eilert and George were possibly in direct competition for a local university chair, but Eilert says he has now given up hope of that in order to complete his *magnum opus*. The manuscript of this went missing when Eilert was in his cups but ends up in Hedda’s possession. Eilert, ashamed to tell the truth says he has destroyed his papers written in concert with young friend Thea Elvsted who departs mortified. To “solve” the situation Hedda encourages Eilert to take his own life—which he does—and burns the masterpiece.



On learning of Eilert’s death George and Thea try to reconstruct the work from his notes but because of the scandal associated with the circumstances of his death—in a brothel—and not the noble one Hedda had hoped he would have she goes off and shoots herself.

The Dance of Death whose 1967 production is featured on the stamp—starring Laurence Olivier—is in fact two related plays by August Strindberg (1849-1912 shown on Sweden 1949) in 1900, which are often presented together despite some minor contradictory plot differences as they were written three months apart.



Like *Hedda* this is also an extremely dark theatrical experience, tempered by a little humour. The plot concerns a marriage in which the parties, Edgar and Alice, hate each other but are about to celebrate their Silver Wedding



anniversary. They have few friends and have turned their own children against them. Edgar who has a heart condition often dances over and around a sabre (alluded to in the stamp design) which his wife hopes might just kill him should he slip and on realising this he threatens to cut her out of his will.

A cousin of Alice's called Kurt conspires with her to kill Edgar who was responsible for his losing custody of his children. As this pair grow closer it's clear they are involved sexually with bizarre proclivities referencing cannibalism and vampirism. The play ends bafflingly—hence the demand for a sequel, which looks at the couple's extended family members. This is clearly a very deep play which looks into the souls of its characters and is quite appalled by what it sees !

Shown on the next stamp are the famous English actors John Gielgud and (seated) Ralph Richardson in the original 1975 production of *No Man's Land* by British Nobel laureate

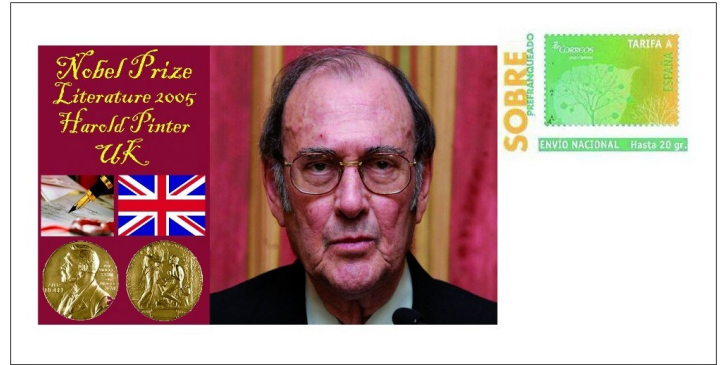


Harold Pinter (1930-2008, shown on Spanish private cover above right).

This play, a four hander, is set in a large room in a grand house in London over an evening and the next morning. Hirst, a writer in his sixties lives with two younger men

Foster and Briggs who appear to be respectively his amanuensis and general factotum. Hirst has brought home that night for an evening's chat, heavy drinking and—who knows? - the dissolute, edgy and garrulous Spooner whom he has encountered in a pub though there are hints that they may have known each other in their university days.

The guest, when well oiled, taunts his host about his sexuality and he reacts impetuously commenting, "No man's land...does not move...or change...or grow old...remains...forever...icy...silent" before slumping out of the room. Foster and then Briggs enter and interrogate Spooner. On Hirst's reappearance a dream he has just had in which someone is drowning is recollected and Spooner opportunistically suggests he was in the dream. Hirst fetches a photograph album which he claims contain pictures of all his true friends and looks for images of Spooner within it. Hirst drinking heavily again collapses. Act One ends abruptly and dramatically with Foster speaking to Spooner and then putting the lights out in the room.



The morning after, Spooner wakes up to find himself locked in and gets unsatisfactory answers about the situation from Briggs who serves him breakfast. When Hirst enters he makes out that he and Spooner were acquainted at university and suggest a whole list of scandals they were involved in including Spooner cuckolding him.

Spooner is desperate to study the contents of the photo album but this is not sanctioned. After further copious amounts of breakfast champagne Spooner who is clearly a scoundrel urgently asks if Hirst will take him into his employ, but his host just wants to ignore the issue. The pair of old men have been playing a cat and mouse game with each other and Hirst has just lost interest in it. The play ends in fading light with nothing resolved.

What was it about ?

(A number of the actors featured are still alive today, Royal Mail having completely surrendered on their stated policy of not featuring living people.)

Other GB stamps referencing plays in this set (1964 & 2011)



Father Brown: Chesterton's Priest-Detective

by Clete Delvaux



Father Brown is a fictional Catholic priest and amateur detective who is featured in 53 short stories published between 1910 and 1936. He solves mysteries and crimes using his intuition and keen understanding of human nature. Father Brown is the creation of English writer Gilbert Keith Chesterton. Father Brown is shown on one of the twelve airmail stamps featuring fictional detectives, issued by Nicaragua in 1972 to commemorate Interpol.

Chesterton loosely based Father Brown on the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John O'Connor (1870–1952), a parish priest in Bradford, who was involved in Chesterton's conversion to Catholicism in 1922. Chesterton describes his priest-detective as short and stumpy with shapeless clothes, and typically carrying a large umbrella. Although he appears clumsy and naïve, his appearance disguises a clever mind, a penetrating insight, a gift for careful observation, and an uncanny insight into human evil. Father Brown makes his first appearance in the story "The Blue Cross" published in 1910.



Chesterton (1874–1936) was a large fellow, as you can see from his caricature on this Czechoslovakian stamp issued in 1969 and photo opposite. Wikipedia says he stood 6' 4" and weighed 286 pounds. His girth gave rise to an anecdote during World War I. A lady in London asked why he was not "out at the Front." He replied, "If you go around to the side, you will see that I am." On another occasion,



Chesterton remarked to his friend George Bernard Shaw "To look at you, anyone would think a famine had struck England." Shaw retorted, "To look at you, anyone would think you had caused it."

Chesterton wrote around 80 books, several hundred poems, some 200 short stories, 4000 essays (mostly newspaper columns), and several plays. He was a literary and social critic, historian, playwright, novelist, Catholic theologian and apologist (Christian themes and symbolism appear in much of his writing), debater, and mystery writer. He was a columnist for the Daily News, The Illustrated London News, and his own paper GK's Weekly. Chesterton also wrote articles for the Encyclopedia Britannica, including the entry on Charles Dickens and part of the entry on Humour. The Man Who Was Thursday is arguably his best-known novel. Still, Wikipedia claims that his best-known character is Father Brown.

The BBC has produced a series of Father Brown television shows starring Mark Williams in the title role (right). My wife and I continue to watch these television shows via our PBS Wisconsin station to guess how Father Brown will unravel the mysteries.

