

THE ALAIN LOCKE CENTENARY

The Association of American Rhodes Scholars invites all AARS members to a symposium to recognize and honor the life and work of:

Alain LeRoy Locke (Pennsylvania & Hertford, 1907),
on this 100th anniversary of Locke's election as a Rhodes Scholar.

The symposium takes place during our send-off of the 2007 class of Rhodes Scholars and includes discussions with leading Locke scholars.

Monday, September 24, 2007
from 9 am to 12:30 pm with lunch to follow

Howard University (Co-Sponsor)
Washington, DC

For information or RSVP, contact Joanne Gerow at 1-866-746-0283
or by email at jgerow@americanrhodes.org

Alain Leroy Locke (1886-1954)
Cosmopolitan, Philosopher, Leader

- First black Rhodes Scholar
- Exponent of Cultural Pluralism and "The Harlem Renaissance"
- Author/Editor of "The New Negro" (1925)
- Chairman, Philosophy Department, Howard University for 30 years
- Member, Baha'i Faith



Remembered by a fellow scholar as:

"...one of the kindest, sweetest, most out-giving Americans any of us will ever know, an industrious, productive, beloved college professor, and for a larger portion of American citizens, I suppose, a more potent influence for good than is ever likely to be again the lot of a Rhodes Scholar."

Karl Karsten
(New Mexico & Hertford, 1911)
From The American Oxonian
October 1954

ALAIN LOCKE AT OXFORD: RACE AND THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIPS

BY JACK C. ZOELLER*
(New York and University '72)

IN March 1907, Alain Leroy Locke stunned the American academic establishment when he was elected a Rhodes Scholar from Pennsylvania. He was the first African-American to receive this honor. Although Locke was a brilliant student, he would find that his fellow scholars were not ready to share their pedestal with a black man.[†] No black Rhodes Scholar would follow him to Oxford until 1963.[‡]

Alain Locke became a philosopher, writer and professor. But his impact on American society would go far beyond the boundaries of scholarly journals and his classroom at Howard University. Locke became leader of the Harlem Renaissance—he called himself its midwife—who birthed and shepherded a generation of black writers and artists. His 1925 book, *The New Negro*, came to symbolize not just the cultural contributions, but the individuality of blacks in America. Locke was an urbane and cosmopolitan man, whose ideas and force of personality gave him an in-

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† In the early 1900s, “Negro” and “Afro-American” were common and usually respectful nouns used to identify members of the African-American race. To the modern ear, “Negro” may have a negative connotation and “Afro-American” is outdated. Therefore, in most of this article, the generic words, “black,” and in many cases, “African-American” have been substituted. However, in direct and indirect quotations, the term “Negro” has been retained to reflect some of the force of the language actually used. If the selection or presentation of racial incidents and epithets in this article gives offense to any reader, the author sincerely apologizes.

‡ Cecil Rhodes’ will contemplated that scholarships would be awarded in each state (numbering forty-eight including territories in 1904) every year. But because Rhodes bequeathed money for only ninety-six American scholars resident in Oxford at one time—most of them staying for three years—the trustees decided that the American scholarships would have to alternate: two-years on, one-year off. Thus, competitions were held in 48 states during 1904 and 1905, 1907 and 1908, etc., but not at all in 1906, 1909, etc. This scheme was later changed to a regional competition equalizing the number of American scholars at thirty-two selected every year.

fluence multiplied a million-fold beyond New York and Washington. In 1954, the black journal *Phylon* eulogized: “Many a Negro today walks with straighter gait, holding his head high in any company, because of Alain Locke.”¹

One hundred years after his Rhodes election, no biography of Locke has ever been published. Locke intimated that he had written his autobiography, but no manuscript has surfaced. Locke’s story remains largely untold, particularly outside the African-American community. The only notable work addressing Locke’s time at Oxford was an article by Jeffrey Stewart in *The Massachusetts Review* in 1993.² Even his obituary in *The American Oxonian* in 1954 was edited from four pages down to one.

That obituary was written by Karl Karsten (New Mexico and Hertford ’11), who had not known Locke at Oxford. When Karsten met Locke at Howard University in the 1940s, Locke told him that it was the first time he had ever been visited by a Rhodes Scholar during more than 30 years in Washington. Karsten later described Locke as “one of the kindest, sweetest, most out-giving Americans any of us will ever know, an industrious, productive, beloved college professor, and for a larger portion of American citizens, I suppose, a more potent influence for good than is ever likely to be again the lot of a Rhodes Scholar.”³

At his death Alain Locke bequeathed his personal papers to Howard University. He had been a prolific correspondent for fifty years; he saved almost everything. This enormous volume of material, some of it intimate correspondence between Locke and his mother or close friends, sheds new light on Locke’s navigation through Oxford as the only African-American Rhodes Scholar in five decades.



Alain Locke established his credentials at Central High in Philadelphia and Harvard College. A second Rhodes Scholar from the same two schools—Clarence Haring, representing Massachusetts—also was elected in 1907.* Two Rhodes Scholars from one public high school was a better performance than almost any *college* in the country. But in Philadelphia and around the world, the headline was that a Negro had won a Cecil Rhodes scholarship competing against the best of Pennsylvania.

Locke’s academic grounding at Central High was reinforced by a sin-

* Pennsylvania produced a third Rhodes Scholar in 1907: Donald Herring, whose home was in Pennsylvania, but who competed in New Jersey after attending Princeton University. Herring’s great-grandson, Nathan Herring (Vermont and New College 2006) was named a Rhodes Scholar from Yale University.



Alain Locke, c. 1920

gle-minded family emphasis on education and advancement. Although Locke's father, Pliny, had died when he was only six, Alain knew well the story of Pliny Locke's law degree from Howard and his ability to capture an audience as a public speaker. He also shared in the legacy of his grandfather, Ishmael Locke, a teacher at a Quaker mission in Liberia and later the first principal of the School for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. But even more important to young Locke's thirst and sense of destiny was the unrelenting role of his mother, Mary Hawkins Locke. Mary was a teacher, who molded her son, urged him, often wrote daily to him, schemed, celebrated and even traveled with him as he made his way from Philadelphia to Harvard to Oxford.

Alain Locke was raised in two cities separated by the Delaware River: Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey. In the 1900 U.S. census, 14-year old Locke was recorded as living in both places. Born as Arthur Locke in September 1885, he attended Philadelphia schools for a decade and lodged in that city with Harry and Elizabeth Johnson during school terms. After Pliny Locke's death, Mary and Alain had moved to Camden where they shared a house with Mary's mother and a teacher named John Bush. The adjacent house was rented by Pliny's relative John Locke, who had married the white daughter of an Englishman before the Civil War—offering a hint on where the Lockes acquired their Anglophilia.

In a candid autobiographical fragment written decades later, Locke described his relationship with his mother as his "closest companionship . . . [yet] unemotional in outward expression." As a boy, he wrote: "I would . . . hug her waist on meeting her, but rarely remember kissing until we got home and she had taken off her hat, coat and washed. . . . I was taught to avoid kissing or being kissed by outsiders." Obedient to his mother's extreme etiquette, Locke evolved into a serious and polished schoolboy.⁴ He also developed an independence and flair—for example, deciding before high school that he would change his name from Arthur Roy to Alain LeRoy. But to his mother, he would always be "my little boy" Roy.*

Both of his parents shared what Alain Locke later called the "smug gentility" of educated Northern Negroes whose families were free before the Civil War. The Lockes adhered to a "frantic respectability." It was mandatory that their son pursue a professional career.⁵ In one respect Alain was fortunate that his father died so early: Pliny Locke had planned to send him to military school.⁶ But his mother steered him instead to the classics curriculum at Central High.

* On his birth certificate, Locke's first name was listed as Arthur. His mother and family and friends in Camden called him Roy throughout their lives.

Central High was a remarkable high school. Its senior faculty were called professors, including twenty-two who had doctoral degrees and another ten with master's. In 1902, the school was able to draw President Theodore Roosevelt to inaugurate a new building. He arrived in a horse-drawn carriage and was feted with a crescendo of 1,400 boys doing "the High School yell in honor of Harvard." So regularly did this school send graduates to Cambridge, Massachusetts that its alumni already had formed a "Central High School Club of Harvard." Alain Locke became its first black member.

But even at progressive Harvard—where twenty-five African-Americans were enrolled during Locke's final year—black candidates faced difficult hurdles. Despite Locke's impressive record in high school, he studied for two post-graduate years at the School of Pedagogy* before he was admitted to Harvard's Class of 1908. By his third year at Harvard, Locke came into the orbit of some of the foremost philosophers in America, including William James, George Santayana, James Royce and George Herbert Palmer. He also was a favorite of Barrett Wendell and Charles Copeland, Harvard professors well-known for nurturing young writers.

Locke had become a master at performing under pressure that, for the most part, he generated from within himself. An illustration of Locke's drive was his acceleration of his honors thesis after he was selected a Rhodes Scholar: he received his degree *magna cum laude* a year earlier than his original class. During the spring of 1907, Locke decided to enter Harvard's annual literary competition. He crafted an essay on Tennyson that won that year's Bowdoin Prize over competitors perhaps including his classmates Van Wyck Brooks and Samuel Eliot Morison, who both later won Pulitzer Prizes.⁷ Alain Locke well deserved to be named a Rhodes Scholar.

For the next 100 years an untrue story would circulate, perhaps started by Locke, that the Pennsylvania selection committee did not know he was black until after it made its decision. Some recent research has proved this story a myth.⁸ The new evidence includes a letter of recommendation from the Dean of Harvard's Faculty of Arts & Sciences describing Locke as a "young colored student from Philadelphia" and a press release stating that the Pennsylvania committee interviewed Locke and five other state finalists.⁹ It is clear that the committee members knew about Locke's race before he arrived, and then saw it for themselves when the five-foot, three-inch black man walked into the room. The committee of five Pennsylvania

* The School of Pedagogy was a post-high school teacher training institute. It had sixteen students in 1902 and shared faculty with Central High.

college presidents knowingly chose a black man over his white competitors, based solely on his personal qualities and qualifications.*



On March 12, 1907, the day that Locke's scholarship was announced in Philadelphia, the buzz in Boston was over Booker T. Washington's speech at Harvard. He was warmly introduced by Charles Eliot, the president of the university. Dr. Washington, the most prominent black man in the U.S. and the author of *Up from Slavery* and principal of the Tuskegee Institute, agreed to meet privately with Harvard's African-American students following his address. Locke's absence that day offers a telling contrast: Booker T. Washington was recruiting blacks from Harvard to teach at his industrial school in Alabama, while Locke competed against white Pennsylvanians for an opportunity to study classics at Oxford.

Although Locke later joined Dr. Washington in a tour of the South and sought his help in raising funds and seeking a teaching position, the two differed greatly in philosophy and style. Washington was a symbol of Negro technical education and accommodation in a segregated society. By contrast Locke would become a leader of the Harlem Renaissance, championing African-American artistic and literary achievement, as well as integration, not segregation. In the Harvard speech that Locke missed, Booker T. Washington revealed the crude reality of the U.S. racial environment that became an unfortunate part of his legacy—when he boasted that lynchings were at their lowest level in twenty years. “Fewer Lynchings,” led the *Globe*, on the day Locke was named a Rhodes Scholar.¹⁰

In the predominantly white world in which Locke was schooled, the notion of a “Negro problem” in the U.S. was commonly discussed. From a modern perspective, it may seem startling that in the early 1900s the black race was routinely, publicly described as inferior. In the 1903 book, *The Negro Problem*, Booker T. Washington and his emerging critic, W. E. B. DuBois, responded with dueling prescriptions for helping black Americans to elevate themselves. There were no such uplifting messages in *The Color Line*, by Tulane professor William Smith, in 1905. The review of Smith's book by *The New York Times* under a startling headline, “The Backward Race,” previewed the protests that would greet Locke after he was named a Rhodes Scholar:

* John Haas, the President of Muhlenberg College and secretary of the Pennsylvania committee, stated that Locke stood out “for his specially mature mentality and high, definite purpose.”

The undoubted accomplishments of negroes under the hothouse influences of white contact argues in the professor's mind only this, that whatever the negro gets must be given him—and as a corollary in the present instance in America, whatever he gets the white man must lose.

Against this racial backdrop, educators in the South had debated whether African-Americans should be allowed to compete for Rhodes Scholarships. Before the first American scholars were elected in 1904, Booker T. Washington had lobbied the Rhodes organizing secretary, George Parkin, requesting an “equal chance” for black institutions.¹¹ But Rhodes Scholar selections in the early years were typically controlled by college presidents. In Georgia, the presidents of the University of Georgia, Emory College and Mercer University conspired to rotate the Rhodes Scholarships annually among the state's three oldest institutions—not coincidentally, Georgia, Emory and Mercer—in a manner intended to deny participation to “negro schools.”* In April 1904, Professor DuBois, a professor at Atlanta University, wrote to the Rhodes Trust protesting the exclusion of candidates from his college. Half a year later, the issue came to a head when the President of the University of North Carolina warned the Trustees that “representative young white men” from North Carolina would not participate if blacks were allowed to compete. He also threatened the resignation of his state committee. The Rhodes Trust Secretary in London, Charles Boyd, wired back to George Parkin: “[T]he Trustees feel that the question is one which the selective committees must be left to fight out with the Negro colleges.”¹² Boyd's language was disingenuous; the Rhodes Trustees had pronounced the fight over.^{†13}

In rejecting the appeals from DuBois and others in 1904, the Rhodes Trustees had side-stepped the lone sentence in Section 24 of Cecil Rhodes' will:

* Walter B. Hill, Chancellor of North Georgia College, explained: “The Georgia conference agreed to a rotation for the first three scholarships among the University of Georgia, Emory and Mercer based on their dates of charter (1785, 1840 and 1842). Consideration of negro schools is postponed by reason that their dates of charter fall after. . . .” M. W. Adams, Dean of Atlanta University, complained that the Chancellor of the University of Georgia had falsely charged that the black colleges did not teach “quadratics in algebra.” Walter Hill, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Jan. 15, 1904). M. W. Adams to George Parkin, File 1122 (Feb. 7, 1903).

† The first African-American Rhodes Scholar selected from Georgia was Jesse Spikes (Georgia and University '72) who previously attended Dartmouth College. The first from North Carolina was Robyn Hadley (North Carolina and Somerville '85) who attended UNC Chapel Hill. The first Rhodes Scholar from a historically black college or university was Nima Warfield (Georgia and St. Edmund Hall '94), a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta.

No student shall be qualified or disqualified for election to a Scholarship on account of his race or religious opinions.

Secretary Boyd later explained that this language might not mean what it said—that when Cecil Rhodes used the term, “race,” he might have meant “Dutch, English, Jew, and the rest.” Reflecting the views of several Trustees, Boyd wrote that if Rhodes knew that black men were being considered, “[h]e would turn in his grave.”¹⁴ Whether Rhodes turned or not, the language in his will had been written to stand on its own. Within three years, it would.



“One of the greatest honors ever earned by a member of our race,” exulted a Canadian teacher in a March 1907 letter to Alain Locke. From Oxford, Locke received congratulations from Pixley Seme, a black South African who would become one of his closest friends at Oxford. The news of his selection as a Rhodes Scholar was carried in newspapers worldwide. The *Boston Globe* called Locke “the man who has fixed a new standard for colored men . . . at Harvard.” William Bolivar, a black Philadelphia historian, wrote that Locke offered “a live refutation of mental inferiority on the part of the Negro.”* Locke’s high school classmate, Charles Dickerman, son of a U.S. congressman, sent a telegram on behalf of Locke’s closest friends at Harvard: “Congratulations from Table twenty-eight.”¹⁵

But instead of remaining ecstatic, Locke turned nervous and angry over his reception in the press. Although the coverage was generally favorable, Locke was sensitive even to small slights. Sometimes the slights were not small. The New York *Evening Post* trilled in an editorial:

A negro has won the Rhodes scholarship at Oxford University. . . . Mr. Locke . . . gives offense beyond that of race. He announces: ‘I intend to devote myself to study while in England.’ To be a negro beating white competitors is bad enough; but to advertise one’s self, in addition, as a mollycoddle, is to strain even the impossible beliefs of Oxford.¹⁶

* Bolivar wrote in this article that Ishmael Locke “spent a season in England and matriculated as a student at Cambridge University.” There is no Ishmael Locke listed in the matriculation records of Cambridge University. Alain Locke provided a clue to the source of Bolivar’s information in his letter to his mother dated May 10, 1907: “[T]hat’s right—put it good and strong [to Bolivar] about old Ishmael—we don’t know half . . . [but] I bet he was a wonder.” AL to Mary Locke, MSRC 164-54.

For weeks Locke felt trapped not only by the press, which spun his scholarship as a race story, but also by his own words that seemed to trigger offense despite being innocuous: “It is my purpose, after three years at Oxford, to return to America and devote my entire time to the uplifting of my race. . . . I will [probably] become an instructor in one of the colored universities.”¹⁷ When he returned to Harvard after the Rhodes announcement, he ignored a pile of business cards jammed by journalists under his door. In Camden, his mother hid upstairs while journalists stood on the porch knocking and waiting.¹⁸

Raised in a cocoon, Locke had barely begun to comprehend his fit in the world and the career options in front of him. He dearly wanted to be accepted as an American Rhodes Scholar, not an African-American, and to pursue the calling that best fit him, rather than what others—whites and blacks alike—expected of an educated African-American. While he was fully aware that he had been bred and trained to be a teacher and had an obligation to his race, Locke was committed intellectually and emotionally to the concept of a liberal education. He wanted to go to Oxford to study “the best that has been said and thought in the world”—not to be immersed in what others called the “Negro problem.” He clung to an almost idyllic image of a prejudice-free Europe.*

Locke exploded when he read conflicting newspaper reports discussing where he resided. On March 13, 1907, the *Philadelphia Record* reported that Locke lived with his foster parents, Mr. & Mrs. Harry Johnson, at 712 South Twelfth St. in Philadelphia. On the same day, the *Camden Post Telegram* wrote that he lived in Camden and gave Mary Locke’s address, 417 Stevens Street. Oddly Locke was not upset over the Philadelphia version, despite it not being true that he had two foster parents—because he probably had planted this story. Instead he was angry at his mother and her friends for inadvertently spreading the truth about him living in Camden.

Locke’s fear after his election was announced was that the Rhodes Trust would take away his scholarship. He believed that he was vulnerable to a potential claim that he was a Camden resident, not a Philadelphian, and was ineligible to compete in Pennsylvania. Looking back, one can make a strong case that Locke was a Pennsylvania resident in 1907—he had been born in Philadelphia, went to public schools there for a decade, and after three years at Harvard still had a lodging room in Philadelphia.

* When he sailed on a German steamship from New York, Locke exulted that he had spotted icebergs and a whale, and that “there is no prejudice aboard.” AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55, Folder 3.

But Locke felt exposed. He particularly feared that African-Americans who had known him in Camden would be discovered by the press.* Locke ordered his mother to lay low. He harshly warned several of her friends about spreading news and photos—going so far as to gather up photos of himself so that Alain Locke of Philadelphia would not be readily identified as Roy Locke of Camden. This scene was surreal: Alain Locke, a source of great pride among African-Americans in Camden and around the world, trying not to be spotted in his home town.

Mary Locke's letter to Alain revealed the tension that both of them were feeling:

[You will] have a nice fight on your hands, with both your name and mine in the Camden Directory. Please remember, that I urged you last fall to vote from Harry Johnson's [in Philadelphia] so your name could be registered there. . . . Bush is willing to say he owns the house [in Camden] or lets or sublets it or anything else—he is so scared. . . .

I beg of you, as I have the possibility of remaining in this country, not to antagonize everybody and also make me feel ridiculous. . . . [I]n the name of Heaven let the colored people alone. . . . They have the papers in the windows (or had) with your picture displayed. You can't sue everybody, or destroy the plates in the papers. . . .

. . . but 'Ma' doesn't scare easily—even when her Rhodes prodigy 'rips her up the back'. . . .¹⁹

Before his Rhodes interview, Locke had shown considerable savvy in evaluating his options in the three states in which he could have submitted his Rhodes application: Massachusetts (where he was enrolled in college), Pennsylvania (where he attended high school and maintained a legal residence), and New Jersey (where he resided with his mother when he was home from college). In the early years of the Rhodes Scholarships, candidates in each state were required to pass an examination administered at a single location and sent to Oxford for grading. Locke took his examination in Massachusetts in January 1907. He used the all-day exam at Harvard Medical School as an opportunity to evaluate the five other Massachusetts candidates—including over lunch and when the six shared a bottle of whisky with their proctor at the end of a long day. Locke concluded that his Massachusetts competitors were “a very extraordinary

* Through the summer of 1907, Locke was still warning his mother: “do not let the colored papers get hold of it—they will stir things up and first thing you know my residence will be disputed.” AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Jul. 15, 1907).

crowd of fellows” and decided to seek permission to apply for a Rhodes interview in Pennsylvania.²⁰ When the Rhodes Trust approved his request in February, Locke became the first Rhodes candidate to take the examination in one state, and then shift to another for the interview.

Before submitting his application to the Pennsylvania committee, Locke briefly considered applying in New Jersey.²¹ But he rejected New Jersey because the state’s selection committee appeared to be under Princeton’s control. Also, he learned through his well-developed intelligence network that nineteen Princeton students had taken the Rhodes examination that year. Locke perceived that a non-Princetonian, no matter how qualified, was unlikely to be chosen—especially if he were African-American.*

In a fascinating sub-plot, Horace Kallen became one of Locke’s sources of intelligence on Princeton University. A graduate teaching assistant in Harvard’s philosophy department, Kallen had received his Harvard A.B. in 1903—like Locke, achieving *magna cum laude* honors in three years. Kallen left for Princeton to be an instructor in English, but after two years his contract was not renewed—perhaps because Princeton’s faculty had discovered he was Jewish.²² Kallen returned to Harvard, where he met Alain Locke and became his improbable friend in a philosophical dialogue that continued for half a century. Decades later Kallen said he had conceived the concept of “cultural pluralism”—around which he built a career as a major American philosopher—largely as a result of his conversations with young Locke.²³ Kallen also made the shocking confession that at first he had been repelled by the idea of sitting across the table from a black man. Nevertheless he commenced a relationship with Locke because at Harvard it was the right thing to do.† Kallen and Locke discovered that they had a shared bond: trying to establish a philosophical

* Alain Locke obtained intelligence on the Pennsylvania candidates through his mother’s network, his former teachers, and Harvard friends from Philadelphia. Ironically, Locke, the lone African American candidate, concluded that one of his “relative advantages” competing against George Wanger of the University of Pennsylvania, whom he considered the strongest of the other Pennsylvania candidates, was that Wanger was Jewish. More accurately, Wanger was thought to be Jewish. His father was a former Congressman and an Episcopalian.

† Although there are several examples in this article of Alain Locke using the term “Jew” in a manner that would not be acceptable today, we find compelling evidence that he was not prejudiced against Jews. Here is one example in a letter to his mother: “By the way, quite an anti-Semitic feeling exists here at Harvard. . . . It’s very strange though for Dick and other of my friends to discuss their prejudices toward Jews with me as if I could admit that I shared them. It’s uncomfortable. . . .” AL to ML, MSRC, 164-47 (undated; written in March 1907). Locke remained a lifelong friend of Horace Kallen, the son of a rabbi.

framework to understand and address the racial and ethnic prejudice that was so pervasive in their lives.²⁴

The racial pressure on Alain Locke came to a head in mid-April 1907. He was sleeping only two to three hours each night as he churned out essays and prepared to tackle his thesis. He was in deepening debt and still worried that his scholarship might be taken away. But he was bothered most by the racial invective channeled through the press. He revealed his frustration in a letter to his mother:

[L]et me tell you now I am not going to England as a Negro—I will leave the color question in New York and English people won't have any chance to enthuse over the Negro question—the only condition on which I will take up the Negro question again is race leadership in America—otherwise none of it for me.²⁵

Locke added that he might remain in England to serve in the “consular or diplomatic service.” Based on a reading of Locke’s correspondence during his Oxford years, he was almost certainly blowing off steam with this comment. Diplomatic service was not an alternative that Locke ever seriously evaluated or pursued. Locke’s only significant career interests evidenced in his correspondence were teaching, writing, journalism, and perhaps becoming the president of a black college.* Nevertheless, at least twice before World War I, Locke gave serious consideration to staying permanently in Europe. This seed may first have been planted by William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., son of a famous anti-slavery journalist, who told Locke before he left for Oxford: “If you can do as well in Europe, stay and be rid of the damned [race] problem.”

In May 1907, Locke was ambushed by another painful newspaper column, describing a letter to the British Ambassador from a board member at Tulane University who wrote that no Negro should be allowed to attend Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. Locke’s instinct was to send a letter to the British Ambassador—or even to President Roosevelt—but he was dissuaded probably by one of his Harvard professors. “I didn’t think I’d get mixed up in international politics,” he wrote to his mother. “I wish they’d keep quiet and leave me in my glory.”²⁶



* Locke revealed one of his career dreams in a letter to his mother in 1909: “I should ultimately like and accept the presidency of Howard—which because of national patronage and plant offers exceptional opportunities [and] may be the first great Cosmopolitan university.” AL to ML, MSRC, 164-57 (May 19, 1909).

For two months Alain Locke was blind to the strains that his election caused within the Rhodes Trust. The report of his election in the *London Times* triggered an immediate meeting of American Rhodes Scholars who were resident in Oxford. Thirty of them were from states that had been pro-slavery at the start of the Civil War. The American scholars expressed outrage over the selection of a Negro as a Rhodes Scholar, and agreed to try to force a reversal of the Pennsylvania decision. They chose three Southerners to lead their campaign: Tucker Brooke (West Virginia and St. John's '04), James Winston (North Carolina and Christ Church '04), and Edward Armstrong (Maryland and Oriel '05).^{*} Within four days of Locke's election, the three had convinced Francis Wylie, the Rhodes Trust's agent in Oxford, to arrange a meeting between them and the Trustees. One week later, the protesting Rhodes Scholars had their forum.[†]

Horace Kallen would write later that he was angered by the Rhodes Scholars' mistreatment of Alain Locke which he observed while on a traveling fellowship in Oxford in late 1907. He remarked that it was not only the Southerners who shunned Alain Locke, but also the Northerners, who acquiesced.²⁷ Those who presumed that most Northerners were not racists may have argued that the extraordinary bonding of the Americans caused some of them to act in a manner inconsistent with their upbringing and character. The Americans had sailed as a group to England and found an English audience that did not truly appreciate them. Most of them became members of the American Club[‡] and many traveled together in small groups during Oxford's frequent vacations. But notwith-

^{*} Brooke, Winston and Armstrong were raised in Southern families whose slave-owning heritage still resonated forty years after the Civil War. Tucker Brooke's father, St. George, served in the war as a Confederate ranger. He came from a Virginia family that owned twenty-six slaves. The Winston family name would become a symbol of the North Carolina tobacco economy. James Winston's grandfather, Patrick Henry Winston, not only owned sixty slaves and served in the Confederate Army, but also was captured and imprisoned by Union forces. In Maryland, Edward Armstrong's paternal grandfather, Alexander, owned eight slaves in 1850, despite being a merchant and not a farmer, in a state that sided with the North. These were not families destined to change their minds within a generation on the issue of blacks in American education.

[†] Sir Anthony Kenny noted in a letter to David Alexander in 1998: "It is ironic that in the whole history of the Trust there were only two occasions when U.S. Scholars waited on the Trustees in person. The first time, in 1907, was to protest against the election of a Black from Pennsylvania. The second time, in the 1970s, was to protest about the non-election of Blacks from Cape Town." AK to DA (Dec. 4, 1998). See Alexander, "American Scholarships," p. 113.

[‡] The American Club (1904-1927) thrived in the early years of the Rhodes Scholarships as a social gathering spot in St. Giles Street. The club offered comfortable chairs in rented rooms, but became the target of complaints like this in the London press: "After the first week in Oxford, the words 'British insularity' are murmured with an accompanying shrug of the shoulders, and the American retreats into his shell—the club—where he reads

standing the Americans' close ties, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, W. T. Harris, wrote that he was shocked at the protests over Locke's appointment—particularly from the Northern Rhodes Scholars who attended racially integrated colleges in the U.S. "Such a delegation and such a protest I would have thought impossible."²⁸

Brooke, Winston and Armstrong, each the son of a lawyer, tried to gain leverage over the Trust by emphasizing the collateral damage to the Rhodes Trust that would result from appointing a Negro. This was essentially the same strategy employed successfully by the Southern university presidents in 1904. The threat now being conveyed to the Trust was that, if Locke were admitted to Oxford, the best men in the South would not participate.

Francis Wylie appears to have supported the Southern scholars. He labeled their position "a matter of principle."²⁹ His view was that the Trust's obligation to preserve the Scholarships in the U.S. outweighed its obligation to enforce Cecil Rhodes' restriction against racial prejudice. Wylie was disappointed in the Pennsylvania committee, which "might at least have waited until the [Rhodes scheme] had established itself firmly in the States" before appointing a Negro.³⁰ On March 22, 1907, Wylie arranged a meeting between the Rhodes Scholar delegates and two of the Trustees in London. Although the Trustees were receptive to the scholars' arguments, they made no promises. Afterwards, Lord Rosebery, the chairman of the Trust, floated this conclusion: "that the addition of a solitary native will not hurt the Confraternity."³¹ Inside the Rhodes Trust, this was perhaps the most positive argument made on Locke's behalf as they considered his fate.

Under Wylie's direction, Oxford's examination office reviewed the passing grade that it had given Locke on his preliminary Rhodes examination taken in January 1907. The review concluded that "he was exceedingly lucky in being allowed to pass." Wylie also studied Locke's birth certificate, and was perplexed that it gave his first name as Arthur, not Alain, and also described him as white. While nothing came of these hiccups, the fact that Wylie conducted them and communicated his findings to the Trustees indicates that Alain Locke was probably right—the Rhodes Trust was looking for "an excuse" to take away his scholarship.

American papers, discusses American politics, sings American songs, and might, indeed, just as well be back in America for all the good he does to himself or to Oxford." ("The Americans at Oxford: An Unfulfilled Bequest," *Daily Mail* [Oct. 11, 1910], 6). The American Club also sponsored an annual Thanksgiving dinner which became controversial after Alain Locke was excluded in 1907. See Alexander, "American Scholarships," pp. 162-3.

Even the brother of Wylie's wife, an American, chimed in from Harvard:

This negro, Locke, is at Harvard and from all accounts, though clever, he is decidedly objectionable. I do not know him personally, but he is not at all pleasant to look at. I do not see why Oxford should not refuse to admit him.³²

As far as we can tell, *none* of Locke's detractors in Oxford had ever met him. When Wylie finally met Alain Locke in October 1907, he would describe him as "not at all a bad little fellow himself"—indicating precisely the type of condescending image of Locke that had been circulated.

It is possible, but unlikely, that Locke's homosexuality—which he had veiled but not hidden at Harvard—played a major role in the campaign against him in 1907. Forty years later Locke would discuss his "three minorities" in a letter discovered by an eminent Locke scholar, Leonard Harris of Purdue University. Locke wrote: "Had I been born in ancient Greece I would have escaped the first [homophobia]; In Europe I would have been spared the second [anti-black legal segregation]; in Japan I would have been above rather below average [height]."³³ We can speculate that all three of Locke's minority attributes might have provoked prejudice from his predominantly athletic, predominantly heterosexual, clubby, white, male Rhodes Scholar contemporaries. However, the evidence indicates that this group struck against Locke before they knew anything other than that he was an African-American.

The Trustees invited the Pennsylvania committee to reconsider Locke's election, but the committee declined to do so. The committee made clear that it had received the Trust's not-so-subtle message when it responded that it was unlikely to select a black candidate again.³⁴ Although the Trustees remained strongly sympathetic to the Southerners, they did not want to overrule their own selection committee. The Trustees also considered the provision in Section 24 of Mr. Rhodes' will prohibiting racial discrimination. Lord Rosebery, the Trust Chairman, stated his view succinctly: "I do *not* rejoice at the election of the negro scholar. . . . But I do not think the terms of Rhodes' will give us a leg to stand on in refusing him."³⁵ Section 24 had prevailed. Alain Locke's admission to Oxford was not blocked.

Undaunted, the Southern Rhodes Scholars expanded their tactics. Instead of simply *threatening* that future candidates from the South would not participate in the Rhodes scheme, the scholars-in-residence began *refusing* to reside in the same college or to participate in activities with Locke. Eugene S. Towles (South Carolina and Magdalen '05) threatened

not to return to Magdalen College for his final year if Locke were assigned there. Magdalen had been Locke's first choice on the list of colleges he submitted to Wylie. Locke was promptly rejected.³⁶

Several Rhodes Scholars-elect in the United States joined the campaign against Locke. Richard C. Becket (Mississippi and Pembroke '07)—whose father, in a familiar story, was a Southern lawyer and former Confederate soldier who had been forced to surrender his company to the Union Army—wrote to Francis Wylie saying he would not take residence in the same college as a Negro. A similar request came from a second Rhodes Scholar-elect. Wylie honored their requests.

Two more new scholars, Benjamin Lacy (North Carolina and Worcester '07) and Shirley T. Wing (Ohio and Wadham '07)* protested to Wylie when they learned that they had been assigned with Alain Locke to Hertford College. With Wylie's help, Lacy and Wing were allowed to withdraw to different colleges—contradicting the spirit of Wylie's report to Locke that most of the colleges were full.³⁷ The entry in the minute book of the Hertford College governing body offered a succinct explanation for the two Rhodes Scholar withdrawals: "owing to racial prejudice."³⁸

There is no record that Francis Wylie or any sympathetic Rhodes Scholar ever breathed a word to Locke about the campaign waged against him by his fellow scholars. Wylie's tactic was to try to mollify Locke. After informing Locke that he would not be assigned to any of his top list of colleges, Wylie employed an argument that would be heard by generations of Rhodes Scholars: "You are in no case the only applicant refused. At Balliol you were only one out of 24 who failed to get in."³⁹ But Locke was persistent. He had not made it to the top of Harvard and won a Rhodes Scholarship by being timid. He told Wylie he wanted to re-apply to his preferred colleges directly, rather than through Wylie, and to submit testimonial letters. He threatened to get the diplomatic community involved. To defuse him, Wylie asked for the names of *any* other Oxford colleges Locke would be willing to attend, assuming he were accepted.

* Benjamin Lacy's grandfather, Drury Lacy, had served as the president of Davidson College in North Carolina. He also was a slave-owner. The pattern of Rhodes Scholars' fathers or grandfathers holding key positions in higher education would continue until 1919, when the Rhodes Trust began its current practice of assigning former Rhodes Scholars to selection committees. The maternal grandfather of Shirley T. Wing was Norton Townshend, a university trustee and professor, and also a U.S. congressman from Ohio and abolitionist. In 1863, Townshend wrote to Salmon P. Chase, his mentor and later Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court: "I don't believe that God will show himself on the side of this nation until all our oppressions of the African race have been repented." His grandson, S. T. Wing, apparently did not subscribe to this element in his family legacy.

“Please send me therefore a good long list.”⁴⁰ This line was the closest Wylie ever came to telling Locke the truth: that in 1907 no other Oxford college would have him.



In late May 1907, Pixley Seme, the black South African, sent Locke a second letter from Oxford, expressing surprise that Locke had not selected a more highly ranked college than Hertford. Seme also gently described the ruckus that had been raised by the Southern Rhodes Scholars. He predicted optimistically but incorrectly that the Rhodes trouble “will die out because a higher spirit here prevails.” Perhaps sensing that Locke needed cheering, he added: “Old Oxford is already filled with your fame . . . and the college stands by you.”⁴¹

Although the two had not met, Seme would play an important role in Locke’s life at Oxford. He was four years older than Locke and had lived for eight years in the U.S., including four in New York as a student at Columbia University. The two also had in common that they were regularly tight on cash. At Oxford, Seme matriculated a year ahead of Locke and was reading for a law degree at Jesus College. The two would routinely socialize and trade advice, and continued to correspond even after Seme left for London in 1909 to qualify for the bar. Seme later became the co-founder and first president of the African National Congress. His greatest impact on Locke may have been introducing him to his circle of friends in Oxford’s Cosmopolitan Club,* a group that would provide Locke with a wonderful antidote—socially, culturally and philosophically—to the American Rhodes Scholars.⁴²

Another black student who would join Locke at Oxford was J. Arthur Harley, an Antiguan scheduled to graduate from Harvard in June 1908. Harley had sent a warm letter to Locke on the night that news of Locke’s scholarship arrived at Harvard. The letter revealed the kind of hold Locke had on many of his peers: “I say I am glad, Old Boy, glad glad glad; glad without thinking of self, save to say I wish I were going to be near you [in

* Pixley Seme is most often associated with Oxford’s African Union Society, which he founded in 1908. He famously solicited Booker T. Washington’s support for this group. PS to BTW, *BTW Papers* (Apr. 5, 1908). Alain Locke is sometimes described as a co-founder with Seme. However, there is little evidence that Locke was substantively involved. The African Union Society was defunct by 1909. PS to AL, MSRC, 164-84, Folder 35 (Oct. 5, 1909). Seme worked closely with Locke as Treasurer of the Cosmopolitan Club for several terms.

Oxford] so that I might have the pleasure of your fellowship. Go & prosper Locke. You have acted the part of a man always.”⁴³ In a few months Harley would get his wish. He was admitted to Jesus, the Oxford college of Pixley Seme.⁴⁴

Nevertheless Locke’s inner circle as he prepared to leave Harvard was predominantly white. Besides Locke, the members were Charles Dickerman (the high school classmate who had sent Locke congratulations from Table 28), Carl Downes and several others from Central High. They were intimate on many levels: social, intellectual, artistic and literary and, for some of them, sexual. Other than Locke, the most intriguing may have been Downes, son of a wealthy art critic for the *Boston Transcript*, a major daily. Downes, like Harley, would matriculate at Oxford in the fall of 1907. During this period it became *de rigueur* for Harvard graduates with money or talent to head off to Europe. Van Wyck Brooks, Locke’s classmate who later won the Pulitzer Prize, left that summer for five years in London. He later observed that his Harvard generation felt the draw of Europe as “the predestined scene of our real beginnings.”⁴⁵

As his plans for Oxford solidified, Alain Locke spilled the news about Downes to his mother: “Downes and I are so intimate now that we are always sure of a good time with each other—no formality—we just say what we feel like saying—and if one hasn’t the money the other has... Downes is a nice chap—says he will go to any college I choose—so the choice is up to me.”⁴⁶ Three weeks later Locke informed his mother that they would sail to England on the same boat. “We’ll get a stateroom together.”⁴⁷ Locke and Downes sailed from New York to Plymouth on the *Kaiser Wilhelm* on September 24, 1907.*

Alain Locke’s passage to England with Carl Downes caused him to miss what many twentieth century Rhodes Scholars would consider the top bonding experience of their Rhodes years: sailing together to England. The concept had been hatched by Paul Nixon (Connecticut and Balliol ’04), a member of the first American Rhodes class. Nixon organized a Boston departure for his class on the steamship *Ivernia* on September 27, 1904. His class set a pattern that would be followed for three-quarters of a century: new Rhodes classmates meeting for a send-off on the East Coast, getting to know each other in the confines of a steamship crossing the Atlantic, then traveling typically in twos and threes for a week in the U.K. awaiting the start of the Oxford fall term.

* Downes was admitted to Merton College. He remained in Oxford for a year and traveled and socialized extensively with Locke. Downes earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Harvard in 1912.

The sailing organizer in Locke's class was Guy Vowles (North Dakota and St. John's '07), a linguist and, at twenty-four, the oldest member of the 1907 class. Locke sent Vowles a reply in mid-May declining the invitation to sail in September with the rest of the class. Locke wrote that he had prior plans requiring him to cross in July. But this was not true. Later, Vowles may have conjectured that Locke's reason for not sailing with them was that he had learned some of them were involved in the campaign against him. However, Locke had not known about the campaign when he sent his regrets to Vowles.

The "real reason" that Locke did not cross the Atlantic with his classmates was the joy and refuge that he had found in his friendship with Carl Downes. While it was unfortunate that Locke gave up a chance to bond with his fellow Rhodes Scholars, most of them soon proved that they were not interested in bonding with an African-American. Locke seized the option that was healthiest for him.



In Camden in the early 1900s, the Lockes faced a perpetual struggle to pay their bills. As a young adult, Alain learned how to ask for loans, move cash around and negotiate repayments with creditors, who in some cases were friends. These were necessary skills in a family with limited income, yet sophisticated tastes. Even before Pliny Locke died in 1891, he and his wife were underpaid and had limited job security. Pliny once had to work as a custodian to make ends meet, despite having a law degree and school principal's certificate.⁴⁸ Rather than becoming frustrated or embittered, the Lockes had learned to make adjustments and to negotiate with everyone. By age 21, Alain Locke was already well-trained at looking people in the eye and, if necessary, deceiving them.

In his last months at Harvard, Alain Locke worried that he might not be able to pay for his mother to travel to his graduation. He already had borrowed from several of his professors, and knew that he would have to borrow or earn more to pay the balance on his student account before Harvard would allow him to graduate. In the spring of 1907 he calculated that he would need \$500 in additional cash to support him and his mother through the summer. By the fall, his mother would again have her teaching income, and Locke intended to wire her money from his Rhodes stipend.⁴⁹

One regular source of cash for Locke was tutoring. For several years, he had posted advertisements, written letters and networked within the

Harvard community to obtain work helping to prepare schoolboys for examinations. In 1906, he began writing essays and short stories to sell or compete for cash prizes. In an essay contest at Harvard, Locke secretly received permission from the contest chairman to submit two entries instead of one. But Locke took extraordinary steps to hide this fact from the contest judges, who might not have approved of this method of increasing his odds. Just prior to the contest's midnight deadline, Locke hand-delivered one of his essays under his own name, while his friend Charles Dickerman, standing next to him, submitted Locke's second essay using a pseudonym.⁵⁰

In April 1907, Locke decided to write an essay to compete for Harvard's Bowdoin Prize. Devoting nearly a month to an essay might have seemed inadvisable—especially with his thesis deadline and graduation fast approaching. But the size of the Bowdoin Prize was \$250—enough for Locke to pay off his Harvard debts—and Locke won it.*

Locke employed a similar financial calculus in deciding to apply for a Rhodes Scholarship from Pennsylvania. He justified the round-trip travel to his Rhodes interview on the basis that the expense was less than 5% of the financial value of a Rhodes Scholarship—\$4,500 over three years.⁵¹ Later Locke wrote in a self-appraisal that he had been better at scholarships than scholarship.⁵² His point may have been that he did not take naturally to the grind that was part of the daily life of a scholar. But he also had shown that he was one of the top scholarship-getters in America. Each year at Harvard, Locke had won a higher-value scholarship than the year before—from a Price Greenleaf Scholarship in 1904-05, to a Perkins Scholarship, a Bowditch Scholarship, and finally a Rhodes Scholarship. Locke had applied to Harvard and then Oxford, because that was where the money was.

In the spring of 1907, Locke also wrote several short stories for small fees. After his Rhodes Scholarship was announced, he was solicited by Hamilton Holt, publisher of *The Independent*, to write an article for that New York weekly. Holt wanted him to write about “how the English and American scholars treat a negro” and suggested that Locke wait until he had been in Oxford “long enough to form an impression.”⁵³ Locke agreed to write the article, which he would title “Oxford Contrasts,” but did not want to write about the race issue.

The Independent did not publish Locke's article until July 1909. By then, Locke had seethed for almost two years: he had submitted his article

* The Bowdoin Prize was the crown jewel of Harvard's literary awards. It has been awarded annually since 1810. Its most famous recipient was Ralph Waldo Emerson.

in late 1907 and needed the money. Even Mary Locke took to dunning Henry Holt for her son's fee. Holt also was unhappy: he had asked for a "race story," and apparently did not listen well when Locke had said, no.

Locke historians have fastened onto "Oxford Contrasts" for good reason. It is an excellent analysis of the Oxford academic system encountered by the first American Rhodes Scholars. It also gives a limited but useful insight into Locke's conclusions about his treatment as an African American in Oxford. Locke's most frequently quoted line in "Oxford Contrasts" probably is: "I infinitely prefer race prejudice to race indifference."⁵⁴ For our story of Locke the young philosopher, this quote forewarns that he would be more troubled by the polite, but impersonal engagement that he encountered among the English in Oxford, than by the Americans who shunned him and were not shy to say why.



After the arrival of the 1907 Rhodes Scholars, word spread of a Thanksgiving dinner in late November to be sponsored by the American Club of Oxford. For new scholars who had never been overseas and were still adapting to the English culture, the dinner represented a chance to get together with their countrymen and share in a tradition of home. But Alain Locke was not invited. The Southern scholars had engineered the removal of his name from the list. Benjamin Lacy, the Rhodes Scholar who had refused to matriculate at Hertford with Locke, wrote home to North Carolina: "Did you ever think how hard it is to make one [who is] unacquainted with the matter see why we refuse to eat with a Negro when he is clean and as well-educated as we are?"⁵⁵ Still outraged thirty years later, Horace Kallen recalled that "only one or two other persons, authentically American" refused to attend the dinner in protest against Locke's exclusion. Kallen called the event "a dinner of inauthentic Americans."⁵⁶

As Thanksgiving unfolded, Locke did not stay in his rooms and feel sorry for himself. Indeed, he had not found it difficult to keep his social calendar in Oxford as full as he wanted. He began the holiday at a Thanksgiving Eve reception in Balliol College "to meet the Americans resident in Oxford." The co-host, Louis Dyer, a former Harvard and Cornell professor and *emeritus* fellow at Balliol, was one of the most visible Americans in Oxford.⁵⁷ Dyer apparently conceived the reception as a means of making a social statement to the Southerners. Following the Balliol event, Locke went to a seven-course dinner at the Clarendon Hotel with two dozen members of Oxford's Club Français.⁵⁸ On Thanksgiving morning,

Locke joined Horace Kallen at a service at Christ Church Cathedral conducted by the Bishop of Nebraska. Later, Locke sat down to Thanksgiving dinner with Professor Dyer and his two sons at their home on Banbury Road. Only six weeks into his Oxford career, Locke's circle was already loyal enough to go to extraordinary lengths to make sure he had a good Thanksgiving—and wide enough to insulate him from the American Rhodes Scholars.

Locke's preservation of the records and minutia of his social life in Oxford—invitations, notes, tickets, programs, calling cards, correspondence and more—provide us an extraordinary insight into his major encounters with his fellow Rhodes Scholars. The first event was a Rhodes Trust dinner in May 1908 at the Randolph Hotel in Oxford. Locke preserved a copy of the seating chart⁵⁹ which shows Locke seated in the rear of the dining room, next to Francis Wylie, apparently stationed at the foot of the table to ensure that there were no incidents involving Locke. No American was seated to the left or right of Locke, or opposite or behind him, or even diagonally across. The seating chart also reveals that most of the Southern Rhodes Scholars were absent—particularly those in the 1907 class. They had sent their regrets when they learned that Locke would be present.* Locke recounted to his mother that he acted “most theatrically cool and unconcerned” at the Randolph that evening. Perhaps the pressure had shifted to Francis Wylie, whom Locke described as “obviously embarrassed for fear of the Southerners out-breaking.”⁶⁰

The next Rhodes Scholar imbroglio involving Alain Locke was a March 1909 luncheon hosted by the U.S. Ambassador, William Whitelaw Reid, at Dorchester House in London.⁶¹ This time, the Southerners pressured Francis Wylie to convince Locke to “recall” his acceptance of the invitation. According to Jeffrey Stewart, a Locke scholar at George Mason University, Ambassador Reid also expressed his discomfort over the inviting of a Negro.⁶² Francis Wylie glossed over the difficulties for Locke in a letter written to the chair of the Pennsylvania selection committee a few weeks later.† But Locke did not back down—saying that he was a “representative”—and was ecstatic after the luncheon. He told his mother that the tea course at the Dorchester was “absolutely the high water mark of all my gastronomic experiences.” While Locke may have overplayed his ar-

* Two of Locke's former antagonists attended the May 1908 dinner, including S. T. Wing, who had refused admission to Hertford, and Eugene Towles, who had refused to remain at Magdalen if Alain Locke were assigned there.

† Wylie wrote: “A short time ago, there was some little anxiety about the attitude that would be taken towards [Locke] when he was included in a luncheon given by the American Ambassador, but by a little tactful management, the difficulty was got over.” FW to Provost Charles Harrison, Rhodes Trust Archives (Apr. 18, 1909).

rival—his pattern was to arrive at the last polite moment dressed to the hilt and carrying a cane—afterwards he was the first to thank his hostess and slip away.⁶³

Alain Locke never revealed in his writings how much hurt he felt in England as he was shunned by his countrymen. He did confide in his mother in December 1907 that he had been excluded from Thanksgiving dinner at the American Club, and also told her about the Southerners who opposed his attendance at the U.S. Ambassador's event in 1909.⁶⁴ Thirty years later, Horace Kallen remarked that Locke's Thanksgiving experience had "left scars."⁶⁵ Francis Wylie may have empathized with Locke when Wylie decided to sit next to him at the Rhodes Trust dinner in 1908—or perhaps this was just an example of Wylie's "tactful management."* More than 40 years later, Wylie would ask Locke if he minded Wylie including an account of the "incident of the lunch of Whitelaw Reid" in a reminiscence soon to be published. "I should not think of doing anything that should hurt your feelings,"⁶⁶ wrote Wylie. He dropped any mention of Alain Locke's name or the Ambassador's luncheon.⁶⁷

After researching these incidents involving the Rhodes Trust and Locke, David Alexander noted that Locke displayed an unusual gentleness of spirit in his letters to Francis Wylie over many years.⁶⁸ While still at Oxford, however, Locke's response was more visceral—he kept his distance and flashed a superior social manner. In 1908 Locke described a rare visit by two fellow Rhodes Scholars: "I have made up my mind to make them come to me. . . . Two came round to call a week or so before term end. Fortunately I was having Downes and DeFouseka and Garratt to coffee, and I sat [the two Rhodes Scholars] down to coffee and biscuits, port wine and fruitcake, as if it were a nightly affair."⁶⁹ At the Rhodes Trust dinner in 1909, Locke confessed, he had put on an act of "obvious self-possession" for his fellow scholars. "[S]ome of the Rhodes men were . . . feeling out of place. . . . I went of course in newly-tailored top."⁷⁰ In 1908, he learned that George Wanger, the unsuccessful Rhodes candidate who

* Francis Wylie, the Oxford Secretary of the Rhodes Trust, appeared sympathetic to the Southerners, more than Locke, from the outset. Although Wylie said he liked Locke, he seemed to accept at face value the negative comments made by others about Locke's character, intellect and capacity for work. In 1909, Wylie wrote to Provost Harrison at the University of Pennsylvania: "The College that took him, and which sacrificed something in doing so, is satisfied with his conduct, but not with his work. . . . [Locke] was too self-satisfied. . . . I feel that if the negro race were to be represented, it [would be better to] be by a man of real weight." FW to CH, Rhodes Trust Archives (Apr. 18, 1909). Wylie later changed his mind about Locke. In 1933, Wylie became the first member of the Rhodes community (including all American Rhodes Scholars) to visit Alain Locke in Washington. FW to AL, MSRC, 164-80, Folder 13 (Feb. 23, 1933).

J. van der Zee, Groningen, 1907	J. van der Zee, Groningen, 1907	W. B. Rayson, S. Australia, 1906	B. E. Schmitt, Tennessee, 1903	A. L. St. Clair, Illinois, 1907	P. H. Haysler, Kansas, 1906	H. W. Scott, Michigan, 1907
A. S. Roe, Quebec, 1904	R. H. M. Hamble, Dartmouth College, Pennsylvania, 1907	M. L. McCullum, New South Wales, 1906	M. L. McCullum, New South Wales, 1906	J. W. Woodrow, Iowa, 1907	J. H. Jackson, Louisiana, 1907	A. P. Terrell, Kansas, 1906
V. A. Lawson, South Africa, 1906	O. V. Cadair, Yamalo, 1909	W. C. Jordan, Mass., 1907	W. C. Jordan, Mass., 1907	W. J. Perrott, Alabama, 1906	A. Joshi, Kansas, 1906	W. D. Wallis, Maryland, 1907
S. M. Rindler, Africa, 1907	W. O. Ayle, Kansas, 1907	K. von Helldrick, Germany, 1906	K. von Helldrick, Germany, 1906	A. B. West, Wisconsin, 1907	H. H. Holly, Tennessee, 1905	F. Kirtner, Germany, 1907
R. H. Williams, S. Africa, 1906	A. W. von Blumenthal, Germany, 1909	H. B. Isaacs, California, 1905	H. B. Isaacs, California, 1905	S. T. Wing, Ohio, 1907	E. F. Strickler, N. Carolina, 1907	E. J. Whinnik, Oregon, 1905
H. A. Mizrahi, California, 1903	R. K. Charney, Minnesota, 1907	H. Bray, Brazil, 1906	H. Bray, Brazil, 1906	A. G. Mullins	Dr. Stadler, Germany, 1906	N. E. Eisinger, Illinois, 1905
C. G. Booth, Mass., 1907	J. V. Eftikh, Yamalo, 1906	E. B. Lloyd, N. Carolina, 1905	E. B. Lloyd, N. Carolina, 1905	S. N. Cronje, S. Africa, 1905	A. E. Rollins, Wisconsin, 1905	J. R. Thomas, Michigan, 1907
C. M. Gilroy, New Zealand, 1907	E. W. Harlicky, Ohio, 1907	N. W. Macroman, Quebec, 1907	N. W. Macroman, Quebec, 1907	T. H. Walls, Georgia, 1905	E. S. Towson, S. Carolina, 1905	J. A. Seitz, Indiana, 1906
R. C. Reade, Canada, 1906	T. B. Howwood, Natal, 1906	M. K. F. Morrow, India, 1900	M. K. F. Morrow, India, 1900	E. Terlizian, Illinois, 1907	A. Moxam, New South Wales, 1906	A. R. MacLeod, Quebec, 1906
G. V. Pottory, New South Wales, 1907	E. A. B. Gillis, Primo Edward, 1907	A. J. Metzger, Tennessee, 1905	A. J. Metzger, Tennessee, 1905	F. Earley Smith, Tennessee, 1906	C. C. Wilson, Tennessee, 1907	C. F. Cranswick, Illinois, 1905
L. C. Hull, Wisconsin, 1907	C. H. Frotter, Iowa, 1905	G. A. Jacobs, Germany, 1907	G. A. Jacobs, Germany, 1907	A. G. Sanders, Texas, 1907	H. A. Wainter, Newfoundland, 1907	G. B. Vossler, S. Dakota, 1907
J. S. Cooper, Illinois, 1907	E. A. Farnham, New Zealand, 1906	G. A. Whiteley, Colorado, 1905	G. A. Whiteley, Colorado, 1905	R. L. Noteworthy, Tennessee, 1905	E. F. Wardlaw, Alabama, 1907	J. T. Gillett, Tennessee, 1907
W. Macmillan, Western College, Ohio, 1905	S. Ellet, Kansas, 1905	W. J. Ross, Kentucky, 1905	W. J. Ross, Kentucky, 1905	Baron H. von Veltheim, Germany, 1906	Baron W. von Sell, Germany, 1906	R. C. Willard, New York, 1904
J. MacLeod, Kentucky, 1904	T. Dumbalin, Tennessee, 1906	Baron W. von Oep, Wachendorf, Germany, 1907	Baron W. von Oep, Wachendorf, Germany, 1907	A. M. Sorensen, Canada, 1905	A. C. D. Rowell, Florida, 1907	G. D. Rogers, New Brunswick, 1907
	A. J. R. Locke, Pennsylvania, 1909	J. Orr, Tennessee, 1905	J. Orr, Tennessee, 1905	T. Larain, British Columbia, 1907		
			Dr. Parkin, C.M.G.			H. J. Rose, Quebec, 1904

Rhodes House dinner seating chart, 1908

had competed against Locke in Pennsylvania in 1907, would be competing for a second time. Locke told his mother that if Wanger were to arrive in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, Locke would “drop a card on him and according to Oxford etiquette he dare not return it, for I will be a second year man.”⁷¹

These examples of social one-upmanship reflect the stiffness of Locke’s etiquette and the limited number of ways he could respond to ostracism without withdrawing from the Rhodes community. David Alexander concluded that the impact of other Rhodes Scholars on Locke “must have been corrosive and dispiriting.” However, Locke was a resilient and independent young man, long accustomed to seeking happiness in a world apart—as an only child, as an out-of-state boy attending school away from home, as the smallest boy in his class, as the only black student in otherwise all-white schools, and as a gay man. There is ample evidence that, notwithstanding his mistreatment by his fellow Rhodes Scholars in Oxford, Locke fully enjoyed his social life, particularly before the academic pressures began to rise in his second year. There is no hiding the joy in Locke’s description of this silly but uplifting episode in April 1908:

Saturday night, Kallen the Jew Harvard instructor in philosophy who is making such an impression here, Eliot the Rhodes man whom I have told you of, Downes and myself* had a splurge dinner at Buol’s [Restaurant] . . . I had been over to Harley’s to tea, and it takes me so long to dress. Besides I had to hurry over to Merton to put Downes in good humor. He always gets stiff when he has to put on a dress suit. I met him on his way over—with his back collar button undone as usual. Well we got off, had a good dinner, were considerably boozed, and startled ourselves and our neighbors by boarding a tram car—going up top and singing American college songs all the way down the High and over to East Oxford, where we went to the East Oxford Theatre and amused ourselves by throwing bread, lump sugar and cheese done up in empty match boxes at the stage. It was a dulling melodrama in several senses of the word. The English cockneys have shocking taste. I never saw such a fool play—and a shocking smell too by the bye—I was nearly overcome with the wine and the heated fetid air and the vile tobacco smoke. However we had a great time, and danced our way back to sober Oxford, serenaded the balcony windows of All Souls and Hertford, played here we go round the mulberry bush and ring around the posey to the lamp post outside our college gate, and finally went indoors and danced and sang till two o’clock.”⁷²

* Horace Kallen was in his second term in Oxford as a traveling fellow. Samuel Eliot (Missouri and Hertford ’05) was the lone Rhodes Scholar known to have befriended Locke at Oxford. Carl Downes was a Harvard classmate who had traveled with Locke to Oxford. “He and I have been inseparable all this year.” AL to ML (June 18, 1908). J. Arthur Harley was a black Harvard classmates who socialized regularly with Locke in Oxford.

Thus, we discover the rationale behind Oxford's long tradition of calling all first year students, including graduates of American universities, "freshmen."



In his freshman year in Oxford, Locke immersed himself in activities that he thought would broaden him, make him healthier, and fit into his Anglophile's view of English society. Before leaving Harvard, he had taken lessons in fencing and tennis and even learned to ride a horse. At Oxford he would become a confident rider, especially when he rode his favorite pony, Prince. Locke attended regular performances of the Balliol and Oxford musical societies and rented a piano for his sitting room. He regularly played accompaniment to a "thoroughly cultivated" Hertford classmate, a clarinetist who played "like Pan himself."⁷³ Locke wrote: "Sometimes the old fever comes on and with muffled pedal I strum on into the night." He also took French lessons from a private tutor, the daughter of a Sorbonne professor. During his regular visits to Paris, he made a point to take a few days in the country on his own to keep improving his language. In Oxford, he developed a regimen of long daily walks into the countryside in the company of close friends.

Locke had learned to be a coxswain at Harvard. In England, the sport of rowing represented a rare opportunity for a small man like Locke to try to fit the stereotyped image of an athletic Rhodes Scholar. Before leaving the United States, Locke had been criticized for not meeting Cecil Rhodes' criterion for "fondness of and success in manly outdoor sports."⁷⁴ Through most of his first year at Oxford, Locke trekked six days a week to the Isis "to steer [the Hertford boat] in and out on the narrowest, twistiest little snake of a river you ever saw." In his first term, he earned his first-ever athletic trophy—a silver cup for Torpids Fours engraved with the names of his Hertford crewmates. He wrote that this achievement "gives the black eye to those people who said I did not qualify athletically for the Rhodes Scholarship."⁷⁵ Near the end of his second term, Locke was forced to exit the Hertford boat, when it was discovered that he could not pass a mandatory swimming test. Locke tried valiantly to learn to swim within three days—including a comical image of being suspended in the pool of the Merton Street Baths wearing a body harness—but did not succeed.⁷⁶

Francis Wylie later observed that Locke might have gotten along much better with his fellow Rhodes Scholars if he had participated in team athletics. This seems a naïve observation in light of Locke's small

size and also the fact that college, not university, sports were predominant in Oxford. While it was true that some Rhodes Scholars during his era became top performers on university teams, including track, tennis and even the traditional English sports of rugby and cricket, many more Americans were content to be recruited onto their college teams—most commonly, rowing and rugby. One 1907 scholar, Charles Keith (Arkansas and Exeter '07) had the opposite problem of Locke: he was so large that he barely fit into his college's boat and, when he did, it nearly submerged. Keith shifted to rugby and soon became a stalwart in the social life of his college.⁷⁷

The center of Locke's life in Oxford was his rooms. In his first year, Hertford assigned him to "elegant rooms in the New Buildings—a large sitter with lounge chair, Morris chair, long sofa upon which three or four fellows stretch out every evening . . . writing desk, sideboard, two window seats, hanging electric light chandelier . . . [and] a large oak table." Locke's scout, whom he described as a "near-servant," served breakfast in his room "with linen cloth and steel bone cutlery (all of which I have to buy)." Locke wrote that it was standard to have guests for breakfast, not lunch—because the setting in one's rooms was private and the food, cooked-to-order. But his distaste for morning activity led Locke to have lunch guests or be invited out "almost every other day."⁷⁸ Locke's trouble rising led to spotty attendance at chapel services at 8:00 a.m. each day. He was regularly chastised for this by the Dean. By the end of his second term, Locke secured a physician's note excusing him from early morning activities for medical reasons.⁷⁹ He and the Dean may both have breathed a sigh of relief at the end of Locke's first year, when the Rhodes Trust approved his request to live in Oxford digs, rather than in the College.*



Two weeks into the 1908 fall term, Alain Locke hosted forty members of the Cosmopolitan Club in his new digs. His hunt for a perfect set of rooms began in mid-September, when he returned from Europe after a

* Locke had been warned by Francis Wylie that appealing his assignment to Hertford College might engender some ill will there. While Locke never became a disciplinary problem, he was by nature a high-maintenance scholar. The Hertford Dean scheduled at least seven meetings with Locke during his first year. Locke's decision to change his degree (see below) was opposed by his Hertford tutor and no doubt made him less popular among the Hertford Fellows. In general, Oxford college finances were tight during this period. Rhodes Scholars who chose not to live, eat or be tutored within their colleges were often criticized because they siphoned Rhodes Trust money away from the colleges.

summer traveling with his mother.* He settled on 14 Beaumont Street, one of the most expensive lodgings in Oxford licensed for students.⁸⁰ Locke then went on a shopping trip to London to prepare for the Cosmopolitan Club gathering. And he engaged the catering department of Buol's to provide "coffee, biscuits, fruit, cigarettes and the like. They brought in a silver coffee urn and all I had to do was draw off and hand a cup to each one as he came in."⁸¹ This was an astounding social effort for any Oxford student—particularly for a young man of limited means.

Substantially all of Alain Locke's important social relationships in Oxford from 1908 to 1910 would center on the Cosmopolitan Club. Initially he and his closest friend, Carl Downes, relied on Pixley Seme, Locke's South African ally, for entrée to the club. By the spring of 1908, Seme and Downes had been named to officer and committee positions. But Locke probably did not need their political help. He would cement his own leadership role in the summer term, when he edited the inaugural 1908 issue of the club's journal, *The Oxford Cosmopolitan*, and delivered a paper on "Cosmopolitanism" at the rooms of Hamed El Alaily, an Egyptian student. By the fall term, Locke would be elected Secretary of the Cosmopolitan Club, and his new friends Percy Philip and Hamed El Alaily, President and Treasurer, respectively. Indeed, Locke was nominated to be President, but declined to pursue the position even when Percy Philip offered to step aside for him.

Percy Philip assumed the role of Locke's most intimate friend in Oxford after Carl Downes returned permanently to the United States in the summer of 1908. Although Locke almost certainly had intimate relationships with other friends in their circle, he would remain close to Percy Philip until well after Locke left for the University of Berlin in 1910. Locke and Philip considered pursuing a career together in journalism, a field that paid well, but that they both said they despised. Ironically, Philip would be elevated to *New York Times* bureau chief in Paris and then Ottawa—no small achievement for the son of a Scottish sheep farmer. Like several of Alain Locke's closest friends, Philip was arguably at least as intelligent and creative as many of the American scholars who showed disdain for Locke. Befriending talented young men like Percy Philip became a lifelong pattern for Alain Locke. Philip provided this insight to a dimension of Locke that might not otherwise have been visible at Oxford: "You

* "I think it more or less a duty for me to live representatively while here. Few of the Rhodes men have such rooms—not because they can't afford to, but because they do not take the trouble to hunt. For a few days I paraded the streets looking into windows like Peeping Tom incarnate. I have at last found what I want." AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55, File 2 (Oct. 3, 1908).



Alain Locke at a dinner of the Oxford Cosmopolitan Club, c. 1908

are the only man I know who gives me a consciousness of a broader vista than my own.”⁸²

Locke’s perspective on racial prejudice was broadened by the insights into European colonialism gained from his friends in the Cosmopolitan Club. For example, in October 1908 Locke listened (between pourings of coffee) while Hamed El Alaily delivered a paper on “The Egyptian Question” when the club met in Locke’s rooms at 14 Beaumont Street. Other active Cosmopolitan members included two Indians (Lala Har Dayal, a revolutionary committed to the defeat of British rule, and S. V. Mukerjea, who later helped establish a regional university in India); Philip Guedalla, an English-born Jew (later, the president of the Oxford Union and a supporter of home rule for Ireland); and Pixley Seme, the South African.⁸³ Locke later described himself as “internationalist and pacifist in worldview” at Oxford, but added that he had been “forced by a sense of simple justice to approve of the militant counter-nationalism of Zionism, Young Turkey, Young Egypt, Young India, and with reservations even Garveyism . . .”⁸⁴ But his connections to Africa would remain more artistic and cultural than political. During Locke’s life he made only one trip to the African continent—to Egypt and the Sudan in 1924. At Oxford, his involvement with African nationals was largely through Pixley Seme.*

The Cosmopolitan Club served constituencies beyond those of overseas students and liberals who were anti-colonial. In some respects, the club was a forerunner of what in later generations might have been labeled a diversity club, gay and bisexual club,[†] young socialists club, and even a literary club. A majority of the Cosmopolitan Club appears on the surface to have been Anglo-Saxon. The topics discussed at Cosmopolitan meetings, typically four times each term, were highly diverse. For example, in Hilary Term 1910, Alain Locke led a discussion of “The American Temperament,” followed by other presentations on “The French Canadian Psychology and Literature,” “Gibbon in Switzerland,” and “Frederick the Great, ‘a Questionable Hero.’” During Locke’s second year, when the club became too politically radical for his tastes, he and Percy Philip engineered the ouster of the club’s top officers before the following term.* Un-

* See the discussion of Pixley Seme above. In 1908 Seme co-founded Oxford’s African Union Society “open to all men of African or Negro extraction who are interested in the general welfare of the Race both in Africa and other parts of the world.” Green, *Black Edwardians*, pp. 151-2. However, the club went defunct in 1909 due to Seme’s departure from Oxford and failure to gain support from Booker T. Washington and others. PS to AL, MSRC, 164-84 (Oct. 5, 1909).

† There were no women in the Cosmopolitan Club, although the club was open to membership by non-Oxford students. Locke reported that he once attended a suffragette’s meeting, but otherwise had little involvement with women in Oxford.

der Locke and Philip, essentially all of the meetings would center on cultural, philosophical and literary topics—more so than the problems of race or colonialism.

Notwithstanding the number of English students in the Cosmopolitan Club, Alain Locke fondly labeled the group “a dish full of international hash.”⁸⁵ This was his milieu. After moving out of Hertford College in June 1908, Locke ceased having routine encounters with English undergraduates—he did not take meals or attend chapel in college, visit classmates impromptu in their rooms, or participate in the social and athletic activities that were the mainstay of Oxford college life.[†] Aside from club meetings, horseback riding and walks with friends, Alain Locke’s life at Oxford increasingly centered around his digs. His comfortable and even elegant lodgings were ideally suited to writing and socializing with close friends. His rooms also offered an escape from the “race prejudice” of the Americans, the “race indifference” of the English, and the “race curiosity” that had painted him an oddity and outsider from the day he was named a Rhodes Scholar.



Soon after he arrived in Oxford, Locke knew that the university was not a good fit for him. Although Locke had studied Greek at Central High and Harvard, he complained (as did most American Rhodes Scholars) that Oxford’s Greek requirements were too exacting. Three days a week he had to report to a “closed-nosed clergyman with a wig” to practice reading Latin and Greek aloud.⁸⁶ As a candidate for a B.A. in *Literae Humaniores* (Lit. Hum., or Greats), Locke also was required to attend lectures on the Sixth Century and Ethics and to meet weekly with his tutors, Rev. H. H. Williams of Hertford and Rev. E. M. Walker of Queens.^{‡87} Locke

* Locke wrote: “[T]he Cosmopolitan Club met—Mukerjea came up from London as Seme’s and my guest—moved a vote of non-confidence in the present officers—carried it—and revenged Philip and me on Biske and his crowd of extremists—they had gone in for intellectual radicalism of the most violent sort.” AL to ML, MSRC, 164-57 (Feb. 20, 1909). Roman Biske was a Russian who matriculated at Wadham College and later worked as a translator and lawyer for the American embassy in Moscow. He went missing in 1938 after a crackdown on Russian citizens with foreign connections.

† In addition to his substantial involvement in the Cosmopolitan Club from 1907-1910, Locke served as Vice President of the Oxford Rationalist Society in 1910. He was also an active member of the Français Club and Oxford University Musical Union, particularly during 1907-1908.

‡ The Rev. E. M. Walker introduced a public talk in 1919 by saying, “I want to apologize for my subject, because I am afraid it is highly technical, and I am afraid that most of the time I will be speaking in Greek.” Rev. Walker was the librarian of Queens and later became a

probably had these tutors in mind when he publicly criticized Oxford's "religious dominance over the province of knowledge." The tutorial system represented a shocking contrast to Locke's experience at Harvard—where he had close contact with many professors (including James, Santanyana, Royce, Barrett and Copeland) who were highly regarded if not renowned in their fields. The heart of Locke's criticism of Oxford's can be found in his article, "Oxford Contrasts," written in December 1907:

[Oxford's] pedagogy is based on the principles of the craft guild; the principle that whoever has served his apprenticeship is a journeyman and fit to teach apprentices, and whoever has matured as a journeyman is, in turn, master over journeymen and a guardian of the profession. . . .

[T]he Oxford 'don' or tutor, as compared with the American type that boasts himself, Prometheus-like, 'a maker of men,' . . . would [never] think of inoculating a set of young men with a dangerous or contagious idea.⁸⁸

Locke did not have to rely on his tutors to plant dangerous or contagious ideas. He encountered plenty of these in the Cosmopolitan Club, where his discourse, presentations and editing of the group's journal were not only stimulating, but also formative. In addition, he wrote essays and short stories for outside publication. He immersed himself in rowing, riding, music, French language, and a heavy social calendar in his first year. Throughout his stay in Oxford he took full advantage of the six weeks between terms and sixteen-week summer vacations to travel with friends (and his mother in the summer) to London, Paris and beyond. Locke was a cultured Renaissance man, not a hermetic scholar. But his tutors were unimpressed. They described his academic work as "not strenuous."⁸⁹ Locke did not disagree. His own description of his progress toward his degree in 1907-1908 was a "year's hibernation."⁹⁰

Locke's difficulty in fitting into Oxford academically was not unusual for American Rhodes Scholars in the early 1900s. Among Locke's forty-five Rhodes classmates, about half received a low-rated (third or fourth class) degree or no degree at all. Only one received a first class degree.⁹¹ Locke's response to his academic unhappiness was to request a change to a B.Sc. in Philosophy, a degree that required the writing of a thesis, rather than tutorials and examinations. In May 1908, Locke's friend, Horace Kallen, introduced him to Dr. Ferdinand C. S. Schiller of Corpus Christi

member of Oxford's governing body, the Hebdomadal Council. Rev. H. H. Williams left Hertford in 1913 to become Principal of St. Edmund Hall.

College, whom Locke hoped would be his thesis supervisor. Locke sensed an immediate bond with Schiller, who had been born outside England, had done graduate work at Cornell and was aligned philosophically with Harvard's most famous philosopher, William James. By the end of their initial meeting, Locke and Schiller had agreed on a thesis title, "The Concept of Value," and even walked together to a lecture by William James—who was visiting from Harvard.

Despite Schiller's support, Locke's application to pursue the B.Sc. was turned down. His tutor at Hertford opposed the change, and his proposed thesis topic was seen as "frightfully unorthodox." But Locke persisted, and in October 1908 his request was approved.⁹² Within a month, however, Locke would lament that his academic work was now centered on "dull philosophy written in bad and involved German by Austrian Jew professors."⁹³ Unfortunately for Locke, he was assigned to a senior faculty supervisor, Professor J. Cook Wilson of New College, who may have been more a task master than a thought leader. This excerpt from a 1909 note written by Wilson to Locke shows a level of disdain and distrust (involving an assignment to write a paper on an Austrian philosopher) that probably swept any remaining enthusiasm from Alain Locke's academic life at Oxford:

I am so glad you have begun to try criticism of your authors, but I have not been able to make much of what you send me because your references are so vague and inaccurate that I have sometimes been unable to find the particular passage of your author which you have in view. Also you do not distinguish by inverted commas the criticisms you are borrowing and transcribing—at least not always . . . This [is] obviously unintentional on your part, but it is confusing.

Will you please 1) give the correct and accurate references to Ehrenfels . . . and 2) also put quotation marks on the passages which need them. Then please bring the paper back to me tomorrow (Saturday) at 11 o'clock, together with your own copy of Ehrenfels. I shall then be able to appraise what you have done.

Three decades later, Locke would write that he had not been treated fairly in his pursuit of the B.Sc. degree, but chose not to protest for fear of creating a race incident and damaging the opportunities of future African-American scholars:

I should have had to publicly complain of arbitrary forces or discrimination which so far as it related to Oxford academics and the degree examination itself was in my best judgment personal rather than racial,

but which would immediately have been construed as racial by public opinion. . . . I thus deliberately resorted to a strategic cover-up at great risk of personal honor and peace of mind. . . .⁹⁴

From his first term at Oxford, Locke had faced a dilemma: he had discovered that the ancient university was not an ideal place for him, and yet the prestige and financial value of his scholarship forced him to persevere. His dilemma was compounded by his status as the first African-American Rhodes Scholar. He knew that if he departed Oxford prematurely to pursue a degree elsewhere, he would cause harm to future black Rhodes Scholar candidates.* In 1909 he did consider resigning his Rhodes Scholarship—telling his mother three times within a year that he wanted to apply to the Sorbonne.⁹⁵ But he did not do so.

During his final Oxford term in 1910, Locke faced a calamity. He was brought up on charges in the Vice-Chancellor's Court related to unsatisfied obligations to local creditors. Locke's case was referred to Hertford College's governing body, which concluded that Locke had "no means of satisfying these claims" and gave him *four days* to leave the college.⁹⁶ In fact, Locke had been in severe financial difficulty for more than a year.† His final Rhodes stipend had been spent. He had to abandon his expensive digs and take up lodging with a family whose sons he had tutored. He even resorted to buying stock on margin—hoping for a quick gain—but incurred losses instead and ceased investing. And yet Locke continued a spending pattern that was sometimes extravagant. In March 1910, Locke purchased a new dinner jacket with Italian glissade sleeves and velvet collar, and a satin-lined Chesterfield coat.‡ The total of his liabilities was revealed a few months later, when he would apply for a loan of more than £600⁹⁷—equivalent to his full Rhodes stipend for two years.

* In 1909 Alain Locke showed that he already had an inkling of the drought to follow, when he wrote: "I don't think there will be a [Negro] Rhodes Scholar soon again though, do you?" AL to ML, MSRC, 164-57 (Apr. 29, 1909). During and after his time at Oxford, Locke's decisions were significantly affected by his intention not to prejudice the chances of future black Rhodes candidates. Otherwise "I should have had to bear the...blame of being largely responsible for the non-election of Negro candidates for these scholarships. . . ." MSRC, 161-141, Folder 3.

† Pixley Seme wrote to Locke from Amsterdam on Nov. 26, 1909, "I pray that you may be saved from proctors who lay about for you in the night and from tradesman who trouble you by day." PS to AL, MSRC, 164-84, Folder 35.

‡ Locke's March 1910 invoice from Standen & Co., an Oxford tailor specializing in "liveries, uniforms, riding habits and costumes" included: a single-breasted Chesterfield coat lined in black satin; a dinner jacket with silk facings, velvet collar and Italian Glissade sleeves; a double-breasted gray vest with smoke pearl buttons; two pairs of plated spun hose; and two rich silk fancy Lucerne ties. Locke paid the invoice in full in October 1910. MSRC 164-190, Folder 32.

While it was not uncommon for Americans to overextend their credit at Oxford, we find no evidence during this period that any other Rhodes Scholar was ejected from the university on these grounds.* Earlier at Harvard, Locke had faced similar money problems and was chastised for being delinquent on his accounts. Yet Harvard did not deny him the opportunity to pursue his degree. At Oxford in 1910, Locke does not appear to have been given time to work out a repayment plan while continuing in residence. Instead, on May 31, 1910, Hertford College instructed Locke to exit the university—and if he wanted to be considered for a degree, to send in his thesis by October 10, 1910.

As Locke's problems had begun to close in on him in March 1910, he had taken an extraordinary personal and financial risk. He drained his bank account to pay the cost of a round trip ticket to New York to present a proposal to Booker T. Washington. One imagines Locke pacing the deck of the *S.S. Mauritania* during a cold winter crossing—probably wearing his new Chesterfield coat—wondering if his six-week trip would keep him from completing his thesis on time.⁹⁸ Indeed, it would. But he was desperate to obtain Washington's support for a tour of the Middle East and Africa, where Locke had decided to undertake "a comparative study of the race problem." With Washington's endorsement, Locke hoped to raise \$5,000 to cover the expenses of the African venture, and repay the full amount from income from articles, lectures and books.⁹⁹ Unfortunately Booker T. Washington offered him no tangible support—and only a single introduction to a potential backer, who turned out not to be interested.¹⁰⁰ At a time when Alain Locke desperately needed help—for an ambitious plan to launch his career and solve his money problem at the same time—he came up dry.

It is hard to imagine a more painful end of a Rhodes Scholar's career at Oxford than Alain Locke experienced in 1910. For three years he had been shunned by most of his fellow American scholars. He had never found harmony with the academic system or his tutors and supervisors. He had been kicked out of Hertford College. We find no evidence that any tutor, professor, dean or representative of the Rhodes Trust or the univer-

* It was not unusual for American Rhodes Scholars to have difficulty managing budgets during this period. The Rhodes stipend had not been designed to cover extensive European travel between Oxford terms. Also, Oxford's booksellers, tailors, liveries and caterers were relaxed in extending credit to students, perhaps because most English students' unpaid obligations would be met by their families. Karl Karsten, the 1911 Rhodes Scholar who later headed the Washington chapter of the Association of American Rhodes Scholars, was hounded by Oxford creditors and solicitors for at least a year after he came down from Oxford. He repaid them quarterly from his subsequent salary. Karl Karsten Papers, Library of Congress, Box 217.

sity put an arm around his shoulder. Locke was left broke, alone and ashamed. He had never before failed in an academic pursuit. His creditors were still hounding him and his landlady had seized his property. His plan to devote himself to the world's "race problem" had not been supported by the most famous black man in America. And yet Alain Locke was still focused on his degree. He traveled to Berlin, completed his thesis, and submitted it before his October deadline—only to have it marked unsatisfactory and sent back in a cheap envelope.



Oxford may have quit on Alain LeRoy Locke, but Harvard did not. In April 1911, Locke received a letter from Harvard's philosophy chair, Ralph Barton Perry,* which surely warmed his heart: "I write simply to let you know that if you decide to return here next year you can count upon sufficient help. . . . We may be able to obtain a University Scholarship for you, and if not, the aid will be supplied from some other source."¹⁰¹ Locke decided instead to begin teaching at Howard University in Washington. But within a few years, he took up Harvard's offer. Abandoned by Oxford, Alain Locke earned his Ph.D. in philosophy at Harvard University in 1918.[†]

* Ralph Barton Perry wrote a biography of William James that won him a Pulitzer Prize.

† Not a single member of Alain Locke's 1907 American Rhodes class remained at Oxford for an advanced degree. Twelve members of his class earned Ph.D. degrees in the United States.

NOTES

1. Benjamin Karpman in "The Passing of Alain Leroy Locke," *Phylon* (1940-1956), Vol. 15, No. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1954), p. 249. *Phylon* was founded in 1940 by the black activist W. E. B. DuBois.
2. Jeffrey C. Stewart, "A Black Aesthete at Oxford," *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 34, Issue 3 (Autumn 1993), p. 411.
3. Karl Karsten, "Alain LeRoy Locke (1885-1954)," *The American Oxonian* (October 1954), vol. XLI, no. 4, p. 259.
4. Alain Leroy Locke, biographical fragment, Moorland Spingarn Research Center (MSRC), Howard University, 164-1, Folder 4.
5. Mary Locke bore another child who died before 1900. 1900 U.S. Census (Camden, NJ).
6. AL, biographical fragment, MSRC, 164-1, Folder 4. Information and quotations on Central High which follow may be found in Franklin S. Edmonds, ed., *Proceedings of the Dedication of the New Buildings of the Central High School of Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, c. 1910).
7. Even as a philosophy student at Oxford, Locke would continue to feel that he was competing against the literary rivals in his Harvard class. In 1909, Locke would write to his mother: "I must be hustling—Ned Sheldon who has written *Salvation Nell* for Mrs. Fiske was an intimate friend at Harvard, Van Wyck Brooks his companion has just published a book, Dickerman...is about to make his maiden appearance. I must really hurry up—mustn't I?" AL to ML, MSRC, 164-56 (Jan. 16, 1909).
8. In his splendid chapter, "The American Scholarships," in *The History of the Rhodes Trust*, David Alexander cites a 1908 Rhodes Trust report which stated that "the Committee had pretty well made up their mind" before seeing the candidates and discovering that the one with the strongest testimonials was a Negro. This Rhodes Trust report must have been incorrect—unless one hypothesizes that Locke's testimonial letter from the Harvard Dean never arrived in Pennsylvania. Anthony Kenny, ed., *The History of the Rhodes Trust*, 1902-1999, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 112.
9. Dean L. B. R. Briggs to Provost C. C. Harrison, Alain LeRoy Locke Papers, MSRC, 164-161 Folder 4 (Mar. 6, 1907). Secretary's statement, Committee for the Rhodes Scholarship from Pennsylvania, MSRC, 161-161, Folder 18.
10. "Fewer Lynchings: Record for 20 Years in the Last Six Months," *Boston Globe*, Mar. 12, 1907, p. 5.
11. Booker T. Washington to Samuel S. H. Washington, *The Booker T. Washington Papers* (Feb. 12, 1903).
12. Charles Boyd to George Parkin, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Nov. 21, 1904).
13. The author is grateful for the careful scholarship of Anthony Kenny, "The Rhodes Trust and Its Administration," pp. 6-7 and Alexander, "American Scholarships," pp. 110-113, in *History of Rhodes Trust*, ed., Anthony Kenny.
14. Kenny, "Rhodes Trust," p. 7.
15. Nova Scotia school teacher to AL, MSRC, 164-80, Folder 10 (Mar. 15, 1910); Pixley Seme to AL, MSRC, 164-84, Folder 33 (Mar. 14, 1907); *Boston Globe* (July 14, 1907), p. 30; William C. Bolivar, "Alain LeRoy Locke," *Church Review*, XXIV:1 (Jul. 1907), p. 19; Charles Dickerman to AL, MSRC, 164-25, Folder 1 (Mar. 12, 1907).

16. "A negro has won the Rhodes scholarship," *The Evening Post*, New York, March 13, 1907, p. 6.
17. "Oxford Prize for Colored Student," *Philadelphia Record* (Mar. 13, 1907), p. 9.
18. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-53 (Mar. 19, 1907).
19. ML to AL, MSRC, 164-53 (Mar. 13 & Apr. 2, 1907).
20. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-47, Folder 4 (undated; written in late Jan. or early Feb. 1907).
21. ML to AL, MSRC, 164-47, Folder 4 (undated letter, Jan. 1907).
22. Milton R. Konvitz, "Horace Meyer Kallen (1882-1974): Philosopher of the Hebraic-American Idea," *American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol. 75 (1974-75), pp. 55-80.
23. Sarah Schmidt, "A Conversation with Horace M. Kallen," *Reconstructionist*, Vol. 41:8 (Nov. 1975), pp. 28-33.
24. Horace M. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 54:5 (Feb. 28, 1957), pp. 119-127.
25. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-54 (Apr. 19, 1907).
26. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-54 (May 3, 1907).
27. Kallen, "Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122.
28. The letter from W. T. Harris to Dr. George Parkin in Rhodes Trust File 1122 (May 22, 1907) is described by David Alexander in "American Scholarships," p. 112.
29. Francis Wylie, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Mar. 23, 1907).
30. Francis Wylie, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Mar. 14, 1907).
31. Roseberry to Boyd, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Mar. 22, 1907). Cited by Kenny, "Rhodes Trust," p. 7.
32. Francis Wylie, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Apr. 6, 1907).
33. Leonard Harris, "'Outing' Alain L. Locke: Empowering the Silenced," *Sexual Identities, Queer Politics*, ed. Mark Blasius (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 338.
34. George Parkin, Report on Qualifying Examination 1908. See Alexander, "American Scholarships," p. 111.
35. Roseberry to Boyd, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Mar. 22, 1907). Cited in Kenny, "Rhodes Trust," p. 7.
36. Francis Wylie, Rhodes Trust File 1122 (Apr. 22, 1907).
37. "[A]ll the colleges concerned are closed to any more Rhodes Scholars." FW to AL, MSRC, 164-80, Folder 13 (May 21, 1907).
38. Hertford College, *Minutes of the Governing Body, 1874-1929* (June 14, 1907), p. 324.
39. FW to AL, MSRC, 164-80, Folder 13 (May 21, 1907).
40. FW to AL, Folder 13 (May 4, 1907).
41. PS to AL, MSRC, 164-84, Folder 33 (May 30, 1907).
42. Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain 1901-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp. 147-154. Pixley Seme's immigration to the U.S. in 1898 is documented in the 1900 U.S. Census for Saratoga Springs, NY, where he worked as a hotel bellman.
43. J. Arthur Harley to AL, MSRC, 164-33, Folder 56 (Mar. 12, 1907).

44. James Arthur Harley joined Pixley Seme at Jesus College. He received one of Oxford's first research diplomas for his work on Japanese Shintoism in 1909, after dropping his pursuit of a B.Litt. in Theology. See "Diploma students in Anthropology, University of Oxford 1907-1945," Pitt Rivers Museum, Relational Database, <http://history.prm.ox.ac.uk>.
45. Van Wyck Brooks, *Scenes and Portraits: Memories of Childhood and Youth* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), p. 123.
46. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-54 (Apr. 14, 1907).
47. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-54 (May 3, 1907).
48. Philadelphia City Directory, 1890.
49. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-53 (June 3, 1907).
50. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-47, Folder 2 (undated; written in Mar. 1906).
51. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-47, Folder 4 (undated; written in Jan.-Feb. 1907).
52. Harvard College, Class of 1908, Secretary's Second Report (June 1914), p. 207.
53. Henry Holt to AL, MSRC, 164-37, Folder 4 (Mar. 15, 1907).
54. Alain LeRoy Locke, "Oxford Contrasts," *The Independent* (Jul. 15, 1909), p. 142.
55. Betty Lacy McClure, *Sermons Without Notes: Benjamin Rice Lacy, Jr. 1886-1981* (privately published, 1994), p. 9.
56. Kallen, "Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122.
57. Louis Dyer was the author of *Oxford as it is; being a guide to rules of collegiate residence and university requirements for degrees, prepared for students in the United States of North America and in British colonies*, (London and New York: McMillan & Co., 1902), published for the American Club of Oxford.
58. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55, Folder 19 (undated fragment, Dec. 1907).
59. *Ibid.*, 164-228.
60. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-56, Folder 17.
61. MSRC, 164-160, Folder 21.
62. Jeffrey Conrad Stewart, *A Biography of Alain Locke, Philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance, 1886-1930*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1979), p. 115.
63. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-57, Folder 2.
64. *Ibid.*, 164-55, Folder 19 (undated fragment dated Dec. 1907).
65. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122.
66. FW to AL, MSRC, 164-80, Folder 13.
67. Francis Wylie, *The First Fifty Years of the Rhodes Trust and the Rhodes Scholarships, 1903-1953*, Lord Elton, ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), pp. 99-100.
68. Alexander, "The American Scholarships," p. 112.
69. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Apr. 7, 1908).
70. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-57 (May 19, 1909).
71. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Feb. 20, 1908).
72. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Apr. 7, 1908).

73. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Feb. 20, 1908).
74. The will of Cecil Rhodes is reproduced in Appendix II of Kenny, *The History of Rhodes Trust*.
75. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55, Folder 18 (no date, Dec. 1907).
76. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Feb. 20, 1908).
77. Charles A. Keith, *Fast Balls and College Halls: An Autobiography*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1960). Keith was a school teacher who also played professional baseball in Little Rock before his selection as a Rhodes Scholar.
78. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Dec. 1, 1907).
79. MSRC, 164-160, Folders 7 & 20; AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55, Folder 43.
80. Based on prices listed in Lodging Houses Licensed for Easter Term 1908, MSRC, 164-160, Folder 8.
81. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-56 (Oct. 31, 1908).
82. PP to AL, MSRC, 164-77, Folder 26 (Jan 9, 1911).
83. Dates, speakers and topics for Cosmopolitan Club meetings from 1907 to 1910 are located in MSRC, 164-161, Folder 10 and 164-165, Folder 5.
84. From a "psychograph" written by Locke to accompany his article, "Values and Imperatives," in *American Philosophy*, edited by Kallen and Hook. Marcus Garvey was a radical leader of the Pan-African movement who urged blacks to return to Africa.
85. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-56 (Oct. 31, 1909).
86. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55 (Dec. 1, 1907).
87. Lecture and tutorial assignments, Michaelmas Term 1907, MSRC, 164-160, Folder 19.
88. Locke, "Oxford Contrasts," *The Independent*, pp. 139-140.
89. Alain Locke's personal file, Rhodes Trust Archives.
90. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-55, Folder 2 (marked Oct. 3, 1907, but in fact 1908).
91. *A Register of Rhodes Scholars, 1903-1981* (Rhodes Trust, 1981).
92. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-56 (Oct. 21 and 31, 1908).
93. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-56 (Nov. 11, 1908).
94. Alain LeRoy Locke, holograph, MSRC, 161-141, Folder 3. The page is undated, probably written in the 1930s.
95. AL to ML, MSRC, 164-56 (Jan. 16, 1909) and 164-57 (Feb. 20, 1909).
96. Hertford College, *Minutes of the Governing Body, 1874-1929*, p. 362.
97. Colin Grafton to AL, MSRC, 164-190, Folder 32 (Jul. 26, 1910). Grafton responded to Locke's inquiry: "re:- Personal Loan of £600/700. . . . I shall be pleased to arrange this Loan. . . ."
98. Locke wrote to his mother, "The main thing is to . . . work on [my thesis] at home . . . so the trip will not prejudice my chances for a degree—of course if I fail, I can re-present to them when I wish." AL to ML, MSRC, 164-58, Folder 19.
99. Over several years, Locke had received informal offers of future employment in Philadelphia and New York City schools and at Howard and Wilberforce Universities, two

predominantly black institutions. He was not inclined to pursue these because they were low-paying and probably beneath his horizon.

100. AL to BTW, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Library of Congress (Mar. 16, 1910 and Jun. 15, 1910).

101. Ralph Barton Perry to AL, MSRC, 164-34, Folder 26 (Apr. 4 and 11, 1911).

OXFORD CONTRASTS

BY ALAIN LEROY LOCKE*
(Pennsylvania and Hertford '07)

[Mr. Locke is the first Negro to win a Rhodes scholarship. He won the honor when a senior at Harvard in competitive examination over seven contestants. His father was a lawyer and his mother a public school teacher. This article was written last year while Mr. Locke was in his first term at Oxford. He comes from Philadelphia.—EDITOR.]

IT cannot be too strongly emphasized at the very outset that what follow are but sketchy impressions of Oxford and Oxford life, based upon only a term's residence and observation; a period just long enough, it may be said in apology, for one to have corrected one's preconceptions, on the one hand, and not yet have contracted any bias or prejudices on the other. Oxford to most Americans, to tourists in general, the Oxford of the summer vacation is little more than a heap of legends and a pile of stones; they go very well together—legends and stones—and deceive only those whom they puzzle. But the real Oxford, the living society of term time, is puzzling only on the closest scrutiny, and in proportion as one is undeceived; for it is, indeed, the most baffling of paradoxes. All appearances to the contrary, Oxford life is not medieval, but most modern; while it is Oxford thought, Oxford ideals of education that both seem to be and ought to be modern, which are, to my way of thinking at least, most medieval. These two significant facts, with the several significant contrasts they make between Oxford and American universities, are all that this article can attempt to sketch, and that only in barest outline.

Certainly the most fundamental, tho not the most evident, difference, a contrast hard to appreciate from an American viewpoint doubtless, is the simple fact that this great English university is a society of scholars, a

* Published in *The Independent* (July 15, 1909, pp. 139-142), a weekly magazine of arts, letters and politics founded in 1848. This essay was reprinted with acknowledgment several months later, under the title of "Oxford: By a Negro Student", in *The Colored American Magazine* (September, 1909, pp. 185-190). The Editor's note above is that of the Editor of *The Independent* and appeared in the original publication; original spelling and punctuation have been maintained.

scholar-craft for the perpetuation rather than for the extension of learning, for the maintenance of its dignity as a class profession more than for its dissemination either as an institutional or popular heritage. Wherefore it follows—as the night the day perhaps, yet quite as inevitably, that the typical Oxonian is neither a philosopher nor an educationalist in ours or the German sense of the terms. For the typical Oxonian's philosophy is a philosophy of manners, ethics of the Aristotelian sort rather than a system of thought or even a systematization of knowledge; and his pedagogy is based upon the principle of the craft-guild, the principle that whoever has served his apprenticeship is a journeyman and fit to teach apprentices, and whoever has matured as a journeyman is, in turn, master over journeymen and a guardian of the profession. This is why the ability to parse Greek sentences is thought to imply the ability to teach the parsing of Greek sentences. And why also a master's degree is conferred for four years further enrollment upon the university books after graduation, a sufficient time, in all reason, for the discipline of the undergraduate *régime* to have ripened into character, or as some one has facetiously put it, just time enough for a man to have recovered the mastery of himself.

Both the inherent excellence and defect of Oxford as an educational system seem to center here. Because his philosophy is a philosophy of manners, and the discipline of study goes hand in hand with the discipline of living, the typical Oxonian is inevitably a man of culture—a man whose learning bears same vital relation to his life. Because his theory and practice of education is the theory and practice of a craft, the typical Oxonian's learning is his own private property by which he makes his living or maintains his social standing, and which he finally bequeaths to his sons. That is to say he is neither by temperament nor by force of social obligation a teacher. The Oxford professor is very like the professional type the world over, but the Oxford "don" or tutor, as compared with an American type that boasts himself, Prometheus-like, "a maker of men," is very like a prudent gardener who relies a prayerful lot on the sun, and the wind, and the rain—on his system and the natural laws of growth. Not that he isn't painstaking and watchful, but he would as soon think of inoculating a set of young men with a dangerous or contagious idea as a gardener of pouring worms in his garden; as soon think of reversing the natural, logical, traditional order of exposition or of altering the perspective to inspire interest and enthusiasm, as a gardener of planting a bulb upside down. And, again, an Oxford man who goes out to teach would hardly go out with the idea of making little Oxfords over England, but of selecting and making little Oxonians, orienting them toward the great

Mecca of their fathers. Education at Oxford, in brief, influences and influences for life everyone who becomes a part of its corporate life. This is its excellence. But the same system gives Oxford a sort of religious dominance over the province of knowledge that certainly makes the right to teach, and too often the right to be taught a matter of apostolic succession, and excommunicates all education that does not subordinate itself as directly preparatory to that system. This is its defect: both excellence and defect are medieval.

These statements will seem unkind and adverse to those who think it a reproach to be called medieval—but by such Oxford never can be understood or appreciated. It is more serious that they will seem unjust and untrue to many who are familiar with the slow but persistent progress of university reform at Oxford. Is not Oxford, such men will say, the source of the movement for the extension of university teaching? She has established, and maintains in flourishing condition, an elaborate system of research degrees. It is a matter of commonplace that the honor school of history is becoming so popular as almost to dispute the traditional ascendancy of the school of the humanities. Then there is the new movement in the study of sociology, the diploma system, the recently proposed engineering department, and the promising Curzon fund for the express furtherance of university aims and development.

But notwithstanding all this, the contention is that Oxford is still medieval; not, indeed, because the Oxford system is antiquated, but because the typical Oxonian's ideas of the purposes and privileges and ideals of education are. University reforms seem like the yielding of the outer walls, while deep within the old *régime* flourishes with greater intensity because of its restrictions—indeed, with the religious intensity and fervor of a beleaguered city of the elect. And the greatest misfortune is that what was once a society is fast becoming a sect. There are circles in Oxford still where, if Truth is an open book, it is like those books of childhood memory, too heavy for youthful knees, and opened only on the maternal lap. In those same circles, an instructor is an intermediiator rather than a guide; and a library a precious granary stored against intellectual famine, and not a mint and exchange for the currency of modern thought; and there, too, scholastic distinction means social privilege more than simply certified skill or attainment.

The usual, trite criticisms of Oxford are as unfair as they are unreasonable. Oxford is above all else consistent, and one must either take issue with the system or with nothing at all. It is foolish, for instance, to charge Oxonians with pedantry, granting their contention that the best thought

is impersonal, and that a first-class mind is like a first-water diamond, colorless and transparent. Again, from a certain point of view, dignity is superciliousness; and craftsecrets, charlatanism; and an aristocracy of learning, which Oxford is indeed, must needs seem wrong side out if viewed from the outside. This is what is meant by saying that Oxford is medieval, and that it must some day face, not reforms but reform; that is to say, be challenged as a system. And that day, to the lasting and reasonable regret of many Oxonians, Oxford will probably choose to become modern.

But once this ancient tradition, that every one admits to be one of the most effective and desirable of educative influences, is driven out of scholarship, where will it take refuge? It is to be hoped in university customs and social life, where it is supposed even now to be rooted, but is so only nominally. Oxford social life is a remarkably well-seasoned and well-working system, rather paternal, it is true, but one where every university function, every university custom is both the occasion and the cause of some little bit of wholesome social life. Even when the difficulties of American contrasts are met and the social antipodes meet, the system by no means breaks down; and under the usual English conditions of more or less approximation to one scale or standard of living among college men, it is or should be the great paradigm to American universities. For one of the greatest of our university problems, I take it, is to make the social life of students the corporate life of the university, and so to equalize its contrasts and fraternize its so-called fraternities as to make it worthy of a single name. Intercollegiate sports in which the public cannot take sufficient interest to seriously intrude itself upon undergraduate life are another thing that should be our present envy and despair. Some would claim that our American college debate brings students enough into contact with non-academic life and problems to anticipate all charges of intellectual provincialism. But the English equivalent, a sort of mock parliament, has the additional advantage of being the direct preparation for civic usefulness our debate is supposed to be. Our average college debating is as good a training for open—that is to say public—mindedness as football is for healthy, normal living.

But to call Oxford social life effective does not gainsay our contention that it is not what it is supposed to be, a noteworthy survival of medievalism. It is of all things most modern. There are the old customs, the old forms, it is true. The very same that seem so “medieval and quaint” to the tourist, are so formally observed as to have little or no meaning. The living conventions of Oxford social life are the fashions and customs of the English “public” or preparatory schools. It is rather disillusioning, for in-

stance, to hear in connection with the gown-wearing custom that every night scores of undergraduates run the risk of losing five shillings rather than be bothered by them, and that the university administration thinks the temptation so natural as to count upon its being profitable—and finding it so. Money fines and dispensations, which are quite the rule at Oxford, have marked the disintegration of medieval codes of discipline before this. And when medievalism has been driven out of scholarship it will have ample work to do, filling with the true spirit of reverence and tradition the observance of what are now largely formal conventions of student life and custom. This superiority Oxford will always have over most American universities, however, that it is a place of select retirement, so necessary—since a place of preparation is necessarily a place apart—the one thing that may ultimately keep the urban American university from being the home of scholarship, of beauty and repose.

Tho much of the beauty of Oxford is latent in its mouldering stones and the conventional observance of its own traditions, there is one beauty of tradition that is its chief charm—of great antiquity and slow growth, and therefore as yet almost below the horizon for our more westerly prospects. It is the beauty of impersonal service that only the oldest and most sanctified of institutions can command. There is in the teaching and in the living of Oxford a self-effacement that almost seems to be self-sacrifice until one reflects how human and dignified and well-proportioned it is withal in its very humility. It consecrates even the most aristocratic of all aims, self-culture, and makes one wish democracy did not need to be so blatant, so self-assertive—but it does need to be.

But what is the point of all this contrast, all this that one calls the paradox of Oxford? The simple fact that Oxford is a place worthy of the respect of all, the thinking consideration of many, the pilgrimage of some. Further that Oxford and American universities are so different that, in the main, the faults of the one are the virtues of the other and vice versa. There is a class of men, the American Rhodes scholars, whom these contrasts vitally concern, and in conclusion a word concerning them.

It has often been remarked that the credit, given for three or four years, as the case may be, in American universities, is very slight, and to those who know that socially and in all college as distinguished from university matters the Rhodes man becomes a “fresher commoner,” even this credit seems merely nominal. But what else can it be if Oxford is such a craft-guild of learning? The very essence of its discipline is that the journeyman should have been an apprentice, and the master, a journeyman, and that the generations of the craft should have grown up beside each

other. In such a system there is no anticipating the first or any intermediate stage. And then again does it follow that, because the defects of the American system are the virtues of the English, the finished Rhodes man is the well-rounded man public opinion expects him to be, the perfect circle logic makes him out? By no means. If he has served his time and purpose well, he will be, I take it, a man whose sympathies are wider than his prejudices, whose knowledge is larger than his beliefs, his work and his hopes greater than he himself. He will be an ideal type—a rare type, indeed—a patriotic cosmopolitan. The representativeness of a Rhodes man is often spoken of in diplomatic terms—and it is in a sense a diplomatic mission with this difference be it added for prospective Rhodes men: Whereas the cash value of the diplomat is earned in his own country, and his credit-value good currency abroad; the Rhodes man will find that his paper value presented to him in his commission, so to speak, is at home, and his title to it, indeed his title to any exceptional consideration whatsoever must be earned at Oxford.

There is one more contrast, one which it is my privilege to have observed as a personal experience, that is mentioned with greater deference to a sense of duty than to its own private claims. To one who has lived upon the cleavage-plane of so great a class distinction as that of races in America, distinctions are marvelously subtle things, they are so broad as sometimes to seem ridiculously unreal self-contradictory, yet they manage to evade the keen edge of logic which splits a hair instead. And real as they are, they are too often due to defective eyesight all round. In a land of class distinctions, distinctions which have taxed my blunt democratic vision, I have found no race distinctions, and better still in cultured circles no race curiosity. While in America, where they boast of having no class distinctions, there are both race distinctions, and a certain strange race-curiosity which most optimistically interpreted is a forerunner of race-sympathies and understandings. What is there left to say but to repeat what has been said before—the faults of one system are often the virtues of another, and vice versa? There is something more, however. I shall not speak of individual preferences—they mean little, for wherever a man consents to live there, I take it, he is satisfied or ought to be—or else values some other things he possesses actually or in prospect above his self-satisfaction. But racially, I prefer disfavor and that most proverbial and effective of disciplines, persecution even, to indifference. One cannot be neutral toward a class or social body without the gravest danger of losing one's own humanity in denying to someone else the most human of all rights, the right to be considered either a friend or an enemy, either as

helpful or harmful. So for the good of every one concerned, I infinitely prefer race prejudice to race indifference. Further than this, I believe that we, with our ten million odd problems, each solving his own and then, if need be, helping solve his neighbors', will have completed our gigantic task, before the sixty million combined will have come to terms with that one stubborn, irreducible fraction they call "the race-problem." And then, in shame and annoyance, they will wash the scribbled slate clean, and begin all over again—it is to be hoped, on the next problem. It is a far cry from this to Oxford, but not as far as from Oxford to this.

HERTFORD COLLEGE, OXFORD

THE RHODES SCHOLAR QUESTION*

BY ALAIN LEROY LOCKE
(Pennsylvania and Hertford '07)

THE Rhodes bequest is a huge and unique educational experiment, an experiment of which the proper results and lasting effects may never be directly felt or ascertained at Oxford. It is doubtful even that it was the original intention that these results should be Oxford results, and still more doubtful that they are to be correctly judged or adequately estimated from the Oxford point of view and from Oxford opinion. The criticism that has recently been made in these columns about Rhodes scholars at Oxford, particularly about the Americans, has ignored or neglected this important point. The fact among others that in the eyes of these critics the Colonials alone seem to have found favor suggests that as much of the criticism as was not made in terms of immediate results and benefits to Oxford was passed from the point of view of a narrow imperialism. Imperial in the best sense of the word the Rhodes scheme certainly is but it was not meant to denationalize or expatriate. Moreover it was intended that in the interests of ulterior results and further understandings a certain international courtesy and tolerance even should prevail. Such criticism, even if true, prevents this, and presuming it well intentioned, defeats its main object.

To exact semi-diplomatic qualifications and to expect international results from university scholarships is to expect and demand a great deal; but this was the imperative hope of Cecil Rhodes. Public opinion expects and demands of the Rhodes scholar what the founder hoped would be the final result and influence of his institution. It calls upon young men,

* See the accompanying reprint of an October 11, 1910 column, "The Americans at Oxford," from the London *Daily Mail*, for a description of an English controversy over American Rhodes Scholars that probably induced Locke to write and submit this piece for publication. The *Daily Mail* article spawned a series of letters and columns on both sides of the Atlantic, including, for example, "Rhodes Scholars Resent 'An Oxford Man's' Attack," in the *New York Times*, October 16, 1910. "The Rhodes Scholar Question" was transcribed by Jack Zoeller from an undated handwritten document in the Alain Locke Papers at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center of Howard University, Box 164-125, Folder 21. Reprinted by kind permission of Howard University's Moorland-Springarn Research Center.

training to become representative, to play the role of diplomats; and expects young students, engaged primarily in the task of educating themselves, to confront national bias, eradicate national prejudice, and educate nations to mutual good will and understanding. Whereas the Rhodes idea, in its original and deeper intentions, was that the Rhodes scholar should play this part and exert this influence in his own country and as a result of his training and experience as a Rhodes scholar. To expect it of him immediately and in England is to some extent to deprive him of the opportunities of developing such power and capacity, and robs the scholarships of some of their educational value. It is just such popular misconstructions and expectations, particularly as reflected in the much discussed attitude of the English undergraduate, which more than any other factor in the situation threatens the ultimate success as well as the more immediate execution of the Rhodes purposes. If anything more or different had been originally intended, the Rhodes foundation should have been, and would have been no doubt, an exchange system. And it might well, in that event, have included some professors and parliamentarians as well.

If, of course, the attitudes of the English undergraduate and the American Rhodes scholars are temperamental reactions for which neither is wholly to blame, the situation is unfortunate but chronic. If, however, as it would seem, though mutual they are mistaken notions, and arise mostly out of preconceptions, there is both blame and remedy for the situation. As much as follows however is explanatory, and neither accusation nor apology. It is only fair to point out that the preconceptions which may and sometimes do prejudice the relations of Rhodes students and Oxford undergraduates arise more out of their specific attitudes toward each other as "Rhodesters" and as "undergrads" than out of any natural antipathies or misunderstandings as Americans and Englishmen. The first and most important of these is that already mentioned, it is an attitude toward the Rhodes scholar which sounds the national note too early, and a high expectation of the corporate results which expressed as an immediate demand upon the individual scholar operates too often as a handicap and an infringement of his personal rights and responsibilities. It is unfortunately easier on this account to get along at Oxford as a foreigner attending at his own expense and initiative than as a holder of a Rhodes scholarship. Perhaps it should be so, but at all events it is.

The trouble of these and other handicaps is that they are meant to tell in the long run, but usually result in a false start. At Oxford a foreigner is particularly liable to a false start, and nowhere perhaps is the first impres-

sion so fatal and so difficult to correct or revise. Nobody is keener at detecting a mental reservation or such inflexibility of judgment than the American. Though used to snap judgment, he is used also to changing it quickly and radically, and judges form and matter, manners and character, separately and apart. Oxford judges differently; especially undergraduate opinion. The latter often judges a man by the way he walks into court, and the typical American reaction upon noticing this is conducive to immediate contempt of court. Another initial mistake too often made at Oxford is to inform the stranger that he has broken an unwritten law, and by means of a frozen and silent ridicule that is painful. Especially harmful is this because the American is really sensitive at points where the Englishman thinks him most obtuse. The sensitive spots in national characters differ, and the typical American has an elephantine memory and sensitiveness to such pin pricks. Every English school boy on the contrary has become inured to the refined cruelties of gossip and ridicule at his public school; he has learned there as well the gentle art of concealing his true individuality under an outward show of conformity, and above all acquired the ability to live in a glass hive like a bee. These public school virtues are not usually developed at an American school, and for the American not to have them is hardly a moral fault or a character defect.

When such initial difficulties grow into permanent differences, the matter becomes serious. Both sides are no doubt to blame when this happens, but on the side of the American it must be said that his attitude is more of a reaction upon the attitude of the English undergraduate, than a direct misunderstanding. For the friendships that spring up often avoid the difficulties and do not remove them. This is due to two causes. The corporate personality of the American is really very vulnerable, and he armor-plates himself at his sensitive points. This accentuates his national peculiarities and makes them more stubborn. The English temperament if more pliable is more subtle, for it makes mental reservations about foreigners, and in making friendships even makes them by way of exceptions and as concessions. To be complimented as different from one's compatriots, or as different even from what has been expected of you, is rather unacceptable to the American disposition, but they are English ways of expressing high approval in these matters. The American no doubt has his corresponding faults; it is a great pity, however, that being opposite they should lead to opposition and not to mutual correction. Chief among our faults are our preconceptions about Oxford itself. American ideas of Oxford and Oxford life are on the whole very erroneous, and their disillusionment amounts to disappointment, though it should not. In this re-

spect ex-Rhodes scholars can be of great service to their successors, and will be no doubt. There too often the publicity attaching to the Rhodes appointment leads young Americans to expect a different reception from that which they receive. The apparent indifference of Oxford conceals a tender and almost too solicitous paternalism, something the American does not quite appreciate at the beginning or understand in the end, largely because he is older and has already had one college course. Most especially does he not understand this paternalism in its most well intentioned moments; for then it appears to him to patronize and to condescend.

Most important of all, there is a fundamental difference between the American and English university codes which amounts practically to different ethics. For example, this talk of doing one's duty to the college tinges quite unpleasantly for an American some of the most natural and voluntary acts of student life. The spontaneousness of American college life is a thing unknown in England, and an American student hardly ever thinks of his studies or his games as duties to his college. When he thinks of them as obligations, he thinks of them as duties toward himself, and the American code fosters this attitude as carefully as the English system cherishes the reverse. An American's debt to his college is thought of as discharged later in life, his duty to his college begins strictly speaking when he leaves, he must send good men up, must help support and endow his college, must keep up his college affiliations, help his classmates and be of public services. To become a successful, representative and helpful alumnus is the American ideal. Along with this go many other important differences: a different attitude toward studies, sport, his teachers and his fellow students. At the start at least allowances should be made for the differences, for none more particularly than for the American student conventions that membership in the same school is an open introduction to everybody, and that any similar college interest is a basis for immediate and friendly relations.

The unkindest criticism in the present state of affairs is that of the Rhodes scholars' devotion to continental travel. If the conditions at Oxford tend to heighten, as is claimed, the peculiarly American characteristics and intensify the English traits as well, then travel is the only corrective and is essential to save one of the main ideas of the bequest, the eradication of provincialism and national bias. One does not infer that this is the reason of the American's devotion to travel, however, for the idea of travel as itself a liberal and liberalizing education is a fundamental and popular American idea. Few would care to deny that as put into prac-

tice by the average Rhode scholar travel, and sight-seeing even, become serious business and hard work.

Finally, to give more than it receives in exchange ought to be the natural function of any university, and to raise the question of Oxford's immediate benefit is harmful. There is no doubt that as a class the Rhodes scholars could take away more and give more in exchange if public and undergraduate opinion were less prone to generalize about them and upon them. For as we have seen hasty and premature judgment about the individual because of the nation and the group to which he belongs is the root of the difficulty. It ends, as such criticism does, in hasty generalizations about Americans and Rhodes scholars. It is true that the Rhodes scholar is sent to make such hasty judgments impossible and unnecessary, and to help educate Oxford in these respects is perhaps his own greatest chance of himself acquiring these desirable traits. But his primary aim and obligation it should be remembered is not this. It is to acquire at Oxford and abroad generally a liberal education, and to continue subsequently the Rhodes mission throughout life and in his own country. If once more it should prove impossible for nations to understand one another as nations, then, as Goethe said, they must learn to tolerate each other as individuals.

Daily Mail (London) October 11, 1910, p. 6

THE AMERICANS AT OXFORD*

AN UNFULFILLED BEQUEST

By AN OXFORD MAN

MR. Cecil Rhodes, one of the greatest of patriots, established one hundred and seventy-nine scholarships at the University of Oxford. These scholarships are divided among the United States of America, the Colonies, and Germany, the preponderance being given to America. His conviction was that "a good understanding between England, Germany and the United States of America will secure the peace of the world, and educational relationships form the strongest tie."

His provisions as to the type of man who should be elected to these scholarships were sound and well thought out. The men were to be chosen not entirely for their literary and scholastic attainments, but also for their "fondness for and success in manly outdoor sports, qualities of manhood, truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindliness, unselfishness, and fellowship." In other words, Mr. Rhodes wished that the best men in the different countries should be awarded the advantages which he offered, and, by their free intermingling with the undergraduates of Oxford, bring about the success of the scheme he had at heart.

TAKING, BUT NOT GIVING

It is a thousand pities that under existing conditions the spirit of the bequest is not complied with. Against the Colonials and Germans there is nothing to be said; they do associate with the rest of the undergraduates, and are with and of them. As regards the American, however, it is different. He does not entirely fulfil his part of the contract. He takes from Oxford everything that she has to give, and withholds from her anything that

* This anonymous article was not written by Locke, but was part of the contemporary English public controversy to which Locke's essay "The Rhodes Scholar Question" was a response. See introductory note, p. 232 *supra*, for a further explanation.

may be in his power to give in return. It would naturally seem that if the men selected by the executors came within measurable distance even of the high standard set up in the bequest, that fact alone would have guaranteed the execution and success of Mr. Rhodes's idea. Either, however, there are no men in America possessed of the various "qualities of manhood" quoted above or, once having succeeded in obtaining the scholarship, all idea of carrying out their obligations go by the board.

The American Rhodes scholar becomes an undergraduate of Oxford only in so far as the wearing of a cap and gown and the obtaining of athletic honours permit. For the rest, he keeps himself to himself and seeks to know nothing of his English surroundings and fellow undergraduates, nor to impart any of the ideas and opinions of his own country for their discussion, approval, or disapproval. That the American scholar should be one of the Oxford undergraduates, should join in their social life, should make friends with them, should become, in fact, their brother during their three years at the university, was always the root idea of the bequest.

He does none of these things. By the foundation of the American Club in Oxford all possibility of his fulfilling these objects is destroyed, and from the first moment of his arrival till the time of his departure the American Rhodes scholar makes friends only with his compatriots.

IS IT THE FAULT OF OXFORD?

It may be argued that this is Oxford's fault, that they who are on the ground make no advances to the stranger at their gates, that they remain cold, reserved, and unresponsive. This is not by any means the case. On the contrary, they go out of their way to make him feel at home, finding out in what he excels, cultivating it, and giving him the advantages of opportunity and encouragement.

In spite of this, the American does not make friends. Of course, this does not mean that there is open enmity, or even friction, between him and the Englishman. This is not implied for a moment; but, in fact, he never gets beyond a nodding acquaintance with him. After the first week in Oxford the words "British insularity" are murmured with an accompanying shrug of the shoulders, and the American retires into his shell – the club – where he reads American papers, discusses American politics, sings American songs, and might, indeed, just as well be back in America for all the good he does to himself or to Oxford.

The only point in which he carries out the spirit of the bequest is in the field of athletics. Here he shows himself to be thoroughly well at

home, though sometimes in a manner which raises grave doubts in English minds as to his comprehension of the word sportsmanship. But at least he is of use to Oxford, for his excellence gains him the coveted "Blue" and is of material assistance to Oxford in her friendly, though none the less determined, rivalry against the sister university.

It would have been reasonable to suppose that here was the opening through which he might get to know and mix with the undergraduates, that by his association with them in athletics he would have arrived at an understanding of their minds and characters, have made friends with them and furthered the idea of the Rhodes bequest. It is not so, however. Although Oxford cannot on any grounds be accused of the idea, the American seems to retain in his mind the fact that he is a stranger, and that therefore Englishmen will be inclined towards "favouritism" to their countrymen, and, in consequence, the feeling of antagonism, however slight, remains as a barrier between him and them, and completely fills up this possible opening. It is only necessary to look through the lists of university representatives to be perfectly satisfied, from the ever-increasing number of Americans who figure therein, that any suspicion of favouritism is impossible.

THE BRITISH UNDERGRADUATE'S ATTITUDE

It cannot be suggested that students of British origin do not try to break down this barrier. They look upon the American who belongs, for example, to their particular college as a friend. In the English treatment of him there is nothing abnormal, nothing in any way different from the ordinary treatment meted out to ordinary British undergraduates. He is, in short, one of them, and treated as such. And yet the American does not, or will not, begin to understand the English or fraternise with them or look upon them as anything but acquaintances. It is all the more strange when looking to the fact that many, if not most, of the Rhodes scholars are graduates of American universities, where the spirit of "brotherhood" is carried almost to excess by the numerous "alumni" and "fraternities" with which all American universities abound.

The American Rhodes scholar receives three hundred pounds a year wherewith to defray his university expenses. This means that the various items of undergraduate life in Oxford should be covered by this sum. The Rhodes scholar, however, contends that expensive journeys in first-class saloon cabins to the ends of the earth in vacations should also be paid out of this annual allowance. Consequently he keeps his Oxford expenses

down to the minimum, and does no more entertaining than he can possibly help in order that, as soon as term is over, he may shake the dust of Oxford off his feet and explore the nooks and crannies of the civilised and uncivilised parts of the world. Does this benefit Oxford? Is this in the spirit of the scholarship?

Cecil Rhodes's bequest is therefore abused. The spirit of his wishes is disregarded. The American Rhodes scholar neither forms the strong tie of educational relationship with us nor, under the existing conditions, will he ever bring about between England and the United States of America the good understanding which will secure the peace of the world.