

INTRODUCTION

By EDWIN H. CADY

WHEN THE OLD "New Criticism" was fresh and dewy, it was perceived that a useful way to look at works of literature was to pretend that they had no history but existed as "pure" objects. For certain uses of esthetic realization, that "New-Critical" fiction about "absolute" literature was effective; and surely in literary criticism techniques are justified by results. Just as surely, it is sophomoric to raise by generalizing any technique, no matter how useful, to the majesty of law. So, it seems to me, were all the efforts to bar historical considerations from literary study. The attack on "the Intentional Fallacy" was itself a fine example of the fallacy of the unitary generalization.

The foregoing is a technical and academic way of setting the stage to say that when I heard from Professor Robert Mitchner about his adventures with the archives of the Bobbs-Merrill Company, I was envious. When David Randall, Lilly Librarian, told me that the Bobbs-Merrill papers were coming to Indiana University, I was delighted. And when the opportunity offered in the spring of 1965, I declared a seminar on "Problems in the Study of a Literary Archive: The Bobbs-Merrill Papers."

The nine Argonauts who "took" the seminar could be assured that their principal reward would be to learn how to pioneer. Publishers' archives are one of the few remaining virgin frontiers for the student of American literature. Robert Frost is reported to have remarked that he knew a

few people who *said* they were "waste-basket poets" writing for no audience—and that he thought they were liars. Books are written for audiences and reach them through commercial publishers. To understand a work of literature is to be able to read it: perfect understanding is perfect reading. Since one of the best ways to understand anything is to study its growth through a process of origins, works of literature must be understood by way (among many ways) of studying the effects upon their origins of the business of authorship and the business of publishing. A publisher's archive is the uniquely valuable source for such studies.

The one major lack in the Bobbs-Merrill list, unfortunately, was that of a great, standard author. There was no Cather, Dreiser, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, or Faulkner. But to help students get their bearings, one could suggest a set of fascinating general topics for consideration:

1. The Business of Authorship
2. Author and Publisher
3. Author, Publisher's Reader, and Editor
4. The Art of Best-Sellerism
5. International Publishing
6. The Fine Art of Libel Suits
7. Regional Literature
8. Indiana Authors
9. The Historical Romance
10. Travel and the Exotic
11. Biography
12. American History
13. The Civil War
14. Abraham Lincoln
15. Muckraking
16. Redbaiting
17. Whodunits
18. Popular Religion
19. Cook and Etiquette Books

20. Children's Literature
21. Literary History and Criticism
22. The Hack Writer

And a wonderfully diversified selection of authors:

Adams, Samuel Hopkins
Ade, George
Alden, Roberta M.
Atherton, Gertrude
Bacheller, Irving
Barnes, Harry Elmer
Barrymore, John
Barton, Bruce
Baum, L. Frank
Beveridge, Albert J.
Biggers, Earl Derr
Brant, Irvin
Burgess, Gellett
Calverton, V. F.
Casey, Robert J.
Cawein, Madison J.
Chamberlain, G. A.
Chester, G. R.
Cobb, Irving S.
Coffin, R. P. T.
Crabb, A. J.
Crothers, S. M.
Curwood, J. Oliver
Davis, Elmer
di Donato, P.
Earnest, Ernest
Edman, Irvin
Eisenschiml, Otto
Erskine, John
Ferguson, Delancey
Fisher, Dorothy Canfield
Fletcher, I.
Gale, Zona

Gruelle, Johnny
Hahn, Emily
Halliburton, Richard
Harding, B.
Hatcher, Harlan
Hobart, A. T.
Hough, Emerson
Hubbard, Kin
Hueffer, Ford Maddox
Hueston, E.
James, Marquis
Johnson, Robert Underwood
Jones, S. M. ("Golden Rule")
Kroll, H. H.
Lardner, Ring
Lewisohn, Ludwig
MacGrath, Harold
Major, Charles
Mellett, John C.
Merwin, S.
Miller, H. T.
Nathan, Robert
Nicholson, Meredith
Nye, C. F. ("Bill")
Pendexter, H.
Perry, Bliss
Peterkin, Julian
Phillips, David Graham
Phillips, Henry Wallace
Quick, H.
Rand, Ayn
Riley, James Whitcomb
Rinehart, Mary Roberts
Rives, H. E.
Rombauer, I. S.
Salten, Felix
Sangster, Margaret E.
Sedgwick, Henry Dwight

Seitz, Don C.
Sherman, Stuart Pratt
Sousa, John Philip
Stone, G.
Stringer, A.
Styron, William
Sumner, C. R.
Terhune, Albert Payson
Terhune, M. V.
Thompson, Maurice
Thompson, Vance
Webster, H. K.
Whitlock, Brand
Wilstach, Paul
Wiltse, C.

Both lists were at best partial. But armed with them and supported by the active cooperation of the University Librarian, the Lilly Librarian, and the steady assistance of the Lilly manuscript curators, Doris Reed and Elfrieda Lang, the seminar plunged into the woods. Its members had two charges: find a rewarding topic for a seminar paper; as a *quid pro quo* for extraordinary privileges, help the Lilly by arranging the papers as you go.

Dusty in dented, rusty old file drawers, the archival papers consisted of seven main groups: authors' correspondence (forty-five files); promotional material (eighty-six files); autobiographical questionnaires filled out by authors at the promotional department's behest (six files); readers' opinions of manuscripts (twelve files); libel cases (one box); bound volumes (financial records, including royalty reports, minutes, ten volumes of a literary house organ: sixty-four volumes in all); and, inevitably, miscellaneous, three boxes. Predictably, some students found sorting and rationalizing all this for the Library soothing, some found

it exciting, others intolerable. One of the functions of the seminar was to be supportive of tenderfeet at loose in the wilderness of primary research. Other functions were to stimulate imaginations; suggest reading; guide, Socratically or otherwise, budding perceptions; insist stubbornly that there could, there *must* be definite, perhaps original, literary insights. Intellectual work is the hardest kind.

Eventually, as most seminars do, this seminar began to "work." Its members, grubbing in the peculiar dust of old papers, began to see things. They began to talk to each other, to labor side by side, exchanging discoveries. The indispensable, essential work of a true seminar, always done mostly outside of class, began to occur. And when the papers came in, even in early forms, it seemed to me that the best of them might well be published as original contributions to understandings of the authors in question, as examples of what studies in a publisher's archive might bring forth, as a tribute to the publishing firm of whose largess scholars were beneficiaries.

It was fine luck to have Professors Stith Thompson and Robert W. Mitchner, who had contributed generously to the seminar, willing to contribute papers. And it was luck again to find that Thomas D. Clark, our Sesquicentennial Visiting Professor, had Bobbs-Merrill tales to tell, and Professor Louis E. Lambert, a political scientist, had been doing researches of love and nostalgia in the files. These men are great enough to let me thank them for giving us the "grave" of our volume: the students have provided the meat.

EDWIN H. CADY is Rudy Professor of English at Indiana University.