

THE WILLIAM A. HUGHES COLLECTION OF MODERN LITERATURE

BY ELIZABETH F. BOYD

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EARLY in January this year, there arrived in Donald F. Cameron's office the first installment of a rich assortment of twentieth century literature, which is being donated to Rutgers University Library by its collector, the late Mr. William A. Hughes, of Elizabeth, New Jersey. Over one hundred and fifty volumes and some pamphlets were ranged up and down the long table, big names next to obscure ones, the great majority first editions, and a considerable number of limited autographed editions. The second and final installment arrived in March, bringing the total to more than two hundred volumes.

In these days when students of literature are accustomed to using only paperback reprints, it comes as a distinct shock to handle the familiar titles in the guise in which they were first published. For persons of the right generation it is a nostalgic experience to roam through these publications of the First World War era, the twenties, and the thirties. For lovers of beautiful books, it is an esthetic treat. One's first impression is of the excellent quality of book-making before the Second World War—of beautiful, legible type, widely spaced on the page, of fine paper, and of individual book design, some of it garish and flamboyant, but with a kind of flair and uniqueness not often encountered in the present inflationary era.

In a first edition, there is an immediate communication between the author and reader that no subsequent edition can give. Any student pursuing Hemingway's interest in bullfighting, for example, will enjoy the first edition of *Death in the Afternoon* (Scribner, 1932) with the frontispiece by Juan Gris, the evidence that "Nicanor" was the name of a bullfighter, and the pages of photographs with Hemingway's comments. No one would need, for another

example, to have much explanation given him of e. e. cummings's personality and then current status as an author, when he can leaf through *No Thanks* (1935), published in the form of a stenographer's notebook, with the dedication page, following the "No Thanks" on the title page, headed "To" and then the long roll of noted publishing houses, and at the end of this collection of poems two epilogue pages: "But Thanks" and "To Marion Morehouse," cummings's wife. The world of American fiction before the First World War comes to life, also, in a 1911 *Jennie Gerhardt*, with its half-tone frontispiece like the illustrations that used to appear in *St. Nicholas* magazine.

The collection has been the work of an amateur of fine books and good reading by favorite authors. In the early nineteenth century when book-collecting was a favorite hobby, the magnificent gentleman might have in his library three copies of each book—one to read, one to lend, and one for show. Mr. Hughes seems to have acted on the principle of collecting partly for show but more for personal enjoyment, and with some attention to making a good investment. The emphasis is on fiction and poetry, but there are also some plays and essays and some biography and autobiography. The area of interest is rather strictly British and American literature, with a few translations from French, German, Russian, and Portuguese. Evidence that it is a do-it-yourself investment lies not only in the duplicate copies of a number of titles or various editions of the same work, but also in the presence of a bibliography or two and a couple of books on book-collecting, one by R. S. Garnett and the other by Gilbert H. Fabes on *D. H. Lawrence His First Editions: Points and Values*. There are, however, only six Lawrence items: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (pirated edition, 1928), *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Touch and Go*, *Assorted Articles*, *Pansies*, and *Love Among the Haystacks and Other Pieces*; this last consists of autobiographical stories dating from 1912, which Richard Garnett had tried to place for Lawrence unsuccessfully, and which were then published (None-such Press, 1930) by David Garnett when he inherited them after Lawrence's death.

Mr. Hughes appears to have been a careful and wise buyer, keeping connections with book dealers in England and the United States. An odd advertisement for Sinclair Lewis's *Work of Art*, in the shape

of a cut-out photograph of Lewis, fell out of a first edition of Shaw's *Apple Cart*. In the second installment of books from Mr. Hughes, sure enough, along came the *Work of Art*. In a first edition of H. M. Tomlinson's *The Snows of Helicon* rested the bill for it from William Jackson (Books) Ltd.—7s. 6d., dated Sept. 7, 1933. Often the impression is that Mr. Hughes made a good bargain in second-hand copies of first or limited editions in excellent condition, some with uncut pages, many with the original dust jackets in good shape, for example those by Vanessa Bell for Virginia Woolf's *Second Common Reader* and *The Waves*. An especially fine bargain, to my untutored mind, was Edith Sitwell's *Rustic Elegies*, purchased for fifty cents.

There are a few products of out-of-the-way little presses, besides such items as a selection from Faber and Faber's series of Ariel Poems (one forgets that Eliot did not have a monopoly of that title). Ezra Pound's *Indiscretions* is here, from the Three Mountains Press, 1923; and Faulkner's *Salmagundi* put out by the Casanova Press in Milwaukee, 1932. The note by Paul Romaine, the publisher, in the front of *Salmagundi* says that all Faulkner's pieces in this fifty-three page pamphlet are reprinted from the New Orleans *Double Dealer*. Romaine further explains why he added, on the back cover, Hemingway's poem *Ultimately*: because "Faulkner's poem, *Portrait*, and Ernest Hemingway's poem, *Ultimately*, both appear on page 337 of the June 1922 issue of *The Double Dealer*," and because "the meticulous Louis Cohn" omitted *Ultimately* from his "absurdly complete bibliography" of Hemingway's work. It is nice to know that this gem has thus been rescued from oblivion. Faulkner's *A Green Bough* (1933) is also represented, in a limited autographed edition. The first of these poems appears also in *Salmagundi*. They are all verses in imitation of Swinburne, Housman, Robinson, and other poets of that period. Here is the proof that Faulkner was by nature a poet.

Mr. Hughes began this collection about 1924, when he had established his law office in New York and was able to indulge long-standing tastes in theater and books. He appears to have taken chances on young unknowns, occasionally, as they appeared. For example, there are three early publications of James Hanley, the earliest being *Men in Darkness* (1931), five stories with a preface by J. C. Powys,

and Alan Odle's design on the dust jacket. Nathanael West's *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933), a first in original dust wrapper, was bought second-hand for seventy-five cents. Here are Ilya Ehrenbourg's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Juranito and His Disciples* (1930) and Franz Werfel's *Class Reunion* (1929), translated by Whittaker Chambers. Sometimes the guessing on an author's future was not so spectacular. What has become of Robert Francis, a French novelist, whose *Wolf at the Door* (1933), with an introduction by Havelock Ellis, appears in a first American edition of the English translation? Or of Gail Wilhelms, a young American novelist promoted by Random House in the mid-thirties?

Many novelists are included, though frequently not represented by best-sellers: Michael Arlen, Evelyn Waugh, H. G. Wells, Dorothy Richardson, Galsworthy, Willa Cather, Hergesheimer, Cabell, Huxley, Steinbeck. Here is a first illustrated edition of Mary Webb's *Gone To Earth*, with an introduction by John Buchan. The Irish are represented only in small quantity: several volumes of Liam O'Flaherty, one of James Stephens, and a first American edition of Joyce's *Ulysses*. But there is a generous collection of fiction and essays by Welsh writers in English, as befits Mr. Hughes's background; both his parents were natives of Anglesey in northwest Wales. Here are novels and stories by Caradoc Evans, Goronwy Rees, Rhys Davies, Llewellyn Wyn Griffith, Richard Hughes, and Dylan Thomas. The Powys brothers are here too, if one may place them next to the Welsh category.

Others of Mr. Hughes's favorites include Richard Aldington and Norman Douglas. About a dozen de luxe autographed volumes, some from the Furnivall limited editions, include L. A. G. Strong, John Collier, Stella Benson, Edith Sitwell, E. A. Robinson, H. E. Bates, and Sylvia Townsend Warner. Dorothy Parker is not forgotten, nor Don Marquis and Christopher Morley. Among the playwrights, we have works by O'Neill and Shaw, Barrie and A. A. Milne, Frederick Lonsdale, Schnitzler, the librettos of two comic operas by A. P. Herbert, and e. e. cummings's *Him: A Play*. And of lyric poets there are many, from Thomas Hardy (a first American edition of *Wessex Poems*) and Emily Dickinson, to Vachel Lindsay, Robinson Jeffers, W. H. Auden, and a first edition of Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*, besides others already mentioned.

Mr. Hughes has greatly enriched the Rutgers University Library's holdings in modern literature. Generations of Rutgers students and faculty members will be in his debt. It is to be hoped that other collectors will see fit to follow Mr. Hughes's example of public benefaction by making similar well selected donations to the University Library.



Device from Lawrence's *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover* (London, 1930, Mandrake Press).