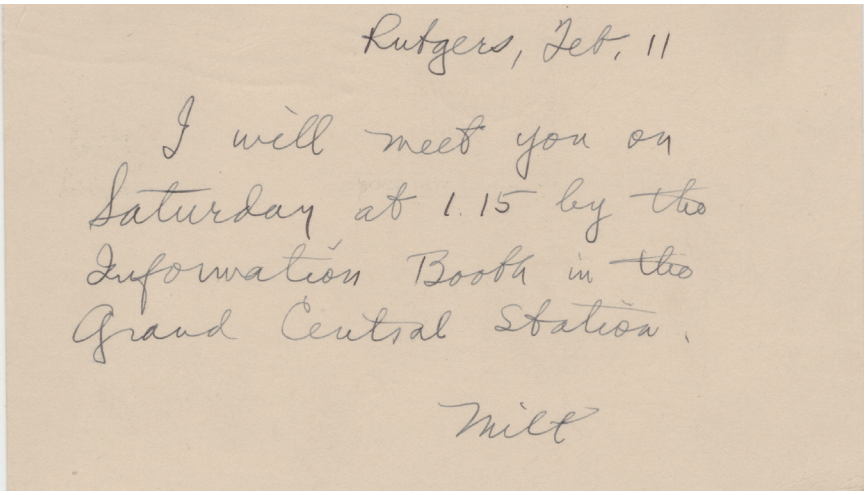
HOW CLEANTH BROOKS READ HIS *SEVENTEENTH CENTURY NEWS LETTER:* COLLECTORS, PROFESSORS, AND THE ORGANIZATION OF ENGLISH AS A PROFESSION

BY KATHRYN JAMES

"I will meet you on Saturday at 1:15 by the Information Booth in the Grand Central Station," wrote Joseph Milton French, professor of English, on a one-penny postcard on February 11, 1942, responding to the summons of his new colleague, James Marshall Osborn, scholar and collector of early modern English literature, whom he had met at the meeting, a few weeks previously, of the Modern Language Association.[1]


Rutgers, Feb. 11

I will meet you on Saturday at 1.15 by the Information Booth in the Grand Central Station.

Milt

3.1 Mid-century meeting arrangements, in this postcard from Brooks to French on February 11 [1942]. From the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The two had hatched the plan of a *Seventeenth Century News Letter*, a gathering place for scholars, readers, and collectors, in Britain and America, of seventeenth-century English literature. Days after the MLA meeting, French wrote excitedly to Osborn with news of potential

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mailing lists "of people interested in the seventeenth century" for their venture, complimenting Osborn on his "mimeographed 'manuscript resources,'" to be included in the publication. "It was splendid getting to know you," he typed, on Rutgers University letterhead, signing his name below: J. Milton French.[2]

The founding of the *Seventeenth Century News Letter*, published in New Brunswick, New Jersey, from 1942–1951 and described in the Yale University Library online catalog as a "Quarterly (irregular)," marks a particular moment in English literature as a profession in mid-twentieth century America.[3] The original newsletter offers a glimpse into the organization of literary scholarship in the period, and the practices by which English literature as a professional community functioned. This period, with its battles over the centrality of literary criticism and literary history, and with the heated opposition to successive fashions in literary theory, has been usefully studied, and within the context of Yale in particular, by Gerald Graff.[4] Yet there are spheres of literary scholarship which Graff's study does not address, in part through its focus on the workings of academic departments, and their courses and curricula, in university English departments. Important professional spaces—the library, most notably—and practices, such as collecting and corresponding, are excluded from this study. These are precisely the spheres occupied by Osborn and his colleagues in this period. This paper turns to two examples of Osborn's work as a literary scholar and collector in the 1940s, to illustrate the networks by which professional practice was governed, and complicated, in English literature in mid-century America. In the imagined community of seventeenth-century scholarship found in the *Seventeenth Century News Letter*, and the collaboration between Osborn and literary critic Cleanth Brooks on a scholarly edition, one finds a lived experience of English literature which was by no means as polarized, as exclusionary, as that portrayed by Graff and others.

By the mid-twentieth century in America, key collections of British art and literature had been formed, and opened to scholars, by collectors like Alexander Smith Cochran (founder of Yale University's Elizabethan Club in 1911), Henry E. Huntington (founder of the Huntington Library in 1919), J. P. Morgan, Jr. (founder of the Morgan Library in 1924), and Henry Clay Folger (founder of the Folger Shakespeare Library in 1932). In an age, then as now, when access to texts governed the ability to do literary

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY NEWS LETTER

This newsletter was conceived at Indianapolis on the evening of December 29th during a dinner meeting of the officers of the Seventeenth Century English Literature Group of the Modern Language Association. They decided that since J. L. Clifford's Johnsonian News Letter has proved to be such a successful medium for communication among eighteenth century researchers, its example might profitably be followed by seventeenth century scholars.

An editorial committee of three members was appointed, comprised of James M. Osborn (Yale), Chairman, J. Milton French (Rutgers), and James G. McManaway (Folger Library). News items may be sent to any of them. Any intelligence of the learned will be welcome, including inquiries after specific information, items about seventeenth century men, manners, and manuscripts, reports of research tools in preparation, and personal news about seventeenth century scholars here and abroad. The future of this newsletter depends on the receipt of such news items more than on any other factors.

The subscription price is $1.00 and should be sent to J. Milton French, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J., who is in charge of mimeographing and distribution. The subscription period will be for as long as the funds last, probably more than a year, depending on the number of subscriptions received. At least six numbers will be issued in each year, according to the amount of material contributed.

SHORT TITLE CATALOGUE, 1641-1700

Because of the many inquiries about the present status of Donald Wing's 1641-1700 continuation of the Short Title Catalogue, Mr. Wing (Yale) has supplied the following information.

"The first volume (A-England) is now in proof and will go to press as soon as a final report of holdings is received from Harvard College Library. The holdings of other libraries were recorded some time ago, but Harvard has been delayed by the transferring of rare books to their new building and other causes. Copies of this first volume will probably be available for distribution in October of this year (1942).

"The slips for the other two volumes have already been transformed into typed copy and should be in shape to go to press as soon as the printer is ready. The schedule of the Index Society, which is publishing the books, calls for issuing Volume II in 1944 and Volume III in 1946.

"The help of scholars having knowledge of special fields has been of distinct value. For example, William R. Parker (Ohio State) is reading proof on the Milton section. Moreover, Parker's own library of rare books contains two items not found elsewhere in America. Communications will be welcome from other persons or libraries who own items believed to be unique.

"Due to several fortunate circumstances, the listing of Quaker

3.2 Osborn's copy of the first issue of *A Seventeenth Century News Letter* (1942). From the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

research, rare book and manuscript collections played an important role in defining the landscape of literary scholarship. Osborn and French acquired both as connoisseurs and as professional scholars, and their correspondence shows them to have been well aware of the relevance of information on collections, acquisitions, and the book trade to their colleagues in English literature. Their fellow editor, James McManaway, was himself at the Folger Shakespeare Library and enmeshed in the networks that bound scholars with rare book libraries and collections.

Like the annual meeting of the MLA, rare book and manuscript collections organized a landscape of English literary scholarship in the United States, enabling research and networks of scholarly acquaintance and communication. As the correspondence surrounding the *Seventeenth Century News Letter* reveals, at least two types of collection were essential to professional practice in the mid-twentieth century: first, collections of scholarly materials, the books themselves that enabled literary research; second, and of parallel status and value, collections of scholarly contacts, and a knowledge of the networks of professionals in the field of seventeenth-century literature, with their information on current research, potential positions, and the location of sources. The *Seventeenth Century News Letter* offered a utopian vision of an organized community of seventeenth-century literary scholars, one in which a six-page quarterly newsletter, mailed at bulk rate to carefully compiled lists of recipients, could solve many of the social and scholarly difficulties of English literary practice in the mid-twentieth century.

By the time Osborn, French, and McManaway embarked on the *Seventeenth Century News Letter*, Osborn had been collecting English literary manuscripts and books for eight years. A graduate of Wesleyan College in 1928, Osborn worked at Guaranty Trust in New York City after graduating, leaving in 1932 to pursue a master's degree in English at Columbia University. In 1934, Osborn, his wife, and their two children, moved to Oxford, England, where he undertook a bachelor of literature degree. At Oxford, Osborn studied under the Shakespeare scholar and editor of the Arden Shakespeare, David Nichol Smith.[5] Osborn's interest in collecting, like that of Alexander Smith Cochran or Henry Clay Folger, was formed by the influence of his mentor, and he began to acquire English literary and historical manuscripts and books from rare book dealers and at auction. As a friend at Oxford, David Daiches, later wrote of Osborn:

> [he] would disappear to London and emerge some days later with marvelous trophies from a sale-room. He would go to auction and buy old libraries. It was marvelous to watch his library build up week by week, month by month, and to see on each visit to Shotover Cleve newly acquired copies of the works of all the principals in Nichol Smith's course in the History of English Studies.[6]

By the time Osborn left England in 1938 to return with his family to America, he was known both within the rare book trade and the English literary profession as a collector of English literary manuscripts. Osborn and his family settled in New Haven, Connecticut, where he held the position of research associate in the English department at Yale, and later, in 1954, advisor on seventeenth-century manuscripts to the Yale University Library. From 1963, in the year that Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library was founded, Osborn began the process of donating his collection to Yale, and became the first curator of the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection.

The newsletter makes visible the several simultaneous networks at work within English literature as a profession in the American mid-century. When Osborn returned from England in 1938, bringing his already extensive collection of English literary and historical manuscripts with him to New Haven, he began to occupy a place on the map of collections supporting scholarship in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English literature, maintaining an extensive correspondence with scholars such as James Lowry Clifford, Cleanth Brooks, Maynard Mack, and others.

René Wellek, founder of the discipline of Comparative Literature, and a correspondent and colleague, described Osborn's multiple efforts to gather and support the machinery of English as a profession, including his project of a *Works in Progress in the Modern Humanities for the Modern Language Association*, published 1938–1942.[7] Osborn's goal, with the *Works in Progress*, was to make the field of literary research better known to itself: to make scholars in related areas known to each other, and to avoid duplication of research. "There can be no isolationism in learning," he wrote in the preface.[8] But this interest in collections, in information on the profession, and in current scholarly activity, was by no means

confined to Osborn. Wellek, after all, met Osborn when he first arrived in the United States from Czechoslovakia in 1939 and, on his way to a teaching position in Iowa, stopped in New Haven "as the nearest city to New York with the reputation of a great library." During his summer at Yale, working on *The Rise of English Literary History* (1941), he met Osborn, "a private scholar who worked on the history of English studies and thus shared many of my interests. His good words must have played a role in the offer from Yale in 1945."[9] Nor were Wellek and Osborn alone in their awareness of the importance of collections, private or institutional, as an organizing force for literary scholarship. To be able to work on texts, scholars had first to establish where they were located, and whether they were available for research. This was precisely the period when scholars like French and Brooks worked to compile editions on key authors. French, who started in the English department of Rutgers in 1940, was to spend the next several decades at work on similar projects, including *The Life Records of John Milton* (1949–1958), and his work on the Columbia University *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* and *The Works of John Milton*.

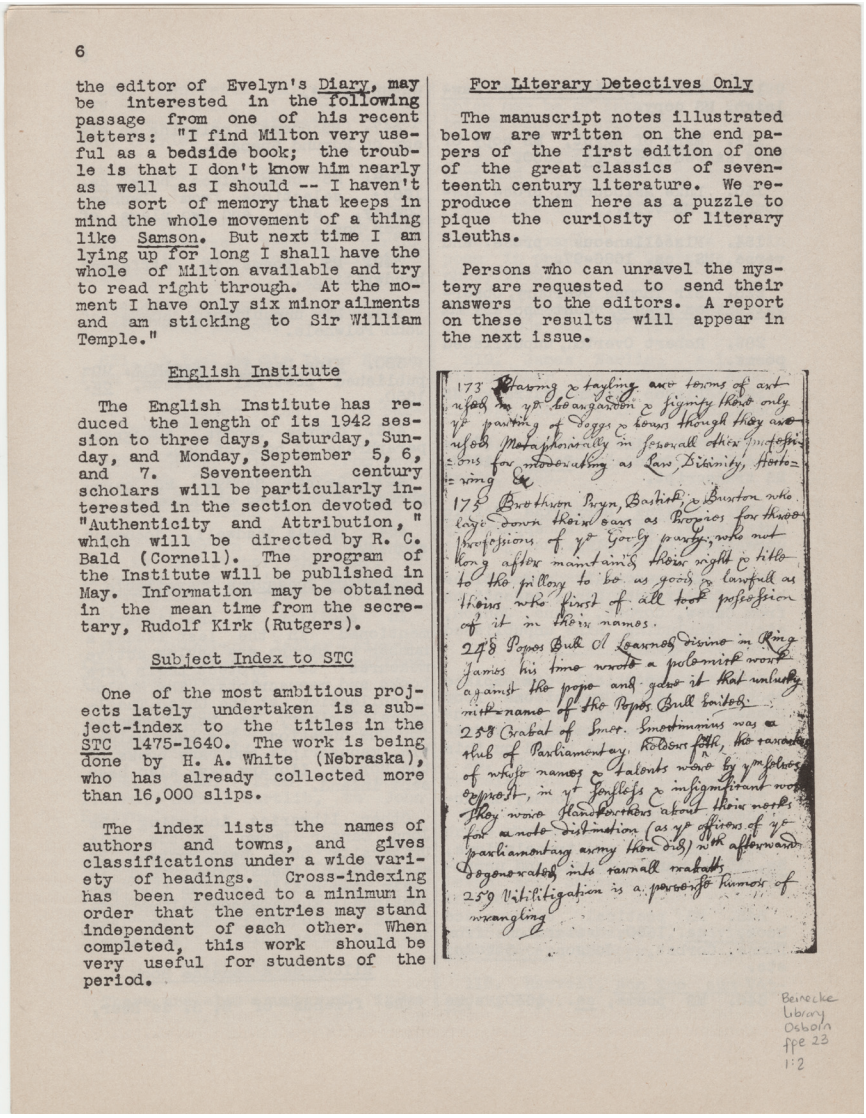
The *Seventeenth Century News Letter* was a conscious effort on the part of Osborn and French to create a map of the scholars, works in progress, bookseller catalog listings, and rare book and manuscript holdings relating to the world of English seventeenth-century literature in America. From the outset, one of the newsletter's important functions was to list manuscripts—both those for sale and those already in collections. "As for cutting down the amount of space given to summaries of manuscripts offered for sale," French wrote to Osborn in March of 1942, "I should strongly object. Such material seems to me difficult for many people to find by themselves, and yet it is useful to have. I am sure we can find room for it."[10] Osborn and French also published photographs of books and manuscripts, sometimes from their own collections; in this sense, Osborn's own Christmas cards, often illustrated with items from his collections, extensively described, served as a forerunner of the newsletter.

The newsletter also, and as importantly, gathered people: French and Osborn combed the acquaintance networks of their colleagues for lists of seventeenth-century minded scholars and potential subscribers to the newsletter, gathering a list of some 800 for the first issue. Osborn scrupulously quartered the landscape of seventeenth-century literary studies in the Anglo-American world:

"I have made it up from (1) lists of the English VII group of the MLA, (2) lists of contributors to periodicals on subjects in the 17th century through the last four or five years, (3) a similar list from Works in Progress."[11] The text itself was acquired in snippets, like autograph purchases: in one of many cheerful postcards, French wrote that "Charlie Coffin (Kenyon) sends me three brief notes for the Newsletter. …. Subscriptions still trickle in," he added, as well as requests for copies of the first issue. "All comments which reach me are enthusiastic. How about those which come to you?"

The *Seventeenth Century News Letter* carried regular features. During the war, the editors listed members of the profession in military service. Books and manuscripts offered by sale in catalogs were also featured. And the newsletter also offered a puzzle, drawing on the collections and wit of its editors. Marjorie Hope Nicolson, then at Columbia, could be found sending the newsletter's editors a postcard, on May 28, 1942, explaining that she had—and apparently continued—to forget to send the subscription payment for the newsletter, but had in the interim solved the newsletter's puzzle, which asked its readers to identify a text from its marginalia. "Naturally," she wrote, "as one of the greatest living detective fans, I had to try my hand at the puzzle. The notes are to Butler's *Hudibras*. 'Vitilitigation is a dead give-away; that line should have been left out to make it nice and hard."[12] The card is annotated by French to Osborn, saying "This is the first solution to reach me. Have you had any? … Could we print the comment?" Chester Shaver of Oberlin College's English Department wrote as well with his solution, and an extensive gloss on *Hudibras*. An unidentified correspondent from the University of Texas, Austin, wrote in darker vein, to state that his first reaction to the puzzle had been one of displeasure: "After working on it a little, I decided it was a phony mystery, completely known to the editor, and all the good a reader would get out of it would be the fun of answering a conundrum, not the supplying of new knowledge to anybody." "A bit uffish, don't you think?" wrote French in the margin.

The *Seventeenth Century News Letter* had its origins in the war, with its interruptions to professional life. The cancellation of the meetings of the MLA, the restrictions on travel, and above all the crushing burden of war work, all contributed both to the necessity of the newsletter and to its overburdening of its editors, who struggled to fill the six pages of the "Quarterly (irregular)" with the news, tidbits, quizzes, obituaries, sales, and observations which were its



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the editor of Evelyn's Diary, may be interested in the following passage from one of his recent letters: "I find Milton very useful as a bedside book; the trouble is that I don't know him nearly as well as I should -- I haven't the sort of memory that keeps in mind the whole movement of a thing like Samson. But next time I am lying up for long I shall have the whole of Milton available and try to read right through. At the moment I have only six minor ailments and am sticking to Sir William Temple."

English Institute

The English Institute has reduced the length of its 1942 session to three days, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, September 5, 6, and 7. Seventeenth century scholars will be particularly interested in the section devoted to "Authenticity and Attribution," which will be directed by R. C. Bald (Cornell). The program of the Institute will be published in May. Information may be obtained in the mean time from the secretary, Rudolf Kirk (Rutgers).

Subject Index to STC

One of the most ambitious projects lately undertaken is a subject-index to the titles in the STC 1475-1640. The work is being done by H. A. White (Nebraska), who has already collected more than 16,000 slips.

The index lists the names of authors and towns, and gives classifications under a wide variety of headings. Cross-indexing has been reduced to a minimum in order that the entries may stand independent of each other. When completed, this work should be very useful for students of the period.

For Literary Detectives Only

The manuscript notes illustrated below are written on the end papers of the first edition of one of the great classics of seventeenth century literature. We reproduce them here as a puzzle to pique the curiosity of literary sleuths.

Persons who can unravel the mystery are requested to send their answers to the editors. A report on these results will appear in the next issue.

173 Brasing & tayling are terms of art used in ye Ho angarden & signify there only ye painting of Poggs & towns though they are used Metaphorically in severall other professions for moderating as Law, Divinity, Horse=ring &c

175 Brethren Prynn, Bastick, & Burton who lay down their ears as Propios for their professions of ye Gorby party, were not long after maintain their right & title to the pillory to be as good & lawfull as theirs who first of all took peseision of it in their names.

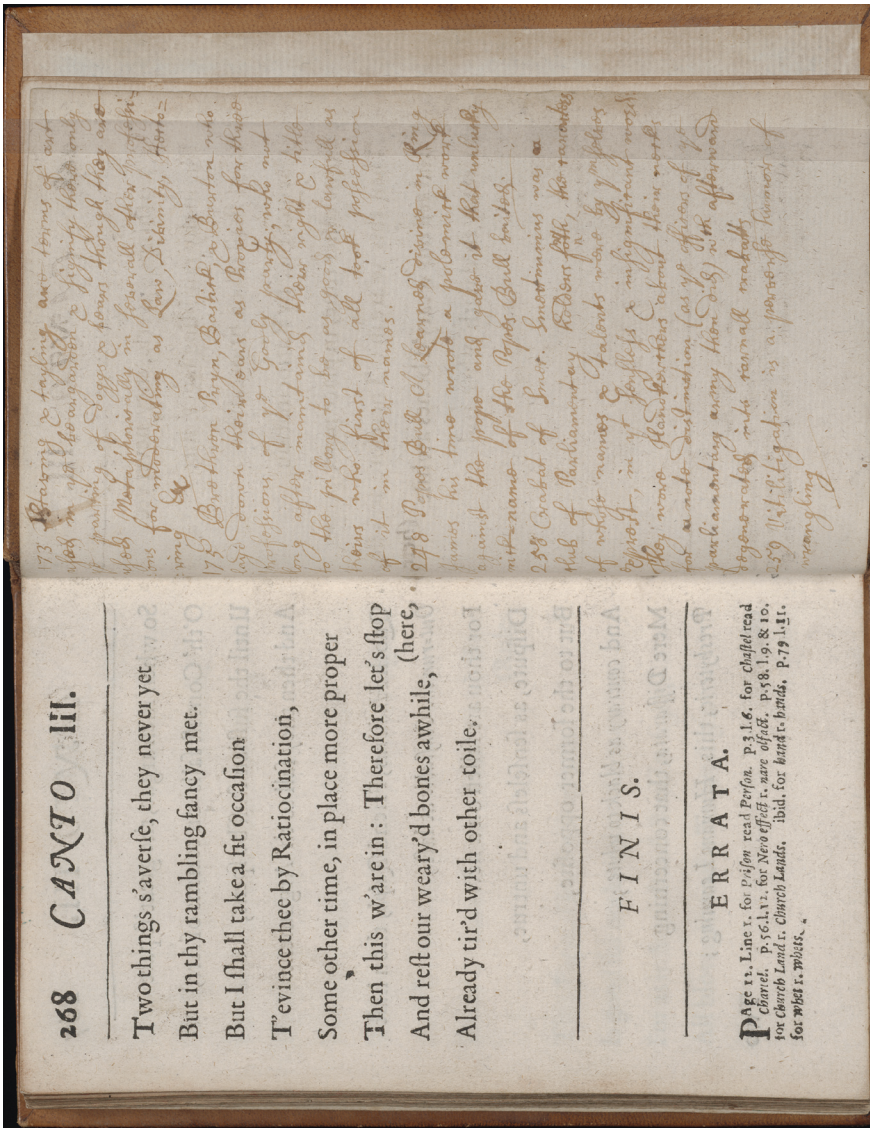
248 Popes Bull of Learned divine in King James his time wrote a polemick work against the pope and gave it that unlucky nick-name of the Popes Bull baitch.

258 Crabat of Inner Inneminus was a club of Parliamentary Rodsour pith, the rascals of whose names & talents were by ym selves approst, in ye Jesleys & insignificant work they were characterizes about their needs for a note distinction (as ye officers of ye parliamentary army then did) with afforward degenerated into rasnall rabalts.

259 Vilitigation is a perverse humour of wrangling

Beinecke Library Osborn fpe 23 1:2

3.3 "For Literary Detectives," shown here in Osborn's copy of the second issue of *A Seventeenth Century News Letter* (May 1942). From the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



268 CANTO III.

Two things s'averſe, they never yet
But in thy rambling fancy met.
But I ſhall take a fit occaſion
T'evince thee by Ratiocination,
Some other time, in place more proper
Then this w'are in: Therefore let's ſtop
And reſt our weary'd bones awhile, (here,
Already tir'd with other toile.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAge 11. Line 1. for *Poiſon* read *Perſon*. p. 3. l. 6. for *chaſtel* read *Chatel*. p. 56. l. 11. for *Nero effect* r. *nave effect*. p. 58. l. 9. & 10. for *Church Land* r. *Church Lands*. ibid. for *hand* r. *hands*. p. 79. l. 11. for *West* r. *Weſts*.

3.4 The copy of the first edition of Butler's *Hudibra* (1663), with annotations, from which the *Seventeenth Century News Letter* literary quiz was taken. As the editors pointed out, in the solution published in the following issue, the annotations "derived from … the 1674 and following editions." Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

function. "We are not getting enough contributions for this little sheet," wrote Osborn in May of 1944, "and I wonder what we can do about it. I am sure that the war is primarily responsible, since everyone's energies are taken up by a dozen activities and research has to be sandwiched in between them. I feel that keeping our little News Letter alive is very important, for within a year or two the energies of scholars should be freed for research once again. But in the meantime the job of writing a six page issue every few months will challenge the patience of a sisyphus."[13] In 1947, the newsletter passed from its original editors' hands, carrying on under new leadership until its demise as a "letter" in 1951.

In 1939, a few years before Osborn and French started the *Seventeenth Century News Letter*, John Crowe Ransom founded another serial publication, the *Kenyon Review*. He had begun work on this over the winter of 1937–1938, writing to Allen Tate that "I've just come back from the Modern Language Association at Chicago. The Professors are in an awful dither, trying to reform themselves, and there's a big stroke possible for a small group that knows what it wants in giving them ideas and definitions and showing them the way."[14] One of these small groups, and an extraordinarily influential one, found itself at Yale, and in Osborn's circle of acquaintance. Just before and after World War II, the Yale English Department, under the leadership of the eighteenth-century scholar Maynard Mack, hired some of the leading figures of New Criticism, including, in 1939, William Wimsatt, whose essays, "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy" stated the principles of the New Criticism; in 1947, Brooks; in 1950, Robert Penn Warren. In 1945, William DeVane, the Dean of Yale College, hired René Wellek as Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature. As Wellek described it, the offer was made at the 1944 meeting of the MLA, "with the reservation that I would first give an acceptable lecture."[15]

This could easily be taken to have marked a movement at Yale away from bibliographic or archival scholarship, of the work of scholar-collectors like French and Osborn. And this conclusion has certainly on occasion been drawn, as by Andrew Rosenheim in his obituary for Brooks in *The Independent* in 1994:

> Cleanth Brooks . . . represented all that was best about the astonishing collection of literary talent at Yale University after the Second World War. The 'old Yale' had a less attractive side, of social

> snobbery, outright prejudice, and an Anglophilia so pronounced as to make the most flattered Englishman wince. This was the Yale of 'dollar-a-year' men, who could buy a scholarly career with an afternoon's intelligent buying at Sotheby's (this in the age before university libraries dominated the market). But it was also a university with a unique and extraordinary cast of writers, critics, and scholars that included Brooks himself, Robert Penn Warren, WK Wimsatt, Frederick Pottles, René Wellek, and many others.[16]

Rosenheim seemingly writes here, and with some ill will, about Osborn, a longstanding colleague and correspondent of Brooks. A "dollar-a-year" man, a Sotheby's scholar: these descriptions of Osborn, so pejorative, so unanswerable, set him in direct contrast with Brooks, the dilettante to Brooks's professional, the snob to Brooks's democrat, the Anglophile to Brook's Americanist, the collector to Brooks's scholar.

And yet, there was no such clear distinction to be drawn between the two. Cleanth Brooks, after all, delivered the tribute to Osborn at his university memorial service in 1976, some thirty years after Osborn had helped to bring Brooks to Yale. Like Osborn, Brooks had studied at Oxford, in Brooks's case as a Rhodes Scholar from 1928–1930; in Osborn's, after returning to the study of English literature after his brief career in finance. Brooks, like Osborn, studied under David Nichol Smith, whose papers Osborn later acquired. Like Osborn, Brooks also presented himself, at least through the 1940s, as a scholar of eighteenth-century British literature. An Anglophile, like Osborn, Brooks served as the cultural attaché to Britain from 1964 to 1966, where he and his wife were visited, in their London townhouse, by Osborn and his wife on their annual trip to England. The two men were themselves colleagues, and members of the "Boys' Friendly," a Monday lunch meeting at Mory's started Jim Osborn in the 1970s and including René Wellek, Bill Wimsatt, Maynard Mack, Louis Martz, and Eugene Waith.

Rather than as arch-nemeses, engaged in fixed controversy over the battlefield of literary history and literary theory, Brooks and Osborn in fact met in the most cordial of manners, through letters on the completion of an edition of eighteenth-century

correspondence. Osborn wrote Brooks in March of 1940 to ask whether there had been any progress on Arthur Tillotson's edition of the Thomas Percy–Edmond Malone correspondence, a volume in the Thomas Percy editorial project, for which David Nichol Smith and Brooks were editors. Osborn, a Malone scholar and collector, had laboriously compiled a research index and chronology of Malone's biography and correspondence. "The last letter I had from Tillotson was in August," wrote Osborn to Brooks, "in which he wrote that a double set of proofs would be sent to me, one to be returned to you after I had gone over it, and the other to be cut up and pasted on cards for my Malone chronology."[17]

Brooks seized on Osborn's offer to read over the Percy proofs, a project which even at that point had been delayed for several years: "I am counting heavily on your inspection to save us from ourselves," he wrote to Osborn in December of 1941.[18] In 1942, he sent a copy of the proofs to Osborn, who was involved intensively in war work in Connecticut, commenting that "ever since Pearl Harbor I have been on the staff of the State Defence Council and have been so busy organizing the air raid wardens of Connecticut that I have answered no letters and done practically no scholarly work." Osborn also owned two Malone letters, and Brooks asked him to include the "MS. page divisions" of these, when returning the proof. "The galley proof for the Percy-Malone volume has now arrived," wrote Osborn on February 18, 1942, "and I hope to get at it in a day or two."[19]

This proved not to be the case, and Brooks was to endure a long, and clearly maddening, wait for Osborn to edit and return the proof for publication. At the end of June, Brooks wrote to inquire whether Osborn had worked through the proofs. "The Press here is howling for copy," he wrote, on the letterhead of *The Southern Review*, which he was at that point editing with Robert Penn Warren and Charles Pipkin, "I should like to be able to give them an estimate of when I can get proof corrections to them."[20] In late July, he wrote again, to say that he was "afraid that in the commotion of leaving and in the confusion of the Review office my earlier letter miscarried."[21]

In August, Osborn finally replied although, as he put it, "this one act of promptness will not remove one shred or speck of the sackcloth and ashes which I have donned." This reply, so long anticipated, must also have proved bitter: Osborn informed Brooks that Tillotson had not included several letters in Osborn's

collection. As one of these preceded the first letter in the edition, the addition would require renumbering the entire collection. "I am sorry to bring them forward at this late date," Osborn wrote, "but that was my understanding with Tillotson, namely, that I would not check over the several thousand cards in my Malone chronology until I saw his copy either in manuscript or in proof. The war is not only responsible for his sending the manuscript directly to you, but also for my not having informed you about these other letters until now."[22]

With the edition itself he was equally unimpressed: "On the whole," he wrote, "I am rather disappointed in Tillotson's editing. He has shown what almost amounts to indifference in a number of cases. Not having my notes here, I cannot cite examples, but shall try to do so when I send you the proof. The correspondence makes such bad reading that it is too bad that it has been edited so loosely."[23] Osborn's copy of the proof, still enclosed in its original box from Duke University Press to "The Editors, The Southern Review," shows his close attention to the edition, even as letters from Brooks show Osborn's reluctance to let go of the draft, whether through the pressures on his time due to war service or through his own inability to release an important edition which he felt to be badly done. At last, in a telegram, Brooks wrote "Sorry to be a nuisance but press is demanding proceed at once with Percy Malone volume stop Please return proof whether finish or not stop many thanks and regards Cleanth Brooks."[24]

In 1944, as the *Seventeenth Century News Letter* commenced its third volume, the edition itself was published. A copy is held in the Osborn collection, as is the copy of the proofs, which seems never to have returned to Louisiana. That year, however, Osborn was instrumental in bringing Brooks himself to Connecticut. In a letter of October, 1944, he writes that "Last week Maynard Mack and I had a long talk about you and are plotting to see if there is not some way in which you can be tempted to make a lecture appearance at Yale. I hope that something will come of it." Something did come of it: Brooks was invited to lecture, and in a letter dated only January, Brooks wrote the secretary of the Yale English department with his biography, in which he describes himself as having taught at Louisiana State University, edited *The Southern Review* and coauthored several textbooks with Robert Penn Warren, and written his *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939), and *The Well Wrought Urn,* which appeared in 1947. Striking in this is

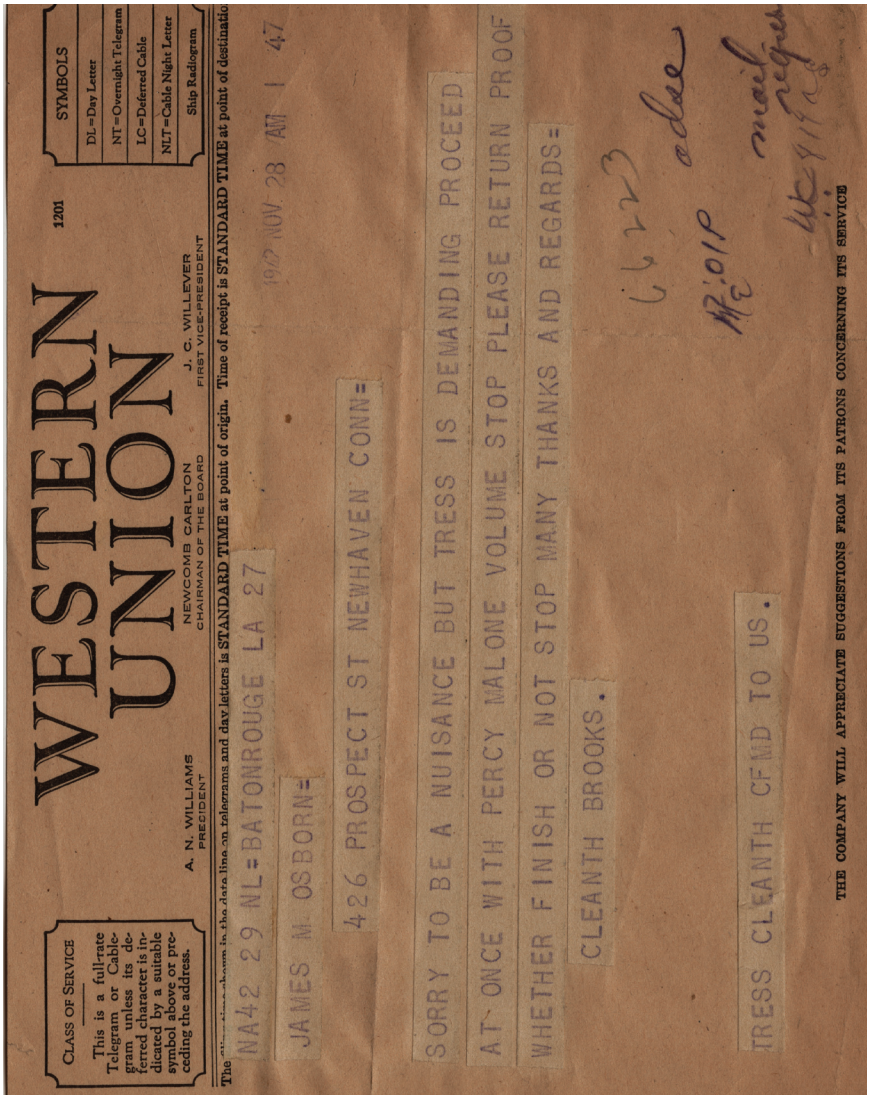
his emphasis on his status as an eighteenth-century British scholar: "I have published a monograph on language and a volume of 18th century letters," he writes,

> This volume is one of a series of Percy's letters for which I am a general editor along with David Nichol Smith who recently retired from the Merton Professorship of English literature at Oxford. . . . As you can see, I have been something of a jack of all trades in this day of intense specialization, with excursions into linguistics and the 18th century; but my primary interests have been, and are, in the poetry of the 17th century and in modern poetry, with special concern for the critical theory which is implied by such poetry.[25]

In December of 1946, Osborn wrote Brooks to congratulate him on his appointment at Yale: "this consummation of the wishes of many of your friends was long worked for, and is now almost too good to be true."[26] There, at the point at which the two became colleagues, their correspondence ceases, except for the occasional thank you note or administrative request or happy letter from Britain or the Continent on sabbatical.

As Brooks stated, in his tribute at Osborn's memorial service in Yale's Dwight Chapel on December 7, 1976, some thirty-six years after their first meeting, Osborn's "enduring memorial is, of course, the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn collection of books and manuscripts,—that and the many scholarly books that Jim himself wrote."[27] As Osborn himself was aware, research collections could act as a powerful organizing force for scholarship in the humanities, framing not only the works which scholars need to consult but fostering the scholarly connections between individuals in a field, a discipline, or the humanities generally. Osborn's correspondence with Brooks, over his Malone letters and the Percy-Malone correspondence, let to a connection over decades between two scholars of remarkably different methodologies.

Brooks consulted Osborn for many reasons. They shared many interests and connections, whether the Percy-Malone correspondence or their mentor, David Nichol Smith, in Oxford. The main reason that Brooks entered into correspondence with Osborn, though, was necessity. Osborn controlled one of the



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NLT = Cable Night Letter
Ship Radiogram

The time shown in the data line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

NA42 29 NL=BATONROUGE LA 27

1942 NOV 28 AM 1 47

JAMES M. OSBORN=

426 PROSPECT ST NEWHAVEN CONN=

SORRY TO BE A NUISANCE BUT TRESS IS DEMANDING PROCEED AT ONCE WITH PERCY MALONE VOLUME STOP PLEASE RETURN PROOF WHETHER FINISH OR NOT STOP MANY THANKS AND REGARDS=

CLEANTH BROOKS.

TRESS CLEANTH CFMD TO US.

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

3.5 A plaintive telegram from Brooks to Osborn on November 28, 1942, requesting the return of the Percy-Malone proof copy. From the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

extant collections of Malone letters. Physical access to manuscript collections was one of the limiting factors of research in the mid-twentieth century, as now. It's no coincidence that the production of textual editions should have been an organizing effort of American literary scholarship in the twentieth century. As James Lowry Clifford, eighteenth-century scholar and friend of Osborn, wrote in a retrospective on eighteenth-century scholarship:

> Before any body of literature can be studied effectively, it must be made available in adequate texts. Thus one of the primary necessities for our time has been the scrupulous examination and reprinting of all the works of the major writers of the period. … The crusade of the modern bibliographers is beginning to take effect, and we are becoming text conscious. Indeed, our insistence upon higher technical standards—not only in editing, but also in biography and bibliography—might be cited as one of the major trends of the mid-twentieth century.[28]

Scholarly editions and bibliography were two of the great concerns of English literature as a profession in the mid-twentieth century, in a period which saw the publication of Fredson Bowers's *Principles of Bibliographic Description* (1949) and Donald Wing's *Short-Title Catalogue* (1945–1951). Collections, and collecting, also played an important role in the organization of English literary scholarship, and from the outset Osborn's career had been defined by his efforts as a collector. David Daiches, in his essay in the festschrift for Osborn, writes at some length of Osborn's butler, and that he relished his visits to Osborn's house in Oxford "not only for the good food and drink we got. There was always good conversation, and masses of antiquarian books bought by Jim almost weekly to be displayed and discussed." [29] But it is striking that neither Osborn nor his colleagues viewed his focus on collecting, and on biography and English literary correspondences that underpinned this collecting to be in opposition to the methodologies of the New Criticism, with its focus on the self-contained qualities of the text. In his welcoming letter to Brooks in December of 1946, Osborn lets Brooks know about a correspondence between Percy and the Reverend J. E. Blakeway, a fact he unearthed, he writes, "in looking through some notes I once

took from nineteenth century autograph catalogs."[30] Osborn read and researched as a collector, and it is fitting that Cleanth Brooks's contribution to the festschrift for Osborn centered on the discovery of Thomas Percy correspondence through dealer catalogs, in the work of their shared mentor at Oxford, David Nichol Smith.

The story, aside from the usual vexations of mortality, has a happy ending. After Osborn's death in 1976, Cleanth Brooks donated his Thomas Percy collection to the Beinecke. And so his copy of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient History*, complete with his scribbled comments in blue pencil, is now, alongside his collection of Percy manuscripts and his printed edition of the Percy-Malone correspondence, part of what has become the Beinecke's Osborn collection.

Notes

1. J. Milton French to James Marshall Osborn (henceforth French and Osborn), February 11, 1942. James Marshall Osborn correspondence, 1928–1977, Box 31. James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

2. French to Osborn, January 1, 1942.

3. The journal continued as *Seventeenth Century News* after 1951, and is currently published as a double issue, twice annually, through the Department of English, Texas A&M University.

4. Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, 2007).

5. Rene Wellek, "James Marshall Osborn 1906–1976," in René Wellek and Alvaro Ribeiro, ed., *Evidence in Literary Scholarship: Essays in Memory of James Marshall Osborn* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), vi – vii.

6. David Daiches, "Jim Osborn: Some Personal Notes," in Wellek and Ribeiro, ed., *Evidence in Literary Scholarship*, xxi.

7. Wellek, "James Marshall Osborn 1906–1976," x.

8. James M. Osborn, ed., *Work in Progress in the Modern Humanities* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1938), v.

9. René Wellek, "Memories of the Profession," in Lionel Gossman and Mihai I. Spariosu, ed., *Building a Profession: Autobiographical Perspectives on the History of Comparative Literature in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 5.

10. Joseph Milton French to James Marshall Osborn, March 10, 1942. Osborn MSS 7, Box 31. James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

11. French to Osborn, February 7, 1942. James Marshall Osborn Correspondence.

12. Marjorie Hope Nicolson to French, May 28, 1942. James Marshall Osborn Correspondence. Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

13. Osborn to French, May 4, 1944. James Marshall Osborn Correspondence.

14. John Crowe Ransom to Allen Tate, January 1, 1938. In Thomas Daniel Young and George Core, ed., *The Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 236.

15. Wellek, "Memories of the Profession," 8.

16. Andrew Rosenheim, "Obituary: Professor Cleanth Brooks," *The Independent*, May 12, 1994.

17. James Marshall Osborn to Cleanth Brooks, March 1, 1940. James Marshall Osborn Correspondence. Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

18. Osborn to Brooks, February 3, 1942.

19. Osborn to Brooks, February 18, 1942.

20. Cleanth Brooks to James Marshall Osborn. James Marshall Osborn Correspondence. Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

21. Brooks to Osborn, July 28, 1942.

22. Osborn to Brooks, August 3, 1942.

23. Ibid.

24. Brooks to Osborn, November 28, 1942

25. Cleanth Brooks Papers.

26. James Marshall Osborn Correspondence.

27. "Tribute to James M. Osborn," Cleanth Brooks Papers.

28. James Lowry Clifford, "The Eighteenth Century," *Modern Language Quarterly* 26 (1965): 112.

29. David Daiches, "Jim Osborn: Some Personal Notes," in Wellek and Ribeiro, ed., *Evidence in Literary Scholarship*, xix.

30. Osborn to Brooks. James Marshall Osborn Correspondence.