James Thurber, one of the genuinely popular and widely admired writers of this age, would hardly need introduction if it were not for the fact that “humorists” in our time—or at least the unpretentious humorists—are not accustomed to being taken very seriously. It might therefore seem pretentiously out of character with the subject—even though the argument is self-evident—to argue that Thurber’s work may be taken seriously, just as he took it himself: seriously, if not solemnly. But that is my intention in this work. He deserves no less, and a bibliography may hopefully be a nudge toward further serious investigation of Thurber as a writer, historian, satirist, commentator, and critic of his times.

His life (1894–1961) touched many of the representative areas of the American twentieth century: boyhood and young manhood in the Middle West of the pre–World War I era; the expatriate world of Europe of the postwar years; the world of journalism in the Middle West and East in the twenties; New York in its literary renaissance; the New Yorker in the years of its growth and flowering; World War II and its following cold war at home and abroad; and finally, the new world of exurbia. He worked in and with and for (and sometimes against) them all, and his work demonstrates an even greater variety: reporting, the journalistic column and special feature, the short humorous piece that the New Yorker has named the “casual,” the more nearly solemn essay, the fable, the parody, the short story in a variety of forms and moods, the book review and drama criticism, the novel—or at least the children’s novel—the biography and the autobiographical reminiscence, the preface, the play, the stage review, even a few short poems. And then there are the drawings, hundreds of them liberally strewn through his own and others’ books, the New Yorker, and the magazines and newspapers of his day. Some are cartoons (with their captions another form of literary art); some illustrations; some perceptive caricatures; some biting or gentle visual comments on men, women, and dogs; some just amusing doodlings with an elusive undercurrent of implication. Here is wide variety and great plenty, ranging from pure humor to fantasy to satire to disillusioned commentary or philosophical speculation.

The very variety of writing and drawing demands a bibliographic accounting. But the quantity, in view of the quality, presents the accountant with a tangled problem. In his writing Thurber worked
almost entirely with short pieces, precise and carefully written—he
told the interviewers for the Paris Review in 1955 that he revised
and rewrote as many as fifteen times before publication—but short
nonetheless. And being a professional writer, he tended to get as
much mileage from them as possible. Typically, a piece would appear
first in a periodical, then in one of his books, and finally in one of
the later collected books such as The Thurber Carnival or Alarms and
Diversions. From the book, in turn, the piece might well be picked
up in anthologies or in other periodicals. Occasionally, too, one
periodical piece might be split into two later ones, or one part
expanded into another whole. Despite the tendency to husband and
preserve his creative capital, he was also—and perhaps even more
typically—creatively prodigal and prolific. He wrote and drew much,
and scattered his works widely through the magazines and newspapers
of the day. Those that he wished to preserve he collected in book
form; those that presumably he did not wish to preserve he allowed
to be forgotten. And one of the intended values of a bibliography
is to direct attention to that uncollected writing that shows a Thurber
sometimes quite different from the Thurber of his books.

Thurber is associated in the public mind with the New Yorker,
and it is true that from 1927 to his death he published the largest part
of his work there. But all of his writing before 1927, and a good body
of writing and drawing after 1927, appeared in other periodicals. This
more obscure writing, particularly of the early days, offers both the
greatest sense of discovery and the greatest threat of accidental
omission. When Thurber first began as a free-lance writer, he pub­
lished where he could, in newspaper or in magazine. Most of this
apprentice work is listed here; but undoubtedly, despite the best
efforts of many people, some of it has been missed. In the very few
instances where it is known to exist but cannot be located, it is
listed as specifically as possible, hoping that someone some day will
stumble across it.

During the first half of the 1920’s, Thurber worked primarily as a
journalist—or less elegantly, a reporter. In 1920 when he returned
to Columbus from Paris, where he had been a code clerk in the
United States embassy, he took a job as reporter on the Columbus
Dispatch for four years. During 1924-25 he went back to Europe
again and there worked for the Paris edition of the Chicago Tribune.
In “Memoirs of a Drudge” (B454) he describes these years amusingly,
including in particular getting out the Riviera edition. In 1926 he
returned to America, working for the New York Evening Post for half
a year before joining the staff of the New Yorker. And even before
the years of professional reporting, he had been one of the editors
for the Ohio State University student newspaper, the Lantern, during
the school year of 1917–18.
Obviously, there is a large body of reporting existing for these early years, but this bibliography makes no attempt to identify or to list it. The entries here are limited to the writing that clearly prefigured the Thurber of the later years. The distinction is perhaps a tenuous one. The "Credos and Curios" page of the Columbus Dispatch in 1923, for instance, is not reporting in the usual meaning of the word but is humorous work of the sort he was later to develop and refine. But should a piece published February 17, 1925, in the Riviera edition of the Chicago Tribune on the Helen Wills–Suzanne Lenglen tennis match be included on the grounds that Thurber was later to cover tennis matches occasionally for the New Yorker? Or a feature article in the New York Evening Post on the blindfolded table-tennis player who talked backwards? The distinction is finally arbitrary, although demanded by the impossibility of identifying the anonymous writing. (All of Thurber's work in the Lantern, for instance, is anonymous.) I have, as a matter of fact, entered most of what I have found, but the reluctant decision must stand: early reporting is not listed.

Everything else is included, in the detail consistent with the demands of the material itself. The books are described in considerable detail; the contributions to other books that do not constitute original publication, in considerably less detail. The preface to each section describes the particular methods of that section. Throughout, the bibliography aims first at clarity and usefulness. The more esoteric bibliographic jargon has been avoided where possible, although the standard bibliographic vocabulary has necessarily been employed. Any unusual usage is explained in the section preface.

The world of readers and scholars is becoming increasingly aware of the problems of accurate transmission of text. Many of the editions in which authors old and new appear today are corrupt, and it should be the obligation of a bibliography to identify the reliable—that is, the accurate—texts. Accordingly, this bibliography makes a special point of identifying those editions or later impressions of books that are accurately reproduced from the original edition—in fact, the original plates—that was proofread and approved by the author. Any changes in the original plates, whether suggested by the author or not, are also carefully noted. In the investigation on which such notations are based, the mechanical Hinman collator has been employed as well as sight-collation. On the other hand, no attempt is made to define the author's revisions between editions or between periodical and book publication. Thurber often touched up his work between periodical and the later book, but he generally gives fair warning in the book preface that he has done so.

The drawings receive a more nearly offhand attention, partly because they are so widely broadcast and so easily and so often
reprinted that it is sometimes difficult to find them all or to distinguish between them when found, partly because drawings are a slightly alien element in conventional bibliography with its traditions and methods based on the description of books. Yet the drawings are important in Thurber’s work; some critics now hail him as one of the most interesting minor artists of the century. I have tried to reach a reasonable compromise between neglect and full-scale description and listing. The preface to the section on drawings in periodicals explains the specific methods and organization, but in general the aim is to list specifically the first periodical appearance of every drawing—titled, untitled, or captioned—that was printed for its own sake. Drawings intended or used primarily for illustration of some piece of writing, either in book or in periodical, are simply mentioned as “illustration” in the listing for the written piece. By this somewhat arbitrary means, the drawings that Thurber intended to be seen as self-entities, complete in and for themselves, receive individual listing; the others are simply associated with the writing of which they form a more or less integrated part.

The bibliography of an author as prolific as Thurber could not be compiled without the help of a great many people and institutions. My first thanks go to those libraries that have been particularly helpful, both in providing books and periodicals and in answering many detailed questions: the library of the Ohio State University with its special Thurber collection, the library of The University of Texas, which has shown such willingness to acquire what it did not already have, the Austin Public Library, the Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association, the New York Public Library, and—as reliably as always—the Library of Congress. Others, too, deserve mention by name, although I did not have the opportunity to make as great use of them: the Chicago Public Library, the Columbia University Library, the Columbus Public Library, the University of New Mexico Library, and the British Museum. Still others have been generous in answering letters, and many others have offered their public collections for my scrutiny and an occasional unexpected discovery.

A bibliographer working in the modern period soon finds that after libraries his next most useful source of new discoveries is the secondhand book shop. Several dealers in rare and out of print books—John S. Van E. Kohn of the Seven Gables Bookshop in New York, Percy Muir of Elkin Mathews in England, and Franklin Gilliam and Anthony Newnham of the Brick Row Book Shop in Austin—were helpful in tracking down known books. But my particular thanks go to all those secondhand dealers spread across the country, through whose shops I wandered taking notes. They seem to be growing fewer every year, and it is a great loss to the literary and scholarly com-
munity. They might be surprised and a little amused to be thanked, but they deserve it.

I have been fortunate in the generous co-operation of most of Thurber’s publishers. Without their records much of the information in the bibliography would have been impossible to find. Mrs. Beulah Hagen, assistant to Cass Canfield of Harper & Row, deserves particular thanks for personal patience far beyond the call of duty and for willingness to represent the co-operation of the company itself. But generosity does not end there. Harcourt, Brace & World, represented by Priscilla Colt and Audrey McEwen; Little, Brown and Company, represented by Alexander W. Williams; Rowohlt Verlag, whose representative remained anonymous; Simon and Schuster, represented by Robert Gottlieb; and the World Publishing Company, represented by Ben D. Zevin; all contributed their time and efforts. To the original publishers I should also like to add two of the book clubs that have helped to clarify the bibliographical complexity of their publications: The Book-of-the-Month Club, represented by Mrs. Elizabeth Easton, and The Book Find Club, represented by Phyllis Rosen.

So many people have taken the time to search for information, write a letter, advise, or generally go to some trouble to help that I cannot thank them all individually. A few I do want to mention by name, even if I cannot indicate the particular degree of aid: Mrs. Hayward Anderson of Milford, Connecticut; Paul W. Austin of Oak Park, Illinois; Dale Beardale of Fantasy and Science Fiction; Bernard A. Bergman of the Philadelphia Bulletin; Lewis C. Branscomb of the Ohio State University Libraries; John C. Broderick of the Library of Congress; Della M. Cortner of the Kansas City Public Library; Robert S. Demorest of the Ohio State University Press; Gretchen DeWitt of the Columbus Public Library; John J. Doohan of the Kansas City Star; Elizabeth B. Drewry of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park; Mrs. Aurevia Eaton of the Hugh Stephens Library, Stephens College; John B. Fullen of the Ohio State University Association; James W. Geibel of the Ohio State University; Jane Gwynn of the British Museum; Charles S. Holmes of Pomona College; L. J. King of the Detroit Public Library; Hyman Kritzer of the Ohio State University Library; William Lichtenwanger of the Music Division, Library of Congress; Mrs. Marguerite McAneny of the Princeton University Library; Ralph L. F. McCombs of Columbus, Ohio; Robert E. Morsberger of Michigan State University; Elliott Nugent of New York; Richard Palmer of the Montrose Book Shop, Houston; Richard A. Ploch of the Ohio State University Library; Walter E. Strickland of Best and Company, New York; William B. Todd of The University of Texas; Ronald John Williams of the Bermudian; Ernest S. Zimmerman of Otto Zimmerman and Son, Cincinnati. The entire staff of The University of Texas Library, including Alexander Moffit, the librarian, and Mrs. Mary
Hirth, librarian of the Academic Center, should rightfully be mentioned individually. I hope that they will forgive me for simply pointing to them all with gratitude and with real pride in them as a highly professional group.

Finally, my special and particular thanks go to Mrs. Helen Thurber of West Cornwall, Connecticut. Mrs. Thurber not only generously shared with me the information and the books in her personal collection but expended a great deal of effort—at a time of physical trials—to find more for my use. With great patience she answered my too frequent letters, and several times she was instrumental in introducing me to others who could answer my questions. Without her aid, this would be a far thinner book.

E. T. B.

Austin, Texas
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