



SEMANTOGRAPHY SERIES NO. 93

AN AMERICAN PUBLISHER, A LITERARY AWARD AND SEMANTOGRAPHY

As my hopes of getting a publication grant from a scientific foundation sank, I turned to awards offered by publishing houses. In the 1950 edition of THE LITERARY MARKET PLACE I found a long list of literary awards. Most of them concerned fiction writing. But one seemed promising. It was made by the publishing house of Houghton Mifflin of Boston and it mentioned "work of non-fiction by promising writers who need financial assistance to complete their work." I found out that this publishing house publishes also books on logic and semantics, and resolved therefore to apply for a publication grant. Again I had in mind the publication of small books on various aspects of Semantography. I thought however that something which would appeal to a greater circle of readers must be presented. I launched therefore two projects, a book for juveniles and laypeople on Logic, Linguistics, Semantics and Semantography to be written in a popular vein, and a second book for children on the simple symbols of Semantography. I concluded the first chapters which form Semantography Series No. 55 and 56. In addition I wrote a detailed publication proposal which forms S. Series No. 57. I also included other material, mentioned later. I felt that I should accompany my application with a letter to the judges. I wrote then;

Sydney 10th December, 1951

To the Judges
of the Houghton Mifflin
Literary Fellowship Award

Dear Sir/Madam,

Together with my application, I beg to direct this personal letter to you, feeling that other yardsticks need to be applied to my work. I ask you, kindly not to judge the literary expression, but the idea presented. I appeal to your imagination, your broadmindedness and your vision to recognise the value of a new idea, or rather an old idea, because for 300 years it was considered a mere philosopher's speculation, impossible to realise.

Now, that I am acknowledged by scholars to be the first man who has worked it out in practice, and has given to mankind a new mode of communication across all barriers, I find myself "ahead of my time", and facing the usual fate of men who pioneer new and unusual ideas. For more than 9 years I have given cheerfully of my savings and earnings for this work. Finding myself now at the end of my tether financially, I ask you for a grant-in-aid to continue the work.

In the attached paper titled MY INTENTIONS I have outlined 4 proposals which I submit to you. My heart is set on proposals 2, 3 and 4. However, realising a publisher's market considerations, I have put in the first place the proposal for a Popular Book (with pictures) for Juveniles and/or Adults on Semantics, Linguistics, Logic and Semantography.

Let me quote 3 scholars (among others) in praise of my work:

Professor Oliver L. Reiser, University of Pittsburgh, Pa.

"Bliss's heroic work ..." and "it provides a powerful stimulus and aid to President Truman's "Point Four Program" ...

Professor G. Patrick Meredith, University of Leeds:

"Semantography is such an important creative advance in language design ... I have spent many more hours (on it) than I could rationally spare - through sheer fascination".

Bertrand Russell

"Semantography ... I think very highly of it ... Any man or men who will spend the money necessary to get this work printed will, in my opinion, be performing an important service to Mankind".

These words refer to the 3 large volumes on SEMANTOGRAPHY in which I have proved the practicability of the idea for Science, Semantics, Logic, Linguistics, Education, Industry, Commerce, Communication, etc. which volumes I had mimeographed. I have approached a number of publishers with the proposal for a short book or booklet, but have been turned down. Yet, I can't blame them. But I believe that my work - if properly presented - might cause a sensation. Interest and support might mount rapidly among the public, the scholars and the governmental agencies of many countries.

Some enthusiastic librarians encouraged me to sell the work in the mimeographed form. They approved of a price of \$ 11.20, and I am glad to report that librarians, scholars and private persons in the United States, Great Britain, Australia, India etc. etc. have bought it. I receive orders from booksellers even for my SEMANTOGRAPHY SERIES comprising my leaflet, pamphlets and approaches to scholars and institutions. I hope that you too will find my work interesting enough for your favourable consideration, and thank you in anticipation.

PS. The attached leaflets may perhaps interest your friends too.

Yours sincerely,

C. K. Bliss

Together with this personal letter I submitted my application form, a selection of leaflets on Semantography, 4 publishing proposals as outlined in Semantography Series No. 57, biographical notes as outlined in Semantography Series No. 58, the manuscript of a juvenile book on Semantography from Sem. Series No. 55, the manuscript for a childrens' book on Semantography from Sem. Series No. 56, Volume II of the books on Semantography, and Sem. Series No. 25 The Gap in Prehistoric History. All this except Book II went on the 18th December by airmail.

On the 21st December I sent another letter informing the secretary that Book II will be sent to him (or her) by my friend Fritz Træuer of Yellow Springs. I felt I had to make a last appeal to the Secretary and so I wrote:

"May I conclude this last letter to you with an appeal. The fate of new and unusual ideas depends often on a secretary, and I depend on you. To reject my work, only one glance is necessary. To realize the great value of this new idea, vision is necessary, I feel sure that you and the judges will take the time and trouble to probe into my work."

Now all my letters and manuscripts came right into the Xmas-New Year holidays. The 31st December 1951 was the deadline. I expected then that a few months will pass until all the manuscripts have been sorted out and studied. I was then thunderstruck when I received already on the 7th of January, 1952 a short letter, signed by a woman telling me "We have read SEMANTOGRAPHY and are sorry to tell you we will be unable to offer an award for this material."

Now, "we have read" must be a lie. The Book II on Semantography came into their hands at a much later date. But, of course, there was no use of lamenting. It was clear. I was sorted out in the first sorting. Nevertheless, foolish as I was to believe that any appeal might still be of some value, I sent off the following letter:

Sydney 20th January, 1952

The Editorial Department,
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
2 Park Street,
BOSTON 7, Mass.

Dear Sirs,

Your letter (kld of Jan. 7) containing a short and quick rejection of my

work has come as a great shock. I understand that you consider the incoming applications once a year, and my application came in just before the deadline 31st December, 1951. That it should have been so quickly considered, seems to me, that it has been sorted-out in the first sorting-out, and I believe that it will not come to the notice of the persons who make the final decision.

It is true, that my work is not a novel, not a biography, not any of the usual books which come on the market every day. It is a new idea and therefore as every new idea, it looks strange, even absurd at first. Yet, it contains publishing possibilities far beyond that of many a work.

Now, this is my first approach to American publishers, and as I have spent money, time and labour on the special approach to you, I shall be thankful if you would in turn give me some advice with regard to my future approaches. Here is my first question: Bertrand Russell wrote that publishing my work means "performing an important service to Mankind". Tell me, carry these words any weight with a publisher? Do they mean anything to the publishing trade and to your firm? After all, every publication is a risk, and the money may be lost, but there are few books of which a man as great as Russell has said such words as he said of my work.

A number of enlightened scholars and librarians have realised that Semantography is a new world-embracing idea and that I am now going through the ordeal of every pioneer. Those librarians have not only brought my 3 volume mimeographed work, but have begun to collect my Semantography Series, the Story of the Struggle of Semantography, the collection of my leaflets and lectures, as well as my approaches and correspondence with great scholars and organisations. Now my futile approach to the Houghton Mifflin Company will be added and it will find its way into libraries telling of another chapter of the struggle of a man for a new idea.

I hope you realise that your quick judgement of my work has added to my embitterment. Even if my work should not be considered for an award, there is still the possibility that you might be interested in the publication of a small book. I ask you therefore to hand this over to the department dealing with publications on such subjects, or perhaps to reconsider your decision, and to submit it to the judges of the award. You may find these paragraphs annoying or arrogant. Professor Reiser of Pittsburgh University called my struggle "heroic". However, if you should not change your mind, please send the whole material to Mr. Fritz Treuer P.O.B. 167 Yellow Springs, Ohio.

However, a large letter is still under way. It contains a number of mimeographed copies of my letter to the judges of the award and attached to every letter are a number of leaflets, etc. These are for the private library of the judges, and I ask you to hand these letters over to the judges. Only if they just don't want them send the letters and leaflets to the address mentioned overleaf.

This is rather a frustrating letter, but I believe that your judgement of my work has been based on the ordinary type of book. I feel sure that the Houghton Mifflin Company will not being credited for having rejected so curtly a work of which Russell and other scholars spoke so highly. It may well be that you won't find the necessity to answer this letter. This too will not be to the credit of the company, and I sincerely hope that you will re-consider my work.

Yours very truly,

C.K. Bliss
5 Maroubra Bay Road,
Pagewood - Sydney
N.S.W. Australia

It was, of course, of no use whatever. The trouble was that they lost my volume II. I got a letter from another woman telling me that they will try to find it. Meanwhile 2 years passed by, and somehow, I revived some hopes.

Something has happened in the meantime. The Boston Christian Science Monitor brought an interesting article "Bliss and Semantography" on the leader page (See Sem. Series No. 63). And Boston was the place of Houghton Mifflin.

So I thought the article in a Boston paper might have brought some changes. Therefore, I sent off the following letter. I am quoting it to show in this instance (as in many others) that I was not easily discouraged and that I tried again and again. Seeing another woman's name on the last letter I made a new appeal, now to her. Why I thought it could help, I shall explain at the end of this issue.

Sydney September, 29th 1953

Miss Grace W. Pierce
Houghton Mifflin Co.
2 Park Street,
Boston 7, U.S.A.

Your letter GWP/nkh of September 23, 1953.

Dear Miss Pierce,

Thank you for your letter. I do hope that the large volume SEMANTOGRAPHY will turn up. I enclose the leaflet (with the tower of Babel) which is on the cover. If you would kindly circulate this among your staff, who handles manuscripts, may be someone will remember having seen it, and where he has put it.

Thank you too for promising to look up the Christian Science Monitor for the article BLISS AND SEMANTOGRAPHY. For your convenience I enclose it. Please read it and realize that here is a new and fascinating idea which might indeed capture the imagination of the world. You may get in touch with Mr. Handley, Lecture Manager of 200 Berkely Street, Boston, who was so fascinated with it, that he planned a lecture tour for me. He approached the President of Boston University and professors at Harvard, but the only obstacle was money. Harvard has recently ordered a second set of my 3 volumes which are already in a number of important libraries. The approved price is \$ 11.20. Moreover, Harvard University and the Library of Congress have given a standing advance order for anything I or others write on Semantography and be it a sheet of typewritten paper only. A famous New York professor is now making great efforts to induce a great American foundation to pay for either the publication of a book or to pay for a lecture tour through the United States. LIFE and TIME have bought the 3 volumes and have only postponed an article on Semantography. I could cite many more incidents proving that Semantography would be a good thing for a publisher.

Now what I have in mind is a short and small book or booklet with paper cover explaining to the intelligent laymen what Semantography is and what it can do. But before I make you a proposal which would take away any risk in this publication venture, let me answer first your objection. You said: "the publication of such a work as Semantography, regardless of its merit, is in all probability outside of our range." That it is "within the range" is proved by (among others) one book on my desk RELIABLE KNOWLEDGE by Harold A. Larrabee, Union College, published by Houghton Mifflin Co. in 1945. This book has the same theme as Semantography with one great difference. Larrabee's writings is highbrow stuff, utterly beyond the reach of laypeople and even of students. After reading this heavy ton of nearly 700 pages one is not quite sure what really constitutes reliable knowledge and how to get it. I understand of course why Larrabee and other professors can get their large manuscripts printed by a publishing firm. Publishers must eat too and they cannot suffer many failures. Such expensive publications like the one mentioned are used, as a text book at colleges and universities. On the other hand, they are never best sellers, and they never reach high editions.

What then is the difference with regard to Semantography and why could Semantography be a success presented in a small book something of the size of the Pocket Book or Penguin Book? Semantography has two aspects, and it is unfortunately the second aspect which people grasp immediately without thinking about the first aspect, which is by far the more important. Semantography is the first practical realisation of an idea proposed 300 years ago by the great mathematician Leibnitz. He dreamed of a simple "Algebra of Thought" so simple that even children and youngsters could grasp and operate it. Naturally, an algebra operates with symbols. Now the algebraic symbols $1 + 2 = 3$ have the same meaning in all languages of the world and therefore can be read in all languages. But everyone who has a grasp of the usefulness of mathematical symbols would laugh if the algebraic symbols would

be termed another "symbolic international language".

Leibnitz realised the havoc created by abstract words, which are mostly ambiguous and vague and lead to fallacies of thought, and therefore he demanded that the symbols should be pictorial, "in order to make our conceptions more real". It becomes obvious that vague and ambiguous words which may mean anything cannot be pictured, and this simple device enables us immediately to spot ambiguities.

Now, everyone who takes a fleeting glance into my books, exclaims "Ah, a picture writing", and with this statement he dismissed the whole idea. I can readily understand why all my manuscripts (although they dealt partially with Semantics, partially with Linguistics, partially with Logic) had been immediately dismissed by your staff making the selection for the literary award. The whole thing looks so outlandish, even absurd, that it is better not to go into it.

It is therefore very difficult for me to induce people to have another look. Most difficult is to make them understand that the aspect of inter-linguistics is of secondary importance. The most important aspect of Semantography is that it constitutes A LOGIC FOR EVERYONE. And here is why it is so important:

We learn the 3 R's in the primary school and then we go on learning more R's and Arts. But the most important R is not taught in the primary and secondary schools of the world: The Art of Reasoning. It is not taught because up till now there was no simple method available. And the Logic taught at the university is far too complicated to be of any value in everyday reasoning. But Semantography is this simple logic, which can be taught even to children.

To prove this assertion I beg to inform you that Bertrand Russell, the greatest living logician has studied Semantography and has tested it here in Sydney. After that he wrote that "Any man or men who will spend the money necessary to get your work printed will, in my opinion be performing an important service to mankind." I enclose the cover of my Introductory Brochure with the picture of Leibnitz and Russell. You will find Russell's full statement and other statements on the back.

I am an industrial man and I simply cannot canvass manuscripts to publishers and get them back in my face. Moreover, my 3 large volumes are only to show that Semantography can be used in all fields of human endeavours. I could write any small book according to the specifications of my publishing firm; it could have 50,000 words or 100,000 words. It could be written for children, or for laymen or for scholars, etc. etc. Now here is my proposal. I believe I could raise a bank guarantee which would insure you against any risk of loss as far as the cost of printing and paper is concerned. Such a bank guarantee would take away all considerations and worries about risk and failure which might beset any person of your publishing firm who gets the task of investigating Semantography.

Before raising that bank guarantee it would be necessary for me to know the cost of printing and paper for one edition of say 1,000 copies (but not the administrative cost of the publishing firm in handling the publication). Furthermore, some stipulation would have to be made when stock is to be taken. I believe one year would be enough. Any remaining copies would either be taken over by me or being put on sale and then credited.

I believe that such arrangements are made in publishing ventures, and I shall be happy to have your comment on this. Only then would I come forward with samples of my writing. And when you have stipulated what you want to have, and how long the manuscript should be, I would go about and do it.

Awaiting your reply I am

Yours sincerely

Encl.

Semantography Series No. 1 Leaflet

C.K. Bliss

" " " 63 Article from the Monitor

" " " 31 Cover only.

In this proposal I have taken away any risk from the publisher. I have guaranteed him against any loss. I did not know at the moment how I am going to do it, but I wanted to see his reaction. I had in the meantime come across a number of instances in which publishers asked the author for a substantial sum to help in the publishing venture. I could not pay, but I could give a bank guarantee guaranteeing payment for any loss the publisher might incur after a certain period.

Miss Pierce wrote back in no time declining the idea. The reader may imagine my new disappointment. Up till then I believed that publishers are moved by one thought only, the making of money, the refusal of risky ventures which might incur a loss. Now I had offered a guarantee against this. And I was rejected again. What was the reason?

Whatever I say might be rejected as pure speculation. I am saying only to show my state of mind, believing that other authors must have gone through similar bitter experiences. Throughout the 11 years of my work on Semantography I believed that one day a woman will come along and will help my work along. I thought so, because the biography of any creative man shows invariably that some women have helped him to success. Some later on became the wife of the genius, etc. This is happening to-day too, and there are lots of biographical articles in the press about successful books and their authors, which have been brought to success by a woman working in the publishing house.

Or it was a married woman of nobility with plenty of time on her hand and have an open saloon for the literary cream of the day, including critics, reviewers and publishers. One day, so I hoped, a woman with some influence will take Semantography to her heart.

To-day I realized how foolish such hopes were. What those women take to their heart is not the work of the author, but the author himself. In short, it's love in the first place, be it the love and hope of a woman to gain a celebrated husband. Or it might be a married woman, frustrated in her marriage and unhappy, who starts a love affair with a young author and helps him along, so binding him to her. Or it may well be that the woman is happily married to another man, but feels a platonic love, or motherly love to the young author - may be, perhaps. It might just as well be women of influence have helped an author along, and found invariably the same picture. It was love in the first place, and nothing else. And I have mistaken this as the devotion of a great woman to a great idea for mankind.

I was therefore a fool when appealing to women in the publishing trade. With some of them, there is another factor - career. Those hornrimmed terribly clever and efficient looking females have found something important - careers. And they are very careful not to make a risky step which could risk their career. And promoting a crazy idea like Semantography can only raise doubts and eyebrows with the chief.

I have found those women as editors of publishing houses, as editors of scientific journals and in other posts. I have come to realize that they must play safe. And playing safe with a book or an article is when it comes from a safe and guaranteed clever man. He must be a professor of something. Then promoting him may be safe. And I am not a professor of something.

I thought first that Houghton Mifflin is publishing only fiction books and that it was a great mistake of approaching this firm. But later I found that they publish in exactly the field where Semantography belongs. A big book came into my hands, published by Houghton Mifflin "Reliable Knowledge" a kind of mixture between Semantics and Logic and with hundreds and hundreds of pages. In the end, you don't know what is really reliable knowledge. But this is not the point. The point is that the author is a Mr. Harold A. Larrabee who is a professor on some college in the Eastern States and who uses this his own book as an approved textbook for his students. This means sales and therefore Houghton Mifflin published the book, though (as I said before) it leaves the poor pupil more perturbed than ever. He does not know any more how really to find reliable knowledge. With Semantography the middle becomes clear. Reliable (○) and knowledge (○) are both mind meanings, vague, ambiguous and changing in different minds. It is a good thing that the logicians and semanticians do not take the trouble to study the semantics of Semantography. They might soon realize how unreliable everything is what they call knowledge.