Penelope Fitzgerald:

An Inventory of Her Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator Fitzgerald, Penelope, 1916-

Title Penelope Fitzgerald Papers

Dates: 1912-1988

Extent: 8 boxes, 1 oversize flat box, 1 bound mss. (3.36 linear feet)

Abstract: The papers of this British writer include research notes, manuscript

drafts, incoming correspondence, and photographs relating to all of

her major works.

RLIN record #: TXRC91-A1

Language: English.

Access Open for research

Restrictions on Author

Use:

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Administrative Information

Acquisition Purchase, 1989

Processed by Andra Whitworth, Vonda Totten, 1990

Repository: Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Penelope Knox Fitzgerald was born into a literary family on December 17, 1916, in Lincoln, England. Her father was E. V. Knox, editor of *Punch* magazine (1932-1949). One of her uncles, Monseigneur Ronald Knox, was well known as a translator of the Bible and a writer of detective stories.

Penelope attended Somerville College and, in 1941, married Desmond Fitzgerald with whom she raised three children. Her work experience was varied and included working in the Ministry of Food, for the BBC, in a haunted bookshop in Southwold, and as an English teacher. Her first professional experience in writing came in the 1950s when she worked as an assistant editor for the literary magazine, *World Review*. She began her writing career as the biographer of Edward Burne-Jones (*Edward Burne-Jones: A Biography*, 1975) and of her father and his three brothers in *The Knox Brothers* (1977).

Fitzgerald began writing fiction after her husband was diagnosed with cancer in the 1970s, partly in an effort to entertain him through his illness. Her first published novel was a mystery, *The Golden Child* (1977). Her second novel, *The Bookshop*, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1978, and in 1979 Fitzgerald won the Booker Prize for her novel *Offshore*. She was also shortlisted for *Innocence* (1986), *The Beginning of Spring* (1988) and *The Gate of Angels* (1990). Fitzgerald won the Heywood Hill Literary Prize for lifetime achievement in literature in 1996 and was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Prize in 1997 for *Blue Flower*, her fictional biography of the German Romantic poet Novalis.

Penelope Fitzgerald died on April 28, 2000. A collection of her short stories, *The Means of Escape*, was published later that year. Her collected essays, *A House of Air* and *The Afterlife*, were also published posthumously in 2003.

Scope and Contents

Research notes, manuscripts, correspondence, printed materials, contracts, and photographs, 1971-1988 (8 document cases), document the literary works of Penelope Fitzgerald. Arranged as received in two series representing her creative works and research notebooks, the papers reflect the research and production phases of her works as well as the responses to them. Nearly half of the materials are research notebooks filled with various notes, writings, and clippings. There are also research materials included in the creative works series under each title. A third series was added comprising personal materials not related to any of Fitzgerald's writings. Oversized materials include one promotional poster for *The Beginning of Spring* and printed materials.

The creative works series includes varying levels of documentation on all nine of Fitzgerald's major works (*The Knox Brothers, Offshore, Innocence, Charlotte Mew, The Beginning of Spring, The Bookshop, The Golden Child, Edward Burne-Jones*, and *At Freddie's*) and four of her minor works (*The Axe, The Poetry Bookshop, The Works of Ernest Shepherd*, and *Human Voices*). The papers contain substantial information on the Knox brothers, Charlotte Mew, and Edward Burne-Jones that provides extensive documentation for research. There are eleven manuscripts, two of which are handwritten and four of which contain extensive corrections. Much of the research correspondence is annotated with comments by Fitzgerald. Also included in the creative works series are Fitzgerald's inventory lists which state the significance of many of the materials she collected during her research. There is no outgoing correspondence in the collection.

The researcher should be aware that this is a very consciously created collection in that Fitzgerald selected the materials that would be included and made notations on many of them as to their significance or their relationship to her work. Some of her commentaries are quite blunt. None of Fitzgerald's life prior to her writing career is reflected in the papers.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Creative Works, 1912-1983 (bulk 1974-1981)

This series consists of Fitzgerald's papers relating to her various creative works. Arranged as received, the papers are organized into subseries by the particular works they concerned. Some works are more completely represented than others. For example, "The Axe "has only one folder of production materials, while The Knox Brothers has 19 folders of research materials and correspondence. To show the various phases of the writing and publishing process, each work is arranged into research materials, manuscripts, production materials, responses to the book, and Fitzgerald's inventories of documents. The research materials include notes, incoming correspondence, photographs, and items Fitzgerald collected in pursuing her research. Fitzgerald corresponded with biographers, historians, British nobility, and relatives of the people she wrote about. This correspondence reveals information not only about Fitzgerald's subjects, but also about closely-related topics, such as the Pre-Raphaelites (the Rossettis in particular), Oscar Wilde, and George Eliot. Manuscripts (some handwritten) are present for Offshore, Innocence, Charlotte Mew, The Beginning of Spring, The Bookshop, At Freddie's, and her introduction to *The Poetry Bookshop*. All have corrections. Production materials include correspondence from her publishers, contracts, and dust jackets. Responses to the book include both personal letters and review clippings. Fitzgerald's inventories of documents are filed at the end of the materials for each work and provide additional information about items in the collection. Incoming correspondence is arranged alphabetically; all other materials are arranged chronologically. Materials dating from 1912-1970 are items gathered by Fitzgerald in the course of her research. An index of works is located at the end of this guide.

Of particular note the page proofs of Evelyn Waugh's *The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox, Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and Pronotary Apostolic to His Holiness Pope Pius XII,* located with the research materials for *The Knox Brothers.*

Series II. Notebooks, undated

This series consists of 57 notebooks used by Fitzgerald in her research and in drafting her stories. The notebooks contain handwritten notes and parts of manuscripts as well as various loose sheets (many torn from other notebooks), correspondence, and clippings that have been left in their original positions between the pages. In some instances it was possible to determine a title for the notebooks, although there is no assurance that all the material in that notebook pertains to a specific novel or short story. Where no single title could be determined, a parenthetical note has been placed on the folder list to give the researcher some indication of the contents of the notebook. In many cases, the notes written on the covers of the notebooks were simply too extensive or too illegible to transcribe. None of the notebooks are dated, but they are a potential goldmine for researchers interested in Fitzgerald's research and writing processes.

Series III. Personal Materials, 1978

This series focuses on Fitzgerald's personal materials that do not relate to any of her creative works. The folder contains two blank postcards, a memorial card on Joshua Haycraft's death, and a poem written (by Colin Haycraft?) to celebrate the 1978 election of a new Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

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Bruford, Walter Horace, 1894-

Butler, Basil Christopher

Carrington, Charles Edmund, 1897-

Cassavetti, Eileen

Christian, John, fl.1974-

Cline, Clarence Lee

Colbeck, R. Norman (Reginald Norman), 1903-

Collins, Dorothy E.

Crankshaw, Edward

Crowe, Michael J.

Dammers, A.H. (Alfred Hounsell), 1921-

D'Arcy, Ella

Daube, David

Dearden, James S.

Denniston, Robin

Dickinson, Patric, 1914-

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Easton, Malcolm

Edel, Leon, 1907-

Ellmann, Richard, 1918-

Farmer, Herbert Henry, 1892-

Farnhill, Kenneth H.

Feldhaus, Irmgard

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Freyberg, Paul Richard Freyberg, Baron, 1923-

Garnett, Richard

Gilling, John

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King, Francis Henry

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Maclean, A.D. (Alan Duart)

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Morris, Helen Soutar, 1909-

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Murray, John, 1908-

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Newby, P.H. (Percy Howard), 1918-

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Oxford and Asquith, Julian Edward George Asquith, earl, 1916-

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Plymouth, Other Robert Ivor Windsor-Clive, earl, 1923-

Richardson, Margaret Alison

Samuels-Lasner, Mark, 1952-

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Spencer, Gilbert, 1892-

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Sykes, Marjorie

Thirkell, Lance

Tillotson, Kathleen Mary

Toynbee, Philip

Trevelyan, Raleigh

Usborne, Richard

Vidler, Alexander Roper, 1899-

Wansbrough, Elizabeth Lewis

Wansbrough, George, 1904-

Watts, Marjorie

Waugh, Auberon

Waugh, Evelyn, 1903-1966

Wilkinson, L.P.

Williams, Frederick J.

Wilson, Angus

Winterbottom, F.W. (Frederick William), 1897-

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Series I. Creative Works, 1912-1983 (bulk 1974-1981) (4 1/2 boxes)

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- Wilson, Angus.--5-4
- Winterbottom, F. W. (Frederick William), 1897-.--1-9
- Woodruff, Douglas.--1-17
- Yorke, Margaret.--1-23