

Leonard Russell:

An Inventory of His Letters at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Russell, Leonard, 1906-
Title:	Leonard Russell Letters
Dates:	1945-1972 (bulk 1948-1960)
Extent:	.5 box (.21 linear feet)
Abstract	The collection comprises three folders of letters to Russell from writers, literary critics, artists, actors, statesmen, and other prominent persons in England. Although most of the letters pertain to Russell's tenure at the <i>Sunday Times</i> , some are more personal in tone, and a few are addressed to both Russell and his wife. Most of the letters are incoming only; a small number include carbon copies of Russell's replies. Taken as a whole, the letters provide insight into the literary scene of post World War II Britain.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-03661
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases, 1990 & 1995 (R11958, R13328)
Processed by	Katie Salzmann, 1995; Sarah Demb, 1996; Jennifer Peters, 1996
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Leonard Russell, editor and literary anthologist, was born in London in 1906. He began his career in journalism at the *Daily Telegraph* registering the editor's incoming review copies. Cyril Lakin later made Russell an assistant when Lakin was appointed literary editor of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1929, and of the *Sunday Times* in 1933. When Russell succeeded Lakin literary editor of the *Sunday Times* in 1945, he contracted talents such as Cyril Connolly, Harold Hobson, Raymond Mortimer, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, who helped make the *Sunday Times* a leading voice in the literary community. He remained literary editor of the *Sunday Times* until 1954.

In addition to these accomplishments, Russell founded *The Saturday Review* in 1941, worked briefly on *Go* magazine after leaving the *Sunday Times*, and later returned to the newspaper, where he edited a succession of serials that changed the character of Sunday journalism and increased the *Sunday Times'* circulation dramatically. Notable serializations under Russell's direction include Lord Montgomery's memoirs, Somerset Maugham's *Ten Novels and Their Authors*, and William Manchester's *Death of a President*.

In his later years Russell was involved in several publishing projects, including *The Pearl of Days*, an unofficial history of the *Sunday Times*.

Russell married film critic Dilys Powell in 1943, and they remained together until his death in 1974.

Scope and Contents

The Leonard Russell Letters, 1945-1972 (bulk 1948-1960), comprise three folders of correspondence. The letters are divided by Ransom Center accession number into two parts, each reflecting a separate acquisition, the first a purchase from Mrs. E. O. Russell, and the second a purchase from the dealer Bertram Rota. The collection contains letters to Russell from writers, literary critics, artists, actors, statesmen, and other prominent persons in England. Although most of the letters pertain to Russell's tenure at the *Sunday Times*, some are more personal in tone, and a few are addressed to both Russell and his wife. Most of the letters are incoming only; a small number include carbon copies of Russell's replies. Taken as a whole, the letters provide insight into the literary scene of post World War II Britain.

The first folder (accession R13328) contains letters received by Russell in response to his requests for contributions to the *Sunday Times*, dating 1948-1957. All of the letters concern the *Sunday Times'* year-end book recommendations. They are from a number of prominent people whom Russell invited to give their choices for the best books published during the year. Notable in this first folder of letters are those from Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, Graham Greene, John Masefield, Somerset Maugham, Laurence Olivier, Edith Sitwell, and Evelyn Waugh. Of particular

interest is Russell's correspondence with Edith Sitwell regarding censorship of book nominations.

The other two folders (accession R11958) contain letters from authors, artists, literary critics, and other contributors to the *Sunday Times*. Also arranged alphabetically, but with a broader date range, the letters include single exchanges with notable writers such as Robert Graves, Aldous Huxley, and Storm Jameson, as well as multiple letters from Russell's literary friends Richard Church, Desmond MacCarthy, J. B. Priestley, and others. Generally pertaining to the *Sunday Times*, the letters contain references to the authors' current projects, news about mutual literary acquaintances, and responses to Russell's requests for contributions. Of particular importance in this collection is the correspondence from Nancy Mitford, who wrote articles for the newspaper from Paris. Covering the years 1950-1955 and 1965, these letters include many of Russell's carbon replies as well as a 2 1/2 page unfinished manuscript by Mitford on the Salon d'Ars Menagers in France. Other correspondents of note are H. E. Bates, Terence Rattigan, Colin Wilson, and Leonard Woolf. Also present are ink sketches by John Hayward, Leonard Rossman, and Tveda.

Index terms

Correspondents:

Bates, H. E. (Herbert Ernest), 1905-1974
 Berlin, Isaiah, Sir
 Bonham-Carter, Violet Asquith, Lady, 1887-1969
 Church, Richard, 1893-
 Eliot, T. S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888-1965
 MacCarthy, Desmond, 1877-1952
 Maugham, W. Somerset (William Somerset), 1874-1965
 Mitford, Nancy, 1904-1973
 Priestly, J. B. (John Boynton), 1884-
 Sitwell, Edith, Dame, 1887-1964
 Whistler, Laurence, 1912-
 Wilson, Colin, 1931-
 Woolf, Leonard, 1880-1969-

Subjects:

Sunday times (London: England: 1931).
 Books and reading--Great Britain

English newspapers--Sections, columns, etc.--Reviews

Document types:

Drawings

box 1 folder 1 Letters (accession R13328)

box 1 folder 2-3 Letters (accession R11958)

Leonard Russell Letters--Index of Correspondents

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- Mitford, Nancy, 1904-1973--1.1-2
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- Wilson, Colin, 1931- --1.3
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