

Jean Cocteau:

An Inventory of His Papers in the Carlton Lake Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Cocteau, Jean, 1889-1963
Title:	Carlton Lake Collection of Jean Cocteau Papers
Dates:	1905-1959 (bulk 1910-1928)
Quantity:	11 boxes (4.62 linear feet), 6 oversize folders (osf), 1 bound volume (bv), and 1 galley folder (gf)
Abstract:	The early personal and professional life of the French poet, novelist, artist, playwright, and filmmaker Jean Cocteau is documented in this collection of manuscripts, correspondence, personal papers, notebooks, drawings, financial and legal documents, and third-party papers, drawn largely from his personal archives.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-04960
Language:	All materials are in French.
Note:	We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which provided funds for the processing and cataloging of this collection.
Access:	Open for research. Permission from copyright holder must accompany photoduplication requests for Jean Cocteau materials.

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gifts and purchases, 1966, 1969, 1973, 1977, 1987, 1997 (G846, G2793, G2966, R5180, R5374, R5883, R7748, G10713)
Processed by:	Monique Daviau, Catherine Stollar, Richard Workman, 2004
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Jean Cocteau, one of the most versatile creative artists of the twentieth century, achieved celebrity as poet, playwright, journalist, novelist, artist, and filmmaker. At the time of his death he was perhaps the best-known French literary figure outside of France.

Born Jean Maurice Eugène Clément Cocteau on July 5, 1889, he was a child of affluence, particularly through the Lecomtes on the maternal side of his family. He began writing poetry as a boy and gained entrance into the literary world through his mother's social contacts. At age eighteen his work was the subject of a public reading that brought him his first notoriety, leading to the publication of his first book of poems, *La lampe d'Aladin* (1909).

In the next few years he met and was influenced by members of the avant-garde, resulting in less traditional works such as the ballet *Parade* (1917) in collaboration with Erik Satie, Léonide Massine, Sergei Diaghilev, and Pablo Picasso, *Le Potomak* (1919), a collection of drawings, poetry, and prose, and the poems of *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1919).

Cocteau's art received further stimulation from his intense love for the gifted young poet Raymond Radiguet. Their affair ended with Radiguet's death from typhoid at age twenty, but not before the younger poet had guided Cocteau away from modernism and toward a more classical formality.

In the years between the two world wars, Cocteau wrote his first novel (*Le grand écart*, 1923), his first nonmusical play (*Antigone*, 1922), and his first film (*Le sang d'un poète*, 1932). For the rest of his life, in spite of his struggles with opium addiction, he continued to produce an enormous quantity of work and maintained his public prominence.

In 1949 Cocteau was made Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. In 1955 he was elected to the Académie Royale de Langue et de Littérature Françaises of Belgium and also to the Académie Française.

He died October 11, 1963, and is buried in the chapel of Saint-Blaise-des-Simples in Milly-la-Forêt, France.

Sources:

Lake, Carlton. *Confessions of a Literary Archaeologist*. New York: New Directions, 1990.

Moulaison, Glenn. "Jean Cocteau." *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 258: Modern French Poets*. <http://www.galegroup.com> (accessed May 19, 2004).

Steegmuller, Francis. *Cocteau: A Biography*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1970.

Scope and Contents

The personal and professional life of French poet, novelist, artist, playwright, and filmmaker Jean Cocteau is reflected in the Carlton Lake collection of Cocteau's manuscripts, correspondence, personal papers, notebooks, drawings, financial and legal documents, and third-party papers. The collection is arranged in four series: I. Works, 1910-1929 (6.5 boxes); II. Correspondence, 1913-1959 (2.5 boxes); III. Personal, 1908-1950 (1 box); and IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1905-1925 (1 box).

The bulk of the collection is a large portion of Cocteau's personal archives that was sold without his permission to a French dealer in 1935. (For a detailed history of the papers, see chapter nine of Lake's *Confessions of a Literary Archaeologist*.) Because the papers went to the dealer in several small lots, it has not been possible to be certain of Cocteau's original arrangement. Therefore, works have been arranged alphabetically by title and correspondence alphabetically by correspondent.

Within the Works series are manuscripts or proofs of most of Cocteau's writings until about 1928, a period that encompassed some of his best work, including *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*, *Le coq et l'arlequin*, *Les enfants terribles*, *Le grand écart*, *Le livre blanc*, *Les mariés de la tour Eiffel*, *La noce massacrée*, *Le Potomak*, and *Thomas l'imposteur*. Many of the manuscripts and notebooks also contain drawings. Because the bulk of the archives predates Cocteau's involvement with the cinema, that aspect of his work is largely not documented.

Within the Correspondence series, the folder of Cocteau's letters to Henri Lefebvre is actually the dossier of Lefebvre's dealings with Cocteau and the sellers of Cocteau's papers (this is the file referred to in Lake's *Confessions* by the title "Affaire Cocteau"). Cocteau's letters which frequently concern his writing, his philosophy, and his personal life are, like his works, sprinkled with drawings. Prominent among his correspondents are Jean and Valentine Hugo, Max Jacob, Marie Laurencin, and Francis Poulenc.

The Personal series includes inscriptions from other authors to Cocteau on tear-sheets, address books, an autograph book from the beginning of his career, and various documents such as his birth certificate, plans for the decoration of his apartment, and a menu from a dinner at Le Boeuf sur le Toit.

Among the Third-Party Works and Correspondence are letters from Cocteau's mother to Valentine Hugo, and works by Raymond Radiguet as well as letters to him from various correspondents.

Related Material

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center, the Lake Art Collection contains a large number of works by Cocteau.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Cocteau, Eugénie, b. 1855.
Hugo, Jean, 1894- .
Hugo, Valentine, 1887-1968.
Jacob, Max, 1876-1944.
Laurencin, Marie, 1883-1956.
Poulenc, Francis, 1899-1963.
Radiguet, Raymond, 1903-1923.

Subjects

Novelists, French.
Poets, French.

Document Types

Address books.
Autograph albums.
Birth certificates.
Galley proofs.
Page proofs.

Series I. Works, 1910-1929, nd

A-B	Box-Folder 39.3
Art poétique (Version définitive), handwritten signed manuscript in notebook, 1916	Box-Folder 39.4
C	Box-Folder 39.5
<i>Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance</i> (1919)	
Handwritten manuscripts with revisions 1915-1917, nd	Box-Folder 39.6-7
"Dédicace," handwritten manuscript, three versions, 1916, nd	Box-Folder 39.8
Typed manuscript and carbon copy, 1917	Box-Folder 39.9
Typed carbon copy, nd	Box-Folder 39.10
First page proofs with handwritten manuscript page and correspondence with printer laid in, 1918, nd	Box-Folder 40.1
Galley and page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1919	Box-Folder 40.2
Page proofs with handwritten final page and sample cover, 1919	Box-Folder 40.3
<i>Carte blanche</i> (1920)	
Two handwritten manuscripts and photocopy of published article from <i>Paris-Midi</i> , 1919, nd	Box-Folder 40.4
Two handwritten signed manuscripts, nd	Box-Folder 40.5
Typescript with handwritten title page, 1919	Box-Folder 40.6
Galley proofs, nd	Box-Folder 40.7
La chanson des anémones, handwritten and typed carbon copy manuscripts, nd	Box-Folder 40.8
Les chansons du prince frivole (published as <i>Le prince frivole</i> , 1910), proofs with extensive handwritten corrections and additions, 1910	Box-Folder 40.9
<i>Le coq et l'arlequin</i> (1918)	

Handwritten first draft with sketches, 1918	Box-Folder 40.10
Handwritten, typed, and carbon copy manuscript, 1918	Box-Folder bv 5
Printed copy with pencil margin markings, 1918	Box-Folder 40.11
D	Box-Folder 41.1
David, handwritten unfinished script, nd	Box-Folder osf 18
Démarche d'un poète, typed carbon copy manuscript, nd	Box-Folder 41.2
<i>Dessins</i> (1923), proofs, 1924	Box-Folder 41.3-4
E	Box-Folder 41.5
Une education sentimentale, signed handwritten manuscript, nd	Box-Folder osf 19
En écoutant un rossignol à Blidah, handwritten manuscript with typed carbon copies, nd	Box-Folder 41.6
<i>Les enfants terribles</i> (1929), typed carbon copy manuscript with handwritten revisions, and incomplete page proofs, 1929, nd	Box-Folder 41.7
<i>Escales</i> , proofs, nd	Box-Folder osf 20
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Un genre nouveau, handwritten manuscript, nd	Box-Folder 41.9
<i>Le grand écart</i> (1923)	
Typed carbon copy manuscript, two copies, 1923	Box-Folder 41.10-11
Page proofs with handwritten additions, bound, 1923	Box-Folder 42.1
L-M	Box-Folder 42.2
<i>Le livre blanc</i> (1928)	
Typed carbon copy manuscript, nd	Box-Folder 42.3
Typed carbon copy manuscript with extensive handwritten revisions, 1927	Box-Folder 42.4

Page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1928	Box-Folder 42.5-7
Les livres, handwritten manuscript with carbon copies, nd	Box-Folder 42.8
<i>Les mariés de la tour Eiffel</i> (1921)	
Handwritten manuscript, titled "La noce massacrée," nd	Box-Folder 42.9
Typescript, titled "La noce massacrée ou Les mariés de la tour Eiffel," nd	Box-Folder 42.10
Le mystère laïc: Chirico'un essai de critique, handwritten and typed manuscript, with typed carbon copy fragments of a later version, 1928	Box-Folder 42.11
N	Box-Folder 43.1
Ne plus voir que ce port, manuscript and typed carbon copy, nd	Box-Folder 43.2
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Le rire de Goya, handwritten manuscript (unpublished), 1916	Box-Folder 43.3
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Proofs, nd	Box-Folder 43.7
Notebook, nd	Box-Folder 43.8
Notebook on art, music, poetry, nd	Box-Folder 43.9
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<i>Les parents terribles</i> (1938), handwritten draft, nd	Box-Folder 44.1
<i>Picasso</i> (1923/1926), typed carbon copy manuscript, 1924	Box-Folder 44.2
Poème autour d'une fleur de Datura, handwritten manuscript with typed carbon copies, 1913	Box-Folder 44.3
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<i>Poésies</i> (1920)	
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<i>Le Potomak</i> (1919)	
Page proofs	
Mercure de France edition (unpublished)	
Few handwritten corrections and emendations, 330 pp., nd	Box-Folder 44.6-7
Incomplete, 312 pp., nd [formerly 45.3]	Box-Folder 44.8
Société Littéraire de France edition (1919)	
Handwritten corrections and revisions, 390 pp., nd	Box-Folder 44.9-10
Handwritten insert and few corrections, 422 pp., 1919	Box-Folder 45.1-2
Q-S	Box-Folder 45.3
Le rappel à l'ordre	Box-Folder 45.4
T	Box-Folder 45.5
<i>Thomas l'imposteur</i> (1923)	
Histoire, typed manuscript, 1923	Box-Folder 45.6

Préface, typed manuscript with handwritten changes, nd	Box-Folder 45.7
Three poems, handwritten manuscript with typed copy, nd	Box-Folder 45.8
24 poems, handwritten manuscript with printed page, 1925, nd	Box-Folder 45.9
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Miscellaneous fragments, drafts, and sketches, nd	Box-Folder 45.11
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Livre d'addresses, service, nd	Box-Folder 49.2-3
Livre d'or (autograph book), 1908-1909	Box-Folder 49.4
Reines de la France (dossier), 1949-1950	Box-Folder 49.5
Miscellaneous	Box-Folder 49.6

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Mathis, Edmund	Box-Folder osf 22
Tailhade, Laurent, 1908	Box-Folder 49.9
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Doucet, Jacques, 1919-1920	Box-Folder 50.4
R-Z	Box-Folder 50.5
Unidentified, nd	Box-Folder 50.6