

John Clifford Mortimer:

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

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Mortimer, John Clifford, 1923-
Title:	John Clifford Mortimer Papers
Dates:	1957-1967
Extent:	1.5 boxes (.63 linear feet)
Abstract:	These papers include typescript and holograph drafts of plays, teleplays, and radio plays, as well as correspondence about the papers and Mortimer's list of his manuscripts.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-02936
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchase, 1968 (Reg #4352)
Processed by	Katherine Mosley, 1999
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

John Clifford Mortimer, the only child of Clifford and Kathleen May Smith Mortimer, was born in Hampstead, London, on April 21, 1923. He was educated at Harrow School (1937-40) and Brasenose College, Oxford (1940-42, BA 1947), and, like his father, he became a barrister in 1948 after serving as a scriptwriter and assistant director for the Crown Film Units during World War II. Mortimer's first novel, *Charade*, was also published in 1948, and within ten years he had published six more novels. His third radio play, *The Dock Brief*, which was produced by the BBC Third Programme in 1957, won the Italia Prize and was produced on the stage in 1958, along with the first play he wrote for the stage, *What Shall We Tell Caroline?* Among his subsequent stage plays are *The Wrong Side of the Park* (1960), *The Judge* (1967), *A Voyage Round My Father* (1970), and *Collaborators* (1973). He also wrote translations of Georges Feydeau's *A Flea in Her Ear* (1966) and *Cat among the Pigeons* (1969). Besides writing for radio and television, Mortimer also wrote screenplays for *The Running Man* (1963), *John and Mary* (1969), and other films.

Unlike his playwright contemporaries, the "angry young men" of the 1950s, Mortimer came from an upper-class background, wrote about the middle classes in decline, and followed established theatrical traditions. He is better known for his one-act plays than his full-length ones, and he is perhaps best known for his "Rumpole of the Bailey" novels and television series, and for his television adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*.

Mortimer continued to work as a lawyer and became a Queen's Counsel (1966) and Master of the Bench, Inner Temple (1975). In a celebrated case in 1970 he successfully defended the publishers of *Oz* against pornography charges.

Mortimer married twice, first to author Penelope Fletcher Dimont (1949, divorced 1971), and second to Penelope Gollop (1972-), and he had two children with each.

More information about John Mortimer and his work may be found in the following sources: *Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series*, volume 21 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1981-); *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, volume 13 (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1982); and the *International Dictionary of Theatre*, volume 2 (Chicago: St. James Press, 1992-96).

Scope and Contents

The John Mortimer papers include typescript and holograph drafts of his plays, teleplays, and radio plays, as well as correspondence about the papers and Mortimer's list of his manuscripts, all dating from 1957-1967. Among noteworthy items are a holograph and a typescript draft of his Feydeau translation *Cat among the Pigeons*, a revised carbon typescript of *Collect Your Hand Baggage*, and a duplicated radio script of his most famous one-act play, *The Dock Brief*. Early drafts of *The Judge* show his

rearrangement of the order of scenes, while a duplicated typescript for the 1967 Cambridge Theatre production of the play contains extensive holograph revisions made during rehearsals. Holograph drafts of *The Other Side* and *The Rare Device* show much rewriting. Two early versions of *The Wrong Side of the Park* are also present, including a heavily revised holograph draft of the first act.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Rota, Bertram, 1903-1966.

Schwartz, Jacob.

Subjects

Dramatists, English.

Novelists, English.

Lawyers as authors.

Screenwriters, England.

Letters from Jacob Schwartz to Bertram Rota re Mortimer's papers, January 1965. With clipping and pricelist	box 1 folder 1
Mortimer's holograph list of his manuscripts, nd	folder 2
<i>Call Me a Liar</i> (teleplay), typescript with holograph revisions, 1958	folder 3
<i>Cat among the Pigeons</i> (translation of Georges Feydeau's <i>Un fil à la patte: Comedie</i>), one holograph and one typescript draft (Note: some holograph pages are written on the versos of pages from the typescript draft)	folder 4-5
<i>Collect Your Hand Baggage</i> , typescript with holograph revisions, 1960	folder 6
<i>David and Broccoli</i> (teleplay), typescript with holograph revisions, 1960	folder 7
<i>The Dock Brief</i> , typescript with some holograph revisions, 1957	folder 8
<i>The Judge</i> [Trial versions]	folder
Composite holograph and typescript draft, with revision pages, nd. With holograph notes re order of scenes	folder 9
Typescript and holograph draft pages, with holograph revisions, nd. With holograph outline of order of scenes in Act One	folder 10
<i>The Judge</i> [Production copy] (for the 1967 Cambridge Theatre, London, production), typescript with heavy holograph revisions and typescript revision page inserts	box 2 folder 1-2
<i>The Other Side</i> (teleplay)	folder
Holograph manuscript, 1967	folder 3
Typescript of rehearsal script, 1967	folder 4
<i>Personality Split</i> (radio play), typescript with holograph revisions, holograph revision pages, and clipping, 1964-65	folder 5

- The [A] Rare Device* (radio play and a program of Son et Lumière given at the Brighton Pavilion outdoor performances), incomplete holograph manuscript, nd **folder 6**
- "Two Plays for Television" (preface to *Lunch Hour and Other Plays*), typescript page with holograph revisions, nd **folder 7**
- The Wrong Side of the Park* **folder**
- Heavily revised holograph manuscript of Act One, with some typescript passages, nd **folder 8**
- Incomplete bound typescript titled "Northwest Passage" **folder 9**