

Robert Nye:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Nye, Robert, 1939-2016
Title:	Robert Nye Papers
Dates:	1911, 1959-1975
Extent:	13 document boxes (5.46 linear feet), 1 oversize folder (osf), 1 galley folder (gf)
Abstract:	The papers of this English author include drafts of his poetry, essays, short stories, libretti, plays, novels, and children's literature, as well as extensive files of his work as a critic and editor of poetry and fiction.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-3067
Language:	English
Access	Open for research. Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: reference@hrc.utexas.edu

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases, 1962-1978 (R1018, R1665, R1734, R2124, R3756, R5871, R6079, R6832, R7102, R7293, R8228)
Processed by	M. DeMeule, C. Filippi, S. Karjala, 1994; S. Mielke, 1997; updated by H. Bollinger, 2012
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Robert Nye was born in London, England, on March 15, 1939, into a working class family. A precocious student, he attended Southend High School and had published poems in the *London Magazine* by the age of sixteen. He left school in 1955 and did not pursue additional formal study. Between 1955 and 1961, he worked at a variety of jobs: newspaper reporter, milkman, laborer in a market garden, and orderly in a sanitarium.

Nye married his first wife, Judith Pratt, in 1959. In 1961, they moved to a remote cottage in North Wales where Nye devoted himself full-time to writing. There he developed an interest in the Welsh and Celtic legends reflected later in his fiction and children's literature. His first literary success, *Juvenilia I* (1961), was a collection of short poems. A second volume, *Juvenilia II* (1963), won the Eric Gregory Award. To supplement his writing income in the early 1960s, Nye began to review poetry for British literary journals and newspapers. He became the poetry editor for *The Scotsman* in 1967, and was named poetry critic of *The Times* in 1971, while also contributing reviews to *The Guardian*.

Nye expanded his literary genres to include children's literature with the publication of *Taliesin* and *March Has Horse Ears* in 1966. Nye published his first novel, *Doubtfire*, in 1967. That same year he divorced his first wife, then in 1968 married Aileen Campbell. The two moved to Edinburgh, Scotland, where they lived until 1977.

Nye's next publication after *Doubtfire* was a return to children's literature, *Beehunter: Adventures of Beowulf* (1968). In 1970, he published another children's book, *Wishing Gold*, and received the James Kennaway Memorial Award for his collection of short stories, *Tales I Told My Mother* (1969).

During the early 1970s Nye assumed two new roles: playwright and editor. He wrote numerous plays for BBC radio including "A Bloody Stupid Hole" (1970), "Reynolds, Reynolds" (1971), and "A Doubtful Fire" (1972), and wrote an unpublished libretto for Harrison Birtwistle's opera, *Kronia* (1970). He continued to write poetry, publishing *Darker Ends* (1969) and *Divisions on a Ground* (1976), and edited *A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse* (1972). It was also during this time that Nye wrote several articles and essays on the life of Thomas Chatterton.

Nye held the position of writer in residence at the University of Edinburgh, 1976-1977, during which time he received the Guardian fiction prize, followed by the Hawthornden Prize for his novel *Falstaff*. He then moved to Cork, Ireland, writing and maintaining his position as poetry critic for the *Scotsman*.

Nye died on July 2, 2016.

Sources:

The Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 14, and *British Novelists Since 1960* (Gale, 1983).

Scope and Contents

Notebooks, typescripts, holograph manuscripts, book proofs, galley proofs, published materials, book reviews, and correspondence document Robert Nye's creative and critical writing from 1959 through 1975. The papers are organized into two series: I. Works, 1959-1975, undated (12 boxes); and II. Correspondence, 1959-1975, undated (2 boxes).

The Works series consists largely of holograph notes and corrected typescripts. The Creative Works subseries (8 boxes) comprises the largest portion of the Works series. It consists of notebooks, original, carbon copy and photostat manuscripts, book proofs, and galley proofs. These materials provide detailed evidence of the creation and refinement of Nye's work in poetry, essays, short stories, libretti, play, novels, and children's literature. The majority of these materials date from the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

Nye's extensive work as a poetry and fiction critic and editor is reflected in the subseries Critical Works (3.5 boxes). It contains reviews intended for publication in *The Guardian*, *The Scotsman*, *The Times*, and *The Tribune*. His lengthy, abandoned effort to publish an edition of Thomas Chatterton's poetry is documented by workbooks, original, carbon, and photostat manuscripts, published works, and reviews. The Chatterton materials also contain the oldest item in Nye's papers, a 1911 publication of Chatterton's poetry, heavily annotated by Nye. Another editing endeavor of Nye's, *A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse*, is represented by several manuscripts, a script, and a book proof.

The Correspondence series is particularly illuminating of Nye's literary activities and his relationship with contemporary authors, critics, editors, and publishers. The bulk, consisting of correspondence between Nye and Derek Stanford (1 box), details both authors' creative and private lives. Nye's letters frequently mention works in progress and his feelings about his craft. A smaller subseries of incoming correspondence contains letters from various literary persona. A list of correspondents appears at the end of this inventory.

Because of Nye's sparing use of paper it is common to find fragments of many works on a single sheet. In addition, a single manuscript may incorporate papers of varying types and sizes.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Works, 1959-1975 (12 boxes)

The Works series is divided into two subseries: Creative Works and Critical Works.

Creative Works comprise the bulk of the Nye collection with just over eight boxes of materials. Worksheets, multiple drafts, and corrected proofs reveal Nye's process in writing and revising manuscripts. A large quantity of Nye's major works are represented in this collection, however, *Falstaff* is not included. Common themes in Nye's writings include ancient Celtic and Welsh legends, religion, and nature.

Nye's children's literature is represented in these papers with manuscripts of *Taliesin* (1967), *March Has Horse's Ears* (1967), *Beowulf* (1968), and *Wishing Gold* (1971). Nye's works for children were often published separately in London and the United States. *Beowulf* was published in London as *Bee Hunter: Adventure of Beowulf* (1968), while the American edition was simply entitled *Beowulf*. The other children's books retained their original titles in the American editions.

Tales I Told My Mother, a collection of nine short stories of adult fiction published in 1969, is represented with drafts, worksheets, and working notes for each of the stories, as well as typescript drafts for the entire anthology. Also present are extensive working drafts and completed typescripts of three short stories not published in the collection. The stories are titled "A Portuguese Person," "Mr. Benjamin," and "The Amber Witch."

Drafts and production scripts for "A Bloody Stupid Hole" (1969), "Reynolds, Reynolds" (1971), "The Body is His Book" (1972) and "The Seven Deadly Sins, a Mask" (1973) comprise Nye's dramatic works. The plays, with the exception of "The Seven Deadly Sins," were broadcast on BBC Radio.

Nye would often recycle his earlier poems for inclusion in later publications. Poems from *Juvenilia I* (1963) and *Juvenilia II* (1963) were included in *Darker Ends* (1969), *Divisions on a Ground* (1975), and his unpublished libretto *Kronia*. *Divisions on a Ground* had the working title *Henry James and other Poems*. Worksheets of rejected poems for *Darker Ends* and *Divisions on a Ground* are arranged by title, providing an overview of Nye's working method.

The remainder of Nye's creative works consist of his first published novel *Doubtfire* (1968), and several unpublished works. The manuscripts for *Doubtfire* contain two typescript drafts entitled "Earlier Union" and "Later Union." Nye's unpublished works in the collection include an abandoned novel, "Mortstone." All materials in the Creative Works subseries are arranged alphabetically by title.

The second subseries, Critical Works (3 boxes, 2 folders), is divided into Poetry Editions and Reviews.

The items in Poetry Editions illustrate Nye's efforts to promote the works of two earlier English poets, Sir Walter Raleigh and Thomas Chatterton. The Chatterton materials are arranged chronologically, tracing the evolution of the work from 1959-1974. This group contains a notebook, correspondence, holograph worksheets, published material, original, carbon and photostat manuscripts, preliminaries, and reader's reviews of Nye's abandoned edition of "The Poems of Thomas Chatterton." Included is a 1959 typescript manuscript, "Thom Chatterton: A Sense of Smegma," of uncertain authorship; Judith Pratt (Nye's wife) is credited on the title page, but Nye claimed authorship. Also included are variants of the project: an unpublished essay, "Tom Sawyer with a Medieval Glossary in His

Pocket: A Consideration of Thomas Chatterton," and a three-part article appearing in *Books and Bookman* (1974), entitled "Chatterton: The Marvellous Boy." The progression of *A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse* (1972) from holographic draft to book proof is included, as well as a final typescript and BBC radio script of "A Durable Fire," a variant project concerning the works of Raleigh.

Reviews include both notebooks, and holograph and typescript manuscripts. Notebooks have no arrangement and contain many brief notations and fragments of reviews written between 1962 and 1964. Manuscripts are arranged in alphabetical order, by title of work reviewed. Those concerning multiple works by the same author are included in the arrangement under the name of the author. Individual manuscripts are undated--Nye indicates only that they were created between 1962 and 1964.

Because of Nye's habit of reusing paper, many critical works contain fragments of short stories or poems on the verso. All reviews with creative works on the verso have been housed together, in alphabetical order by title of work reviewed.

Series II. Correspondence, 1959-1975 (1 box, 2 folders)

Series II is divided into correspondence with Derek Stanford and incoming correspondence.

Spanning the years 1968-1975, the letters and postcards of the Nye-Stanford correspondence document the close professional ties between the two writers. A 1969 letter from Stanford includes his draft of a recommendation of Nye for an Arts Council Bursery. Enclosed in several letters sent by Stanford in the early 1970s are drafts of his reviews of Nye's plays and fiction. Nye's letters, in turn, mention his efforts to publish Stanford's poems in the *Scotsman*. Both authors frankly discuss works in progress, including Nye's *Doubtfire* and the "Poems of Thomas Chatterton." A close personal bond is displayed in a 1973 letter containing a poem dedicated to Stanford. Much of the correspondence contains exchanges of opinion concerning travels, home life, and Nye's children. The correspondence is often addressed to both Nye and his wife Aileen. Five letters and two postcards sent to Stanford and his wife were written by Nye's wife on his behalf. Arrangement is chronological.

Incoming correspondence is arranged alphabetically by the name of the sender, and thereunder chronologically. A range of contemporary authors, critics, and editors are represented, including one or more letters from E.M. Forster, Robert Graves, Compton Mackenzie, and Moray McLaren. Also included are 37 letters with enclosures from Michael Mott, a poet and assistant editor of *Adam International Review*, displaying close professional and personal ties similar to those evident in the Stanford correspondence.

Related Material

Other Nye manuscript materials are located at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, and the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Forster, E. M. (Edward Morgan), 1879-1970.

Graves, Robert, 1895-1985.

Mackenzie, Compton, Sir, 1883-1972.

McLaren, Moray.

Mott, Michael, 1930-2019.

Stanford, Derek.

Subjects

Authors, English--20th century.

Poetry, English.

Document Types

First drafts.

Galley proofs.

Juvenilia.

Librettos.

Scripts.

Series I. Works, 1959-1975

Subseries A: Creative Works

"The Amber Witch," typescript	Box 1 Folder 1-2
Bee Hunter; Adventures of Beowulf	
Notebook, 1966	Box 1 Folder 3
Typescript, 1968	Folder 4
Beowulf	
Typescript, 1968	Box 1 Folder 5
Photocopy typescript, 1968	Folder 6
"A Bloody Stupit Hole" [radio play]	
Typescript, 1969	Box 1 Folder 7
Production script, 1969	Folder 8
"The Body Is His Book" [radio play]	
Preliminary draft typescript, undated	Box 1 Folder 9
Final draft typescript, undated	Folder 10
Production script, 1972	Folder 11
Darker Ends	
Holograph manuscript with newspaper clippings [in salesman's dummy], 1963-1964	Box 2 Folder 1
Holograph manuscripts, typescript worksheets, and preliminary drafts, undated	Folder 2-4
Fair transcript copies, undated	Folder 5
Production script of <i>New Poems</i> , 1968	Folder 6

Divisions on a Ground

Worksheets & drafts, undated	Box 3 Folder 1-4
Early draft, undated	Folder 5
Preliminary draft ("Henry James and Other Poems"), undated	Folder 6
Intermediate draft, undated	Folder 7
Late draft ("Henry James and Other Poems"), 1975	Folder 8

Doubtfire

Early draft, 1960-65	Box 4 Folder 1-2
Later draft, 1966	Folder 3-4
"The Hereford Earthquake" [unpublished]	
Worksheets, undated	Box 4 Folder 5
Typescript draft, undated	Folder 6

Juvenilia I

Holograph manuscript, undated	Box 4 Folder 7
Typescript, undated	Container 4.8, gf 2
Galley proofs, undated	Box 4 Folder 9

Juvenilia II

Notebook, 1959-1963	Box 5 Folder 1
Worksheets, 1963	Folder 2
Worksheets, undated	Folder 3
Correspondence, 1962-1963	Folder 4
Unstitched book proof, 1963	Folder 5
Printer's copy, 1963	Folder 6

Galley proofs, undated	Folder 7
Kronia	
Notebook, 1971	Box 5 Folder 8
Early draft, 1971	Folder 9
Two carbon typescripts, 1971	Folder 10
Correspondence, 1971	Folder 11
<i>The Lesson</i> , carbon typescript, undated	Box 6 Folder 1
<i>Mr. Benjamin</i> , typescript, 1969	Folder 2
<i>March Has Horse's Ears</i> , advance proofs, 1966	Folder 3
Mortstone	
Typescript, undated	Box 6 Folder 4
Working sheets, undated	Folder 5
"A Portuguese Person"	
Notebook [1965?]	Box 6 Folder 6
Intermediate typescript, undated	Folder 7-8
Carbon typescript, undated	Folder 9-10
"Reynolds, Reynolds" [radio play]	
Typescript, 1971	Box 7 Folder 1
Production script, 1971	Folder 2
"Robespierre, Mr. Sing Sing and General Romoza," typescript, 1971	Folder 3
"The Same Old Story"	
Typescript, 1967-1969	Box 7 Folder 4

Carbon typescript, 1967-1969	Folder 5
"Seven Deadly Sins," typescript, 1973	Folder 6
Tales I Told My Mother	
Notes and sources, undated	Box 7 Folder 7-8
Working notes, undated	Folder 9
Worksheets, undated	Folder 10
Preliminary typescript, undated	Box 8 Folder 1
Intermediate typescript, undated	Folder 2
Final typescript, undated	Folder 3
Final version with printers marks, undated	Folder 4
Galley proofs, 1969	Container 8.5, gf 2
Correspondence, 1969	Box 8 Folder 6
Taliesin	
Notebook, 1963	Box 8 Folder 7
Typescript, 1966	Folder 8
Wishing Gold	
Typescript, 1970	Box 9 Folder 1
Typescript copy, 1970	Folder 2
Subseries B: Critical Works	
A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse	
Early drafts, 1972	Box 9 Folder 3
Intermediate draft, 1972	Folder 4
Final draft, 1975	Folder 5
Book proof, 1972	Folder 6

"A Durable Fire" [radio play]	
Typescript, 1971	Box 9 Folder 7
Production script, 1971	Folder 8
"The Poems of Thomas Chatterton"	
The Rowley Poems, 1911	Box 9 Folder 9
"Thom Chatterton: A Sense of Smegma," 1959	Folder 10
Notes, undated	Folder 11
Correspondence, 1964, 1969	Folder 12
Early drafts, 1965	Folder 13
Intermediate drafts, undated	Box 10 Folder 1
Reader's reviews, undated	Folder 2
"Tom Sawyer with a Medieval Glossary in His Pocket," undated	Folder 3
"Chatterton the Marvellous Boy," 1974	Folder 4
Notebooks [1], undated	Folder 5
Notebooks [2], undated	Folder 6
Notebooks [3], undated	Folder 7
Notebooks [4], undated	Folder 8
Notebooks [5], undated	Folder 9
Notebooks [6], undated	Folder 10
Notebooks [7], undated	Folder 11
Notebooks [8], undated	Folder 12
Notebooks [9], undated	Box 11 Folder 1
Notebooks [10], undated	Folder 2

Notebooks [11], undated

Folder 3

Reviews

A-D

Box 11 Folder 4

E-K

Folder 5

L-O

Folder 6

P-Si

Folder 7

Sm-Z

Box 12 Folder 1

Miscellaneous

Container 12.2, osf 3

Reviews with works on verso

A-M

Box 12 Folder 3

N-Z

Folder 4

Series II. Correspondence, 1959-1975

Subseries A: Derek Stanford

September 1968-January 1970	Box 12 Folder 5
January 1970-September 1970	Folder 6
September 1970-December 1971	Folder 7
January 1972-March 1973	Box 13 Folder 1
April 1973-August 1974	Folder 2
October 1974-April 1975	Folder 3
Undated	Folder 4

Subseries B: Incoming

A-Mc	Box 13 Folder 5
Mo-Z	Folder 6

Robert Nye Papers--Index of Correspondents

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- Davies, Aneirin Talfan--13.5
- Forster, E.M. (Edward Morgan), 1879-1970--13.5
- Gordon, Giles--13.5
- Graves, Robert, 1895--13.5
- Grisell, L. V.--9.12
- Hall, Peter--5.11
- Hobdell, Roger--13.5
- Lehman, John--13.5
- Lerwitz, Michael--13.5
- Mackenzie, Compton, Sir, 1883-1972--13.5
- Mason, Bruce--13.5
- Matthews, Harry B.--13.5
- McKnight, Catherine--8.6
- McLaren, Moray--13.5
- Moraes, Dan--13.6
- Mott, Michael, 1930--13.6
- Murray, Mary Middletown--13.6
- Playter, Phyllis--13.6
- Schubert, Elspeth Harley--13.6
- Sinclair-Stevenson, Christopher--13.6
- Spurling, John--13.6
- Stanford, Derek--12.5-7, 13.1-4
- Stanton, Virginia--10.2
- Tooley, John (to Olwyn Hughes)--5.11
- Wang, Arthur--8.6
- West, Ernest--13.6
- White, Eric W.--9.12
- Wilson, Colin--13.6
- Wright, David--13.6
- Wright, Troy--5.11

Bar Code List

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