

# Dashiell Hammett:

## An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator:</b>	Hammett, Dashiell, 1894-1961
<b>Title:</b>	Dashiell Hammett Papers
<b>Dates:</b>	1923-1974
<b>Extent:</b>	2 boxes (.84 linear feet)
<b>Abstract:</b>	The papers of Dashiell Hammett include drafts of short stories, several unpublished and some incomplete, along with drafts of <i>The Thin Man</i> , the film version of <i>Watch on the Rhine</i> , and the unfinished novels, <i>The Secret Emperor</i> and <i>Tulip</i> . The collection also includes personal correspondence, along with a small group of miscellaneous notes.
<b>Call Number:</b>	Manuscript Collection MS-01814
<b>Language:</b>	English.
<b>Access:</b>	Open for research

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### Administrative Information

<b>Acquisition:</b>	Gifts and purchase, 1967-1975, 2014 (R3521, 2014-07-005-P)
<b>Processed by:</b>	Bob Taylor, 2006
<b>Repository:</b>	<a href="#">Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin</a>

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## Biographical Sketch

Samuel Dashiell Hammett was born in St. Mary's County, Maryland on May 27, 1894 to a family long in the county. After working as a youth to help support his family, he left home in 1914 and worked as a detective before enlisting in the U.S. Army during World War I. His contraction of influenza in 1918 led to tuberculosis, for which Hammett was treated in military hospitals on the west coast.

In one of these hospitals he met and married a nurse, Josephine (Jose) Dolan. Following his discharge in 1921 they moved to San Francisco, where he found work as an advertising copy writer. Soon he began writing fiction for publication, quickly gaining a following for his gritty detective writing in *Black Mask* magazine. Due to a relapse of tuberculosis, Hammett began living apart from his wife and two children, but continued with his increasingly well-received writing career.

In 1930 Knopf published Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, and his fame as an American author was made. He met Lillian Hellman in 1931, and though both were married at the time, they began a relationship that lasted until Hammett's death. His *The Thin Man* (1934) is in some sense a roman à clef based on their life together. Following the publication of *The Thin Man* Hammett's literary production essentially ceased, for reasons still debated.

In the years between 1935 and 1941 Hammett's life was marked by creative false starts, leftist activism, and increasingly severe alcohol abuse. After Pearl Harbor, however, he enlisted in the army and served for most of the war years in Alaska, a time that is generally regarded as one of personal contentment for Hammett, even though his literary work was limited to editing a serviceman's newspaper in the Aleutians.

Upon his discharge from military service in 1945 Hammett returned to New York, where his attempts at resuming a writing career were hampered by political persecution, poor health, and his drinking problem. Following a prison term in 1951 for refusing to answer questions posed by the congressional House Committee on Un-American Activities he lived a retired life, supported by Lillian Hellman and other friends. Dashiell Hammett died at New York's Lenox Hill Hospital on January 10, 1961.

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## Sources:

Hammett, Jo. *Dashiell Hammett: a Daughter Remembers*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2001.

Johnson, Diane. *Dashiell Hammett, a Life*. New York: Random House, 1983.

Layman, Richard, ed. *Selected Letters of Dashiell Hammett*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of Dashiell Hammett include manuscripts and personal correspondence, along with a small group of miscellaneous notes. The material dates from the years 1923 to 1974 and has been arranged into three series, I. Works, II. Correspondence, and III. Additions to the Collection.

Included among the manuscripts comprising Series I. are numerous drafts of short stories written between 1923 and the early 1930s, several of which remain unpublished. The *Secret Emperor*, an unfinished novel present in the series, is written on the versos of discarded manuscript pages of a number of Hammett's short stories. Accompanying *The Secret Emperor* are plot summaries and descriptions of characters. *Tulip*, another unfinished novel, dates from about 1952 and is the author's latest known surviving literary effort.

Hammett's 1942 manuscript for the film version of Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine* is to be found here; it is the draft which was subsequently revised by Hellman for the 1943 film production.

Also present in the series is *The Continental Op*, a 1974 short story collection edited by Steven Marcus which does not duplicate the contents of the 1945 collection of the same title. The drafts present in the Hammett papers comprise typescripts of Marcus' introduction along with photocopies of pages from earlier published editions of the stories. Galleys and page proofs of this 1974 collection are located in the Lillian Hellman Papers.

Series II. consists, in the main, of letters Hammett wrote to Lillian Hellman between 1935 and 1958 and to Margaret Frohnknecht Kober in the years 1942 to 1951. Many of these letters were written during Hammett's wartime service in Alaska as an enlisted man in the U.S. Army and detail his experiences in and observations of that remote theater of operations. Other letters, some of which are present in facsimile, are addressed to Kermit Bloomgarden, Nancy Bragdon, Jo Hammett, and Herman Shumlin. Carbons of letters to *Black Mask* and *The Forum*, both from 1925 or 1926, were recycled by Hammett in typing *The Secret Emperor*.

Series III. contains four letters Hammett wrote in 1943 and 1944 to Florence and Paul Monash and Prudence Whitfield while stationed in the Aleutian Islands.

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## Related Material

Other collections in the Ransom Center holding materials relating to Dashiell Hammett include those of Diane Johnson and Lillian Hellman. Ms. Johnson's papers include materials collected for her *Dashiell Hammett, a Life*, and the Hellman papers include letters written her by Hammett as well as documents related to her acquisition of Hammett's literary estate. Other Hammett correspondence is located in the Alfred A.

Knopf, Inc. Records and the Ross Russell Papers.

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## **Index Terms**

### **People**

Hellman, Lillian, 1906- .

Kober, Margaret Frohnknecht, 1913-1951.

### **Document Types**

Photocopies.

### **Subjects**

Novelists, American--20th century--Biography.

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**Series I. Works, 1923-1974**

A-H	<b>Box 1 Folder 1</b>
<i>Continental Op</i>	
Photocopy	<b>Box 1 Folder 2</b>
Setting copy	<b>Folder 3-4</b>
I	<b>Folder 5</b>
K-R	<b>Folder 6</b>
S-Sep	<b>Folder 7</b>
Sev-Tim	<b>Box 2 Folder 1</b>
The Sign of the Potent Pills	<b>Folder 2</b>
<i>The Thin Man</i> , carbon typescript setting copy	<b>Folder 3-4</b>
Tulip (novel fragment)	<b>Folder 5</b>
Two-W	<b>Folder 6</b>
<i>Watch on the Rhine</i> , handwritten manuscript	<b>Folder 7-8</b>
Untitled	<b>Folder 9</b>
Miscellaneous notes, including underworld jargon	<b>Folder 10</b>

**Series II. Correspondence, 1935-1958**

B-S

**Box 2 Folder 11**

Hellman, Lillian, 1935-1958

**Folder 12**

Kober, Maggie, 1942-51

**Folder 13**

**Series III. Additions to the Collection 2014- , 1943-1944**

Monash, Florence and Paul; Whitfield, Prudence, 1943-1944

**Box 2**  
**Folder 14**

**Dashiell Hammett Papers--Index of Works**

- Action and the Quiz Kid--1.1
- "Bodies Piled Up"--see Including Murder
- "The Boundaries of Science and Philosophy"--1.1
- The Breech-born--1.1
- *City Streets*--see The Kiss-off
- *The Continental Op* (Random House, 1974)--1.2-4
- "The Creeping Siamese" [fragments]--see The Secret Emperor
- The Croaker--1.1
- The Darkened Face. Part one: The Unlocked Door--1.1
- "Dead Yellow Women" [fragments]--see The Secret Emperor
- December First--1.1
- Devil's Playground--1.1
- Dynamite Carson [untitled]--2.9
- Faith--1.1
- Fragments of Justice--1.1
- "The Gatewood Caper"--see Including Murder
- "The Golden Horseshoe"--see Including Murder
- The Good Meal: a Play in Three Acts--1.1
- The Gutting of Couffignal [fragments]--see The Secret Emperor
- The Hunter--1.1
- An Inch and a Half of Glory--1.5
- Including Murder: Bodies Piled Up--1.5
- Including Murder: The Gatewood Caper--1.5
- Including Murder: The Golden Horseshoe--1.5
- Including Murder: Night Shots--1.5
- Including Murder: Women, Politics and Murder--1.5
- "Itchy"--1.5
- The Kiss-off [film treatment for *City Streets*]--1.6
- The Lovely Strangers--1.6
- Magic--1.6; see also The Secret Emperor
- "A Man Named Thin"--1.6
- Monk and Johnny Fox--1.6
- The Murderer Who Thought Twice--1.6
- Nelson Redline [untitled]--2.9
- "Night Shots"--see Including Murder
- [Review of] *Desperate Men* by James D. Horan--1.6
- The Secret Emperor--1.7
- September 20, 1938--1.7
- Seven Pages--2.1
- The Sign of the Potent Pills--2.2
- So I Shot Him [untitled]--2.9
- "They Can Only Hang You Once"--2.1
- They Die Too--2.1
- *The Thin Man*--2.3-4
- "This Little Pig"--2.1
- Three Dimes--2.1
- A Throne for the Worm--2.1
- Time to Die--2.1
- "Tulip"--2.5

- "Two Sharp Knives"--2.6
- [Two Sharp Knives] "To a Sharp Knife"--2.6
- The Ungallant--2.6
- The Unlocked Door--see The Darkened Face
- *Watch on the Rhine*--2.7-8
- Week-end--2.6
- Women Are a Lot of Fun Too--2.6
- "Women, Politics and Murder"--see Including Murder