

Sitwell, Osbert:

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

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Sitwell, Osbert, 1892-1969
Title:	Osbert Sitwell Collection
Dates:	1887-1969
Extent:	45 boxes (18.9 linear feet), 5 galley folders, 1 oversize folder
Abstract:	Seventy-one notebooks with handwritten drafts of a wide variety of works make up a large portion of the Osbert Sitwell Collection, along with galley files and typescripts of additional titles, and an extensive assortment of correspondence.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-03858
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases, 1965-1995
Processed by:	Chelsea Dinsmore, 2002
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Francis Osbert Sacheverell Sitwell was born December 6, 1892, the second child and first son of Sir George and Lady Ida Sitwell. Educated first at a day school in Scarborough, then a prep school, and finally at Eton from 1905-1910, Sitwell expected to attend Oxford; however, his father sent him to prepare for entrance to military college. When Sitwell failed the entrance exams, his father arranged a commission for him in the Sherwood Rangers. After a year at Aldershot, Sitwell suffered a nervous breakdown and received a transfer to the Grenadier Guards stationed in London.

While in London, Sitwell began socializing with an elite group that included Margot Asquith, Mrs. George Keppel and her daughter Violet (to whom Sitwell was briefly engaged) and Lady Sackville. Membership in the Marlborough club involved him in the world of creative artists, including Debussy, Delius, and George Moore. His pleasure in his new friends and in ballet, to which they introduced him, was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I and his posting to Flanders in 1914.

Left unfit for active service by an injury, Sitwell returned to England where he began publishing anti-war satires in *Wheels*, a magazine directed by his sister, Edith. From prose he moved on to poetry and in 1923 he produced his sister's performance of *Façade*. The failure of the show to produce any positive reaction came as a severe blow to the siblings, though when it ran again in 1926 it was well received. Meanwhile, in 1925, Sitwell published his first collection of travel essays and in this he seemed to find his métier.

In 1926 Sitwell made the first of many trips to the United States after which he visited the Italian Riviera, North Africa, and the Orient. From 1933 until the start of World War II, Sitwell contributed a weekly article to the *Sunday Referee*, a collection of these essays appeared in 1935 as *Penny Foolish*. Curtailing his travels, Sitwell spent the war years at Renishaw, the family home. When his father died in 1943, Sitwell became the fifth baronet. In 1944 and 1946 the first two volumes of Sitwell's autobiography were published to moderate acclaim; *The Sunday Times* awarded him a medal and a thousand pounds.

Though suffering from the early stages of Parkinson's disease, Sitwell continued to travel extensively throughout the fifties. His final travel book, *The Four Continents: Being More Discursions on Travel, Art, and Life* was published in 1954, and his last collection of essays, *Tales My Father Taught Me*, appeared in 1962. His remaining years were spent at the family home in Italy, where he died in May 1969. His ashes were buried in the Protestant cemetery at Allori, near Florence.

Dictionary of Literary Biography -- Volume 195: British Travel Writers, 1910-1939.
Barbara Brothers, ed. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1998.

Pearson, John. The Sitwells: A Family's Biography. New York: Harcourt Brace
Jovanovitch, 1978.

Scope and Contents

Seventy-one notebooks with handwritten drafts of a wide variety of works make up a large portion of the Osbert Sitwell Collection, along with galley files and typescripts of additional titles, and an extensive assortment of correspondence. The collection is arranged in five series: Series I. Works, 1898-1965 (28 boxes); Series II. Correspondence, 1902-1969 (12.5 boxes); Series III. Personal Papers, 1898-1969 (.5 boxes); Series IV. David Horner, 1932-1966 (2.5 boxes); and Series V. Third Party Works and Correspondence, 1887-1969 (1.5 boxes). Portions of this collection were previously accessible through a card catalog, but have been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project to include new accessions.

The Works series is composed of page and galley proofs for all five volumes of Sitwell's autobiography, *Left Hand, Right Hand*. Holograph and typescript drafts of the collected essays of *Penny Foolish* are present, as are drafts of *Pound Wise*, *The Red Horizon*, and *Sing High! Sing Low!* These works are arranged alphabetically by title. The seventy-one notebooks which comprise the rest of the works series contain drafts of many of Sitwell's notable works, individual poems, and draft letters. Not all of the materials in these notebooks have been identified, nor are they arranged chronologically. All identified titles, including those in the notebooks, are listed in the Index of Works at the end of this guide.

The Correspondence Series is arranged in two sections, outgoing mail by Sitwell and incoming letters to Sitwell. Of particular note are nearly a thousand letters from Sitwell to his companion David Horner, written between 1926 and 1964. A small batch of letters to Horner, written between 1951 and 1956, arrived in a later accession and are grouped together at the end of the Horner section. There are smaller batches of letters to and from Lorna Andrade, Richard Grants, Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell, and others. Correspondents in this series are listed in the Index of Correspondents at the end of this guide.

The small Personal Papers Series comprises bank and royalty records, legal documents, lists, and Sitwell family photographs. The David Horner Series contains letters primarily to Horner from various friends and acquaintances. Leslie Hartley and Edith Sitwell are well represented in this series. All correspondents in the David Horner Series are listed in the Index of Correspondents at the end of this guide.

The Third-Party Works and Correspondence Series holds works by Sitwellian scholars and friends as well as correspondence between his friends and business associates. Galley proofs of Richard Fifoot's bibliography of Edith Sitwell's work are present, in addition to poems by Sacheverell Sitwell and a holograph draft of Max Wykes-Joyce's *Triad of Genius*. Also of note is a pen and ink sketch of Sitwell by Peter Roseland, lists

and materials for Sitwell's poetry reading tour in America, and letters and documents regarding Ida Sitwell's scandal-laden bankruptcy. All identified titles in this series are listed in the Index of Works and all the correspondents are listed in the Index of Correspondents at the end of this guide.

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center are 25 photographs of Sitwell, his family, friends, and images of Rennishaw Hall, located in the Literary Files of the Photography Collection. Also present are 26 vertical files containing newspaper clippings covering the publication and criticism of Sitwell's works as well as biographical and printed material. Portraits of Sitwell appear in two collections in the Art Collection as well as several items from his own art collection, one folder of newspaper clippings is located in the Scrapbook Collection, and one reel-to-reel recording of an interview with Sitwell in the Sound Recordings Collection. Other materials related to Osbert Sitwell may be found in the following manuscript collections at the Ransom Center:

- Adams, James Donald
- Barker, George
- Bermondsey Book
- Betjeman, John
- Blunden, Edmund Charles
- Brooke, Jocelyn
- Connolly, Cyril
- Coppard, Alfred Edgar
- Cunard, Nancy
- Duncan, Ronald Frederick Henry
- Ervine, St. John Greer
- Garnett, David
- Garvin, J. L.
- Golden Cockerel Press
- Hutchinson, Mary
- La Farge, Oliver
- Lehmann, John
- Lewis, Sinclair
- Lindsay, Philip
- *London Magazine*
- Lowndes, Marie Adelaide (Belloc)

- MacKenzie, Compton
- MacNamara, Brinsley
- Masfield, John
- Nehls, Edward
- PEN
- Richards, Grant
- Sassoon, Siegfried Lorraine
- Shaw, George Bernard
- Sitwell, Edith, Dame
- Smith, L. P.
- Strong, Leonard Alfred George
- Tchelitchew, Pavel
- Tyler, Parker
- Walpole, Hugh, Sir
- Waugh, Alec
- Webb, Stella Dorothea
- Welch, Denton

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Harper, Allanah, 1904-.
Horner, David, 1900-.
Leverson, Ada.
Magroz, Frank.
Sasson, Siegfried, 1886-1967.
Sitwell, Edith, Dame, 1887-1964.

Sitwell, George Reresby, Sir, 1860-1943.

Sitwell, Sacheverell, 1897-.

Organizations

Curtis Brown, Ltd.

Subjects

Authors, England, 20th century.

England, Social life and customs, 20th century.

Sitwell Family.

Travel and description.

Document Types

Galley proofs.

Notebooks.

I. Works, 1898-1965

Untitled and fragmentary works	Box 1 Folder 1
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B	Folder 4
C	Folder 5
Commentary	Folder 6
D	Folder 7
<i>Death of a God and Other Stories</i> , handwritten, typescript, and carbon copy drafts with author revisions, nd, 220pp	Folder 8
<i>Demos the Empero: A Secular Oratorior</i> , handwritten and typescript drafts with author revisions, nd, 29pp	Folder 9
<i>Dickens</i> , first page proofs with author revisions, 1931, 50pp	Folder 10
<i>Dumb Animals and Other Stories</i>	
"Happy Endings," handwritten draft in bound notebook and typescript with author revisions, about 200pp	Box 2 Folder 1-2
"The Love-Bird," typescript with author revisions, 1929, 31pp	Folder 3
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<i>Gentle Caesar</i> , by R. Kames Miney and Osbert Sitwell	
Prologue, typescript and two carbon copies with author revisions, nd	Box 3 Folder 1
Three typescript versions with author revisions and insertions, nd	Folder 2-3
Bound typescript with author revisions, 1942, 106pp	Folder 4
First galley proofs, 1942, 43pp (*removed to galley folder 2)	Folder *
H	Folder 5
I-K	Folder 6
L	Folder 7
<i>Left Hand, Right Hand</i>	
Fragments	Box 3 Folder 8
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Bound handwritten draft with author revisions, 227pp	Box 3 Folder 9
Bound typescript with author revisions, 407pp	Box 4 Folder 1
"Louisa Lady Sitwell," 7pp	Folder 2
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Typescript excerpts, 74pp	Folder 4
Volume II. <i>The Scarlet Tree</i>	
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Bound typescript, 441pp	Box 7 Folder 1
Volume IV. <i>Laughter in the Next Room</i>	
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<i>The Man Who Lost Himself</i> , bound handwritten draft with author revisions and note, and two copies of typescript excerpts	Folder 6
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<i>Miracle on Sinai</i> , bound handwritten drafts and galley proofs with author revisions, 1946, about 300pp	Folder 2-3

"Modern Fiction: It's Cause and Cure," two typescripts with author revisions, 58pp	Folder 4
"Moving House," galley proofs, 1963, 48pp (*removed to galley folder 4)	Folder *
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- The British Book Centre, Inc. --44.4
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- Evors, E.M.--40.1
- Farrer, Reginald John, 1880-1920--40.1
- Fletcher, J. Kyrle, Ltd.--29.1
- Ford, Brinsley--40.1
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