

Pierre Louÿs:

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

Descriptive Summary

- Creator:** Louÿs, Pierre, 1870-1925
- Title:** Carlton Lake Collection of Pierre Louÿs Papers
- Inclusive Dates:** 1839-1934 (bulk 1891-1919)
- Extent:** 9 boxes (3.78 linear feet)
- Abstract:** Manuscripts, correspondence, and assorted personal and third-party papers make up the collection of the French poet and novelist Pierre Louÿs.
- Call Number:** Manuscript Collection MS-04960
- Language:** All materials are written 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
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Administrative Information

- Acquisition:** Gift of Carlton Lake, 1973
- Processed by:** Monique Daviau, Richard Workman, and Catherine Stollar, 2004
- Repository:** [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)
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Biographical Sketch

Pierre-Philippe Louis, a French lawyer, and his wife, the former Claire Céline Maldan, had temporarily fled to Belgium from political turmoil in France when their second son, Pierre-Félix, was born December 10, 1870, in Ghent. Pierre-Félix became an excellent student at the École Alsacienne, where André Gide was in the class ahead of him. The two boys grew to be close friends and together founded *Potache-revue* in 1889. In 1890 Pierre expressed his passion for classical Greek culture by changing the spelling of his name to Louÿs (in French the name of the letter "y" means "Greek i") and pronouncing the final "s" to give it a Greek flavor.

Louÿs had another early literary friendship with the poet Paul Valéry, who was still unknown when he and Louÿs became acquainted. Both young men were members of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé's circle. For several years Louÿs was also a friend of Oscar Wilde, although they eventually quarelled, as did Louÿs and Gide. Another artist who formed an early friendship with Louÿs was the composer Claude Debussy.

Louÿs's first book was a collection of poems entitled *Astarte* (1891). In 1895 he published what is today his best-known work, *Les chansons de Bilitis* (1895), which exemplifies the type of eroticism that his work is noted for. *La femme et le pantin* (1898) is often considered his finest novel.

Women, including prostitutes, played a large role in Louÿs's life. He married Louise de Heredia in 1899, but the marriage ended in divorce in 1913. Among his mistresses was the dancer Claudine Roland, who died in 1920. In 1923 he married Claudine's half-sister, Aline Steenackers, the mother of his two children. A third child was born shortly after Louÿs's death on June 8, 1925.

Source:

Brosman, Catherine Savage. "Pierre Louÿs." *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 123: Nineteenth-Century French Fiction Writers: Naturalism and Beyond, 1860-1900*. <http://www.galegroup.com> (accessed May 25, 2004).

Scope and Contents

Manuscripts, correspondence, and assorted personal and third-party papers make up the Carlton Lake Collection of the French poet and novelist Pierre Louÿs and shed considerable light on his professional and private life. The collection is arranged in four series: I. Works, 1880-1934 (3 boxes); II. Correspondence, 1891-1921 (5 boxes); III. Personal, 1891-1918 (.5 box); and IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1839-1900 (.5 box).

Louÿs's entire career is represented in the Works series, from juvenilia to posthumously published verse, although with more emphasis on his poetic than his prose works. Included are several versions of the manuscript of his first book, *Astarte* (1891), as well as numerous iterations of one of his most important poems, "Pervigilium mortis." Also present are Louÿs's manuscripts for a proposed work on Corneille that was turned down by publishers who were not amused at having previously been hoaxed by his claim that *Les chansons de Bilitis* was an authentic ancient Greek manuscript.

Correspondence is the largest series in the collection. It is divided into outgoing and incoming groups and arranged alphabetically by correspondent. The largest single correspondence is with Louis Loviot, friend and fellow man of letters. Other correspondents are Louÿs's half-brother Georges Louis, the historian and novelist André Lebey, writer Claude Farrère, writer Natalie Clifford Barney, actress and journalist Musidora, Wilde biographer Robert Harborough Sherard, and his mistress Claudine Roland, whose letters are bound in a single volume together with his letters to her. Also present is correspondence with Marthe Du Bert, a woman whose fascination for Louÿs led her to impersonate a journalist, forge letters, and concoct an imaginary lesbian relationship in order to attract Louÿs's attention. The collection includes several of her forged letters as well as an untitled memorandum by Louÿs (in the Works series) giving an account of the affair for possible legal prosecution.

The Personal series contains items such as classroom notes, a pocket engagement book, an admission card to view Egyptian monuments, and a copy of a newspaper left by composer Camille Saint-Saëns on a café table, retrieved and documented by Louÿs.

The Third-Party Works and Correspondence series includes the handwritten manuscript of Natalie Clifford Barney's *Tis: Cinq petits dialogues grecs*, several manuscript poems by André Lebey, and a published copy of Henri Legrand's 1839 book *Los Angeles: Una hija*, which is printed in a mock-Arabic script that Louÿs claims, in a note laid in, to have deciphered. (In the Works series there is also a folder of Louÿs's notes on Legrand.)

Index Terms

Correspondents

- Barney, Natalie Clifford.
- Blanche, Jacques-Emile, 1861-1942.
- Bracquemond, Félix, 1833-1914.
- Du Bert, Marthe.
- Erlanger, Camille, 1863-1919.
- Farrère, Claude, 1876-1957.
- Heredia, Louise de, 1878-1930.
- Lebey, André, 1877-1938.

Louis, Georges, 1847-1917.

Loviot, Louis

Moulié, Charles, b. 1890.

Musidora.

Quillot, Maurice.

Roland, Claudine.

Sherard, Robert Harborough, 1861-1943.

Subjects

Legrand, Henry, 1814-1876.

Novelists, French.

Poets, French.

Document Types

Page proofs.

Series I. Works, 1880-1934, nd

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| A-C | Box-Folder 168.5 |
| <i>Astarté</i> , handwritten workings, drafts, and final versions with proofs interbound, 1890-1891 | Volume bv11 |
| "Les chansons de Bilitis de Mr Pierre Louÿs mises en vers français par le lieutenant La Touche de l'Escadrille Br. 66, Les Eperviers, au front français, 1917-1918," typed manuscript with handwritten note by Louÿs, 1917-1918 | Box-Folder 168.6 |
| D-K | Box-Folder 169.1 |
| <i>Les derniers vers</i> , handwritten manuscripts, drafts, and fragments, 1914-1922 | Box-Folder 169.2 |
| Examination papers, Lycée Janson de Sailly, handwritten manuscripts, 1887-1888, nd | Box-Folder 169.3 |
| <i>Le gallant rendez-vous</i> , handwritten manuscript with revisions, bound, nd | Box-Folder 169.4 |
| Histoire de la littérature romaine, handwritten manuscript in notebook, nd | Box-Folder 169.5 |
| L-O | Box-Folder 169.6 |
| "Lettre-préface," handwritten signed manuscript, bound, 1901 | Box-Folder 169.7 |
| Notes on Legrand, handwritten, typed, and typed carbon copy manuscripts and clippings, nd | Box-Folder 169.8 |
| P | Box-Folder 170.1 |
| Pages préliminaires sur Corneille le grand, handwritten manuscript and letters to Charles Moulié, 1919-1921, nd | Box-Folder 170.2-3 |
| Pastille, par Mme. la comtesse de Ségur, unfinished handwritten manuscript in notebook, nd | Box-Folder 170.4 |
| "Pervigilium Mortis" | |
| Handwritten drafts and fragments with revisions, nd | Box-Folder 170.5 |
| Typescripts and carbon copies, with clippings, 1933-1934, nd | Box-Folder 170.6 |

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| Poems and fragments, handwritten manuscripts, 1880, nd | Box-Folder 170.7 |
| Poèmes inédits en vieux français, handwritten manuscripts with revisions, bound, nd | Box-Folder 170.8 |
| Poems, notes, and rejected lines, typescripts and carbons, nd | Box-Folder 170.9 |
| <i>Les poësies de Meleagros</i> , handwritten manuscript, bound, 1893 | Volume bv12 |
| "Premiers vers," typescripts with printer's markings, nd | Box-Folder 170.10 |
| Q-Z | Box-Folder 171.1 |
| <i>Qui l'ignorait?</i> , three handwritten manuscript drafts, bound, nd | Box-Folder 171.2 |
| Scènes de la vie des courtisanes, handwritten manuscript with alterations, bound, 1892 | Box-Folder 171.3 |
| Vers, handwritten manuscript drafts and fragments, 1890-1894 | Box-Folder 171.4 |
| Miscellaneous prose fragments and notes, handwritten, nd | Box-Folder 171.5 |
| Unidentified and untitled works, handwritten, 1890, 1917, nd | Box-Folder 171.6 |

Series II. Correspondence, 1891-1921, nd

Outgoing

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| A-F | Box-Folder 172.1 |
| G-L | Box-Folder 172.2 |
| Lebey, André, 1909, nd | Box-Folder 172.3 |
| Louis, Georges, 1895-1912 | Box-Folder 172.4 |
| Loviot, Louis | |
| 1909-1915, bound | Box-Folder 172.5 |
| 1910-1911, bound | Box-Folder 172.6 |
| 1913, nd | Box-Folder 172.7 |
| M-Z | Box-Folder 173.1 |
| Roland, Claudine (includes incoming correspondence), 1914-1919, bound | Box-Folder 173.2 |
| Unidentified, 1892-1919, nd | Box-Folder 173.3 |

Incoming

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A-E | Box-Folder 174.1 |
| Barney, Natalie Clifford, 1899-1917 | Box-Folder 174.2 |
| Blanche, Jacques Emile, 1892-1901 | Box-Folder 174.3 |
| Bracquemond, Félix, 1895-1911 | Box-Folder 174.4 |
| Business correspondence, 1893-1921 | Box-Folder 174.5 |
| Du Bert, Marthe, 1913-1914 | Box-Folder 174.6 |
| Erlanger, Camille, 1900-1911 | Box-Folder 174.7 |
| F-L | Box-Folder 174.8 |
| Farrère, Claude, 1913-1918 | Box-Folder 174.9 |
| Loviot, Louis | |

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1908-1909 | Box-Folder 174.10 |
| Jan.-June 1910 | Box-Folder 174.11 |
| July-Oct. 1910 | Box-Folder 174.12 |
| Nov.-Dec. 1910 | Box-Folder 175.1 |
| Jan.-May 1911 | Box-Folder 175.2 |
| June-Nov. 1911 | Box-Folder 175.3 |
| Feb.-Dec. 1912 | Box-Folder 175.4 |
| Jan.-Dec. 1913 | Box-Folder 175.5 |
| 1914-1917 | Box-Folder 175.6 |
| M-Z | Box-Folder 176.1 |
| Musidora, 1915-1918 | Box-Folder 176.2 |
| Quillot, Maurice, 1891 | Box-Folder 176.3 |
| Sherard, Robert Harborough, nd | Box-Folder 176.4 |
| Unidentified, 1900 | Box-Folder 176.5 |

Series III. Personal, 1891-1918, nd

A-Z

Box-Folder 177.1

Engagement book, 1894

Box-Folder 177.2

Notes taken in rhetoric class, nd

Box-Folder 177.3

Miscellaneous notes, correspondence, and documents, 1891-1918

Box-Folder
177.4

Series IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1839-1900, nd

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A-Z | Box-Folder 177.5 |
| Barney, Natalie Clifford, nd | Box-Folder 177.6 |
| Heredia, Louise de | |
| Correspondence, 1899, nd | Box-Folder 177.7 |
| Pocket diary, 1900 | Box-Folder 177.8 |
| Legrand, Henri, 1839 | Box-Folder 177.9 |