

Milton Hindus:

An Inventory of His Collection of Louis-Ferdinand Céline in the Manuscript Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Hindus, Milton

Title: Milton Hindus Collection of Louis-Ferdinand Céline

Dates: 1937-1950

Extent: 1 box (.42 linear feet)

Abstract: The Milton Hindus Collection of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, 1937-1950, consists of correspondence between Hindus and Céline, typescripts of three of Céline's later works, five photographs of Céline and his wife Lucette, and a photocopy of a typescript of Hindus' biography of Céline, *The Crippled Giant* (1950).

RLIN Record #: TXRC04-A4

Language: English

Access: Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition: Purchase, 1983 (R 10261)

Processed by: Morgan Jones, 2004

Repository: [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

Biographical Sketch

Louis-Ferdinand Destouches, the man whom the literary world would come to know by his pseudonym, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, was born May 27, 1894, in Courbevoie, France. An only child, Céline was raised by his mother, Marguerite-Louise-Céline Guilloux, and his father, Ferdinand-Auguste Destouches. He attended local schools in the Paris suburb of Passage Choiseul, before being sent to study in England and Germany. In 1912, Céline joined the French cavalry, serving as a sergeant until he was wounded in World War I. After his injury, Céline received a medal of honor and was sent to London to work in the passport office of the French Consulate. It was in London that Céline married his first of three wives, Suzanne Nebout. The marriage lasted roughly one year, ending in 1916 when Céline was discharged from the military and left London to work for a trading company in West Africa.

Returning to France in 1917, Céline began his medical studies at the University of Rennes in 1919; in the same year, he married his second wife, Edith Follet. The marriage ended in 1925 when Céline abandoned his wife and their daughter, Collette. For the next three years, Céline traveled across the globe as a doctor for the League of Nations. In 1928, he returned to France and set up a private practice as a doctor for the poor in Clichy. It was at this time that he began writing, hoping to augment the meager income of his medical work.

His first novel, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (*Journey to the End of the Night*), published in 1932, was a popular and critical success and received the Theophraste Renaudot Prize in 1933. Other successful novels include *Mort à crédit* (1936; *Death on the Installment Plan*), *D'un chateau à l'autre* (1957; *Castle to Castle*), *Nord* (1960; *North*), and *Rigodon* (1969; *Rigadoon*). The works are marked by an abrasive honesty, rage, and brutal humor, reflecting the horrors Céline faced throughout his life, from fighting on the German front during World War I, to treating the sick and poor in the suburbs of Paris.

In addition to his highly autobiographical novels, Céline wrote several anti-Semitic political pieces, including *Bagatelles pour un massacre* (1937; *Trifles for a Massacre*), *L'école des cadavres* (1938; *School for Corpses*), and *Les beaux draps* (1941; *A Nice Mess*). As World War II drew to a close, the French government denounced Céline as a traitor because of his political pieces. Fearing for his life, Céline fled France in 1944 with his third wife, Lucette. He was arrested in Denmark by orders of the French government and imprisoned there for over a year. Convicted of treason in 1951, the couple remained in Denmark until a military tribunal granted Céline amnesty. Céline returned to France and settled again in a suburb of Paris, where he continued writing and working as a doctor for the underprivileged until his death in 1961.

Sources:

Wiloch, Thomas. "Louis-Ferdinand Destouches." *Contemporary Authors Online*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com> (accessed 29 October 2004)

"Louis-Ferdinand Céline." *Contemporary Literary Criticism-Select*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com> (accessed 29 October 2004)

Scope and Contents

The Milton Hindus Collection of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, 1937-1950, consists of correspondence between Hindus and Céline, typescripts of three of Céline's later works, five photographs of Céline and his wife Lucette, and a photocopy of a typescript of Hindus' biography of Céline, *The Crippled Giant* (1950). The collection is arranged in two series, the first containing Céline's papers and the second containing Hindus' papers.

Approximately one-third of the collection is comprised of the correspondence of Céline and Milton Hindus (1916-1998), an American professor of literature at the University of Chicago and later at Brandeis University. The first series contains ten handwritten letters in French from Céline to Hindus, dating from November 1948 to October 1949. The second series contains photocopies of transcripts of sixty letters in English from Hindus to Céline, dating from June 1947 to February 1949. The correspondence discusses dealings with publishers, Céline's writing, other contemporary writers, Céline's exile in Denmark and his health. Additionally, the letters written by Hindus contain discussion of his own career as a professor.

Céline's works include the page proofs of *Scandale aux abysses* and the typescript of *Foudres et flèches*, both with corrections marked by Maria Canavaggia, Céline's secretary. The typescript of *A l'agité du bocal* contains a handwritten note by Céline on the last page.

Related Material

Additional Céline and Hindus materials may be found at the Ransom Center, in the Carlton Lake Collection.

Index Terms

People

Céline, Louis-Ferdinand, 1894-1961

Subjects

Authors, French -- 20th century

Series I. Céline 1937-1949

Letters, 1948-1949

Box 1 Folder 1

Photographs and negatives, 1937-1946, undated

Folder 2

Works

A l'agité du bocal (1947), typed carbon manuscript

Folder 3

Foudres et fleches (1948), typed carbon manuscript with handwritten corrections

Folder 4

"Reply to charges of treason made by the French Department of Justice," 6

November 1946, printed, English translation

Folder 5

Scandale aux abysses (1944), page proofs with handwritten corrections

Folder 6

Series II. Hindus 1947-1950

Letters, 1947-1949

Box 1 Folder 7

Works

The Crippled Giant (1950), photocopy typed manuscript with corrections

Folder 8