

Jerome Klinkowitz:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Klinkowitz, Jerome, 1943-
Title:	Jerome Klinkowitz Papers
Dates:	1971-1988
Extent:	3 boxes (1.26 linear feet)
Abstract:	Correspondence, printed material, and creative works, 1971-1988, received and produced by Jerome Klinkowitz, document his academic, professional, and personal activities.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-2317
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:	Purchase, 1989 (R11597, R11852)
Processed by:	Katie Causier and Anne Petrimoulx, 2006; updated by Kelsey Handler, 2012
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Jerome Klinkowitz is a literary critic, scholar, author, and teacher. He was born December 24, 1943, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Klinkowitz attended Marquette University and received a B.A. in 1966 and an M.A. in 1967. In 1969, he received a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. He was an assistant professor at Northern Illinois University, 1969-1972, and began teaching English at the University of Northern Iowa in 1972. As of 2009 he still held this position as a full professor specializing in contemporary narrative and literature.

Klinkowitz has published prolifically, writing reviews and articles for several literary publications and serving as both editor and author for a number of books. Much of his work focuses on bringing lesser-known authors of innovative fiction to attention, such as Kurt Vonnegut and Jerzy Kosinski. Vonnegut is Klinkowitz's primary research subject, and his book, *The Vonnegut Effect* (2004), is regarded as one of the most comprehensive studies of Vonnegut ever written. Three of Klinkowitz's most important works deal with post-contemporary literature and its authors: *Innovative Fiction* (1972); *Literary Disruptions* (1975); and *Literary Subversions: New American Fiction and the Practice of Criticism* (1985). These works are hailed by his literary contemporaries as the most important critical works of the 1970s. Klinkowitz was concerned especially with a brand of new and subversive fiction known to him and his colleagues as "surfiction."

Surfictionists, borrowing their philosophy from the surrealist art movement, were primarily concerned with the "death of fiction" and the "truth" of surrealism both in their own work and the work of others. Together with Klinkowitz, writers and professors Raymond Federman, Steve Katz, and Ronald Sukenick were part of this surrealist movement. They formed what they called a "literary/surfictionist clique." They maintained their friendships primarily through correspondence, having only occasional meetings in person. In many cases, Klinkowitz served as a mediator between his colleagues and publishers, and informally acted as a literary agent while his colleagues were abroad.

Raymond Federman (1928-) coined the term "surfiction" in his 1975 book of essays, *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*. He was born in France, but wrote in and experimented with the English language as an adult. His first novel, *Double or Nothing*, was published in 1971. *Amer eldorado* (written in French) was published in 1974 and followed in 1976 by the English version, *Take It or Leave It*. He edited several books, including two collections of works by Samuel Beckett. Other works include translations, additional novels, and several books of poetry.

Steve Katz (1935-) is known for his imaginative and sometimes shocking writing. He is primarily a novelist and writer of short stories, though he has also written poetry, such as the 1973 epic poem, *Cheyenne River Wild Track*. Other novels include *Moving Parts* (1977) and *Wier and Pouce* (1985).

Ronald Sukenick (1932-2004) was an avant-garde novelist whose works were characterized by a re-interpretation of structure and narration. His first book, *Wallace Stevens: Musing the Obscure* (1967), was hailed for its innovative approach to criticism. Later works include *Up* (1968), *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories* (1969), and *98.6* (1975). He founded the *American Book Review* in 1977.

Klinkowitz served as a "substantial literary critic-friend" to these men, editing, reviewing, and working with them toward publication of their work. The men engaged in much literary "log-rolling" for each other. Klinkowitz often included the writing of Federman, Katz, and Sukenick in works for which he served as editor; in turn, the men included Klinkowitz's writing when they served as editors.

He married Elaine Ptaszynski on January 29, 1966, and was divorced on January 16, 1978. He then married fellow writer Julie Huffman on May 27, 1978. He has two children, Jonathan and Nina, from his first marriage.

Sources:

Contemporary Authors Online, <http://galenet.galegroup.com> (accessed 18 June 2009).

Scope and Contents

Correspondence, printed material, and creative works, 1971-1988, received and produced by Jerome Klinkowitz, document his academic, professional, and personal activities. The collection is organized in two series: I. Correspondence, 1971-1988 (22 folders) and II. Creative Works, 1972-1985 (14 folders).

Series I. Correspondence, consists primarily of incoming letters from Raymond Federman, Steve Katz, and Ronald Sukenick. Correspondence among these men is marked by a friendly tone, with personal and professional issues intermingled. The correspondence illuminates the nature of Klinkowitz's relationship with his colleagues as both a friend and a critic. The men discuss one another's works as well as the works of others, offering critiques and accolades. Additional correspondents include Michael Rossman, James Park Sloan, Southern Illinois University Press, and William Crawford Woods. Folders are arranged alphabetically by correspondent, and correspondence is in chronological order within each folder, with some undated letters and empty, postmarked envelopes filed last. Envelopes often bear dates when letters do not, and are filed in front of the letter with which they are associated. Correspondence contains many enclosures including manuscripts, printed material, and forwarded letters. Enclosures are housed in sleeves behind the associated letter.

The Federman correspondence documents the development of a personal and professional relationship with Klinkowitz; earlier letters have a stronger focus on professional topics, and become more casual. The four letters from Klinkowitz to Federman represent the largest number of outgoing letters in the collection. Katz's correspondence documents Klinkowitz's role as a "critic-friend," as many of his letters contain enclosed manuscripts for Klinkowitz to review. This correspondence also contains several postcards Katz sent to Klinkowitz while on vacation. Correspondence with Sukenick contains a large number of forwarded letters pertaining to Sukenick's professional and publishing career, and concerns Klinkowitz serving as an advisor to his friends. In the Sukenick material is a group of letters from Sukenick written in his role as editor of *American Book Review*, regarding Klinkowitz as a reviewer for the journal.

Authors discussed in the correspondence include Jerzy Kosinski, Jurek Kutnick, and Clarence Major, with insights on Beckett (Federman) and Vonnegut (Klinkowitz).

Series II. Creative Works contains manuscripts by Federman, Katz, Klinkowitz, and Sukenick, and book reviews, articles and publicity by and about James Park Sloan. Folders are arranged in alphabetical order by creator and contain one work per folder unless otherwise grouped together by Klinkowitz. Collected Sloan material includes: newspaper clippings, manuscripts, publications, publicity fliers, an interview transcript, and notes on his career. Some articles are contained within their original publication.

Related Material

Additional Klinkowitz-related material is located in the papers of Steve Katz, Richard Kostelanetz and Ronald Sukenick which are also housed at the Ransom Center.

Series I. Correspondence, 1971-1988

A-Z, 1982-1984	Container 1.1
Federman, Raymond	
1971-1974	Container 1.2
1974-1975	Container 1.3-4
1977-1980	Container 1.5
1980-1983	Container 1.6
1984-1988	Container 1.7
Empty envelopes, 1972, 1978, undated	Container 1.8
Katz, Steve	
1972-1974	Container 2.1
1975-1976, 1980	Container 2.2
Undated	Container 2.3
Rossmann, Michael, 1978	Container 2.4
Sloan, James Park, 1972-1975	Container 2.5
Southern Illinois University Press, 1984	Container 2.6
Sukenick, Ronald	
1971-1973	Container 2.7
1974-1978	Container 2.8
1979-1983	Container 2.9-10
1984-1987	Container 3.1
<i>American Book Review</i> , 1980-1985	Container 3.2
Letters from Sukenick to others, 1987	Container 3.3
Woods, William Crawford, 1978-1985	Container 3.4

Series II. Creative Works, 1972-1985

Federman, Raymond. "Fiction Today, Or the Pursuit of Non-Knowledge," 1978	Container 3.5
Katz, Steve	
<i>Cheyenne River Wild Track</i> , 1973	Container 3.6
"Parcel of Wrists," 1973	Container 3.7
"The Perfect Life," 1973	Container 3.8
"Friendship," 1974 and "One on One: A Concert of Essays," 1974	Container 3.9
"Two Seaside Yarns," undated	Container 3.10
<i>Wier and Pouce</i> excerpts, undated	Container 3.11
Klinkowitz, Jerome	
Interview with James Park Sloan, undated	Container 3.12
Handwritten notes about James Park Sloan, undated	Container 3.13
Review of <i>Wallace Stevens: Musing the Obscure</i> , by Ronald Sukenick, 1985	Container 3.14
Sloan, James Park	
Articles by Sloan, 1974-1975	Container 3.15
Book reviews by Sloan, 1974-1979	Container 3.16
Articles and reviews re Sloan, 1972-1974	Container 3.17
Publicity, 1972-1973	Container 3.18

Bar Code List

- 1--059188000055143
- 2--059188000055154
- 3--059188000055165