Descriptive Summary

Creator: Freeling, Nicolas, 1927-2003
Title: Nicolas Freeling Papers
Dates: circa 1952-2003, undated
Extent: 34 document boxes (14.28 linear feet), 1 oversize folder (osf), 1 galley file (gf)
Abstract: The Nicolas Freeling Papers consist of manuscript drafts, correspondence, journals, clippings, contracts, and royalty statements belonging to the British mystery novelist Nicolas Freeling.
Call Number: Manuscript Collection MS-5194
Language: English, French, German, Spanish
Access: Open for research

Access Note: Several folders of correspondence, contracts, and clippings are contaminated with mold. The Conservation Department has vacuum treated material in these folders for mold infestation, but mold may still be present. For health reasons, patrons may consider wearing gloves and a dust/mist respirator while handling this material. One box of clippings contains material contaminated with mold that has not been treated for mold infestation and use of this material is restricted and is subject to permission from the head of the reading room.

Administrative Information

Acquisition: Purchase, 2010 (10-10-006-P)
Processed by: Amy E. Armstrong, 2012
Repository: The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center
Biographical Sketch

Nicolas Freeling was born in London on March 3, 1927, and spent his early childhood in France and later childhood in Southampton, England and Dublin, Ireland. He attended the University of Dublin for a year and then joined the military service in 1945. He served in England, North Africa, and France and left the service in 1947. In need of a job, he began working as a kitchen apprentice in a hotel in the south of France. Over the next twelve years, Freeling became a chef and worked in hotels throughout France, England, and northern Europe. In 1954, he married a Dutch woman, Cornelia (Renée) Termes, and the couple later had four sons, Hugo, Conrad, Yvan, and Wolf, and one daughter, Fabienne (whom they called "Nana").

In 1959, Freeling was arrested for stealing food from the kitchen of an Amsterdam hotel. Though this event caused his family's deportation to England, it also began his literary career. Freeling was fascinated with a particular Dutch police officer and over his four weeks of incarceration, he began writing a detective story on the wrappers of soap he was assigned to package. While still working in hotels, Freeling finished his first two novels, *Love in Amsterdam* (1962) and *Because of the Cats* (1963), which introduced readers to Dutch Police Inspector Piet van der Valk and his wife, Arlette. The sale of these two books in America and Europe allowed Freeling to retire from the hotel restaurant business and become a full-time novelist. The family returned to the Netherlands for several years and in 1964, moved to a town near Strasbourg, France, where Freeling would remain for the rest of his life. The van der Valk mysteries were hugely successful and led to two successful British television series based on the character. Between 1962 and 1972, van der Valk appeared in ten novels, and in the final book, *A Long Silence* (1972), Freeling killed his popular detective, angering many of his readers and disappointing his publishers.


Freeling briefly reunited readers with widower Arlette van der Valk who solved mysteries through her Strasbourg "help bureau" in two novels, *The Widow* (1979) and *One Damn Thing after Another* (1981). In 1989, he wrote a Piet van der Valk prequel called *Sand Castles*.

Freeling's 42 books not only profiled the cases of his three famous detectives, but also followed other protagonists in eight "Euro Crime" novels and four non-fiction books: *Cook Book* (1972) and *Kitchen Book* (1970) which were reissued together in 2002, a book of essays about literature's best crime writers, *Criminal Convictions* (1994), and his memoir, *The Village Book* (2001). Freeling was awarded three prestigious international awards for crime writing: the Grand Prix de Roman Policier (1964, France), Edgar Allan Poe Award (1966, United States), and Crime Writers' Golden Dagger (1964, Britain).
Freeling expressed ambivalence at being categorized as a crime novelist and preferred to see himself as a "straight novelist" who used crimes to analyze human nature, cultural conventions, and social institutions. Beginning with his earliest novel, Freeling sought to move away from the predictable formulas of the English detective or the American private-eye story which focused on answering "whodunit?" Instead, Freeling explored the psychological realms of all those involved in a crime, particularly his detectives, and sought to answer "whydunit?"


Sources:

In addition to material found within the Nicolas Freeling Papers, the following sources were used:


Scope and Contents


Series I. Works makes up the bulk of the papers and includes materials associated with Freeling's writings. It is arranged into three subseries: A. Published books, 1964-2001, undated; B. Other Writings, 1973-1993, undated; and C. Television and Plays, 1971-1980, undated. Materials in each of these subseries are arranged in alphabetical order by title, based on Freeling's original folder titles, which are most often the British title. The title following in parentheses is a variant title, most often the American title.

Subseries A. Published Books primarily contains drafts for most of Freeling's mystery novels and non-fiction books. Correspondence accompanies some manuscripts and is often editorial notes between Freeling and his editors. Most drafts are near final versions and contain minor edits. One exception is the book Gadget. Freeling developed the story with physics professor Peter Zimmerman and consulted with him on the technical information; therefore, there are many technical notes and exchanges between the two collaborators. The journals in Series III. Personal and Professional Papers contain some notes and working draft fragments for some of Freeling’s novels.
Subseries B. Other Writings are drafts, notes, clippings, and galley proofs for Freeling's articles, essays, book reviews, book chapters, and short stories. This subseries also contains works that were in progress or were unpublished which Freeling labeled as "shelved scripts." The material titled Hearsay is an early draft of an autobiography Freeling was developing.

Subseries C. Television and Plays contains script drafts, outlines, television episode synopses, and correspondence for a theater play and several proposed television series based on Freeling’s characters Piet and Arlette van der Valk.

Series II. Correspondence includes personal and professional incoming and outgoing correspondence. It is arranged into two subseries: A. Incoming, 1962-2003; and B. Outgoing, 1967-1997. Letters in each of these subseries are arranged chronologically following Freeling's original order. Some letters contain attachments such as photographs, drafts of articles, book jacket designs, and contracts. Works that are interfiled with correspondence are listed in an index at the end of this finding aid. Additionally, Freeling often included corrections and responses to his editors' questions in his letters and these are scattered among the incoming and outgoing correspondence. A complete index of all correspondent names in this collection is included at the end of the finding aid.

Several folders of correspondence were treated for mold infestation and patrons may consider wearing gloves and a dust respirator while handling this material.

Series III. Personal and Professional Papers contains a variety of material documenting Freeling's writing career and it is arranged in alphabetical order by topic. Included in this series are clippings, collected research material, contracts, journal notebooks, photographs, publicity materials, publishing catalogs, and royalty statements. There is little personal material except for poems Freeling copied at the age of fifteen and the journal notebooks, which contain personal notes mixed with writing notes and handwritten draft fragments for some of Freeling's novels and books.

The clippings are arranged into two segments: publicity and reviews and assorted topics. The assorted topics are collected newspaper articles in French and English on a variety of subjects--presumably some used for research--which cover crime and punishment, politics, gastronomy, books, publishing, authors, culture, travel, etc. One box of clippings contains material contaminated with mold that has not been treated for mold infestation and use of this material is restricted and is subject to permission from the head of the reading room.

Publishing contracts are arranged in chronological order. Several folders of clippings and contracts were treated for mold infestation and patrons may consider wearing gloves and a dust respirator while handling this material.

Of particular interest are twenty-seven journal notebooks. Titles, if present, are taken from the covers and provided in single quotes. Most of these journals were used for both personal and professional purposes, but a few contain handwritten incomplete drafts for a few of Freeling's books. Personal notes include daily journal entries, to-do lists, recipes, household budgets and expenses, and other jottings. The journals are arranged in rough chronological order.
There are very few photographs in the collection and those that are present are head shots or publicity photos of Freeling taken at events.

Royalty statements are arranged chronologically and also include a notebook in which Freeling recorded account overviews for specific works over several years. Several folders were treated for severe mold infestation and use by patrons must be under a vent hood and is subject to permission from the head of the reading room.

Related Material

The Alfred A. Knopf Records at the Ransom Center contains additional Freeling-related material.

Index Terms

Subjects
Authors, English--20th century.
Autobiography.
Mystery and detective stories.
Novelists, English--20th century.

Places
Amsterdam (Netherlands).
France.

Document Types
Clippings.
Contracts.
Correspondence.
Journals.
Manuscripts.

Subseries A. Published Books, 1964-2001, undated

Because of the Cats (1963), typescript and note, 1966, undated

Castang's City (1980), 'carbon II' typescript, correspondence, 1979

A City Solitary (1985)

   Editorial notes, correspondence, 1984

   'Carbon II' typescript, 1984

Cold Iron (1986)

   Typescript, 1985

   Photocopied typescript, correspondence, editorial notes, 1985


Double Barrel (1964), edited typescript, 1964-1965

The Dresden Green (1966)

   Typescript, undated

   Edited carbon typescript, memos, specimen pages, synopsis, 1966-1967

A Dwarf Kingdom (1996), 'Biarritz carbon uncorrected' typescript draft, undated

Flanders Sky (1992) (The Pretty How Town), photocopied typescript, undated

Gadget (1977)

   Rough draft fragments, notes, letters with Peter Zimmerman, 1971-1975

   Photocopied typescript with inserts, 1976
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gun Before Butter (1963) (Question of Loyalty)</td>
<td>Edited typescript, undated</td>
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<td>The Janeites (2002)</td>
<td>Typescript, undated</td>
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<td>Edited typescript, 2002</td>
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<td>Kitchen Book (1970) (The Kitchen: A Delicious Account of the Author's Years as a Grand Hotel Cook)</td>
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<td>Rough draft, revised pages, 1974</td>
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<td>Love in Amsterdam (1962) (Death in Amsterdam)</td>
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<td>Photocopy of edited typescript, letter, editorial notes, 1983</td>
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<td>Not as Far as Velma (1989)</td>
<td>'Carbon II' typescript, editorial notes, letters, replaced pages, 1988</td>
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<td>One Damn Thing After Another (1981) (Arlette)</td>
<td>'Carbon II' typescript, undated</td>
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<td>One More River (1989)</td>
<td>'96 carbon' typescript, 1996</td>
<td>6.10, 7.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Edited typescript, 1988</td>
<td>7.4-6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Editorial notes, letters, 1988-1989</td>
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</table>
The Seacoast of Bohemia (1994), carbon typescript, editorial notes, undated

Some Day Tomorrow (1999)

Carbon typescript, undated

Photocopied typescript, undated

Those in Peril (1990), carbon typescript, 1988

Valparaiso (1964), edited typescript, undated

The Village Book (2001)

Draft fragments, letters, 1996, undated

Typescript draft, undated

Page proofs, editorial notes, jacket design, 2001

What Are the Bugles Blowing For? (1975) (The Bugles Blowing), edited typescript, undated

The Widow (1979), 'carbon II' typescript, editorial notes, undated

Wolfnight (1982), 'carbon II' typescript, undated


Subseries B. Other Writings, 1973-1993, undated

Amsterdam, draft, undated

A Brief Account of the Matter Witnessed, draft, undated

Crime and Metaphysics, 'shelved script' draft, 1989

Crime Fiction, draft, 1989

European Abroad, draft, 1974

Fundamental Things Apply, draft, letter, 1992

Hearsay, draft fragments, 1974, undated
Honour, drafts, undated


Jannock, 'shelved script' draft, undated

Kipling Society address, draft, undated

Mangetout, draft, letters, 1981

Masefield, draft, undated

Mr. Mordecai, draft, undated

Mornings at Seven?, draft, undated

My Very First Job, draft, letter, 1993

1927, draft, 1989-1990

Origin of the World, draft, undated

Personal Belief, outline drafts, undated

Qu'est ce je fais?, French typescript, undated

Ray and Ross, draft, undated

Rudyard Kipling, drafts, letter, 1984, undated

Southampton, draft, letter, 1981

'Tour de France'

   Correspondence, drafts, published article, 1975

   Printed material about the Tour de France, 1974

The Tram Stop, draft, undated

A Verbal Communication (appeared in Midwinter Mysteries, No. 3 [1993]), photocopy of published essay, letter, 1993

Why VDV Died, draft, undated

Why Write at All?, draft, undated
Winters Tales, draft fragment, undated

Unidentified fragments, notes, and clippings, 1973-1979, undated

Book Reviews

Biko by Donald Woods, draft and clipping, 1978

A Dog's Ransom by Patricia Highsmith, draft, circa 1972

Europe 2,000 by Peter Hall, clipping, 1977

The Family Arsenal by Paul Theroux, draft, circa 1976

Le procès de Gilles de Rais by Georges Bataille, galley proof, 1965

The Railway Stations of London by John Betjeman, draft, circa 1972

The Riddle of the Sands by Erskine Childers, drafts, undated

Travel article clippings, A City to Fight For (Leningrad), 1988; City at the Crossroads (Strasbourg), 1988

Subseries C. Television and Plays, 1971-1980, undated

Red Sky at Night, play script, drafts, notes, undated

Van der Valk series

A Bed for the Night, synopsis, letter, undated

Cut Down to Size, synopsis, undated

Dupont and Nemours, synopsis, undated

In Case of Emergency, synopsis, undated

Punishment, synopsis, undated

Retired Spot, synopsis, undated

The Widow (proposed series based on book of the same title), correspondence, outlines, 1980

Written All Over Your Face: Nicolas Freeling On Amsterdam, correspondence, script drafts, 1971-1972
# Series II. Correspondence, 1962-2003

## Subseries A. Incoming, 1962-2003

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Subseries B. Outgoing, 1967-1997

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<td>1997</td>
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Series III. Personal and Professional Papers, circa 1952-2003

Biographies about Freeling, circa 1980s

Clippings

Publicity and reviews

1964-1978

1982-1986

1986-1988

1989-1991

1991-1996

Assorted topics, 1965-1999

1971, 1979, 1983-1984 (Mold contamination has been detected in this box. Material in this box has not been treated for mold infestation and use of this material is restricted and is subject to permission from the head of the reading room.)

Collected research material

Assorted articles about writers, legal documents, 1971-1991

'General interest,' clippings, photocopied articles, advertisements, 1979-1983

'Green Go the Rushes,' letter, Dilly Song research, 1982

Contracts

1961-1966

1966-1976 (Material in this box has been treated for mold infestation. Patrons may consider wearing gloves and a dust/mist respirator while handling this material.)

1972-1975

1976
Freeling, Nicolas, 1927-2003

1977-1980

1981-1983

1984-1985

1986-1987

1988

1988-1991 (Material in this box has been treated for mold infestation. Patrons may consider wearing gloves and a dust/mist respirator while handling this material.)

1989-1993

1994-1999

Dust jack designs for German editions and illustrations for The Cookbook or The Kitchen [?], undated

Journal notebooks

Red and navy journal, handwritten excerpts from Because of the Cats [?], Valparaiso, Gun Before Butter [?], circa 1963-1964

Green journal, personal and writing notes, 1968

'Castle II' red/blue/white journal, drafts and notes for This is the Castle, circa 1967-1968

'Castle III' red/blue/white journal, drafts and notes for This is the Castle (Conrad Freeling's notebook; Nicolas Freeling's notes resume at the back), circa 1967-1968

'Tsing-Boum I' red notebook, handwritten draft for Tsing-Boum!, circa 1968-1969

'Tsing-Boum II' blue plaid notebook, handwwritten draft for Tsing-Boum!, circa 1968-1969

'Tel Outlines' maroon journal, television outlines, personal notes, clippings, letter from George Hertz, 1969-1970

'Nicolas' tan journal, personal and writing notes, 1970-1972

'Day by Day' green and yellow journal, personal notes, Hear Say fragment, 1971

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'Hear Say' tan journal, personal and writing notes, 1972-1977

'Journal' red and black journal, Hear Say and other writing notes, personal notes, 1973-1975

'Castang' red and yellow journal, Castang notes, circa 1973-1974

'Book scripts' red and black journal, Castang and other writing notes, personal notes, July 1974


'Rough Bomb Book' red and black journal, notes and fragments for Gadget, 1975

Orange spiral journal, personal and writing notes, circa 1979

Blue and black journal, personal and writing notes, 1979

'Cathares' yellow and navy journal, Castang and other writing notes, personal notes, 1980-1981

'Spain' red and black journal, Castang and other writing notes, personal notes, circa 1980-1982

Brown journal, draft fragments, writing notes, clippings, letter from Renée, circa 1990s

Blue spiral journal, personal notes, The Village Book, Castang and other writing notes, circa 1996-1999

Black journal, personal notes, 1998

Gray journal, personal notes, notes for Kipling and other writings, circa 2000s

Teal journal, personal and writing notes, postcard, circa 2002-2003

Red/black/white journal, personal and writing notes, sketches, undated

Orange journal, recipe and cooking notes, undated
'Notes' green journal, personal notes, undated

Newsletters (Authors Guild Bulletin, Mystery Readers of America Journal), 1985-1987

Photographs of Freeling, circa 1960s-1980s

Poems, published poems hand copied at age 15, circa 1952

Publicity poster, German, 1986

Publishers catalogs, 1986-1990

Royalty statements

1986-1993

1993-1995

1997-1999

1989-1991 (Material in this box has been treated for mold infestation. Patrons may consider wearing gloves and a dust/mist respirator while handling this material.)

'Accounts' red journal, royalties and income, bank statement, 1964-1975

Tax documents, German forms, 1975-1979
## Index of Correspondents

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<td>Ager, Annabelle (Curtis Brown Associates)</td>
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<td>Ball, Betty (&quot;Bessie&quot;)</td>
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