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Guide to the T.C.H. Jacobs Literary Papers, 1907-1974

Accession number: 2006-0067R
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Jacobs, T. C. H.
Title: T.C.H. Jacobs Literary Papers, 1907-1974
Accession: 2006-0067R
Extent: 2.64 cubic feet
Repository: Pennsylvania State University, University Libraries, Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Access

Unrestricted access.

Preferred Citation

T.C.H. Jacobs Literary Papers, 1907-1974, Accession 2006-0067R, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, Pennsylvania State University.

Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Richard Ford, 2005

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in five series: Biography, Correspondence, Research, Journals, and Writings.

Biographical Note

T.C.H. (Thomas Curtis Hicks) Jacobs, was a prolific English pulp fiction author of Westerns, romances, true crime stories, and spy and detective fiction. He was born in

Plymouth, Devonshire, England, on 30 December 1899, to Mary and Robert Jacobs, a printer and paper merchant, and educated in a local Plymouth grammar school. Jacobs wrote his first published work for the *Western Weekly News* at age sixteen.

Jacobs served in the British Army Infantry from 1917 to 1921. In 1918, he was wounded in action and taken prisoner of war. He escaped and was demobilized in 1921 as a second lieutenant. After the war, Jacobs joined the English civil service as a revenue investigating officer. In 1925, he married Muriel Newbury.

In 1928, Jacobs sold his first novel, an "economic necessity," he later recalled, as a serial published by A. J. Rhodes. During his 23 years with the Inland Revenue, Jacobs wrote at night. From 1950 to 1976, he wrote full time. He began by writing many short stories for boys' magazines, but as the popularity of short stories for boys' magazines and fiction declined around 1950, he branched into non-fiction writing with a trilogy on the study of murder.

In 1953, Jacobs became a founding member of the Crime Writers' Association; in 1960-1961 he served as its chairman. His other memberships included The Society of Civil Service Authors, the Press Club, Radio and Television Guild, Society of Authors, and the Bexley Rotary Club. In 1939, Jacobs attained the distinction of being the first English civil servant to have a film made from one of his novels, *Traitor Spy*.

For much of his life, Jacobs apparently made his home in Bexley, Kent, England. He died in London in 1976; his obituary was listed under the pseudonym Jacques Pendower.

In a 1961 interview printed in the *Rotary News* in Bexley, Kent (under the pseudonym T.C.H. Pendower), Jacobs revealed some of his literary method. He attributed having set working hours and keeping at the writing, rather than inspiration, as key. He began with a central idea and characters, not an extensive synopsis that would restrict his writing. In his mysteries, Jacobs noted that he established the ending first, and then started writing the story. He did develop, however, dialogue, character descriptions, and notes on locales in his authorial commonplace books.

As an example of how Jacobs approached the formulaic writing of pulp fiction, he explained that he wrote his Westerns from his home in Bexley, Kent, by using the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, fifty stock Western words, and Texas as the setting for all the stories. In 1957, in a letter to "My Dear John" (a fellow author who wrote under the pseudonym Col. Vernon Hinchley), Jacobs told how he expanded a short story to novel length by inserting new incidents in the middle that began and ended there.

Jacobs wrote more than 100 novels and short stories under many pseudonyms, including Jacques Pendower, T.C.H. Pendower, Penn Dower, Tom Curtis, Marilyn Pender, Kathleen Carstairs, Helen Howard, and Anne Penn. His works, written for popular markets in England, France, Spain, Germany, and the United States, were translated into most of the languages of Western Europe.

Scope and Content

The T.C.H. Jacobs Literary Papers, dating from 1907 to 1974, document the writing life of a twentieth-century pulp fiction writer. The collection includes Jacobs' childhood writings, authorial commonplace books, research clippings, typescripts, publications, an authorial record book, and correspondence.

A manuscript and notebook of children's stories by a young Jacobs appear in the collection, manifesting an early interest in writing. Other items reveal preliminary stages of Jacobs' creative process. They include three commonplace books Jacobs used to develop fictional elements, and newspaper, magazine, and journal clippings Jacobs gathered for research.

Under his own and other names (e.g., Jacques Pendower and Tom Curtis), Jacobs wrote in many genres. His writings include detective, romance, espionage, and Western stories, as well as scenic descriptions, and true crime and factual spy narratives. Instances of these kinds of writings appear in the collection in some 62 unpublished transcripts and 42 published articles.

Notable among the typescripts are two adaptations. One is the BBC script, *The Grensen Murder Case*, developed from a short story by Jacobs. A second is a script for *Traitor Spy*, a popular movie derived from another of Jacobs' short stories, and further adapted by Jacobs and published in the magazine *Boy's Cinema*.

Of particular interest among the publications are the ten installments of the serial, *Sinister Quest*, written by Jacobs under the pseudonym Marilyn Pender for the pulp magazine, *Miracle*. Also included is a T.C.H. Jacobs paperback, *Texas Stranger*, published by Western Library.

In addition, the collection includes an authorial record book, indicating the disposition of Jacobs' typescripts and his working relationships with his publishers. Several letters from his editors illuminate the development of his typescripts. Additional letters from two contemporaneous authors, Dorothy Cooper and Vernon Hinchley, shed light on the lives of pulp fiction writers and the realities of their market.

T.C.H. Jacobs' work may be identified with several of pulp fictions' movements, with their characteristic sensationalist themes and underlying cultural sensitivity. For example, Jacobs' early writings may be seen to be part of the boys' adventure story movement occurring between 1920 and 1950. Other of Jacobs' early writings may be identified with popular crime fiction published between 1930 and 1950. Jacobs' Western stories and romances, frequently serialized, appealed to popular genre markets of the twentieth century.

With its clippings from contemporary newspapers and magazines, Jacobs' research files suggest his attunement to British life and culture. Increasingly, Jacobs' later work of the

1940s to 1960s reveals this sensitivity. Reflecting British social concerns, Jacobs explored underlying motivations in his true crime stories and drew inspiration from events of World II and the subsequent Cold War for his timely non-fiction, espionage narratives.

Index Terms

These materials are indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Pennsylvania State University. Researchers wishing to find related materials should search the catalog under these index terms.

Personal Name Subjects

Jacobs, T. C. H. (Thomas Curtis Hicks), 1899-1976

Topical Subjects

Child authors -- Great Britain -- 20th century.

Male authors, English -- 20th century

Pulp literature

Form/Genre Terms

Correspondence

Manuscripts for publication

Correspondents

Cooper, Dorothy

Hinchley, Vernon

Pseudonyms

Carstairs, Kathleen

Curtis, Tom

Dower, Penn

Howard, Helen

Pender, Marilyn

Pendower, T. C. H.

Penn, Anne

Pendower, Jacques, 1899-1976

Names Jacobs Used as a Child

Jacobs, C.

Jacobs, Curtis

Jacobs, T. C. H.

Processors' Notes

Three issues need to be brought to the attention of researchers.

Name of the Collection

Because the author used a number of pseudonyms, we found it challenging to select a proper name to title the papers. In fact, the collection includes envelopes sent to the author's home in Bexley, Kent, addressed either to T.C.H. Jacobs or to Jacques or T.C.H. Pendower. Moreover, the Library of Congress includes three associated, authorized name headings: T.C.H. Jacobs, Jacques Pendower, and Penn Dower. Literary databases and other sources list the author either as T.C.H. Jacobs (with the pseudonym Jacques Pendower) or vice versa. Several sources give "Pendower" as the author's real name. These sources include *The Gale Literary Database*, *Twentieth-century Crime and Mystery Writers* (John M. Reilly, ed.), *Crime Fiction II: A Comprehensive Bibliography 1749-1990* (Allen J. Hubin), and *Spy Fiction: A Connoisseur's Guide* (Donald McCormick and Katy Fletcher). *AB Bookman's Weekly*, January 10, 1977, lists an obituary for Jacques Pendower. Other sources identify T.C.H. Jacobs as the author's real name. For example, *Who Was Who Among English and European Authors 1931-1949* (Gale Research Company) lists T.C.H. Jacobs as an author. In addition, the juvenilia in the collection was signed "Jacobs," and a 1901 census record for the Administrative County of Devonshire, Civil Parish of Plymouth, England, lists Thomas Curtis Jacobs, age two, as the son of Robert and Mary Jacobs. On the basis of the 1901 census and the name on the juvenilia, we chose "T.C.H. Jacobs" for the name of the papers. The names Jacques Pendower and Penn Dower are entered into the catalog record as additional name headings.

Grierson Dickson Typescripts

Among the "Typescripts with accompanying materials" in Series V are five murder stories set at various British seaside resorts and attributed to Grierson Dickson. Despite

Jacobs' use of pseudonyms, the authorship of these materials is not clear. At first glance, the accompanying correspondence may suggest that "Grierson Dickson," is a collaborative pseudonym adopted by Jacobs and a writer named Colonel Vernon Hinchley. In correspondence between "Jimmy" (the author who used the pseudonym Col. Vernon Hinchley) and "Jake" (Jacobs), Jimmy invites Jacobs to collaborate with him on murder mysteries set at seaside resorts. Compounding the questions of authorship, Jimmy also mentions that he shares the pseudonym Hinchley in successful collaborations with another author (identified as [Bernard] Newman). Another possibility is that the five stories were written by "Jimmy," and sent to Jacobs as sample chapters for the proposed book they might author together. In later correspondence, Jimmy responds to Jacobs' concern that conventional murder stories are unpopular at the time and suggests collaborating on another type of story, one involving a fictitious spy-master. In sum, it is unclear whether Jacobs and Hinchley collaborated and to whom the authorship of these stories should be attributed, other than to "Grierson Dickson."

Separated Material

The T.C.H. Jacobs collection includes the papers of another author, Mr. Harry Stuart Daniell, who according to addressed envelopes lived at 44 Bexeley, Kent, where Jacobs lived. These papers will constitute a separate collection, the Harry Stuart Daniell Literary Papers.

Container List

Series I. Biography

Biography, 1950-1961.

The Biography series includes a 1961 interview with T.C.H. Jacobs (under the pseudonym T.C.H. Pendower), from the *Rotary News* No. 112 (District Rotary International, Kent and East Sussex, England). In it Jacobs discusses his approach to writing. The series also contains a 1950 clipping from the *Berleyheath Observer & Kentish Times* including Jacobs' assessment of the current audience for written works.

Box 1

Folder 01

Biographical materials, 1950, 1961

Series II. Correspondence

Correspondence, 1954-1974.

This series includes correspondence with publishers, fans, and Jacobs' fellow authors Dorothy Cooper and Vernon Hinchley, provides evidence of the various pseudonyms Jacobs used and further indicates his approach to writing. The letters also reveal

aspects of the daily life of writers, their monetary concerns, and their relationships with other writers, publishers, and agents. Moreover, they outline the various genres of pulp fiction and their popularity in the 1950s and 1960s.

The correspondence is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.

Box 1

Folder 02

Correspondence, 1954-1974 (bulk 1954-1958)

Series III. Research

Research, 1950-1970.

This series contains resources kept by T.C.H. Jacobs to support his writing. This series was created from loose items among his papers. It includes pages from medical journals, crime-related information from the Crime Writers' Association, course materials about writing for television, and clippings from British magazines and newspapers documenting highly publicized crime and spy scandals of the 1950s and 1960s. Reflecting Jacobs' interests, these resources provide glimpses into the sources of Jacobs' inspiration and knowledge in developing his stories.

The series is arranged chronologically.

Box 1

Folder 03

Espionage / mafia / crime / punishment, 1951-1970 (bulk 1963-1968) and undated

Box 1

Folder 04

Capital punishment / insanity / juvenile delinquency / Symonds case, 1953-1973 (bulk 1963-1964)

Box 1

Folder 05

Murder / spies, 1954-1976 (bulk 1954) and undated

Box 1

Folder 06

New Scotland Yard / understanding criminology / capital punishment, 1955-1967 (bulk 1956)

Box 1

Folder 07

The secrets case and Master Detective, 1961-1963 (bulk 1961)

Box 1

Folder 08

Espionage / Wynne's return / Penkovsky papers, 1961-1965 (bulk 1964-1965)

Box 1

Folder 09

Crime and espionage, 1961-1968 (bulk 1964)

Box 1

Folder 10

The Medico-Legal Journal, 1962

Box 1
Folder 11 - 12
The Hanratty case, 1962
Box 1
Folder 13
Lord Dennings's Report on the Profumo Affair, 1963
Box 1
Folder 14
The Ward case / Russian defector, 1963-1964
Box 1
Folder 15
The Great Train Robbery, 1963-1964
Box 1
Folder 16
Spy materials (Philby), 1963-1964
Box 1
Folder 17
Spy carton (Criminology), 1963-1964
Box 1
Folder 18
Master Detective and True Detective, 1963-1964
Box 1
Folder 19
Moors murders, 1965-1966
Box 1
Folder 20
Moors murders / Blake case / mystery trawler, 1966
Box 1
Folder 21
Crime Writers' Association, 1968
Box 1
Folder 22
Television Writing School Limited, undated
Box 3
Folder 01
Great Train Robbery, 1963
Box 3
Folder 02
Espionage / Criminology, 1966-1967

Series IV. Journals

Journals, 1932-1972.

Commonplace Books Sub-series

Commonplace books, 1932-1963.

This sub-series includes three undated commonplace books, each approximately one

hundred pages, used by T.C.H. Jacobs to develop technical contexts and fictional plots, settings, and characters. Among the entries are lists of names, French vocabulary, and Western phrases; descriptions of places, characters, and motives; plot synopses; set-pieces for openings and endings; and research notes about subjects as varied as World War I poisonous gases, courtroom layout, and metropolitan police procedures. Inserted clippings from newspapers and magazines from 1932 to 1963 suggest that Jacobs likely used these commonplace books over much of his writing career. Richly detailed, they offer insight into Jacobs' creative process.

Box 1

Folder 23

Commonplace book, 1947, 1952, 1963, and undated

Box 1

Folder 24

Commonplace books, 1955, and undated

Box 1

Folder 25

Commonplace book, 1959-1967, and undated

Box 3

Folder 03

Commonplace book, 1930-1964, and undated

Record Books Sub-series

Record books, 1949-1972.

The subseries Record books consists of a record book of about 100 pages, including the data on his typescripts T.C.H. Jacobs kept from 1949 to 1972. Sets of records document authorial pseudonyms, typescript titles, dates sent, acceptance status, date paid, amount paid, and number printed. As well as providing an overview of the disposition of Jacobs' titles, his record book also offers a view of an author's relationships with the publishers of his day, among them the three publishing houses of Gibson, Hale, and Bookman.

Box 1

Folder 26

Record book, 1949-1972

Series V. Writings

Writings, 1907-1964.

This series contains the writings of T.C.H. Jacobs in four sub-series: Juvenilia, Typescripts, Typescripts with accompanying materials, and Published works. These writings, together with Jacobs' commonplace books, reflect the repetitive formulas of characters, plot, and dramatic situations that define pulp fiction.

The sub-series are arranged alphabetically by title.

Juvenilia Sub-series

Juvenilia, 1907-1910.

The sub-series consists of childhood writings by T.C.H. Jacobs. Written in 1907 and 1910, when Jacobs was eight and eleven years old, "The Children's Book of Stories" includes illustrated stories, puzzles, and stories without words (visual narratives). Also present is a separate, undated, eight-page adventure story, "The wreck off Martin's point and how three scouts came to the rescue." Both items offer evidence of Jacobs' early interest in writing and suggest approaches used in teaching children's art and writing in England during the early 20th century.

Box 1

Folder 27

The Children's Book of Stories and The Wreck off the Martin's Point . . . , 1907, 1910, and undated

Typescripts Sub-series

Typescripts, 1937 and undated.

The sub-series consists of forty-two undated typescripts and typescript fragments written by T.C.H. Jacobs under his own name and pseudonyms Jacques Pendower, Tom Curtis, and Kathleen Carstairs. Typescripts average 2200 words. They provide excellent examples of detective and spy stories, Westerns, and romances--narratives written in the widely read genre known as pulp fiction.

Among the typescripts are seven under the name T.C.H. Jacobs. They include "The Grensen Murder Case" (a typescript consisting of the dialogue for the BBC radio serial of the same name). There are twenty-five typescripts attributed to Jacques Pendower, Jacobs' primary pseudonym. These include crime and espionage short stories and a true-crime feature. The Western "Phantom Marshal" is penned under the pseudonym Tom Curtis, a name Jacobs often used for this genre. Two of the typescripts do not indicate the name under which they were written. One, "Blackmail," appears to be an unpublished detective novel featuring the character Temple Fortune. The other, presumably documenting a trip Jacobs made to the United States, is titled "Travelogue of Trip through California" (June 1937).

Typescript fragments include an excerpt of "Killer in the House," the preface and title page of "Monsters of Murder," as well as several synopses, including "Synopsis: Tongues of Scandal," written under the pseudonym Kathleen Carstairs.

Box 1

Folder 28

Act of Providence and others, undated

Box 1

Folders 29-32

Blackmail, undated

Box 1

Folder 33

Dance Hall Girl and others, undated
Box 2
Folder 01
Footsteps in the Dark and others, undated
Box 2
Folders 02-03
Number One Suspect (Ashes in the Cellar), undated
Box 2
Folders 04-05
Phantom Marshal, undated
Box 2
Folder 06
A Question of Identity and others, undated
Box 2
Folder 07
The Secret Places, undated

Typescripts With Accompanying Materials Sub-series

Typescripts with accompanying materials, 1929-1940.

The sub-series consists of typescripts and associated editorial correspondence, newspaper clippings, publicity, and trade publications. They reveal Jacobs' working relationships with editors, how he adapted his short story "The Grensen Murder Case" into a movie script, and how he researched current events to develop characters and plots. Six of the typescripts are attributed to T.C.H. Jacobs. In addition, five stories of murders at popular British seaside resorts are attributed to Grierson Dickson, possibly, but not certainly, a joint pseudonym used by Vernon Hinchley and T.C.H. Jacobs.

A large number of materials in this sub-series relate to the movie *Traitor Spy*, adapted by Jacobs from his short story of the same name. A typescript, presumably used in the filming of *Traitor Spy*, is dated Jan. 1940. Accompanying newspaper clippings from 1939 to 1940 provide the historical context of World War II film production. They cover the stages of the film from pre- to post-production activities; provide synopses of the plot and details, such as the participation of the Admiralty in the filming; review the movie; and provide information on the sequel to follow. Also included are press releases from Pathe Pictures Ltd. and trade publications featuring the film. A letter from the editor of *Boy's Cinema*, dated Feb. 1940, asks Jacobs for a synopsis of the story "Traitor Spy." The subsequent version of "Traitor Spy" printed in *Boy's Cinema* is included in the accompanying materials.

The collection also includes typescripts with accompanying correspondence for "The Double Trail," a detective Dixon Hawke story, and "Death of a Scoundrel," a Temple Fortune story. Correspondence between Jacobs and Mr. Gilchrist of *Adventure* magazine, dating between January 1929 and January 1930, documents the development of a Dixon Hawke serial detective story that was not published. A letter from Patricia M. Templeton of Robert Hale Ltd. documents approval of "Death of a Scoundrel" for publication.

Box 2

Folder 08
Travelogue of California, 1937
Box 2
Folders 09-12
Death of a Scoundrel, 1966-1967, and undated
Box 2
Folder 13
Dixon Hawke, 1929, and undated
Box 2
Folders 14-16
Espionage, 1964-1966, and undated
Box 2
Folders 17-18
The Gresen Murder Case, 1943, 1946, and undated
Box 2
Folder 19
Monsters of Murder, 1956, 1959, and undated
Box 2
Folder 20
Murder by the Sea (by Grierson Dickson), 1967, and undated
Box 2
Folders 21-22
Traitor Spy, 1939-1940, and undated

Published Works Sub-series

Published works, 1928-1964.

The sub-series consists of forty-one titles, published from 1928 to 1964, with bylines by T.C.H. Jacobs, Jacques Pendower, and Marilyn Pender. The collection's published writings suggest the range of Jacobs' stories as well as their typical venues and audiences.

The thirty-three publications by T.C.H. Jacobs include descriptions of the landscapes and traditions of Dartmoor and surrounding areas, published in the *Western Weekly News*, 1928-1929; the paperback, *Texas Stranger*, published by Western Library; newspaper stories from Jacobs' true-crime works, *Aspects of Murder* and *Cavalcade of Murder*, and several "Western Short Stories," from *Evening News* and *Evening News and Star*. Also present is a published plot synopsis advertising Jacobs' story "The Moineau" for serialization. Among the publications is a complete serialization, "Sinister Quest," written by Jacobs under his pseudonym Marilyn Pender for the magazine *Miracle*. Also seven short stories by Jacques Pendower range from romance to supernatural to detective fiction and appear in such publications as *Parade*, *Escort*, and *Master Detective*.

Box 2
Folder 23
The Aftermath of Scandal and others, 1931, 1938-1940, 1955-1964
Box 2
Folder 24

Blue Fire Blackmail and others, 1930, 1958-1964, and undated
Box 2
Folder 25
Dartmoor Hermits and others, 1928-1929
Box 2
Folder 26
Sinister Quest, 1957
Box 2
Folder 27
Texas Stranger and other, undated and 1931
Box 3
Folder 04
Traitor Spy-related trade magazines, 1939