



**FINDING AID TO
THE ALDOUS HUXLEY CORRESPONDENCE,
1961**

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Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections
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Processed by: Kristin Leaman, February 14, 2012

Descriptive Summary

Creator Information	Huxley, Aldous, 1894-1963
Title	Aldous Huxley correspondence
Collection Identifier	MSP 83
Date Span	1961-1961
Abstract	The Aldous Huxley correspondence (1961; 0.25 cubic feet) documents his work on <i>Island</i> with editor, L. Rust Hills. The collection contains one typed letter (5 pages) and one hand-written letter by Huxley. Both letters are addressed to L. Rust Hills, who was the fiction editor at Esquire magazine from 1956 to 1963. The correspondence also documents when Huxley's house burned down and a reference to hallucinogenic mushrooms leading to spiritual transcendence.
Extent	0.25 cubic feet (1ms box)
Finding Aid Author	Kristin Leaman, 2012
Languages	English
Repository	Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

Administrative Information

Location Information:	ASC
Access Restrictions:	Collection is open for research.
Acquisition Information:	Purchase, Bromer Booksellers, April 6, 2010
Accession Number:	20100416
Preferred Citation:	MSP 83, Aldous Huxley correspondence, Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries
Copyright Notice:	Copyright restrictions may apply. Consult an archivist for details.

**Related Materials
Information:**

Aldous Huxley letter, MSP 101

Subjects and Genres

Persons

Huxley, Aldous, 1894-1963
Hills, L. Rust

Topics

Psychedelic drugs

Form and Genre Types

Correspondence

Biography of Aldous Huxley

Aldous Leonard Huxley was born on July 26, 1894 in Godalming, England to T. H. Huxley and Julia Arnold Huxley. He was the third of four children and lost both his mother and his sister in 1908. Huxley's father was a scientist and a supporter of Darwinism; his mother was the niece of poet Matthew Arnold. Huxley attended Hillside School in Godalming from 1903 until 1908 and Eaton College on a scholarship from 1908 until 1913; he received a BA (with honors) in English Literature and Philosophy from Balliol College, Oxford in 1915. At sixteen years of age, Huxley contracted keratitis, which left him temporarily blind. He learned to read Braille and used it until he regained partial vision, which allowed him to return to his studies. In 1919, he married Maria Nys who died in 1955 from breast cancer; a year later, he married Laura Archera, and they had a son together. Huxley became a full-time writer in 1921 and moved to California in 1937, where he also worked as a freelance screenwriter and co-wrote screenplays such as *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), *Jane Eyre* (1944), and Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951). Huxley is widely published from his early works *Crome Yellow* (1921) and *Antic Hay* (1928) to his later works *The Genius and the Goddess* (1955) and *Island* (1962). His work can be divided into two periods: "his early work, much of it social satire, is arch and occasionally condescending; his later work, essentially mystical, is prophetic but in places self-righteous." Huxley's more "psychedelic" and "mystical" published works are: *Brave New World* (1932), *Island* (1962), *Point Counter Point* (1928), *Heaven and Hell* (1956), and *The Doors of Perception* (1963), which is interestingly where the band The Doors took their name. Huxley's brother, Julian, a scientist and also a prolific writer, wrote *Aldous Huxley, 1894-1963; A Memorial Volume* (1965). In 1960, Aldous Huxley was diagnosed with throat cancer and died November 22, 1963, the same day as John F. Kennedy's assassination and C. S. Lewis' death. Even after his death, authors are still publishing works on Huxley and his writings, and many of his articles and books have been reprinted. Tracy Lee Simmons in the *National Review* writes of Huxley stating that he is "often wrong, always fascinating, when right, dead right, almost in spite of himself."

Sources:

"Aldous (Leonard) Huxley." *Contemporary Authors Online*. Detroit: Gale, 2004. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 16 Dec. 2011.

<http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=false&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE|H1000048658&mode=view>

"Huxley, Aldous Leonard (1894-1963)." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Detroit: Gale, 1998. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 16 Dec. 2011.

<http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=false&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE|A148466738&mode=view>

"Aldous (Leonard) Huxley." *St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers*. New York: St. James Press, 1996. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 16 Dec. 2011.
<http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=false&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE|K2407000275&mode=view>

Collection Description

Scope

The Aldous Huxley correspondence (1961; 0.25 cubic feet) documents his work on *Island* with editor, L. Rust Hills. The collection contains one typed letter (5 pages) and one hand-written letter by Huxley. Both letters are addressed to L. Rust Hills, who was the fiction editor at Esquire magazine from 1956 to 1963. The letter discusses Huxley's most recent work, *Island*, a utopian response to *Brave New World*. It bears the typed address of Huxley's house that had recently been destroyed by fire. In the letter, Huxley apologizes for his delay in responding to a letter that Hill had written the previous month, citing "...a delay due to the fact that my house burned down last month and that the resulting confusion slowed me down." The manuscript for *Island* was one of the few items that Huxley rescued from the blaze.

Huxley writes that he has finished the novel and sent it off to the publishers. Most of the letter contains a summary of the novel's plot and insight into the philosophies behind it. Huxley mentions that he is sending a self-contained extract of the novel to Rust for consideration, "...an account as accurate as I can make it of a spiritual experience on the level of unalloyed Nirvana, on the level of pure aesthetic delight, on the level of unalloyed hell, and on the level of a fully developed humanity." Huxley contributed many pieces to the magazine, but it is uncertain if this extract was ever actually published in Esquire. The additional handwritten note on blue air-mail paper was sent from London, and continues the correspondence. He writes, "Thank you for your letters. I think that the best plan will be for you to contact Mr. Cass Canfield at Harper & Bros, and ask him to see the script of the novel, which is in his hands." At the time, Mr. Canfield was the chairman of the executive committee at Harper & Brothers, the company that had long been Huxley's publisher in the U.S.

Although not in our description, Huxley specifically mentions the consumption of mushrooms as a pathway to spiritual transcendence, and cites an initiation ceremony in which the hallucinogenic mushroom is used -- this is termed Moksha-medicine.

(Description provided by Bromer Booksellers.)

Descriptive Rules

Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd Edition / Describing Archives: A Content Standard

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Box 1

Item

1. Letter to Mr. Hills from Aldous Huxley, June 14, 1961
2. Letter to Mr. Hills from Aldous Huxley, July 12, 1961