Finding aid for the Craig Rice papers 0153

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Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections
Title: Craig Rice papers
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Physical Description: 1 Linear Feet1 box
Date (inclusive): circa 1950-1955
Abstract: Personal and business correspondence; typescripts, ca. 1950-55. Craig Rice (Georgiana Ann Randolph) (1908-1957) published her first book, *8 Faces at 3*, in 1939. She married several times; one was to Beat writer Larry Lipton. She became an enormously popular writer of mystery and detective stories, at one point rivalling Agatha Christie in sales. Agatha Christie with mystery fans, rivalling her in sales. Rice died at the age of 49 in 1957.
Storage Unit: 1
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[Box/folder# or item name], Craig Rice Papers, Collection no. 0153, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California
Conditions Governing Access
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE: Advance notice required for access.
Scope and Contents
Personal and business correspondence of writer Craig Rice (Georgiana Ann Randolph); typescripts, ca. 1950-55.
Biographical note
Craig Rice (Georgiana Ann Randolph) (1908-1957) was born to an artist and a Chicago socialite who travelled frequently. Georgia never lived for more than three years with her parents at a time. Indeed, supposedly her happiest times were spent being watched over by her father's sister, Mrs. Elton Rice. It was from her, of course, that Rice drew her pen name. Rice wrote for the papers, radio, and kept her hand in publicity work, publishing her first book, *8 Faces at 3*, in 1939. She married several times; one was to Beat writer Larry Lipton.
In its January 28, 1946 issue, Time Magazine selected Rice for a cover feature on the mystery genre. Rice was "The Queen of the Screwball Mystery." Rice's series characters, ne'er-do-well attorney John J. Malone and his pals, Jake and Helene Justus, two endearingly inept Watsons, drank their way through a whole slew of novels and short stories, not to mention later film, radio and television appearances. Some of the stories were collected in The Name Is Malone (1958). She also wrote several short stories with Stuart Palmer, teaming up Malone with his detective, Hildegard Witheres. These were collected in People vs. Witheres and Malone (1963).
But Rice wrote more than just the Malone series. She wrote several stand-alone novels, and a trilogy featuring traveling photographers, the fast-talking Bingo Riggs and his partner, Handsome Kusak. The books in that series are The Sunday Pigeon Murders (1942), The Thursday Turkey Murders (1943) and The April Robin Murders (1958). The last book was, in fact, left uncompleted at the time of her death, and Ed McBain completed it. She wrote the standalone To Catch a Thief (1943), which some consider her finest work. She wrote three other non series books under her own name, including the magnificent Home Sweet Homicide (1944) which was also made into a film. She also published three books under the pseudonym Michael Venning, featuring New York City lawyer Melville Fairr.
Rice also wrote for film, adding several of her bizarre, surreal touches to The Falcon's Brother (1942), with her future collaborator Stuart Palmer, and The Falcon in Danger (1943). The first, in particular, with the early death of its hero and his apparent resurrection and ultimate replacement by his brother, reeks of one of Rice's favourite themes, that of doppelgangers and the dead who don't seem to beat writer Larry Lipton.
Rice also found time to write several highly-acclaimed true crime articles, and to ghost a couple of books, two for stripper Gypsy Rose Lee and one for George Sanders, the actor who had played the original Falcon in The Falcon's Brother. With all these projects she was involved in, it's easy to see why it was said that she was, for a while, almost as popular as Agatha Christie with mystery fans, rivalling her in sales. Rice died at the age of 49 in 1957.
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