

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
MANUSCRIPTS & ARCHIVES SECTION

ACCESSION RECORD

Accession Number 92M20  
Title James Turcotte Papers  
Location BPSE 135-H-5  
Approximate Inclusive Dates 1969-1992  
Date of Receipt June 3, 1992  
Received From James Turcotte  
Volume on Arrival .83 lin ft  
Number of Boxes (after reboxing) 2 AB  
Condition Good  
Restrictions  
Special Formats (list) Photoprints

**DESCRIPTION** Manuscripts, notebooks and photographs of James Turcotte, 1945-1993. Turcotte, a former tax advisor and art gallery owner, began writing in the late 1960's, at first primarily fiction and free verse reflecting his experiences as a gay man, father, drug user and resident of Los Angeles and New York. He was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988. His subsequent writings were primarily poetic and journalistic recordings of his life and observations. Turcotte died of AIDS-related causes on May 11, 1993.

The collection is comprised of an unbound compilation (typescript, photocopy, and computer printout) of Turcotte's writings (1969-1992, 1680p.) (A table of contents is attached.) A second, variant copy of the prose poem "Romance and Brain Damage" is included. A number of the works are illustrated with sketches, often cut from the notebooks; loose at the front of the manuscript are three photographs of Turcotte in 1991 and 1992, when he had Kaposi's sarcoma (one of the opportunistic diseases common to people with AIDS.) The photographs were taken in New York by Bill Bytsura. There are nine bound notebooks (1972-1985, numbered 10-15 plus three unnumbered.) Turcotte used these variously as journals and to record his other writings. Photographs and related ephemera are occasionally taped in.

Some of Turcotte's poems have been published in Unending Dialogue, Rachel Hadas, ed. (Boston, Faber and Faber, 1991.)

rev, mbb 5/27/93

Box 1: Writings by James Turcotte (typescript, photocopy, computer printout).

Photographs

Box 2: Notebooks

REV. 8/14/92 mbb

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
MANUSCRIPTS & ARCHIVES SECTION

ACCESSION RECORD

Accession Number            92M38  
Title                    James Turcotte Papers (Additions)  
Location            BPSE 135-H-5  
Approximate Inclusive Dates    1969-1992  
Date of Receipt            August 7, 1992  
Received From            James Turcotte  
Volume on Arrival        .42 lin ft  
Number of Boxes (after reboxing)    1 AB  
Condition Good  
Restrictions  
Special Formats (list)    Videocassette; sketchbooks; photoprint

DESCRIPTION

Box 3:    Privately printed versions of six works by James Turcotte: Fall (1989), Counting Backwards (1989), George (1990), The Holidays (1990), Summer (1991), and Moving Places (1992). The volumes have been hand-bound in cloth covers, and each is signed.

Two sketchbooks (1975-1977, and 1977-1986) by James Turcotte.

Videocassette (VHS) entitled "Voice" produced by Turcotte at Gay Men's Health Crisis in 1991. See attached list of contents.

(A portrait photograph of Turcotte by Harvey Stein has been added to previously received photographs in Box 1.)

rev. mbb 8/19/92

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JAMES TURCOTTE

On November 30 1945, I was born above a gas station on Manchester Street in Lawrence Massachusetts. I lived with my mother and her aunt, whom I called Nana and referred to as my grandmother. They were close. Nana had raised my mother while holding down a mill job. My mother (Madi) moved to Los Angeles briefly, and married my father (Ray). But nine months after my mother became pregnant, my father died under mysterious circumstances in the US Navy, and so she returned to live with her aunt in Lawrence. They fought frequently. I attended St Patrick's Grammar School. We moved to a housing project in South Lawrence. My mother built a new house, partially with my father's veteran's benefits, and partially with Nana's money. Nana moved to Florida after a fight they had. My mother decided to earn a bachelor's degree from Merrimack, a local Augustinian college. After this, she sold the house and we moved to Amherst Massachusetts so she could get her Master's Degree at the University of Massachusetts. I was sent to Cranwell Academy, a Jesuit boarding school. On account of my homosexual conduct, I was expelled and had to attend Amherst High School.

In 1961, my mother bought a tract home in Tempe Arizona. I graduated from Tempe High School, and attended Arizona State University.

In 1965, I moved to New York and then to Madrid Spain, where I lived for almost two years. In 1967, I returned to Arizona and completed a bachelor's degree in Spanish. During this period I read philosophy, latin american literature, and autobiographical journals of early settlers in the west. Detailed and factual, the journals impressed me more than much fictional literature I'd read.

In 1969, after graduation from the university, I returned to New York. In the rabbi's study of Temple Emmanu-El in Manhattan, I married Judi Baskin, a college friend from Los Angeles. We separated shortly after. Judi returned to Los Angeles, and I remained in New York. Judi visited frequently, and in 1976 conceived our son David. Again, she returned to Los Angeles. A few months before the birth of my son, I moved to Los Angeles. He was born at UCLA Hospital on May 30, 1977.

In Los Angeles, I worked for the Internal Revenue Service, and eventually opened an art gallery and ran a successful tax practice out of the gallery office. The practice supported the gallery and, to the extent of the law, my son David. His mother and I separated after he was born.

In February 1988, I moved back to New York with my lover

Andre. By August, I was diagnosed with AIDS. At this point I began to print and bind my own books and give them to friends. In this way I believed they would live - even if outside the enigmatic monolith of the publishing world.

Note: Around 1968, I began writing in a stream of conscious style that concealed my homosexuality. Eventually, I moved to fiction, changing the names and genders of the people I was and knew. And finally, after my diagnosis, I switched to clear and concise journal story telling of actual people and events in my life.

## P O E T R Y

1969 - 1987

ROMANCE AND BRAIN DAMAGE. A volume of semi-autobiographical free verse. With pen and ink illustrations.

1989

COUNTING BACKWARDS, a volume of semi-autobiographical free verse. Most written after AIDS diagnosis. With pen and ink illustrations.

1991

Poems included in UNENDING DIALOGUE by Rachel Hadas. A volume of poems and commentaries by the co-ordinator of the poetry workshop at GMHC in New York. Published by Faber and Faber in Boston.

## F I C T I O N

1975 - 1987

X-RAY. Two volumes, ROMANCE and BRAIN DAMAGE. A fictional autobiography about a cuban man, Joe Sueño, and his relationship with a jewish american princess, Holiday Void.

1986.

PARAISO. The legend of Orpheus is blended with the book of Esther in a story told about a mythical caribbean island. Begins well, spiked with plagiarism, but plods eventually toward the supermarket racks.

1987.

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES. Novel about a drug addicted and unnamed movie star, two vagrants, an heiress, a gallery receptionist, his lover, a hooker, and an accountant. All become involved with a murder. Sad story of greed and

jealousy. Chapter titles: Food, Shelter, Clothing, Sex, Money, Power.

1988.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY. Essays on generalities, philosophy, religion, pure science, etc - using the ten categories of the dewey decimal system.

1989.

EL MUNDO AND OTHER STORIES. Novel connecting the lives of an interior decorator, an ambitious model, a garment manufacturer, his drug addicted poetess daughter, his gay restaurateur son, a young heir to a music fortune, a lonely man, a corrupt priest who works the cruise ships, and others. Examines motivation in an occasionally incomprehensible writing style. With pen and ink illustrations. Chapter titles: El Mundo, The Radiant Altar, Hot Climates, Interest, Making Money, The Man and The Muse, Life in Pictures, Those Fabulous Achilles Heels, Barbarism, The Package, The Lead Balloon.

1990.

CITY. A collection of short stories based on people and places in my life. Titles: La Gorce, Metamorphosis, Members Only, Friends, Hollywood Divine, Music, Eight, Childs & Co, Billy Martin, Room At The Top, Looking For Love.

GOLEMS. A novelette about a couple who wish themselves into the past, and then try to imagine themselves out of it. The secret lies in cities, where time moves faster.

ZERO. A long unfinished novel retelling El Quijote in the adventures of Joe Sueño and Zero, the vagrants in THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, Joe being also the protagonist in X-RAY.

1992

LAND X. Stories, journal entries, and poetry written while I was a member of Other Countries - a writing group of gay black men. Titles: Lipstick. 3-D. My House. Charity. Running. Class. Westworld. Sunkist. Shooting George Bush. We Can Do This.

X-MEN. (novel in progress). A successful black drug dealer leaves his girlfriend and baby for a gay white museum employee. The girlfriend befriends the girl next door. Strangely attracted to her, she becomes pregnant by what turns out to be a young female impersonator.

# J O U R N A L S

1989

COUNTING BACKWARDS. Beginning with a seat in the welfare office, each successive chapter moves backwards in time. Observations on being diagnosed with AIDS. My gay life in Hollywood. Living with a schizophrenic, robbing a bank while working for the IRS, doing drugs. Moving backwards, the book ends at the point where X-RAY left off, in effect, connecting James Turcotte to Joe Sueño. Chapter titles: Welfare, Class, The System, Work, Rooms, Smoking, Andre, Mitchell, Shelter, Joe, Flying, Rex.

1990

FALL. In Manhattan. Living with AIDS, visiting hospitals, and working with an art dealer. The pressure and the horror in a glamorous setting. Chapter titles: Nick, George, Tom, Joe, Jen, Lee, Days, Fall.

GEORGE. Stories about an art dealer. Some gossip - about Keith Haring and his foundation - by Keith's ex-lover. Chapter titles: George, Miami, La Gorce, Juan, Keith, Dorothy, Thanksgiving.

THE HOLIDAYS. Thanksgiving in Manhattan (repeated chapter). And then, two weeks around New Years - as I spent them with my mother and son in Arizona. Disillusionment in New York. Desert history and travel. Observations about family life. Chapter titles: Thanksgiving, Xmas, Madeline, David, Claire, Havana, New Years.

1991

SUMMER. Chapters about spending three weeks with my son and my mother. Travels around Manhattan and Brooklyn on bikes. Incidents about racism, poverty, urban life. Chapters: The Homestead. Markets. August. The Adult Stage. Forbidden Planet. Minions. Planes.

1992

MOVING PLACES. Descriptive narratives about visiting an ex-lover and friends in Philadelphia, and Garrison New York. Entries: The Sporting Club, Travarrow, Ciboulette.

GAYLIFE. (in progress) Straightforward journal involving the gay world.

HETLIFE. (in progress) Concurrent, straightforward journal not involving the gay world.