

Multitudes: A Celebration of the Yale Collection of American Literature, 1911–2011
On view at Beinecke Library, Yale University, July 8 through October 1, 2011

Checklist and Descriptions: Writers' Notebooks & Snapshots

Writers' Notebooks & Snapshots

Allen Ginsberg, *India Journal*, 1962–3.

This journal documents beat generation poet Allen Ginsberg's early 1960s trip to India. Along with draft poems and lyric fragments, the notebook includes descriptions of beggars, holy men, cremation ceremonies along the Ganges River, and other aspects of life in India and refers to Ginsberg's writer-friends William S. Burroughs, Peter Orlovsky, and others. Of this notebook, Ginsberg wrote: "Indian Journals are notebook writings sketches dream fragments night thoughts afternoon reveries Kodak snapshots Optical & verbal: hymns to Kali, political ravings, one line pensees, doodles, description in detail of opium Dens in Calcutta & Bombay; fragments of conversations with Beggars, poets, Babas, newsmen, lovers; paragraphs of letters, ganja-grass high notations on moving trains and in burning grounds, tourist awes & addresses, glimpses of bridges and streets; but mostly the tortured introspection of self wandering in XX Century throughout northern India, living half a year at a time in Benares and Calcutta, dreaming about holymen and visiting some few, watching beggars, feeding lepers with Orlovsky poet-nurse, bathing in Ganges, shopping in ancient markets and cooking hideous cannibal chickens in holytown, learning mantras & Hindu god's names for chanting; books of thought kept at fancy leisure, crude poems, home-made photos of cows and sadhus."

Countee Cullen, notebook, 1944–45

Celebrated Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen used this composition book to draft lyrics and metrical schemes for three untitled songs for the musical *St. Louis Woman*; since the songs were not included in the final script for the musical, Cullen's notebook provides crucial documentation of these ephemeral texts. The inclusion of two pages of brief pencil notes on musical terminology also provides some information about Cullen's approach to the project. The notebook also includes an autobiographical poem and twenty numbered "Rhyme Vocabularies for the Pupils."

Susan Howe, notebooks, 1986–2001. *From the Susan Howe Papers.*

Fragment of the wedding dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards, undated. *From the Jonathan Edwards Collection.*

Poet-scholar Susan Howe's creative and scholarly writing often draws on archival resources; her own literary archive at the Beinecke Library includes many notebooks documenting her interconnected poetic and academic projects. Howe's notebooks reveal a daily record of her work and life, including notes about and quotations from the books she's reading, her own notes for creative and scholarly projects, information about day-to-day activities and errands, and diary-like descriptions of life events. One example shows Howe's drawing of a fragment of the wedding dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards, part of the Beinecke Library's Jonathan Edwards Collection. Howe encountered the dress fragment in the Beinecke's reading room while studying Edwards' writing and sermons. The Edwards collection, including the dress fragment, was an important inspiration for *That This*, Howe's most recent book of poems. *That This*, winner of the 2011 Bollingen Prize for American Poetry, features an image of the wedding dress fragment on the cover.

Candid photographs from the archives of poets H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), William Carlos Williams, and Langston Hughes.

Literary archives often provide students and scholars with a view of writers' family and personal lives as well as their writing life and creative process. Candid snapshots in writers' papers document all manner of experiences with family and friends—vacations, parties, informal dinners, sporting events, and other special occasions. These images often give researchers useful details about writers' lives, families, and travels. Snapshots also contain mysteries: unidentified individuals, blank spaces where photographs have been removed from family albums. The photographs featured here contain images of H. D. and her family, including her daughter Perdita and writers Bryher and Kenneth Macpherson; Williams Carlos Williams at home and vacationing with friends and family on West Haven, Connecticut, beaches; and photographs of Langston Hughes with friends and classmates from his college days at Lincoln University.
