I contain multitudes
Do I contradict myself?
Very well then . . . . I contradict myself;
I am large . . . . I contain multitudes.

Walt Whitman, from *Leaves of Grass*, 1855
Multitudes: A Celebration of the Yale Collection of American Literature, 1911–2011

An exhibition on view July 8 through October 1, 2011 at Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

Founded in 1911 when Yale College graduate Owen Franklin Aldis donated his distinguished library of first editions of American fiction, drama, and poetry to the Yale Library, the Collection of American Literature is one of the most important collections of its kind. In the century following Aldis’s gift, the Collection has continued to grow, building on core areas and expanding to include complementary materials, from individual manuscripts to expansive literary archives, from little magazines and lively ephemera to high-tech artists’ books. The highlights exhibited in Multitudes: A Celebration of the Yale Collection of American Literature, 1911–2011 reveal areas of bibliographic strength and new development while demonstrating the Collection’s extraordinary richness, eclecticism, and depth. From the colonial period to the present, the Collection celebrates American Literature as a living art form with a complex history. Its evolving and vibrant traditions are a subject worthy of rigorous scholarly attention as well as leisurely pursuit for the general reader.
The Owen Franklin Aldis Library

Books from Owen F. Aldis’s founding gift, including Emerson’s Nature, Poe’s The Raven, Alcott’s Little Women, Barlow’s Columbiad, Hawthorne’s Our Old Home, and many others.

Yale Collection of American Literature founder, Owen F. Aldis (1874, made his mark as a Chicago real estate developer, and he was responsible for some of that city’s most recognizable skyscrapers, including the Montauk, Monadnock, and Pontiac Buildings. Aldis began collecting books around 1890, acquiring primarily American first editions and aiming to include in each volume a letter from the author referring to the specific title. In 1911 Aldis donated his outstanding collection to the Yale University Library, where it has since been maintained as a separate entity with its own curators. In the hope that other Yale alumni might donate their collections of American books, Aldis insisted that the collection not bear his name. Thus, his gift became the Yale Collection of American Literature.

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of American Negro Arts and Letters

Books, manuscripts, photographs, and memorabilia from the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection (including materials from the James Weldon and Grace Nail Johnson Papers, the Langston Hughes Papers, the Zora Neale Hurston Papers) and from the Carl Van Vechten Papers.
The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of American Negro Arts and Letters was founded in 1941 by Carl Van Vechten in honor of James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938). The collection celebrates the accomplishments of African American writers and artists, with a strong emphasis on those of the Harlem Renaissance. Grace Nail Johnson contributed her husband’s papers, leading the way for gifts from many of Johnson’s friends and colleagues. A writer, cultural critic, and photographer, Van Vechten was also a visionary collector. His donation of books, manuscripts, correspondence, photographs, and memorabilia as well as his ongoing advocacy for contributions from literary friends and fellow writers established the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection as one of the most significant archives documenting African American arts and letters.

**Nineteenth-Century Manuscripts in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection**


Unique manuscripts written by nineteenth-century African American writers exemplify the richness and historical significance of materials in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. “The Bondwoman’s Narrative,” a fictionalized autobiography, is thought
to be the first novel written by an African American woman and the only known novel written by a fugitive slave. Written in the gothic and sentimental style favored at the time, “The Bondwoman’s Narrative” is the story of a slave whose escape from a North Carolina plantation leads to a series of adventures and obstacles, until she eventually finds freedom and safety in the North. In his memoir, written around 1859, Robert Reed recounts his experiences at the New York House of Refuge, the first juvenile reformatory in the United States, and later in New York’s Auburn State Prison. Reed provides a wealth of vivid detail about his incarceration at Auburn, including a description of the horizontal black-and-white striped uniform, which originated at Auburn: “streaked clothes of shame and disgrace.” Released from Auburn on May 1, 1842, he was reincarcerated there before the close of the year, “I return’d home and committed a crime which brought me back to a gloomy prison.” This unparalleled narrative is an incomparable resource documenting the lives of African American prisoners in antebellum America.

**American Poetry**

*Copies of the 1855 first edition of Leaves of Grass (including Owen F. Aldis’s copy); manuscripts, photographs, and memorabilia from the Walt Whitman Collection.*

An example of the Collection’s great strength in printed, manuscript, and visual materials documenting American Poetry is its
outstanding holdings of materials relating to the life and writing of Walt Whitman. In addition to distinguished copies of all of Whitman’s published works (including five copies of the extraordinarily rare first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1855), the Library’s Walt Whitman Collection contains letters, manuscripts, photographs, art, and other material dating from 1842–1949, and features the Whitmania of Yale benefactors Owen F. Aldis, Louis Mayer Rabinowitz, Adrian Van Sinderen, and others. One of the most important works of American Literature, Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* is a celebration of the democratic spirit, the emotional and intellectual power of literature and art, and of the poet himself. In the more than 150 years since it was first published, *Leaves of Grass* and its author have played a crucial role in shaping American literature and the American literary imagination.

Modern Literary Archives

*Materials from the Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers,* including notes for and early manuscript drafts of *Tender Buttons,* correspondence from and photographs of Pablo Picasso, photographs and memorabilia. *Gertrude Stein first editions from the Yale Collection of American Literature.*

The Yale Collection of American Literature is renowned for its outstanding Modernist-era literary archives and manuscript collections. These materials offer scholars access to writers’ creative practices, often within the context of their personal lives. Modern archives include a wide range of materials: manuscript drafts, working notes and notebooks, correspondences, daily diaries, snapshots, ephemeral documents, family papers, and even personal effects—house keys, a wristwatch, a favorite pen. No stretch of the imagination is required to appreciate the constellation of Modernist relationships when the papers of Ezra Pound, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, and Carl Van Vechten are to be found in one library. Such modernist master works as Pound’s *Cantos,* Williams’s *Paterson,* Stein’s *Making of Americans,* and H. D.’s *Trilogy* from the authors’ own papers, join such giants from the *Dial* archive as William Butler Yeats’s “Among Schoolchildren,” Marianne Moore’s “An Octopus,” Hart Crane’s “The Bridge,” T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land,” and Wallace Stevens’s “Bantams in Pine-Woods.”

The Library continues to acquire literary archives and unique manuscripts documenting the lives and work of important contemporary American writers. Recent archival acquisitions include the papers of Forrest Gander, Peter Gizzi, Barbara Guest, Susan Howe, Ann Lauterbach, Gerard Malanga, Ron Padgett, and C. D. Wright.
Nineteenth-Century American Literature

First editions of Moby-Dick by Herman Melville and The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne (including Owen F. Aldis’s copy); correspondence from Melville to Hawthorne and manuscript excerpt from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Chimera,” 1858, from the Nathaniel Hawthorne Collection.

Noted for its bibliographic strength in nineteenth-century writings, the Collection includes first and other significant editions of virtually every major work of American literature published by prominent authors of the period, often in copies of distinguished provenance, for example Henry David Thoreau’s inscribed copy of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Essays. The work of writers such as James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow are represented in books and manuscripts, as are mid-century greats associated with Transcendentalism and the so-called American Renaissance: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The writers of the nineteenth century helped to shape a uniquely American literature, exploring a range of literary styles and considering specifically American subject matter. Important and well-loved books of the period, including Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter and Herman Melville’s Moby-Dick, have come to represent the spirit of American literature.

African American Writers’ Archives

Materials from the Richard Wright Papers, including correspondence, drafts, and publishing ephemera. Richard Wright first editions from the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection.

Building upon the Harlem Renaissance strengths of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection, later archives and small collections of notable authors such as Richard Wright, Chester Himes, James Baldwin, and Amiri Baraka document the creative output of writers forging new artistic ventures in regard to African American life at home and abroad. While Wright and his cohort lived as expatriates largely in Paris, Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) bridged the formative moments then emerging on the American literary scene, from the Beats (of which he was a key innovator) to the Black Arts Movement. As such, these papers document a rich internationalism as they also reveal the groundwork at play in the formation of an engaged sense of community spirit in New York and other major U.S. cities. Richard Wright, a hugely influential figure in the African American canon, paved the way for future generations of black writers. He is perhaps best known for his groundbreaking novel Native Son (1940) and his autobiography Black Boy (American Hunger), first published in excised form in 1945. He also produced extensive travel writings, essays about social and political issues of the day, and, toward the end of his life, an impressive body of haiku. While archives such as Wright’s
are replete with a substantive and near exhaustive array of correspondence, literary manuscripts, photographs, and other ephemera, the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection also includes bibliographic strength in first editions and fine printings, as well as representative samples of work by African American writers, artists, and activists in the post-war period.

**Literary Intellectuals at Yale**


Among the Collection’s holdings of literary archives are the papers of numerous twentieth-century literary critics, great intellectuals of their time. Chief among these holdings is the Robert Penn Warren Papers, consisting of 145 linear feet of manuscript drafts, correspondence, and personal papers, all from the desk of poet, novelist, and critic Robert Penn Warren. Warren, known to most as “Red,” began his career as an undergraduate at Vanderbilt University, where he became closely involved with the Fugitives, a group of Southern poets and literary critics. He joined the English faculty at Yale in 1950 and was instrumental in the development of the American Studies program. His third novel, the political thriller *All the King’s Men* (1946), won him his first Pulitzer Prize. He received
subsequent Pulitzer Prizes for two volumes of poetry, Promises (1958) and Now and Then (1979), and in 1986 became Poet Laureate of the United States. His papers contain rich correspondence with literary heavyweights such as William Faulkner, Harold Bloom, John Cheever, Lillian Hellman, John Hollander, Katherine Anne Porter, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Eudora Welty.

Yale literary traditions remain central to the Yale Collection of American Literature; in recent years, the Library has added the archives of Yale poets Robert Fitzgerald, Louise Glück, John Hollander, and J.D. McClatchy.

The Modern American Novel

Materials relating to the work of the novelist Henry Miller, including a multi-volume manuscript draft of Tropic of Cancer, his Paris notebooks, and rare “Mezzotint” broadsides.

The work of the prolific American writer Henry Miller, an iconoclastic figure made famous by his “banned” book Tropic of Cancer (Paris, 1934; New York, 1961) and his relationship with the French writer Anaïs Nin, is represented in the Beinecke’s holdings by a 900-page, four-volume, bound draft of Tropic of Cancer, ca. 1930–1932, a gift of Frederick R. Koch, Yale School of Drama, 1961 MFAD, (Frederick R. Koch Collection, 1640–1983, GEN MSS 601). A remarkable document, the draft includes collation of various typescript material, some of it heavily revised in Miller’s own hand, thus
The life and the adventures
of a haunted convict
Or the inmate of a gloomy prison
With the mysteries and miseries
of the New-York House of Refuge
and Auburn Prison unmasked
with the rules and regulations of
Auburn Prison from 1840 up to the present time, and the different modes of punishments.

Chapter 7
The bright sun was just a shining into the window of my father's cottage when I was called by the voice of a female to come and take the last look of my dying father. I was then at the age of six; after taking the last look of the dying man I turned from the dying scene leaving the angle of death to finish the last and awful work. But oh! who could describe the feelings of my boyish heart when I saw my father laid cold and lifeless in the coffin—then that was the hour when all the fond recollection of my dying father came rushing in my mind: his last look—his last dying advice—his last prayer and his last blessing that I might be kept from all the snares and temptations of the world, and that I might grow up and become a useful man that I might be a help meet to my mother when she should be bowing down beneath the weight of old age. How often in my boyish days when the bright sun was just about to sink beneath
revealing the arduous work involved in composition as well as the evolution of a major text. Other important Miller materials have since been acquired. They include Miller’s Paris notebooks (three volumes, 1932–1936), the only known copy of a first draft (later discarded) of *Tropic of Capricorn*, Miller’s “little black book,” drafts of his unpublished work “Nexus II,” correspondence with Maurice Girodias of Olympia Press, and an extremely rare set of “Mezzotints,” colored broadsides featuring 250-word prose poems, which Miller dreamed up as an early (unsuccessful) money-making venture. The collection highlights Miller’s place in the American avant-garde, transatlantic connections to late modernism, publishing and censorship, literary circles and close friendships, and the writer as visual artist.

**African American Arts and Letters**

*Materials from the Tom Feelings Collection, including maquettes and first editions.*

Although the Beinecke Library is not an art gallery or museum, the visual arts have long played an informative role in literary life, just as they continue to enhance our appreciation of the book as material object. The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in particular highlights the close relationship between “Arts” and “Letters,” and the history of African American cultural production cannot be understood fully without inclusion of the visual arts
and the attendant issues that surround the idea of “representation.” Literary papers in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection are bolstered by the work of Augusta Savage, Aaron Douglas, James Van Der Zee, Romare Bearden, and Roy DeCarava, among others, while related depiction of African American subjects can be found in the work of Miguel Covarrubias or the extensive Randolph Linsley Simpson Collection of photographs. The latter spans the early history of the medium, from daguerreotypes and cabinet cards to photographic postcards and snapshots, ca. 1850–1930. Reflecting the Library’s strengths in children’s literature (the Betsy Beinecke Shirley Collection), the artist, illustrator, and Caldecott Medal-winner Tom Feelings pairs image and text, often poetry, with vibrant, playful color (Soul Looks Back in Wonder; 1993), while the haunting black and white imagery in his book for older readers, Middle Passage: White Ships, Black Cargo (1995), captures the “unspeakable,” graphic aspects of the transatlantic slave trade.

Artists and Letters: Documenting the Arts

Materials from the Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive, including correspondence between and photographs of Stieglitz and O’Keeffe, “Lower Manhattan” by Alfred Stieglitz, undated, and “The House I Live In” by Georgia O’Keeffe, 1937.

The lives and work of important American artists and arts communities are well documented in the Collection, especially at points
of intersection between twentieth-century literature and the visual arts. The papers of painter and arts educator Robert Henri document the experiences of the Ashcan painters, artists whose work depicted American culture and life in the modern city; the Katherine Dreier Papers record the history of her Société Anonyme and the artists she championed, particularly Marcel Duchamp, as well as Man Ray, El Lissitzky, and Max Ernst. Activities around Alfred Stieglitz’s important photography and art galleries, 291 and An American Place, and his influential publication Camera Work, as well as conversations and exchanges among artists and writers in the Southwest are documented in the Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive; the archive includes work, correspondence, and writings by artists Anne Brigman, Marsden Hartley, Paul Strand, Edward Steichen, and others. More recently, Saul Steinberg willed his papers to Yale, along with hundreds of drawings and sketchbooks, and the archive also includes a selection of colored pencils, his customary tools. Photographer Eve Arnold’s archive, including detailed notebooks describing her work process, are another important recent addition to the Collection. Works by Picasso and Matisse; paintings by Marsden Hartley; photographs by Edward Steichen, James Van Der Zee, and Carl Van Vechten; caricatures by Miguel Covarrubias; sculpture by Augusta Savage and Isamu Noguchi; and prints by Romare Bearden suggest the range of artworks in the Collection.

**Nineteenth-Century American Print Culture**

*Materials related to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin, including first and important editions, theatrical and other adaptations, and ephemera.*

The bestselling book of the nineteenth century, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s influential abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) provides an example of the rapidly changing print culture of the period. Advancements in printing technologies and increasing literacy rates resulted in a revolution in American book culture. First appearing serially in 1851 in The National Era, an abolitionist newspaper, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was published as an illustrated two-volume book in 1852. The initial print run of five thousand copies sold out within a week. To meet the tremendous demand for copies, the book was reprinted several times in quick succession; more than 300,000 copies were sold within a year. Without benefit of strict copyright laws, the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was immediately followed by a proliferation of related publications and reproductions in various formats—sheet music and children’s books, stage adaptations and so-called “anti-Tom” novels defending Southern slavery, card games and porcelain figures. The Collection contains an expansive range of books, pamphlets, broadsides, sheet music, cards, memorabilia, and other materials documenting more than 150 years of this still-significant novel’s publication history, readership, and cultural evolution.
A major American literary figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Edith Wharton was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize, awarded in 1921 for her novel *The Age of Innocence* (1920). She then became the first woman to receive an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Yale, in 1923. Some decades later, the Yale English and American Studies professor and noted critic R. W. B. Lewis would win the Pulitzer for his literary biography, *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (1975), considered a masterpiece of the genre. While the Wharton papers are understood properly as a “Collection” made up of various gifts and purchases of material from the Wharton estate and from her immediate circle, their scholarly importance has been reanimated by the recent acquisition in 2009 of the papers of Anna Catherine Bahlmann. Employed as Wharton’s German language tutor in 1874, Bahlmann later served as her governess, secretary, and literary assistant. Comprising over 130 letters from Wharton to Bahlmann (along with other related correspondence and Bahlmann’s own papers and effects), the collection sheds light on Wharton’s personal and literary affairs while it reveals, for the first time, a vivid picture of the then Edith Newbold Jones as a young girl and her coming-of-age as a writer.
Modernism and the Little Magazine

Journal issues from the Yale Collection of American Literature and the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection; manuscript materials and correspondence from the Dial/Scofield Thayer Papers, the Ezra Pound Papers, and the Furioso Papers.

The Collection is home to an outstanding collection of printed and manuscript material related to American little magazines of the Modernist Era. Collaborations among writers, artists, and editors resulted in the publication of numerous journals promoting new aesthetic and political ideas. These non-commercial, limited-circulation publications helped shape the revolutionary arts movements of the period and contributed to evolving social and cultural discussions. The Collection’s printed and manuscript holdings in this area reveal trends in publishing, editorial debates, and aesthetic battles among the literary greats of the period including writer-editors Ezra Pound, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, W.E.B. Du Bois, Lincoln Kirstein, T.S. Eliot, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Marianne Moore, Wallace Thurman, and many others. Complete runs of most important publications, including distinguished copies from writers’ own libraries and unique copies annotated by poets and editors, are complemented and enriched by the extensive archival collections relating to little magazines including the Dial, The Little Review, Hound & Horn, Furioso, The Tiger’s Eye, Twice A Year, and others.

Image, Text, and the Art of the Book


American writers, artists, and publishers have long explored the book form—its intimacy, portability, and physicality—asserting its position as a multifaceted method of communication, as well as its significance as an evolving cultural object. The books that document these explorations raise questions about textuality, verbal and visual metaphor, tensions between language and image, and the shape of texts and books. The Collection’s strength in the vast and growing body of materials uniting art and text includes fine press editions and handmade works, traditional codex formats and imaginative alternative bindings. The history and development of books and literature in American culture is reflected in these dynamic materials.

American Dramatists

Manuscript materials, correspondence, and related ephemera from the Eugene O’Neill Papers and the Thornton Wilder Papers; papers pertaining to the life and work of Tennessee Williams. First editions from the Yale Collection of American Literature.

The Yale Collection of American Literature includes strong holdings in American drama—notably the work of four-time Pulitzer
Prize-winner and Nobel Laureate Eugene O’Neill. Theatre also plays a central role in the life of the much-lauded novelist/playwright and Hamden, Connecticut, local Thornton Wilder (1920), while the world of the theatre at large is documented through company-based archives such as those of The Theatre Guild, The Living Theatre, The Phoenix Theatre, The Civic Repertory Theatre, and New Dramatists, Inc. Such collections include working scripts with lighting plots and blocking notes, readers’ reports, financial papers, casting books, cast and production photographs, playbills, and reviews. The Papers of John Guare, Larry Kramer, and Lloyd Richards, director and former Dean of the Yale School of Drama, are some recent additions to the Collection. Although the collected papers of a key figure such as Tennessee Williams can be found in libraries elsewhere, the actress Ruth Ford’s working copy of her understudy script for the role of Blanche DuBois in the 1947 Broadway production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, directed by Elia Kazan and starring Marlon Brando and Jessica Tandy, makes for a rare representative sample, association copy, and print variant.

**Film in the Archive**

*A selection of American photoplay editions, screenplays, and first editions of novels made into films.*

There has long been a relationship between literary production and filmmaking—from the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Nathanael
West toiling away to produce screenplays for the Hollywood studio system, to film versions of contemporary literary novels and short stories such as Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours*, Charles Frazier’s *Cold Mountain*, and Annie Proulx’s “Brokeback Mountain.” The Collection documents filmmaking, with a particular emphasis on experimental projects, through the medium’s various paper trails: scripts, treatments, production materials, journals, stills, publicity ephemera such as posters and lobby cards, and, occasionally, rare footage of short films and home movies. Highlights can be found, for example, in papers relating to H.D., Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), and Kenneth Macpherson’s Pool Films and *Close Up* magazine, Stan Brakhage, Gerard Malanga, and the Gene Persson Collection of *Dutchman* Papers. A recent acquisition is the Mark Wolff Collection of Photoplay Editions—over 2000 volumes that document tie-ins between popular novels and motion pictures, ca. 1915–1960. Importantly, while the photoplay edition is often a reprint of a particular novel or play, or a novelization or adaptation from the screenplay, the earliest examples are sometimes the only remaining trace of lost films, especially silent movies.
Illustrations

Page 2 | Bookplate from Owen Franklin Aldis’s library.

Page 4 | Aaron Douglas, invitation to a party for Grace and James Weldon Johnson, New York, undated. From the Muriel Draper Papers, YCAL MSS 49.


Page 24 | “Was She Justified in Seeking a Divorce?” advertisement for The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton, [1920]. From the Edith Wharton Collection, YCAL MSS 42.


Multitudes: A Celebration of the Yale Collection of American Literature, 1911–2011 is on view at the Beinecke Library, July 8–October 1, 2011. For more information about the Yale Collection of American Literature, contact Louise Bernard, Curator of Prose and Drama (louise.bernard@yale.edu), or Nancy Kuhl, Curator of Poetry (nancy.kuhl@yale.edu). The exhibition was organized with the assistance of Charlotte Parker. Design by Rebecca Martz. Copyright 2011 Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.