

# Bridgewater State University

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**Conrad Aiken Collection,  
1940 – 1997, (bulk 1965 – 1976)  
(MSS-004)**

*Finding Aid Compiled by  
Orson Kingsley*

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**Volume:** 2 linear feet (4 document boxes)

**Acquisition:** All items in this manuscript group were donated to Bridgewater State University by Maureen Connelly in 2012.

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### **Conrad Aiken Biographical Sketch**

Conrad Potter Aiken was born in Savannah, Georgia on August 5, 1889. The tragic fate of his father and mother, originally from Massachusetts, greatly shaped his life when in 1901 a murder-suicide left him parentless. He moved to Massachusetts where he would eventually attend Harvard University. While at Harvard, Aiken was President of the *Harvard Advocate* and co-editor with T.S. Eliot. According to the Advocate's webpage, "*The Harvard Advocate*, founded in 1866, is the oldest continuously published collegiate literary magazine in the country. Over its past 146 years, it can count T.S. Eliot, Conrad Aiken, and Norman Mailer among its members and e.e. cummings, Jack Kerouac, and Tom Wolfe as contributors to its pages." This would begin a lifetime of interactions with renowned poets for Aiken, as well as a successful career as a poet and novelist.

Aiken spent much time in Europe between his years after Harvard and 1930. He first married in 1912 to Jessie McDonald, whom he had three children with: John, Jane, and Joan. Shortly after his marriage to his first wife ended in 1929 (he would remarry two more times), he received the Pulitzer Prize in 1930 for his work *Selected Poems*. Other awards he would win throughout his life included the Shelley Memorial Award (the award's first recipient), National Medal for Literature, the Gold Medal for Poetry from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Bollingen Prize, and the National Book Award. From 1950-1952 he was the Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress, now known as the U.S. Poet Laureate. Aiken also edited *Emily Dickinson's Selected Poems* in 1924, which proved to be largely responsible for establishing her posthumous literary reputation.

In 1947 Aiken moved to Brewster, MA on Cape Cod. While here, he and his wife Mary ran a summer school for writing and painting called *Forty-One Doors*, with Conrad working with the writers and Mary working with the painters. Aiken's long and distinguished career concluded in 1973 when he passed away in Savannah, Georgia.

## **Conrad Aiken**

### **Scope and Content Note**

Aiken was well known for his letters, which is the strength of this collection. The correspondence from Conrad and his wife Mary are to Maureen Connelly, the donor of the collection. The collection contains a personal interview Mrs. Connelly did with Conrad Aiken, as well as numerous book reviews she wrote of his works, and reviews from others on Aiken's works. A number of Aiken's publications, including many that are inscribed, are in the collection, as well as works by authors that wrote about Aiken's life. Correspondence and publications from Aiken's children can be found, making the collection reflect Conrad Aiken's entire family, not just himself. The numerous photographs of the Aiken's by the donor show the author at a later stage in his life.

## **Conrad Aiken Collection**

### **Box and Folder List**

#### **Box 1**

#### **Folder**

1. Letter- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, October 22, 1962
2. Letter- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, December 14, 1963
3. Letter- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, November 1, 1964
4. Letters- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1965, (12 letters)
5. Letters- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1966, (2 letters)
6. Letters- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1967, (2 letters)
7. Letters- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1968, (5 letters)
8. Letters- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1969, (3 letters)
9. Letter- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, May 18, 1970
10. Letters- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1971, (2 letters)
11. Letters- Conrad Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1972, (4 letters)
12. Correspondence about Conrad Aiken, 1969-1979, (3 letters)
13. Letters- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1966, (2 letters)
14. Letter- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, March 14, 1970
15. Letters- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1971, (4 letters)
16. Letters- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1972, (4 letters)
17. Letters- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1973, (11 letters)
18. Letters- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1974, (4 letters)
19. Letter- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, April 15, 1975
20. Letters- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, 1976, 1978 (3 letters)
21. Card- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, January 4, 1980
22. Letters- Mary Aiken to Maureen Connelly, undated, (5 letters)
23. Hodge, Jane Aiken correspondence, 1972, 1973
24. Photographs-Conrad Aiken and Mary Aiken, undated
25. Photograph of Conrad Aiken and T.S. Eliot while at Harvard (reproduction), undated
26. Photographs-Mary Aiken, undated
27. Photographs-Conrad Aiken, includes photographs of Brewster farmhouse and Aiken's last

- birthday party on Cape Cod, 1971, undated
28. Harvard Alumni Bulletin, Includes Poem "Hallowe'en," page 116, October 22, 1949
  29. "Parisian Review" includes poem, "The Return" by Conrad Aiken, July-August, 1950
  30. "Wake 11" by Conrad Aiken, Inscribed by Aiken (1965), 1952
  31. "Wake 11" edited by Seymour Lawrence, 1952
  32. "The New Republic" includes poem "The Phoenix and the Garden" by Conrad Aiken, December 8, 1958
  33. "Shenandoah" An Interview with Conrad Aiken, Autumn 1963
  34. "The Atlantic" includes "Poetry and the Mind of Modern Man" by Conrad Aiken, November 1964
  35. "The Phoenix" includes "Please Continue Mr. Aiken" by Conrad Aiken, 1965-1966
  36. "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" A play by Conrad Aiken, Inscribed, 1974
  37. Aiken, Joan, Publication in periodical "The Writer," 1968

## Box 2

### Folder

1. Interview of Conrad Aiken by Maureen Connelly, October 31, 1964
2. "Aiken at Eighty" by Maureen Connelly, 1969
3. "Concentric Layers of Consciousness in the Writing of Blue Voyage," By Maureen Connelly, 1979
4. Poetry of Conrad Aiken by Calvin S. Brown, 1954
5. The Georgia Review, Conrad Aiken's "Music Strangely Subtle," by Vance Mizelle, Spring 1965
6. "Conrad Aiken" by Reuel Denny, one copy inscribed by Aiken, 1965, (2 copies)
7. Saturday Review, includes "Conrad Aiken: Our Best Know Unread Poet" by Louis Untermeyer, November 25, 1967
8. Essays of Arts and Sciences, includes "Conrad Aiken's Preludes and the Modern Consciousness" by Douglas Robillard, May 1974
9. Studies in the Literary Imagination, Georgia State University, Fall 1980
10. Published Articles on Conrad Aiken, 1969, Undated
11. "Conrad Aiken: and Other New England Transcendentalists," by Malcolm Crowley, 1975
12. "The Short Stories of Conrad Aiken" by Arthur Waterman, undated
13. Reviews on Conrad Aiken by Maureen Connelly, 1971-1978, undated
14. Hodge, Jane Aiken, Reviews, 1972 (By Maureen Connelly),
15. Reviews on Conrad Aiken, Newspaper clippings, 1978, undated
16. "T.S. Eliot" by Conrad Aiken, undated
17. Forty-One Doors: A Summer School for Writing and Painting put on by the Aikens, Undated
18. Obituary, biographical newspaper clippings, and interviews, 1965-1969, undated
19. Ephemera, 1964-1976
20. Newspaper clippings – Miscellaneous, 1968, undated

## Box 3

### All books in this box inscribed by author

1. *Ushant*. Inscribed. 1971. Hardcover with dust jacket
2. *Ushant*. Inscribed. 1952 First edition. Hardcover with dust jacket

3. *And In The Human Heart*. Inscribed. 1940 second printing. Hardcover with dust jacket
4. *Thee*. Inscribed. 1967 first edition, drawings by Leonard Baskin, Hardcover with dust jacket
5. *The Collected Novels of Conrad Aiken*. Inscribed. 1964 first edition. Contains *Blue Voyage*; *Great Circle*; *King Coffin*; *A Heart for the gods of Mexico*; and *Conversation*. Binding in bad shape. Hardcover.

#### **Box 4**

**Most books in this box represent scholarly output on Aiken, and books published by his daughters**

1. *Ushant*. 1962, paperback
2. *Selected Letters of Conrad Aiken*. Edited by Joseph Killorin, 1978, hardcover with dust jacket
3. *Conrad Aiken* by Frederick J. Hoffman. Twayne's United States Authors Series. 1962, paperback.
4. *Only a Novel: The Double Life of Jane Austen*, by Jane Aiken Hodge, 1972 first US edition, hardcover with dust jacket
5. *The Youngest Miss Ward*, by Joan Aiken 1998 first US edition. Hardcover with dust jacket
6. *Time's Stop in Savannah: Conrad Aiken's Inner Journey* by Ted R. Spivey. 1997, hardcover with dust jacket
7. *Conrad Aiken: A Life of His Art* by Jay Martin. 1963 second printing, hardcover
8. *Collected Criticism: Conrad Aiken*. Preface by I.A. Richards. 1968 paperback
9. *Lorelei Two: My Life with Conrad Aiken* by Clarissa M. Lorenz. 1983 hardcover with dust jacket

#### **Media**

- LP: "Yale Series of Recorded Poets: Conrad Aiken Reads his Works," field recording made on location with poet; Carillon Records, NY, undated
- LP: "Conrad Aiken Reads A Letter From Li Po and the Blues of Ruby Matrix," Caedmon Publishers, NY, 1955