

Kenneth Patchen:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Patchen, Kenneth, 1911-1972
Title:	Kenneth Patchen Collection
Dates:	1929-1978
Extent:	5 boxes (2.1 linear feet), 1 flat folder
Abstract:	The majority of the collection pertains to the books Richard Morgan wrote about Patchen.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-03184
Language:	English
Access	Open for Research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchase, 1968-1978
Processed by	Deborah Shelby, 1992
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketches

Kenneth Patchen

Kenneth Patchen was a writer, poet, and artist. The third of five children, Kenneth was born on December 13, 1911, in Niles, Ohio, to Eva and Wayne Patchen. Writing, a life-long pursuit, began for Kenneth around his twelfth year when he started keeping a diary. Publication of his writing first appeared in his high school newspaper *High School Life*, in 1928. His scholastic abilities were complimented by his athletic accomplishments in football and track in high school and in college. Patchen worked two summers in the steel mills with his father and brother to supplement his college scholarship. From 1929-1930 he attended the Alexander Meilejohn's Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. Following his mentor, Meilejohn to the Commonwealth College in Mena Arkansas, Patchen became disenchanted with academics and left after one semester to travel around the country.

Doing odd jobs and traveling in the United States and Canada from 1930-1933, Patchen continued his writing and had two sonnets published in the *New York Times*. While at a Christmas party in Boston in 1933, Patchen met Miriam Oikemus, and on June 28, 1934, they were married.

Before the Brave, Patchen's first book of poetry, was published in 1936. In 1937, Patchen damaged his back severely while trying to separate the locked bumpers of two cars that had collided. It wasn't until 1950, when he had surgery to fix the slipped disk that he was temporarily relieved of this chronic pain. In 1956, a spinal fusion gave Patchen the mobility to tour around the country giving concert performances of poetry and jazz. This activity was unfortunately short lived. In 1959, Patchen was undergoing exploratory surgery when a "surgical mishap" occurred. Patchen fell off the operating table, permanently damaging his spine, and was bedridden the remainder of his life. This however, did not prevent him from continuing to write and paint.

From 1936-1972, Kenneth Patchen published over 36 books and pioneered experiments in the anti-novel, concrete poetry, poetry and jazz, irrational tales and verse, as well as painting and poetry experiments which he termed "painted books," "poems and drawings," and "picture poems." Patchen's unique work followed no particular group or style, and he wrote and painted for his own pleasure, not for recognition by academics or for commercial acceptance. On January 8, 1972 Kenneth Patchen died from a heart attack.

Richard Morgan

Richard G. Morgan was born on December 17, 1950. He married Lissa Fischer on May 19, 1975. While writing several books on Kenneth Patchen, Morgan taught English and creative writing at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Morgan is the author of *Patchen's Lost Plays* (1977); *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays* (1977); *Kenneth Patchen: An Annotated, Descriptive Bibliography* (1978); and *Tiger in the Air* (1979). Poems and essays of Morgan's

have appeared in periodicals in the United States, Canada, England, France, and Australia.

Sources

Detro, Gene, *Patchen: The Last Interview*, 1976

Eaton, Gail, *Kenneth Patchen; a First Bibliography*, 1948

Morgan, Richard G. *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays*, 1977 *Kenneth Patchen: An Annotated, Descriptive Bibliography*, 1978

Rigg, Margaret, *Kenneth Patchen*, 1964

Smith, Larry R., *Kenneth Patchen*, 1978

Tribute to Kenneth Patchen, 1977

Scope and Contents

The Kenneth Patchen collection was purchased in three parts from 1968 to 1978. The last purchase was from Richard G. Morgan who wrote several books about Patchen. The majority of the collection is from the third purchase and pertains to the books Morgan wrote about Patchen. The materials are arranged in three series: Series I: Correspondence, 1939-1978 (1 box); Series II: Works, 1946-1976 (3 boxes); and Series III: Miscellaneous, 1927-1978 (1/2 box, 1 flat file). Most of the materials were not created by Kenneth Patchen, and the order imposed on the collection helps establish a distinction between Patchen and Morgan materials. The Correspondence and Works series contain a combination of Morgan and Kenneth and Miriam Patchen materials, while miscellaneous items relate primarily to Kenneth Patchen.

The correspondence series is divided into two sections: letters written by or to the Patchens, and letters written to Morgan. Each section is in alphabetical order. In the Patchen section of the correspondence, Miriam Patchen's letters to Bill and Lillian Perlman from 1939 to 1949 provide biographical information of the Patchen's life. There is one card from Victor Gonsalves, and two cards written by Miriam that were removed from books. There is also a form letter that was created by the Patchen Foundation to raise money for Patchen's medical expenses.

There are no letters written by Richard Morgan. Two folders of the correspondence to Morgan are from the individuals who wrote only a few letters regarding the publication of his books on Patchen. Correspondence from the publishers of two of Morgan's books, *Patchen's Lost Plays* (Capra Press), and *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays* (AMS Press), permission forms for use of the essays, and Miriam Patchen's letters to Morgan, comprise the bulk of Morgan's section of the correspondence. Miriam discusses both logistical concerns of the publications as well as providing biographical information

about her husband and their lives together. She answers questions Morgan presumably asked, though she generally does not repeat the questions and unfortunately the letters from Morgan are not part of this collection. Permission forms and letters from Miriam to Morgan are separate from the rest of her correspondence, and are filed under permission forms in this section. Their correspondence began in 1973 and abruptly ends in 1978 when Morgan sold these materials. Individuals who corresponded with Morgan include Stanley Burnshaw, Alan Clodd, Jack Conroy, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, James Laughlin, Michael McClure, John Martin, James Boyer May, Henry Miller, Harold Norse, Steven Osterlund, Bern Porter, Jack Eric Williams, Jonathan Williams, and others. Also included in the correspondence series are the forms and letters from the individuals who contributed articles for *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays*. This folder is arranged alphabetically by author. There is an alphabetical index to the correspondence at the end of the inventory which does not include the names of individuals for whom there are only permission forms.

Works by Patchen, Works by Morgan, and Works by Others are the three sections of the Works series. Works by Patchen and Morgan are arranged alphabetically by title and works by others are arranged alphabetically by author.

This section of the collection is predominantly Morgan's materials, though there are unbound page proofs of Patchen's *See You in the Morning*, and *Sleepers Awake*, and an original handwritten bound copy of *Teeth of the Lion*. "Portrait of the Artist as Interior Decorator," published in *The Bridge*, v.3, #2, October 12, 1948, is also included with Patchen's works. For individual items such as greeting cards, book jackets, and post cards created by Patchen, see the miscellaneous series. Also see the list of additional materials for two of Patchen's portfolios that are in the HRC Art Collection.

The works by Morgan pertain to three books: *Kenneth Patchen: An Annotated, Descriptive Bibliography*; *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays*; and *Patchen's Lost Plays*. Copies of the essays collected, original typescripts, drafts, and printers proofs for these three books form the bulk of this section.

There are six works by other writers, two of which are by Miriam Patchen. Her works include, a forward to "The Argument of Innocence," and draft versions for the introduction to *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays*. An article by David Tony Glover, "Kenneth Patchen, the Horror and the Hope"; "Homage to Kenneth Patchen," by a collection of authors; Edward Bellamy's "Parable of the Water Tank"; and an article, "Blake," by a unidentified author are also part of this subseries.

Miscellaneous materials consist of clippings, three of Patchen's high school year books (*The Echoes*), materials withdrawn from books, photographs, publicity for Patchen's books, performances, and exhibits, including examples of four of Patchen's postcards as well as some of his holiday greeting cards and book jackets.

The clippings include reviews of Patchen's *Memoir of a Shy Pornographer* (1945); a tribute to Kenneth Patchen to raise money for an operation and other medical expenses (1961); an interview with Miriam (1977); and reviews of *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays*, and *Patchen's Lost Plays* (1977).

Related Material

Additional materials by and about Kenneth Patchen are available in other HRC manuscript collections, as well as photographs in the Photography Department, art works in the Art Collection, and books in the book collection of the HRC. The first published works of Patchen in his high school newspaper, *High School Life* in 1928 (qPS/3531/A764/C475), and a copy of the *Rebel Poet*, July 1932 (PS/3531/A764/R484) in which "Reversing the Inquest" appears, are both available at the HRC. Items in the personal effects section of the Vertical Files include a rubber stamp used for Patchen's picture poems and stationery. An audio tape of a discussion about Patchen by Charles Burowski and others is #220 of the sound recordings collection.

The following manuscript collections contain Patchen materials:

- Armstrong, Terence Ian Fytton
- Beck, Julian
- Cummings, Edward Estlin
- El Corno Emplumado
- Ford, Charles Henri
- Gardiner, Wrey
- Genesis West
- Higham, David
- Johnson, Spud
- Morley, Christopher Darlington
- Norman, Charles
- Patchen's *Before the Brave* (PS/3531/A764/B39/1936b)
- Sitwell, Dame Edith
- Zukofsky, Louis

Index Terms

Correspondents

Black Sparrow Press

Burnshaw, Stanley, 1906-

Clodd, Alan

Conroy, Jack, 1899-

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence

Laughlin, James, 1914-

McClure, Michael

May, James Boyer, 1904-

Miller, Henry, 1891-

Morgan, Richard G., 1950-

Norse, Harold

Osterlund, Steven, 1943-

Patchen, Miriam, 1914-

Porter, Bern, 1911-

Williams, Jack Eric

Williams, Jonathon, 1929-

Subjects

Patchen, Kenneth, 1911-1972--Biography

Authors, American--20th century--Biography

Poets, American--20th century--Biography

Series I: Correspondence

Patchen

Gonsalves, Virgil, 1962	box 1 folder 1
Letters removed from books, nd	folder 2
Perlman, Lillian and Bill, 1939-1949, nd	folder 3

Morgan

A-L, 1973-1978, nd	box 1 folder 4
M-Z, 1973-1978, nd	folder 5
AMS Press Inc., John Hopper, 1976-1977, nd	folder 6
Capra Press, Noel Young, 1976-1978, nd	folder 7
Patchen, Miriam, 1973-1978, nd	folder 8-9
Permission forms for publication of <i>Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays</i> , 1976-77, nd	folder 10
Permission from Miriam Patchen to Morgan, 1976-1977	folder 11

Series II: Works, 1948-1976

Patchen

- "Portrait of the Artist as Interior Decorator," *The Bridge*, v.3 #2, Oct. 12, 1948 **box 2**
folder 1
- See You in the Morning*, nd **folder 2**
- Sleepers Awake*, nd **folder 3-6**
- Teeth of the Lion*, nd **box 3 folder 1**

Morgan

- Call for information on Kenneth Patchen, 1976, nd **box 3**
folder 2
- Kenneth Patchen: An Annotated, Descriptive Bibliography*, original typescript, nd **folder**
3-4
- Printer's proof, nd **folder 5-6**
- Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays*, essays collected, nd **folder 7**
- Typescript/paste-up copy, nd **box 4 folder 1-3**
- "Journal of Albion Moonlight," nd **folder 4**
- First page proofs, nd **folder 5**
- Patchen's Lost Plays*, draft introduction and page proofs, nd **folder 6**

Works by Others

- Bellamy, Edward, "Parable of the Water Tank," nd **box 4**
folder 7
- Glover, David Tony, "Kenneth Patchen, the Horror and the Hope," nd **folder 8**
- Patchen, Miriam, forward to "The Argument of Innocence," edited by Peter Verse, 1976 **folder**
9

Introduction drafts to *Kenneth Patchen: A Collection of Essays*, nd

folder
10

Collected authors, "Homage to Kenneth Patchen,"nd

folder 11

Unidentified author, "Blake,"nd

folder 12

Series III: Miscellaneous, 1927-1978

Clippings, 1945-1978, nd	box 4 folder 13
<i>The Echoes</i> , Kenneth Patchen's high school year books, 1927-1929	box 5 folder 1-2
Legal document, 1963	folder 3
Materials withdrawn from books, 195?-1977, nd	folder 4
Patchen: Postcards, greeting cards, book jackets, 1958-1976, nd	folder 5
Photographs, Kenneth Patchen, nd	folder 6
Publicity for Kenneth Patchen	
Books, 1977, nd (see also flat file)	box 5 folder 7
Performances and exhibits, 1952-1977, nd (see also flat file)	folder 8

Kenneth Patchen Collection--Index of Correspondents

- AMS Press, (John Hopper, editor in chief), 1976-1977--1.6
- Anderson, Carol R., Random House, 1973--1.4
- Appel, Paul P., 1976-1978--1.4
- Bevan, Allan, Editor of *Dalhousie Review*, 1977--1.4
- Bogue, Jacqueline R., see Scrimshaw Press
- Bottoms, Rita, 1977--1.4
- Branch, Edgar M., 1977--1.4
- Burnshaw, Stanley, 1977--1.4
- Capra Press (Noel Young), 1976-1978--1.7
- Climenhaga, Joel, 1977--1.4
- Clodd, Alan, 1977--1.4
- Conroy, Jack, 1977--1.4
- Douskey, Franz, 1977--1.4
- Ferlinghetti, Lawrence, 1977-1978--1.4
- Ford, Michael C., nd--1.4
- Fraser, Russell A., 1976--1.4
- Garrett, Alexandra, 1976--1.4
- Gonsalves, Virgil, 1962--1.1
- Hopper, John, see AMS Press
- Knight, Authur, 1977--1.4
- Laughlin, James, see New Directions
- McClure, Michael, 1977--1.5
- Martin, John, 1977-1978--1.5
- May, James Boyer, 1977--1,5
- Maylone, R. Russell, 1976--1.5
- Miller, Henry, 1977--1.5
- Miller, Sandra, 1973--1.5
- Myers, Paul, 1976--1.5
- New Directions, (G. Ohannessian & James Laughlin), 1973-1976--1.5
- Ohannessian, Griselda, see New Directions
- Osterland, Steven, 1976--1.5
- Patchen, Miriam, 1939-1978--1.3, 1.8-9
- Perlman, Lillian and Bill, 1939-1949--1.3
- Phillips, Nancy, 1973--1.5
- Porter, Bern, 1973-1977--1.5
- Scrimshaw Press (Jacqueline R. Bogue), 1976--1.5
- Vangelisti, Paul, 1978--1.5
- Wald, Alan, 1976--1.5
- Williams, Jack Eric, 1976--1.5
- Williams, Jonathan, 1973--1.5
- Young, Noel, see Capra Press