

# Guide to the Robin Magowan Papers

YCAL MSS 612



by Beinecke staff, Lucretia Baskin

May 2017. Revised: June 2023

P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

---

## Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	3
Requesting Instructions .....	3
Administrative Information .....	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition .....	3
Conditions Governing Access .....	4
Conditions Governing Use .....	4
Preferred Citation .....	4
Processing Information .....	4
Biographical / Historical .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	5
Arrangement .....	5
Collection Contents .....	6
April 2012 acquisition, 1936–2011 .....	6
July 2014 acquisition, 1970–2006 .....	9
February 2016 acquisition, 1945–2015 .....	10
September 2016 acquisition, circa 1990s–2016 .....	11
February 2017 acquisition, circa 2012 .....	12
July 2020 acquisition, 1973–2009, undated .....	13
Selected Search Terms .....	15

---

## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** YCAL MSS 612

**CREATOR:** Magowan, Robin

**TITLE:** Robin Magowan papers

**DATES:** 1936–2017

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 30.09 linear feet (42 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists of correspondence, writings, notebooks, printed material, audiovisual materials, electronic media, and other papers documenting the life and work of poet and writer Robin Magowan. Writings include manuscripts and typescripts of poems and prose, including drafts and corrected copies of *Lilac Cigarette in a Wish Cathedral* (University of South Carolina Press, 1998), *Memoirs of a Minotaur* (Story Line Press, 1999), and other works. Includes correspondence and other papers relating to Magowan's uncle, James Merrill.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.magowan>

---

## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.magowan>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.        box  
    item barcode

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Robin Magowan, 2012-2020.

---

## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Boxes 26 and 40 (audiovisual materials): Restricted fragile material. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Boxes 27, 35, and 39 (computer disks): Restricted fragile material. Reference copies of electronic files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

---

## Conditions Governing Use

The Robin Magowan Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

---

## Preferred Citation

Robin Magowan Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

---

## Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections as they are acquired, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization. Various acquisitions associated with the collection have not been merged and organized as a whole. Each acquisition is described separately in the contents list below, titled according to month and year of acquisition.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Robin Magowan (b. 1936) is an American poet, memoirist, and travel writer. He studied at Exeter, Harvard (B. A.) and Columbia (M.A.) and Yale, where he earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. He taught at the University of Washington, and the University of California, Berkeley. In 1986 he founded the journal *Margin*; he served as editor until 1990. He is the author of books in several genres, including: *Lilac Cigarette in a Wish Cathedral*, *Memoirs of a Minotaur*, *And Other Voyages*, *Fabled Cities: Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva*, *Kings of the Road Portrait of Racers and Racing*, *Birds in a Forest Swaying*, and *The Rim of Dawn*. He is the nephew of poet James Merrill.

## **Scope and Contents**

The collection consists of correspondence, writings, notebooks, printed material, audiovisual materials, electronic media, and other papers documenting the life and work of poet and writer Robin Magowan. Writings include manuscripts and typescripts of poems and prose, including drafts and corrected copies of *Lilac Cigarette in a Wish Cathedral* (University of South Carolina Press, 1998), *Memoirs of a Minotaur* (Story Line Press, 1999), and other works. Includes correspondence and other papers relating to Magowan's uncle, James Merrill.

---

## **Arrangement**

Organized into seven groupings: April 2012 acquisition; July 2014 acquisition; February 2016 acquisition; September 2016 acquisition; February 2017 acquisition; January 2019 acquisition; and July 2020 acquisition.

---

## Collection Contents

### April 2012 acquisition, 1936–2011

23.0 linear feet (30 boxes)

b. 1	Publisher, family, and college correspondence; printed materials	1949 - 2000s
b. 2	Correspondence and printed material	1950s-1970s, 2000s
b. 3	Correspondence, primarily from family, including Magowan's father	1953-2002
b. 4	Correspondence from Magowan's mother and others	1953-2002
b. 5	Photocopies of James Merrill correspondence from University of St. Louis, Missouri and elsewhere	1960s-1990s
b. 6	Correspondence, printed material relating to art and gardening, and printed ephemera	2000-2010
b. 7	Typescripts including Green Dizzy Screaming Sun-Abyss; Harvard graduation material	1958-2000s
b. 8	Publishing agreements, photographs, family genealogy, family correspondence, and typescripts including Maya Revisited, Paul Clouded, Lilac Cigarette in a Wish Cathedral, The Wanton Current, and others	1958-2011
b. 9	Corrected typescripts for Lilac Cigarette in a Wish Cathedral and other writings	1970s-1990s
b. 10	Corrected typescripts and photocopies	1970s-1990s
b. 11	Photocopies of typescript of Maya Revisited and other works, clippings	1970s-1990s
b. 12	Typescripts for Fabled Cities of Central Asia, and other works, subject files, correspondence, wedding photograph, clippings, and a wooden box and coins	1971-2010
b. 13	Photocopies of typescripts and other papers	1980s-1990s
b. 13a	Photocopies of typescripts and other papers	1980s-1990s
b. 14	Writings including Trinidad, Birds, Connecticut, A Robin's life, Collected Incongruities, and poems	1980s-2000s
b. 15	Writings, including poems, prose relating to gardening, and manuscript of autobiography ("The Minotaur")	2000s
b. 16	Typescripts including The Wanton Current and others	2000s
b. 17	Notebooks, astrological charts, baby book for Robert Anderson Magowan III, and master's thesis	1936, circa 1960s-1970s
b. 18	Notebooks, bachelor's thesis, address book, and writings	1950s-1960s
b. 19	Notebooks, travel notes, "The Dream Book," year book, poems, scrapbook, and journals	1950s-1980s
b. 20	Notebooks including poetry, diaries, Japan and central Asia travel notes, and translations; typescripts; manuscripts; postcard	1950s-1980s

b. 21	Notebooks kept in London and elsewhere	1950s-1980s
b. 22	Notebooks including drafts of poems and prose, clippings, typescripts, and college coursework	1973-1987
b. 23	Notebooks, writings, including drafts of poems, typescripts, and clippings	1980s
b. 24	"Planters" notebook	undated
b. 25	Printed materials, typescripts, manuscripts, and correspondence Printed materials include ephemera, newsletters, clippings, and James Merrill materials. Typescripts and manuscripts include The Poems of Jeufre Rudel, Literary Criticism of Andre Gide, and A Different Person. Correspondence includes letters and postcards from Sonta Angelo, Micaela di Leonardo, Mark O'Brian, and others.	1960s-2000s
b. 24	Planter's notebook, newspapers, Harvard graduation materials	1958-2000s
b. 26	Audiovisual materials Restricted fragile material. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1963-2007
b. 26, ■■■■ 39002091399759	Robin Magowan. Poetry Program <i>1 Audiotape Reel ; 1/4 inch; diameter 7 inches 00:32:59 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Static can be heard on the audiotape reel. <a href="#">[Aviary] ycalmss061239002091399759.u.mp3</a> Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile.	1965 February 19
b. 26, ■■■■ 39002091399767	McGovern, N. W. Poets <i>1 Audiotape Reel ; 1/4 inch; diameter 7 inches 00:19:03 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> <a href="#">[Aviary] ycalmss061239002091399767.u.mp3</a> Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile.	undated
b. 26, ■■■■ 39002091399775	Robin Magowan. Poetry <i>1 Audiotape Reel ; 1/4 inch; diameter 7 inches 00:29:48 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Static can be heard on the tape. <a href="#">[Aviary] ycalmss061239002091399775.u.mp3</a> Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1963 October 20
b. 26, ■■■■ 39002091399783	Jimmy? Dub #2 <i>1 Audiotape Reel ; 1/4 inch; diameter 7 inches 00:31:13 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Program begins abruptly. <a href="#">[Aviary] ycalmss061239002091399783.u.mp3</a> Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated

## Audiovisual materials (continued)

b. 26, ■■■ 39002091399791	Robin Magowan. KUSP <i>1 Audiocassette 00:31:01 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> A high amount of hum and hiss can be heard on the tape. Static can also be heard. Right channel recorded at a lower level than the left channel throughout the tape. <a href="#">[Aviary] ycalmss061239002091399791.u.mp3</a> Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1986 April 9
b. 26, ■■■ 39002091399809	Robin Magowan. Poetry Lecture <i>1 Audiocassette 01:02:07 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The program begins and ends abruptly. <a href="#">[Aviary] ycalmss061239002091399809.u.mp3</a> A note with the audiocassette reads: Dear Robin and Juliet, I hope you enjoy this tape. With appreciation and affection, Helen. Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	2007 January 9
	Computer media <i>1 CD-R 3 Optical Discs (DVD)</i> Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	2006–2008
b. 27	Robin Magowan Memoirs of a Minotaur, from Merrill Lynch to Patty Hearst to Poetry October 4, 2006 Litchfield County Writers Project & UConn Torrington Campus 2012-ycal-36-0001 <i>1 DVD-R</i> Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 27	CULTIVATING LIFE Spring-Season 3 TV show Interview with Robin Magowan 2012-ycal-36-0002 <i>1 DVD-R</i> Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 27	Lisa Starr / Robin Magowan Juliet Mattila / Bhuchung Sonam Reading and Discussing Their Work April 23, 2008 Litchfield County Writers Project & UConn Torrington Campus 2012-ycal-36-0003 <i>1 DVD-R</i> Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 27	Reading by Carol Asher & Robin Magowan © P. Decker 2012-ycal-36-0004 <i>1 CD-R</i> Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 28	Photocopies of Virgil Burnett correspondence with Robin Magowan	1970s-1990s
b. 29	Photocopies of Virgil Burnett correspondence with Robin Magowan	1970s-1990s



**July 2014 acquisition, 1970–2006**

*1.33 linear feet (2 boxes)*

---

b. 30	Notebooks and manuscripts	1970–2006
b. 31	Notebooks	1986–1987, 1990

---

**February 2016 acquisition, 1945–2015**

*1.5 linear feet (2 boxes)*

---

b. 32	Correspondence	1945-2007
b. 33	Drafts of poems and translations	2012-2015

---

**September 2016 acquisition, circa 1990s-2016***1.33 linear feet (2 boxes)*

b. 34	Correspondence	circa 1990s-2016
b. 35	Computer media <i>1 CD-R</i>	2011
	Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 35	SONGS FROM THE MUSICAL SILVER SPOON PROMOTIONAL DEMO ONLY, 2011 2017-ycal-0050-0001 <i>1 CD-R 560879132 bytes (560.88 Megabytes.)</i>	

**February 2017 acquisition, circa 2012**

*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

b. 36

Self portrait in the Rose Garden, typescript

circa 2012

---

**July 2020 acquisition, 1973-2009, undated***1.25 linear feet (4 boxes)*

Includes writings, poems, electronic media, and audiovisual material.

Gift of Robin Magowan, 2020.

This addition is arranged roughly in the order in which it was received.

b. 37	Typescript, "Inheritance" 8 Folders	undated
b. 38	Writings including "Saeb, The Throne of the Wind: a collage" and "A Restaurant in Olema" 1 Folder	undated
b. 38	Writings including "A Rose Garden of Persian Poetry: from the 10th Century to the Present" 1 Folder	undated
b. 38	Writings including "Memoirs of a Minotaur" and poems 2 Folders	undated
b. 38	Writings including "The Garden of Amazement" 2 Folders	undated
b. 38	Poems 1 Folder	undated
	Computer media 4 CD-RWs 1 CD-R (2 folders) (1 folder) Restricted fragile. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	2002-2009, undated
b. 39	Text Internal Weather 2021-ycal-0004-0001 1 CD-RW Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 39	INT WEATH VERTICAL 2021-ycal-0004-0002 1 CD-RW Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 39	[No Label Information] 2021-ycal-0004-0003 1 CD-RW Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	
b. 39	Magowan CORRECT Rim of Dawn table of contents + title pages 2021-ycal-0004-0004 1 CD-RW Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	

Computer media (continued)

- b. 39                      Live from Trainie Lights Robin Magowan 7/8/02  
2021-ycal-0004-0005  
1 CD-R  
  
Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested.  
Consult Access Services for further information.
- 
- b. 40                      Poetry reading, University of California, Berkeley, Alumni House                      1973 February 14  
1 Audiotape Reel; 1/4 inch; 5" diameter  
  
Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested.  
Consult Access Services for further information.
-

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

American poetry -- 20th Century  
American poetry -- 21st century  
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives  
Poets, American -- 20th Century -- Archives  
Poets, American -- 21st century -- Archives

### **Genres / Formats**

Audiovisual materials  
Born digital

### **Occupations**

Poets -- United States -- 20th Century  
Poets -- United States -- 21st century

### **Names**

Magowan, Robin  
Merrill, James, 1926-1995