The selected correspondence of Joan Aiken and Charles Schlessiger: 1963-1964

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Thesis

THE SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE OF
JOAN AIKEN & CHARLES SCHLESSIGER: 1963–1964

by

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B.A., Boston University, 2012

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Chelsea L. Bingham

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2013

Major Professor: Christopher Ricks,
William M. and Sara B. Warren Professor of the Humanities

Abstract

This selection of letters annotates the correspondence of author Joan Aiken with her literary agent, Charles Schlessiger of Brandt & Brandt (now Brandt & Hochman) from 1963-64. The letters begin with her introduction to Schlessiger through her father, poet and novelist Conrad Aiken, who worked with the same agency. The correspondence reveals a fast-paced lifestyle as Aiken raised two children in a single-parent household and produced at least two titles a year from 1963 until the end of her career. Between 1962 and 1964 Aiken published some of her most important work, including the first two installments in the Wolves of Willoughby Chase series, while working on a number of other pieces for adults. The letters reveal the day-to-day business required to maintain a trans-Atlantic literary career.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approval</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology of Joan Aiken’s Life</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s Work 1953-1967</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Notes</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Agencies</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers</td>
<td>xxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Letters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s Work 1953-2011</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Referenced</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chronology of Joan Aiken’s Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Conrad and Jessie divorced. Conrad returned to the US, and Jessie remained in England with the children and married writer Martin Armstrong. John (b.1913) and Jane (b.1917) attend school while Jessie begins educating Joan at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Brother, David Armstrong born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-9</td>
<td>Attended Wychwood Boarding School, until World War II shut it down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Began working for the BBC after failing University entrance exam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Married Ron Brown, whom she met while working at the United Nations Information Office the previous year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Son John born. Left the United Nations Information Office to write full-time from home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Daughter Elizabeth (Lizza) born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Ron Brown died. Joan began working at <em>Argosy</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Purchased White Hart House, an old pub in Petworth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1969  Received Guardian Award for *The Whispering Mountain* and
*Wolves* series, as well as the Lewis Carroll Award for *Wolves*.

1970  Jessie Armstrong died.

1973  Conrad Aiken died. Joan began regularly visiting New York; met
painter Julius Goldstein.

1976  Married Julius Goldstein.

1983  Began series of Jane Austen sequels.

1985  First grandchild, Belou, born.

1986  Second grandchild, Emil, born.

1989  John, Jane, and Joan wrote *Conrad Aiken Remembered*, a memoir

1995  Received the Lindbergh Prize for *Cold Shoulder Road*, outstanding
fantasy novel 1995-96.

1996-97  *Black Hearts in Battersea* shown as a BBC TV Serial.

1999  Awarded MBE for services to Children’s Literature. David
Armstrong died.

2001  Julius Goldstein died.

4 January 2004  Joan Aiken died. Finished *The Witch of Clatteringshaws*, the final
installment in the *Wolves* series, before her death.

Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s Work 1953-1967

All editions for the titles first published between 1953 and 1967 are listed here. This date range applies to the works discussed in the letters 1963-1964. The genre of each work is provided to give a sense of the range of the type of work Aiken engaged in. For a complete list of works, see Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s Work 1953-2011.

All You’ve Ever Wanted. Fantasy stories.


More Than You Bargained For. Fantasy stories.


The Kingdom and the Cave. Magic and mystery for young readers.


Trouble With Product X (Beware of the Bouquet). Novel for adults.


Nightbirds on Nantucket. Novel for young adults.


Hate Begins at Home (Dark Interval). Novel for adults.


Ribs of Death (The Crystal Crow). Novel for adults.


Editorial Notes

The letters presented in this selection come from the Joan Aiken Collection in the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University. Brandt & Brandt, Joan Aiken’s US literary agency, kept careful record of the correspondence to, about, and from Aiken during her career. The letters sent by her to Charles Schlessiger, her agent from 1963 until her death in 2004, span topics from legal concerns with contracts to painting her house, colorfully narrating the development of a prolific literary figure. Schlessiger’s responses to and personal interest in her career take business-related letters and make them into a record of a relationship that extends beyond the professional world. The selection begins with a letter from Joan’s father, Conrad Aiken, to Schlessiger, followed by response, as it is through Conrad that Joan’s career with Brandt & Brandt begins. Any use of “Aiken” from this point forward refers to Joan and not her father. Any other Aiken referred to will include a first name.

Overview

All of Schlessiger’s letters were transcribed from typewritten carbon copies kept by the agency. They do not contain his signature, as they were duplicates, but each contains his initials in the bottom left of the letter, indicating authorship. Schlessiger dutifully dates each letter in the upper right. Most letters contain Aiken’s address in a uniform format aligned left; the notes indicate where Schlessiger abandons his usual format by omission. All dates and closing salutations have been uniformly justified right;
all appeared on the right hand side of the page in varying positions of tabulation relative to the text of the letter originally.

Aiken’s letters were transcribed from original typewritten copies, kept and filed by Brandt & Brandt. At times, handwritten notes appear in margins or as postscripts, handwritten signatures appear above typewritten ones, and corrections appear by hand in ink. Italic font indicates where Aiken makes a handwritten contribution to the letter. All asterisks within the text of letters were written by hand. Marginal notes have been moved to the bottom of each letter but are noted as appearing originally in the margin. She signs “Joan” in most the letters, but on a single occasion (27 Aug. 1963) signs “Joan Delano Aiken,” her first, middle, and maiden name. She does not publish under her married name, Brown, which leads to later questions of copyright by her agents. Aiken also refers to her father as “Conrad,” rather than as “my father,” or any other usual phrasing a child might use to speak of a parent. This remains consistent throughout the correspondence.

Aiken inconsistently addressed her letters to Schlessiger, using varying tabulation, but always wrote her own address in the upper right of the page. The first line of the address usually appeared about halfway across the first line, with each subsequent line tabbed toward the right to create a downward staiertepping effect. All of her addresses have been justified right for ease of reading and to fit marginal requirements of the page for the graduate school. When she writes Schlessiger’s address, it usually appears justified left below her own, but sometimes appears at the end of the letter. His address
has been left where Aiken originally wrote it. Original wording and punctuation are retained.

**Abbreviations**

In footnotes, Joan Aiken is referred to as “JA,” and Charles Schlessiger is referred to as “CS.” These are the only names used often enough to warrant abbreviations. The Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center is noted by the acronym “HGARC.” Any date following this acronym refers to another letter in the Joan Aiken Collection. Any abbreviations used in the text of the letters belong to either Aiken or Schlessiger, and notes are not provided to explain these abbreviations when the letter text clarifies the meaning for the reader. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is abbreviated to “OED” in citations.

**Alignment, Tabs, and Spacing**

Letters are uniformly aligned, with addresses and salutations justified full right, left, or center, depending on where they appeared in the letter originally. This provides ease of reading and continuity of formatting to fit marginal requirements. Aiken tabs her paragraphs and sometimes separates paragraphs further by leaving a blank line between. This has not been standardized, preserving Aiken’s irregular method. Her longer letters often do not use single blank lines, only tabs, to indicate paragraphs, in order to fit on a single airmail sheet. Schlessiger does not use tabs to indicate paragraphs but uses a single blank line. The letter text has been left single spaced, so any blank horizontal line that appears belongs to the author. Any text belonging to the current editor appears as double-spaced.
Punctuation

Original punctuation is retained. The length of dashes is not exactly reproduced in each case. Irregularities arising from the use of a typewriter have been standardized to fit the necessities of a graduate thesis. Both Schlessiger and Aiken sometimes leave spaces on either side of a dash and other times leave no space. Each case is, however, transcribed as closely to the original as possible. Errors or misuse of punctuation are retained, as none hinder the clarity of the letters. Aiken at times uses a capital “S” as a dollar sign. She handwrites a vertical line through the “S” to complete the dollar sign. These cases are transcribed as “$” with a note describing the typewritten original.

Spelling

Aiken’s British spellings are retained (cheque, favourite). Any misspelled or uncorrected words are transcribed as they appear. When, for instance, she types “day,” and she means to write “way,” she typewrites the w over the d instead of simply crossing out (with the character x) or scrapping the entire letter and beginning again on a new sheaf. Aiken occasionally uses x over errors, as is the case when she writes “agency” as “angency,” typewriting x over the premature n instead of retyping the word. The present editor silently corrects such errors. A note is given in such cases to describe the instance, as these errors give a sense of Aiken’s mode of composition. No such corrections appear in Schlessiger’s letters.

Notation

Notes appear at the end of each letter to provide clarification and add contextual information. Superscript numbers indicate a note within the body of each letter.
Quotations from other letters in the Aiken Collection are given in an attempt to enrich the reader’s understanding of the discussions taking place between Aiken and Schlessiger. Some of these quotations derive from editors, such as Isabelle Taylor of Doubleday Publishers, to identify typos or errors in Aiken’s work. On one occasion, Taylor pointed out, “On page 5, the difference between the time in London and Toronto is spoken of as eight hours, whereas it is only six. And on page 133 Jeremy says he was at sea when his Uncle John died, but he wasn’t – he was actually approaching the house with Carreen” (HGARC, 20 Dec. 1963). Schlessiger communicated with many publishers, magazines, editors, and Aiken’s British agents, providing a wealth of contextual material beyond his direct correspondence with Aiken.

Other quotations are taken from rejection letters written to Schlessiger as he attempted to disseminate Aiken’s work as widely as possible. He sent copies of these letters to her, to which she usually responded with a sense of positivity, even when of a negative nature. These letters demonstrate a wide-range of reactions, depending on the editor and magazine to which it was sent, usually for serial publication. Reviews, ads, and articles mentioned in the correspondence are quoted when recovery was possible. An attempt by the present editor was made to locate any article or review mentioned by either Aiken or Schlessiger. Rather than note that the source could not be recovered, no note at all is given. Sources for quotes appear alongside notes. Any italic font used in the notes (not within quotation marks) derives from the editor to indicate titles.
Titles

In the bibliographies, titles were standardized to reflect the first edition published. Most of Aiken’s work went through multiple printings and editions, though only the bibliography for 1953-67 reflects this fact. Titles often changed in reprints. In the case of Nightbirds on Nantucket, later editions give Night Birds On Nantucket as the title, or Night Birds on Nantucket. Another title first appears as Fog Hounds, Wind Cat, Sea Mice, and in reprints appears as Fog Hounds Wind Cat Sea Mice. The former example gives less reason to be startled, prompted perhaps more by cover design than necessity. The latter example, however, changes the experience of reading the title immensely. With commas, the title appears to contain only three objects. Without commas, the title appears to have six items. Before reading the collection, the pairing of objects is not obvious. The retitling of later published editions is an interesting question, but one that this project does not pursue.

Within the letters, both Aiken and Schlessiger made varying stylistic choices to identify titles of works. Aiken’s titles, reading recommendations, magazines, newspapers, short stories, and journals sometimes appeared in all capitals, underlined, abbreviated, or typed out in full. Though inconsistently applied, the letters provide enough information to indicate that, for example, “Woman” is a magazine title, whereas when Joan feels “piano,” she simply wishes to highlight her quieted demeanor. The act of underlining serves different purposes, not always used to indicate a title. Ladies’ Home Journal sometimes appears as “LHJ,” and others times as “Ladies’ H.J.” “THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE” is sometimes written as “WOLVES” or “THE
WOLVES.” Other titles, as in the case with Product X, appear routinely as “Product X,” but eventually surprise the reader with “PRODUCT X.” Because the idiosyncratic notation delineating titles does not hinder the clarity of the letters, the original style was retained in each case.

The varying types of titles made recovering articles and reviews challenging for the editor. If Aiken used “Times,” she may have meant The London Times, whereas Schlessiger likewise used “Times” for The New York Times. Neither Aiken nor Schlessiger was concerned with consistency of style when it came to titles, which is understandable, considering that both needed to make time in busy lives to conduct business regularly while separated by the Atlantic. A number of archives were consulted to determine which publication to which the author of the letter referred. Consistent dating of letters both complicated and made the process of locating such references easier. Dates gave a guide by which to search archives, but Aiken and Schlessiger often refer only vaguely to when the article or review was published. The editor indicates where only the most likely publication was recovered and not one that is definite.

People and Institutions

Many people and institutions factor into the chaotic start to Aiken’s career. These include family members, editors, assistants, magazines, newspapers, publishers, and agencies. She works with a number of different people and institutions early on, especially in 1963-64 when she is not yet well known. Schlessiger spends a great deal of time corresponding with magazine fiction editors as he attempted to sell Aiken’s work in serial form as a means of building anticipation for hardcover publication. Even when
rejected, he dutifully sent the returned manuscript out to another magazine – and sent subsequent works to the same magazine. He worked as tirelessly to find a route to publication as Aiken did to produce works. Schlessiger devoted himself to giving Aiken’s work the audience it deserved. His efforts were often fruitless during the beginning of Aiken’s career, but he tried with each new title, whether for children or adults. Schlessiger tapped into the market with not only new stories, but also previously published ones, selling first, second, and sometimes third, rights early in his tenure as Aiken’s agent.

He mentions many magazines and fiction editors as a consequence of his attempts to sell as much of Aiken’s work as possible. These people and publications are identified in notes following each letter. Quotations are taken from other letters in the Aiken Collection to elaborate on what Schlessiger writes himself to Aiken. He also forwards reviews and ads he finds in American publications for Aiken to see. Because of erratic titling and abbreviations, both Aiken and Schlessiger at times leave the exact publication to which they refer ambiguous when it comes to articles and ads, as previously discussed in the “Titles” section. *The New York Times* appears as “NYT,” “Times,” and even perhaps “Time.” On some occasions he uses “Time,” and whether he refers to *Time* Magazine or *The New York Times* remains not all together certain, in some cases, as the document to which he refers could not be located in either publication.

The likelihood of any one option over another was not consistent. Every publication to which either Aiken or Schlessiger might be referring was searched in each case. The advent of online archiving makes materials more accessible; however,
technological error in the digital process and ambiguous titling by Aiken and Schlessiger made tracking down each reference a daunting pursuit, one that would punctuate the letters with added context and interest when recovered, but are mostly unnecessary for comprehension. Whenever possible, the publication, article, or review is identified.

The various institutions with whom Aiken and Schlessiger communicated on a regular basis received an extended description in the introduction. Less frequently mentioned institutions received a note the first time they are referenced. Aiken worked with Jonathan Cape and Doubleday throughout her career. Both of these institutions published significant titles in Aiken’s body of work; for instance, Cape published 11 out of 12 titles in the Wolves of Willoughby Chase Series in the UK, and Doubleday published 5 out of 12 in the US, demonstrating the longevity and tight-knit relationships formed by Aiken with these publishers. Despite these relationships, Aiken usually uses the genitive form for names of her publishers and agencies. She wrote “Highams” instead of “Higham,” as Schlessiger prefers to write, to refer to her British representation. When Schlessiger writes about “Doubleday,” Aiken responds with “Doubledays.” Throughout the letters 1963-64, Aiken retains her plural spellings of institutions in almost every instance, while Schlessiger prefers the singular. She sometimes uses ‘s instead of simply the plural form. Each occasion was transcribed here as the author wrote it.

Instead of compiling a list of people and institutions in the form of a glossary, the information appears in brief notes below each letter when not expanded upon in the introduction. A glance supplies a reference, explaining the significance of the person, place, publication, or institution. Only key details are provided to keep the letters as the
focal point of the project and the notes succinct. Rather than focus on any one editorial concern listed above, this selection of letters and accompanying notes aims to give a well-rounded view of the many figures, institutions, and works at play that came together to make Aiken’s career a success.

**Literary Agencies**

Aiken began her American literary career with Harold Ober Associates. Beyond mentioning in her early communication with Schlessiger that she did not want to remain with the agency, Aiken gives little reason for wanting a new American agent. She had not yet written much that was published, only two short collections in the UK, so perhaps wanted stronger, more personal representation, which could reflect her aspirations and need to support her family. Aiken does not begin working with Ober by chance; her British representation steers her towards working with them. Later complications ensued because of this, as the question of sharing profits of US editions arose, though Aiken found her new American representation without the help of David Higham Associates, her British agency.

Ober began when Harold Ober started working at the Paul R. Reynolds Literary agency. He represented authors such as Jack London and H.G. Wells. Once he started his own agency in 1929, he took on F. Scott Fitzgerald and Agatha Christie, among others. He died in 1959, leaving the agency with a strong foundation upon which to continue representing authors. The agency survives today, with an expansive list of
authors and estates, including the James M. Cain Estate, the J.D. Salinger Estate, and the Langston Hughes estate. Ober has agents overseas, ranging from Britain to Bulgaria.

Ober’s British branch of the agency is David Higham Associates, which was established in 1935 and still survives today. Aiken worked with this agency from the beginning of her career until 1966 when she left to work with A.M. Heath Associates. Aiken’s British agent was David Bolt. He worked at Higham from 1958-70, after which he left to start his own agency. Bolt communicated with Schlessiger fairly regularly in the years 1963-64 to settle contracts and other business-related concerns. In the following letters, Higham expects shares in the American profits of *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* series despite having nothing to do with the US publication. Aiken resolves the situation gracefully, and Higham conceded that as they do not share profits from the UK with Brandt & Brandt, they should not take a share of American profits. Higham boasts management of the estates of Roald Dahl, Gertrude Stein, and Jane Aiken Hodge, Joan Aiken’s older sister.

Aiken began working with A.M. Heath Associates in 1966. The agency was founded in 1919 and survives today, with authors such as George Orwell, Flann O’Brien, and, of course, Joan Aiken on their management list. Heath still manages Aiken’s estate in Britain, while Brandt & Brandt (now Brandt & Hochman) continue to do so in America. While Ober, Higham, and Heath all offer an array of founding information, agent and author lists, and avenues for electronic submission via well-developed web pages, Brandt & Hochman serves as the exception. With minimal information about current agents available only through interviews and general literary agent listings, such
as on agentyquery.com, Brandt only accepts queries via “snail mail.” The agency has, however, recently represented authors such as Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours*, a novel inspired by the life and work of Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* in particular.

Charles Schlessiger’s background is likewise elusive. Though he attended the 50th anniversary of *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, a celebration put together by Aiken’s daughter, Lizza, in NYC in October of 2012, whether Schlessiger continues to take on new projects and authors or simply continues to manage the estates and authors garnered over the course of his career with Brandt remains a question. Much of the confusion finding information about Schlessiger derives from the spelling of his last name. Often seen as “Schlessinger,” or “Schlesinger,” one must not rely on others properly spelling “Schlessiger.” Aiken herself makes this error early in her communication with him. He is living.

**Publishers**

Aiken worked with a number of different publishers over the course of her career. Not only during the start, but throughout the entirety of her life, the three most notable publishers of her work were Doubleday in the US, and Jonathan Cape and Gollancz in the UK. These publishers consistently worked with her and often issued reprints of the same editions. The Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s Work 1953-67 best shows this, as it lists every edition published for the works between those years. Though only first editions are listed in the Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s Work 1953-2011, one still sees Doubleday,
Cape, and Gollancz as primary publishers of her work. Doubleday publishes a total of 31 first editions, Gollancz also 31, and Cape a total of 43. Aiken found a way to not only write often and well, but to be so consistent that the same publishers were willing to work with her over a long literary career.

Doubleday most notably published a number of titles in *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* series. Part of the Random House Corporation, Doubleday currently falls under the larger umbrella corporation Bertelsmann, and was most recently merged with the Knopf Publishing Group. Bertelsmann is a large German corporation that controls not only a large portion of book publishing with the Random House Group, but also radio and television groups, newspaper and magazine publishing groups, media and communication groups, and miscellaneous print groups focused on communications media for commercial companies. Though Doubleday started out in 1897 as its own imprint along with the magazine publisher Samuel McClure, it merged over time with other publishing groups. Doubleday publishes serious non-fiction, commercial fiction, and literary fiction. Notable bestsellers include Rudyard Kipling’s *The Day’s Work*, and works by Margaret Atwood, Bill Bryson, and Ian McEwan. Other imprints alongside Doubleday in the Knopf Group include Pantheon, Nan A. Talese, Vintage, and Everyman’s Library. Together, the backlist of these imprints forms a powerhouse of authors and works.

Jonathan Cape likewise published many of the titles in *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* series. Cape is a London-based publisher, founded in 1921 by Jonathan Cape and Wren Howard. Publishing authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Ian Fleming, and Philip
Roth, the house continues to produce successful titles each year and boasts an impressive backlist. Cape is one of many houses that comprises UK branch of the Random House Group, which is associated with Random House Inc. in the US. The Random House division of Bertelsmann worldwide is responsible for all their trade book publishing. Other publishers and imprints under the same division include Chatto & Windus, Bodley Head, Red Fox, and BBC Books. It is perhaps less surprising in that case that BBC Books and Red Fox both publish later editions of Aiken’s work as paperbacks.

Another British publisher, Victor Gollancz Ltd. was founded in 1927 by Victor Gollancz. Currently owned by a division of Hatchette Livre, Orion Publishing Group, Gollancz specializes in science fiction and fantasy, a fitting outcome for a house that published four out of five of Aiken’s first science fiction, fantasy, and mystery novels for adults. Gollancz has been continuously publishing science fiction since 1961, right around the time Aiken’s literary endeavors took off. Hatchette Livre makes up part of the Lagardère Group, a French media corporation which functions as an overarching organization for four distinct business endeavors, only one of which is the publishing division.
The Letters

A professional writer might describe a letter as just another genre through which one must convey a point in words. However, one writes it with a particular audience in mind: the addressee. The epistolary novel succeeds because it feels personal, secret, and genuine, even if that is not the case. The writer presents him or herself to the reader as he or she wishes to be perceived. The intended recipient experiences the letter one way, while an unintended recipient, such as any reader of this selection, experiences the letter in a different way. An aptly written and marketed piece of writing has a broad target audience in mind, but the letter’s audience remains far more specific. Collecting the correspondence between two individuals who sustain contact for many years provides a window into their relationship, one previously meant only for those corresponding.

In Joan Aiken’s case, letter writing served a practical purpose, as opposed to a sentimental one. In the days before e-mail, e-books, and trans-Atlantic communication that can occur in just a few seconds, plans had to be made well in advance. Contracts and checks were sent via mail for signatures and deposits. Hard copies of drafts were sent back and forth as texts required lengthening, shortening, or corrections: no track changes. To best manage her career, Aiken took on American agents to advise her and guide business dealings in the US while working from her native England. Though working with two agencies complicated legal concerns when it came to selling previously published material, the gains of taking on American representation far outstripped the losses.
As a gain, Schlessiger also worked with Aiken’s father, Conrad. Reporting on Conrad’s travels, publications, and well-being, Schlessiger provided further information to Aiken about her father, though also in communication with them herself, as he saw him regularly while Aiken did not. When she could not gauge Conrad’s wellness through letters, she reaches out to Schlessiger for reports on how he seems in person. Conrad’s third wife, artist Mary Hoover Aiken, also writes to Schlessiger. In 1964, Mary sends drawings of Joan that Doubleday Publishers might want to use for jacket material. Schlessiger occupies not only the role of agent but of family friend. Though the letters 1963-64 do not fully demonstrate this, later letters attest to the level of comfort shared by Aiken and Schlessiger. The strongest case for this arises in 1965, when both began using “love” regularly as a closing salutation, one not often seen in business letters.

The following selection begins to illuminate the process by which Aiken worked. After sending one project off to her agents, Aiken often started up a new one, only to drop it again when the first returned with revisions. Starting one, dropping another, while retyping drafts of a third arises as a pattern in Aiken’s mode of composition. Looking at Aiken’s bibliography, one sees a pattern of continuous publication, producing multiple titles each year with only a handful of exceptions from 1964 until her death in 2004. The composition, however, did not occur in such a straightforward manner. For instance, in 1964, Aiken mentions the expansion of a short story, *The Accomplices*, but does not mention it again due to more pressing matters: the third installment in the *Wolves* series and a novel for adults. *The Accomplices* does not come back into the picture until the letters of 1966, and ends up published in 1967 under two different titles in the United
Looking only at the selection of letters 1963-64, it appears that Aiken forgot about *The Accomplices* rather quickly, though the story eventually comes back into play.

This pattern repeats with other works. Only by reading through the vast Aiken Collection can one begin to piece together the history of any one of her works, as documented by her agent and the editors with whom she developed various projects. Short stories evolved into full-length novels with new titles; stories formerly published in magazines are expanded to fit into collections alongside similar tales; she abandons her pen name, Nicholas Dee, as works formerly published under her nom de plume are republished under her real name. Writing for many mediums and in vast quantities, all while raising her children, led to a complicated web of composition and publication, a balancing act she seems to have perfected.

Aiken as letter writer follows this pattern in miniature form. A patchwork of business mixed with play, practical concerns mixed with sentimental ones, and containing typos and idiosyncrasies one would never find in her novels, Aiken’s letters uphold one rule: expect the unexpected. Using innovative means of expressing delight, upon hearing news of a sale, Aiken rejoices that now she “shall be able to have the house proofed against wood-boring beetles” (JA to CS 19 May 1964). “Paying bills” falls into the category of the mundane, one into which neither Aiken nor her stories fit; wood-boring beetles present a real-life Hanoverian plot that Aiken must foil before they tear down her kingdom. Aiken’s letters serve as a reminder of the work required to sustain a
literary career. Remaining good natured, selfless, and generous throughout, Aiken highlights the humane side often lost in an industry that relies on making money.
Charles Schlessiger
New York

Dear Charles:

My daughter Joan Aiken Brown (who for litry purposes calls herself Joan Aiken) will be in NYC Monday and Tuesday next week. Doubleday is giving her a gala lunch Tuesday for the advent (Sept 6) of her new book, THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE. Cover by Gorey, they seem to, be keen on it, and though she writes for the Young, they are the young of all ages. She’s quite a marvel. Anyway, as she’s sort of without an agent now, could she come and talk to you and Carl, either or both? She’ll be staying at my flat. Goes down Saturday. Mail won’t reach her there, but the phone is on. But if you’d let me have a line post haste here she could call the office Monday morning next and make an appointment to come and see you. I might add that in addition to being extremely gifted in a deliciously offbeat sort of way, she’s quite enchanting. I know it’s holiday time, but hope some of you—all will be there.

PS—she writes remarkable short stories—Cape has done two books of them—fairy stories (very funny)(of the 20th century.

Conrad
Conrad Aiken

Mrs. Joan Aiken Brown
White Hart House
High Street
Petworth, Sussex

1 Carl D. Brandt, founder and agent at Brandt & Brandt with Charles Schlessiger.
2 Jonathan Cape, UK publishing house.
3 All You've Ever Wanted, More Than You Bargained For. Conrad’s postscript moved from above the header to below.
England

August 26, 1963

Mr. Conrad Aiken
Forty-One Doors
Stony Brook Road
Brewster, Massachusetts

Dear Conrad:

Two of the best ways to start a week: winning $20.00 in the office baseball pool and meeting your daughter, Joan. I only mention them in that order because that is the order in which they occurred.

I made sure everything was timed so I could speak to her awhile before she spoke to Carl for purely selfish reasons on my part. As matters stand now – after she returns to England, she will send Carl her representative work so he can decide whether or not we are the best people for her. And she can decide, too, whether or not she likes us. I hope she does.

As ever,

cs
from 233 E. 33rd Street,
New York 16
27th August 1963

Charles Schlesiger, Esq.
Brandt & Brandt
101 Park Avenue,
New York 17.

Dear Mr Schlesiger,

I discovered this old copy of the English *Argosy* in my father’s flat containing a short story of mine – MISS RIVER under the pen name Nicholas Dee.

I’ve asked Abelard-Schuman and Doubleday to send you copies of my children’s books.

It was nice to have the chance of meeting you and Mr Brandt yesterday and I very much enjoyed it; thank you again for finding time.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Delano Aiken
Joan Aiken

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4 Type written in all capitals, not a letterhead.
5 JA misspells “Schlessiger.”
6 First founded in 1865, ran until 1901. Revived in 1926 in quarto size to run serials, stories, and cartoons. JA worked as Features Editor from 1965-70, returning at various points in her career on a temporary basis.
7 Published in *Argosy*, 18.1, January 1957, 17-24.
8 *More Than You Bargained For, The Kingdom and the Cave, The Wolves of Willoughby Chase.*
October 3, 1963

Mrs. Joan Aiken Brown
White Hart House
High Street
Petworth, Sussex
England

Dear Miss Aiken:

I have been completely captivated by THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE. I think it is a delightful book, and I am pleased that you would like us to handle your work. Carl is, too.

When you have made your decision to break with the Ober\(^9\) office, it would best be done by having your British agents\(^{10}\) write them. There would be no change in your British representation, of course, and we would be dealing only with your American rights.

We look forward to hearing from you, and I hope your silence has been caused by the fact that you have been busy getting your children back to school, not that you have lost interest in us.

Sincerely,

Charles Schlessiger

cs

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\(^9\) Harold Ober Associates, JA’s first American agent.

\(^{10}\) David Higham Associates, English branch of the international Ober office.
Charles Schlessiger,  
Brandt & Brandt  
101 Park Avenue,  
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

Thank you for your letter. I’m so glad you enjoyed THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE – I hope you’ll like BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA, which I expect to finish sometime before Christmas, equally well.

Meanwhile I must apologise: I got home to find six weeks’ arrears of publishers’ reading, which I’ve just about struggled through, plus a pressing need to assemble new winter wardrobes for my children, which is why I haven’t yet sent the sample batch of stories I promised. I will do so within a week or two. And, of course, I’m terribly pleased that you feel you can handle my work on the strength of THE WOLVES. I will now write to David Higham Associates, my British agents, and put the position straight with them.

I must also apologise for Abelard-Schuman – I wrote to them while I was in New York, asking them to send you round copies of MORE THAN YOU BARGAINED FOR and THE KINGDOM AND THE CAVE, which they published in the U.S.A. Some low mentality there instead sent the books here, where they have just turned up. I’ve again asked A-S to send you copies and hope that this time they find their way.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Aiken
Joan Aiken
Charles Schlessiger,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York.

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

I’ve just sent off to you a very mixed batch of material; as I haven’t much idea about the American market I’ve sent a bit of everything in the hopes that you can select something that might find a sale in the U.S.A.; anything that you don’t think stands much chance, send right back.

The package consists of: 14 short stories (THE LOVE-SEAT, HARP MUSIC, SIREN GREEN, SALE OF SUMMER MOMENT, ISLAND WEDDING, THE FAR FORESTS, BOY WITH A PICTURE, AN APPLE FROM ADAM, AS WELL AS CAN BE EXPECTED, MRS CONSIDINE, PRIDE OF THE CIRCLE Y, MEDLAR JELLY, WHAT A SATURDAY NIGHT.)\(^1\) These are a mixed lot, some serious, some fantasy, some aimed at women’s magazines. None of them has appeared in English magazines.

There are two thrillers, HUNT THE SLIPPER\(^1\) and NEXT DOOR TO MURDER,\(^2\) each about 40,000 words. They were aimed at an English magazine, Everywoman, which had accepted a couple of similar stories from me but then changed editors and policy just about the time they were finished.

I’ve also enclosed a verse radio play WINTER IN PERNAMBUCO (just for fun) and WITH MURDER IN MIND, a collection of stories which have mostly appeared in English magazines but not in book form.

These of course represent work over the last two or three years. I’ll ask Obers to send you anything of mine they have (not much, I think), and will send you future work as I produce it.

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\(^{1}\) JA lists only 13 titles. The assortment was intended to introduce CS to her work, not to be published as a collection.

\(^{2}\) Published as The Silence of Herondale.

\(^{3}\) Published as The Fortune Hunters.
I should be really grateful to know what kind of thing out of these has a chance of finding a market in America, as I don’t want to burden you and waste your time with a lot of useless stuff.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Aiken

November 11, 1963

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

I have read HUNT THE SLIPPER and NEXT DOOR TO MURDER and, before starting on the short stories, would like to see what we can accomplish with them. Of the two, I think HUNT THE SLIPPER has more of a chance for publication here.

Have you any idea if the Ober office offered any of this material here at all?

Has Doubleday seen HUNT THE SLIPPER? They have a pretty good mystery department, and you already have a foot in the door there with the juvenile. If they were interested and felt the book needed more work, would you be willing to do it? It would help very much with the magazine market if we could say the book was going to be published in hardcovers in the future.

I have given the radio play to our dramatic department, and I will let you know what they report.

Sincerely,

Charles Schlessiger

14 Wolves of Willoughby Chase.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101, Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

I’ve checked with David Highams and they say that, as I thought, Obers didn’t offer HUNT THE SLIPPER anywhere and Doubledays haven’t seen it. It seems an excellent idea to try it there.\textsuperscript{15} (Did you know they have just published a novel of my sister Jane’s which I gather has got a Book-of-the-Month award?)\textsuperscript{16}

I have asked Jean LeRoy at Highams to check through the list of the other materials I sent you to see which of it, if any, was sent to Obers. I think very little was

I wouldn’t at all mind altering or doing more work on HUNT THE SLIPPER if Doubledays were interested; I look on that sort of potboiling work as a purely practical proposition.

Would you mind telling me what are the prospects for stories that have already been published in England? I have a collection of my own favourites which have all come out in the English Argosy (about 20); would there be any future for them as a volume or singly? Or does English publication really preclude further use in the U.S.A.? They are mainly fantasy/ science fiction. Ray Bradbury, whom I interviewed for Argosy one time when he was in England, read and liked some of them; if they were usable as a collection maybe he could be persuaded to do a forward?\textsuperscript{17}

Sorry to keep bombarding you with questions!
Yours sincerely,

Joan Aiken

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\textsuperscript{15}“toy” written with “r” tyewritten over the o.
\textsuperscript{17}Interview not found. Bradbury never wrote a forward for JA.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York 17

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

Here is my new children’s book, BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA, which is a sequel to WILLOUGHBY CHASE. Miss Lesser at Doubledays said that she would like to see it when it was finished, so I should be most obliged if you could sent it to her.\textsuperscript{18}

A copy has gone to Jonathan Cape, who have the English option.

I was delighted to see the nice review in \textit{Time} this week of Willoughby Chase; hope this is a good moment to send in another!\textsuperscript{19}

With best Christmas wishes,
Yours sincerely,
\textit{Joan Aiken}

\textit{Joan Aiken}

White Hart House\textsuperscript{20}
High Street, Petworth,
Sussex, England

So sorry – this got detached from Part I, sent separately.

\textit{Joan Aiken}

\textsuperscript{18} Margaret (Peggy) Lesser. Works in Doubleday juvenile department. Retires in 1964.
\textsuperscript{19} “Children may have to wait until their parents finish reading this sly and delightful melodrama in which ravening wolves are the least of the Victorian villains that beset our two young heroines.” \textit{Time}, 20 Dec 1963, 82.25, 4.
\textsuperscript{20} Beginning of second page. Only the words, as transcribed above, appeared on this sheet. Unclear why this page was important enough to send.
December 13, 1963

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

I am sorry for the delay in answering your last letter. As the office wrote you, I was on vacation – a late one this year.

Short stories first published in England do not stand as good a chance here as those being submitted for the first time. Jean Leroy has written Carl that she will be sending him the new ones as they come to her, she to hold off till he arranges something for those that he feels have a good chance here.

I’ve read the collection, WITH MURDER IN MIND, and I am going to try them – or rather some of them – in the mystery reprint market, such as Ellery Queen’s, Alfred Hitchcock, Rogue. The time limit and the prior British publication does rather rule them out for the bigger magazines.

Please send me the science fiction stories. There are several paperback houses here that specialize in science fiction/fantasy. Would you mind my not trying them in the hardcover market? The hardcover market for short stories is extremely difficult.

I am afraid our dramatic department will not be able to work with WINTER IN PERNAMBUCO. The radio market is almost nil these days, and they feel the script would not adapt well to the television market.

I’ve sent HUNT THE SLIPPER to Doubleday, and I will let you know their reaction.

Sincerely yours,

Charles Schlessiger

21 All three magazines specialize in pulp and science fiction. The OED describes pulp fiction as “sensational, lurid, or popular fiction.” Ellery Queen’s and Alfred Hitchcock Magazines are still in print. First and second longest running pulp mystery magazines.
P.S. I am returning, under separate cover, WINTER IN PERNAMBUCO. If I wrote you my reaction to all the stories in WITH MURDER IN MIND, this letter would turn into quite a tome. Let me just stay that I think JUGGED HARE is one of the most delightfully ghoulish stories I have ever read.\(^{22}\)

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December 19, 1963

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

Doubleday are most enthusiastic about HUNT THE SLIPPER! They will be sending us a letter within the next few days, outlining revisions and suggestions for lengthening the text by about forty pages. If you are agreeable to the changes, they will sending through a contract, calling for an advance of $1000.00 against their standard mystery royalties.\(^{23}\) I suppose I am counting my chickens before they are hatched, but I am delighted and I know this is all going to work out.

Merry Christmas!

Sincerely,

Charles Schlessiger

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\(^{22}\) Published in *The Pan Book of Horror Stories*, Pan Books Ltd., 1959.

\(^{23}\) Should read “will be sending.”
Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

Here is the letter from Isabelle Taylor, outlining the work Doubleday would like you to do on HUNT THE SLIPPER. Mrs. Taylor mentions that the material seems compressed – she does not know that you wrote this with British serial in mind. I felt there was no point in telling her that – just that you had written this mystery, that you realized it was not quite long enough, and that you would welcome the suggestions of an enthusiastic editor.

Have you a carbon of the novel to work from? If not, I’ll get the copy that Doubleday is holding and send it to you. Doubleday’s contract calls for two complete typewritten copies of the script, and we are going to need a clean carbon to offer in the serial market. I think it would be a good idea, therefore, if you had the revised script retyped.

The fact that we will be able to tell the magazines that Doubleday is going to publish is a good selling point, aside from the very obvious selling point that the material is quite good.

When you let us know your reaction to Mrs. Taylor’s suggestions – or rather your approval – will you please let me know if the Doubleday agreement is to be drawn to “Joan Aiken” or to “Joan Aiken Brown”. The copyright line for the book is going to have to read in the name the contract is drawn to. The byline for the book will not be affected either way of course.

I will also need to know your citizenship. If you are British, we will have to send you tax exemption certificates to sign.

Since HUNT THE SLIPPER has not been sold first in England, I think it is only fair that we give Doubleday the Canadian market.

24 Isabelle Taylor: editor at Doubleday. Improvements include the title; Taylor writes, “I am convinced that anyone who could originate the fascinating WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE can come up with an equally intriguing title for this book.” HGARC, 20 Dec 1963.
After HUNT THE SLIPPER is settled, we can decide what we are going to do with NEXT DOOR TO MURDER.

I look forward to hearing from you. Your head must be spinning with all these questions!

Sincerely,

Charles Schlessiger

csenc.
White Hart House,
High Street, Petworth,
Sussex, England
30th December 1963

Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

I seem to be about three letters behind – I do apologise! Your last but one arrived on December 24 and then Christmas overtook me.

Of course I’m terribly pleased and excited that Doubledays are interested in HUNT THE SLIPPER. I’ll start work on a revision at once – for a possible 1000 dollars forty pages is a trifle. I have a carbon to work from so don’t bother to get Doubledays’ copy back – I’ll send over two new copies.

Isabelle Taylor’s suggestions all seem very practical and workable – I haven’t any queries about them. The Doubleday agreement and copyright line for WOLVES was Joan Aiken, so I might as well stick to that for consistency’s sake. Incidentally, are Doubledays happy about having thrillers and children’s books come out under the same name? If not I sometimes use the pen-name Nicholas Dee for short stories over here and could use it for the thriller – but I don’t mind either way.\(^{25}\)

Quite okay to give Doubledays the Canadian market. And it hasn’t been seen by any English publisher except Cape, who said it wasn’t their type of thriller.

I’m a British citizen by birth – Conrad forgot to register me at the Embassy.

Relating to your letter of December 13 – I’ll send the sf stories and will be delighted for you to try paperback market – the hardcover market is pretty bleak over here too.

I hope by now you will have received BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA – so sorry it got sent in two halves. Pre-Christmas frenzy!

\(^{25}\) None of JA’s novels or collections were published under this name, though some short stories published under Nicholas Dee later made their way into collections under JA.
I’ll send the revised HTS as soon as possible. Have Doubledays mentioned any deadline?

Happy New Year, and very many thanks,
Yours,

Joan Aiken
January 3, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

Isabelle Taylor was so pleased when I told her you were going ahead with the revisions for HUNT THE SLIPPER – when I asked her for the deadline, she said “the day before yesterday”!

The agreement will be coming through in a few days, and I am sure the delivery date will be one that will suit you and Doubleday. The sooner you get the revision done, the happier Mrs. Taylor will be. She is most enthusiastic about the book, and the prospect of publishing future mysteries of yours.

Doubleday prefer that the book be published as by Joan Aiken. Please send me three copies. We want to use one for serial. If nothing comes of it, we’ll return the copy to you.

Yes, BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA has just arrived. I’ll send it to Miss Lesser on Monday. I want to read it over the weekend!

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

cs
January 6, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA goes to Doubleday today. I will be truly startled if they are anything but delighted with it. It is just as exciting and as enchanting as THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE. The jacket designer is going to go out of his mind trying to decide what scene to draw on for the cover.26 If Doubleday does not send a contract through for this one, I will retire.

Dido is one of the most captivating children I have come across in years. You can not convince me that she died at sea – and that she is not going to be the subject of your next one.

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

26 Robin Jacques: illustrator of the American edition; he is British by birth.
White Hart House,
High Street, Petworth,
Sussex, England
7.1.6427

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

Thanks for your letter of Jan.3. I’ll try and get the revision on HUNT THE SLIPPER done in the next fortnight. Will send 3 copies.

This is just a note to say that I’ve heard from Michael Howard at Jonathan Cape, who likes BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA and wants to publish it but says it is too long and will have to be cut – we are going to confer about this.28 Apparently at its present length it would cost about a guinea, which is too much for an English children’s book.29 I don’t know if you will want to tell Doubledays this? Anyway, thought I’d better let you know.

With best wishes,

Joan Aiken

Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York, U.S.A

27 Typewritten “6” transposed over originally typed “74.”
28 Michael Howard: editor at Jonathan Cape. He is the husband of Pat Marriott, who illustrated a number of JA’s works.
29 Approximately $3.75. JA selling for $2.95.
Dear Mr Schlessiger,

This is just to tell you that I sent off HUNT THE SLIPPER to you today, extended by 50 pages and retitled THE SILENCE AT HERONDALE. I hope Doubledays approve. (I found it absolutely hellish to retitle and am not keen on the new one, so I put in some alternatives which I’m not dead keen on either – I can’t think why it was so difficult.) I’ve sent one copy by air, two following by surface.

Best wishes,
Yours,
Joan Aiken

Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue
New York 17, U.S.A.

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30 Becomes *The Silence of Herondale* to sound like JA’s juvenile list titles, despite being labeled as “adult mystery.”
January 15, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

Let’s wait and see what Doubleday has to say about BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA first before letting them know that the British edition is going to be cut. If they want to publish the script as it is now, I don’t think it will make any difference if the British edition is shorter than the American.

Have you thought about a new title for HUNT THE SLIPPER?31

Sincerely,

CS

31 Brandt & Brandt stamped JA’s letter of Jan 14 as received on Jan 20. CS begins referring to Hunt the Slipper as The Silence of Herondale on Jan 21.
January 17, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

I am enclosing two copies of the agreement with Doubleday for HUNT THE SLIPPER. We find them all in order, and if you agree: will you please sign both copies, initial Clause 21 in both, and return them to me.

You are going to have to sign as Joan Aiken Brown since this is your legal name. The copyright line will appear as the name of Joan Aiken Brown, too, but the by-line will be Joan Aiken.

Isabelle Taylor writes:

“We have put in the option clause the modifying phrase “adult mystery” to keep our transactions with her entirely disconnected from any arrangements she makes with the Junior Books department. We are unanimous, however, in our admiration for her work.”

Sincerely,

Charles Schlessiger

enc.
January 17, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

Doubleday are most enthusiastic about BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA, and they are going to push for fall publication.

I could not get Miss Lesser to agree to raising the royalty rate over the one in the agreement for THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE. A higher rate, added to the expense of the illustrations, would make the book much too expensive for this market, she feels. A juvenile has a much longer life than the average trade book, and apparently higher rates would make it harder to keep the book going over a period of years.

She proposed an increase in the advance, making it $750.00; but I have asked for $1000.00. Miss Lesser feels this might affect your tax situation in England, particularly since you will be receiving $1000.00 on HUNT THE SLIPPER this year, and Cape will be probably paying an advance on BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA. Will you please let me know about this? If it causes no trouble in your tax situation, I will tell Doubleday that we want the $1000.00.

After she mentioned that she felt the book a bit too long, I told her that you were cutting for Cape. She will be writing you about small cuts that she would like made – not in the plot line, but in the exposition. These apparently will be minor.

Sincerely,

Charles Schlessiger

cs
January 21, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

The top copy of THE SILENCE AT HERONDALE goes to Doubleday today, and I will be looking out for the two carbons.

I can understand the problem of retitling. I like the new one better than the first; and if Doubleday does not like it perhaps they will come up with a better one. I’ll let you know.

What ever happened to those science fiction stories you were going to send us?32

Yours,

cs

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32 First mentioned on 18 Nov 1963, HGARC.
Charles Schelssiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

Your letters are all so full of good news that I’m developing a positively
Pavlovian reaction when the postman sticks them through the window! I’m afraid I’m
behindhand with answering them, though (I’ve gone back to my old job on the English
Argosy magazine for a couple of months while my successor has a baby and it makes for
acute time-shortage.)

Thank you for your letter with the HUNT THE SLIPPER contract which I’m
returning herewith, signed and initialled*. I hope the airmail copy of the revised
version has arrived by now. I’ve sent off one by sea and will hang on to the third copy
until I hear from Doubleday as to whether they want any further alterations, as my file
copy is rather chaotic; then I’ll send it off to you.

It’s wonderful news about BLACK HEARTS – and thank you for your very nice
remarks about it, and about Dido, my own favourite character. Yes, of course, she is
going to be picked up by a whaler and taken away to a life of unexampled hardships in
Nantucket, but I will have to do some research first.

I can see Doubleday’s point about the royalties and that it may be reasonable to
stick at the same rate. About the advance, however, I agree with you – I would much
prefer $1000.00, though it’s kind of them to worry about my tax position. In fact,
however, if they pay half when the agreement goes through and half on publication it will
fall into two different tax years – will they be doing that, or could they be persuaded to?

With best wishes,

33 Doubleday did not yet approve the title change. JA goes back to Hunt the Slipper, despite
using The Silence at Herondale in previous communication. CS also goes back to using Hunt the
Slipper until 24 Jan 1964.
34 JA types an “S” and strikes vertically through in pen to make a “$.”
*P.S. I haven’t put income tax or social insurance references; I assume English ones wouldn’t be required?

January 23, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

There was no need to fill in the income tax or social security information on the agreement for HUNT THE SLIPPER. I am pretty sure this applies only to American citizens. I have written Mrs. Taylor that you are holding the second carbon until she approves the changes. As soon as we hear from her and the first carbon arrives, we will start it on the magazine rounds.

Doubleday will pay the advance on BLACK HEARTS: one-half on signature, the balance on publication. Miss Lesser tells me that they are starting their sales conferences now so the agreement will be delayed somewhat. I couldn’t resist telling her your news about Dido. Her reaction was the same as mine – absolutely delighted. Dido in Nantucket, indeed! Now I know who stole the wooden Indian that used to stand outside the Opera House.35

The fact that you’re back with Argosy makes me feel like a slouch. I can’t imagine where you find the time to do that, write, and take care of two children as well. You are a wonder!

Your reaction to my letters is very nice. I wish every one of them had news of a sale for you.

Sincerely,

Charles Schlessiger

Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:  

Isabelle Taylor likes the changes in the mystery. She asks that you airmail the carbon. There is a rate, I think, that is just as fast as airmail, but not as expensive. You will probably be able to check this with your post office. We still have not received the carbon you sent us, so if the airmailed one comes in first, I’ll use that for serial, and send Doubleday the other.

Doubleday want June publication. I told her this was all right as long as we had enough time to offer in the serial market. Mrs. Taylor has promised to be accommodating should we get a serial offer.

She wants to call the book THE SILENCE OF HERONDALE – more evocative apparently than THE SILENCE AT HERONDALE, and she has asked to be allowed to delete the page with the botanical reference to the lady slipper. There is enough reference in the text to the flower to acquaint the readers with it, and I suppose an extra page will jack up production costs. I hope you don’t mind my taking the liberty of telling her to go ahead on both counts.

Sincerely,  

Charles Schlessiger  

---

Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

Many thanks for your letter of the 24th, with the welcome news that Isabelle Taylor has okayed the additions to the mystery. I’m so relieved about this. THE SILENCE OF HERONDALE is alright with me, and the deletion of the botanical reference, which seems irrelevant anyways with the changed title. Thank you for sorting these matters.

I’ve airmailed off the carbon-I’m not surprised at the hustle if they want to publish by June. Heavens, they must have an efficient production system.

I’ll send the sf stories shortly – I’m retyping them at the rate of one a day as they are all on sordid Argosy tearouts, and reckon to be finished in 2-3 weeks.

With best wishes,

Joan A
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

Damn, one thing I forgot to mention in regard to BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA was, when it comes to payment for it, could you put it through to me via Jonathan Cape in London? They have always treated me very well, and made the original deal with Doubledays on WOLVES; I wouldn’t want them to think I was trying to do them out of their cut by short-circuiting them.

Yours sincerely,
Joan Aiken
Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England  

Dear Miss Aiken:

Here is your file copy of the agreement with Doubleday for THE SILENCE OF HERONDALE. The advance has come in, and I am pretty sure our accounting department has already sent it to you.

One of the carbons of the book arrived this morning, and I have sent it to the first magazine that we had in mind for it. I will let you know what happens.

I am afraid I have not clear in my mind Jonathan Cape’s position with BLACK HEARTS IN BATTERSEA, and I wish you would fill me in more on the details. Why should they receive any of the money earned by the American rights in the book, and does this mean that they will receive a share in all the books in the series?37

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

cs

c

37 No discussion takes place in 1963-64 between JA and CS about how long the series might be. By the end of her career, the series includes 12 titles.
February 7, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

The second copy of HERONDALE for Doubleday arrived today, and it has gone to them.

Here’s some nice news from Publishers Weekly about WILLOUGHBY CHASE that you may not have seen.

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

cs
enc.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue, New York.

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

Many thanks for the file copy of THE SILENCE OF HERONDALE agreement, and for the cheque for $900. I’m really thrilled about that sale, as I’d more or less written off that story in my mind. I saw David Bolt of David Highams yesterday, and he says, could you kindly send him a proof when Doubledays have them, in order to try for an English publisher. 38 Many thanks again for your good offices over it all!

I’m about halfway through the shortened version of BLACK HEARTS and hope to post it off next week. I’m doing a retype, as it’s a condensation as well as a cut and I hate messy mss. Doubledays sent me back their copy (Cape asked them to, apparently) and asked me to drop the revision at their London office, which I will do, plus the longer version, so they can take their choice.

The position of Cape regarding BLACK HEARTS presents an ethical problem: they haven’t any legal claim, as all they had was an option on my next juvenile book, terms to be the subject of a fresh agreement*. 39 On the other hand, they have published my first three books and in general nursed minded me; they have hitherto acted as agents in arranging foreign sales and, more complicated, Michael Howard, the director, is a personal friend, and his wife Pat Marriott does my illustrations, so if Doubleday decide not to use hers in BLACK HEARTS Cape would lose on that too. 40 I don’t want them to feel they’ve been stabbed in the back; I’m inclined to give them a share of the American Rights of BLACK HEARTS (if it won’t create a precedent for ever, and, I hope, if it can be done without cutting in David Highams, who get a share of the English Rights of course) - and hereafter I’ll make sure it is understood from the start that all American affairs are dealt with separately. Do you think this is reasonable? I’ve never had to deal with two sets of publishers and agents before, and don’t want to tread on anyone’s toes.

38 David Bolt: Aiken’s British agent at David Higham.
39 *“not yet signed” handwritten in ink in the right margin.
40 Doubleday used illustrator Robin Jacques instead of Marriott.
Thank you so much for the cutting from the PUBLISHER’S WEEKLY. This seems splendid – bless *Time* for that wonderful review! “Sleeper” is an unfamiliar term to me – does it mean a book that starts slow and picks up?41

With best wishes,

Yours

Joan A

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

When proof of THE SILENCE OF HERONDALE is available, I will make sure one goes to David Bolt. Doubleday have now decided to publish the book in October – much better for us, actually, because we will have more time to try for serial.

“Sleeper” is a term that originated in Hollywood. It meant a film that is released with no fanfare, which – after its release – catches on and becomes a success on its own merits.

I can fully understand your feeling committed to Cape. “Stabbing them in the back”, however, would entail moving to another publisher in London, not: telling them you now have an American agent with whom you deal direct, and so all future contracts with them must leave all American rights in your hands. Cape’s main concern should be the money the books make in Britain. David Higham, as far as we are concerned, should receive none of the American money either. With everyone getting a piece of the pie, how much would you have left for yourself? You must work this out in as comfortable a manner as possible with Cape, I realize, because you will not want to strain relations with them. And certainly, since Michael Howard is a personal friend, you should be able to get this across to them. This is of course up to you.

Yours,

Joan A

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41 *OED* defines “sleeper” as “a picture made with the thought that it would be just another light Summer item, but which has turned out to be a surprisingly popular box-office success,” 1945.
February 19, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

Will you please sign both copies of the BLACK HEARTS agreement, initial Clause 21 in both, and return them to me. I am pretty sure you will find them in order.

I called Margaret Lesser about the business of your being charged for the illustrations in Clause 4, and she has assured me that this is a formality, that it will not be put into effect, and that there is no need for us to cross it out of the agreement. I told her I would take her word for it.42

I expect to hear from you soon how this money is to go to you from us.

Yours,

42 This clause later deleted, despite assurances that it made no difference in the contract.
February 20, 1964

Dear Miss Aiken:

I am enclosing a copy of the letter from Good Housekeeping turning down HERONDALE.

It now goes to Barbara Blakemore at Redbook, and I will let you know what happens.

Yours,

cs
enc.

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43 Fiction editor Naome Lewis found Herondale “just grand” but had already taken on Mary Stewart’s This Rough Magic. Lewis stated, “I’d have my head handed to me if I proposed two British suspense novels in one year.” HGARC, 20 Feb 1964.
March 3, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

Redbook have turned down HERONDALE – as you will see from the enclosed. We are, of course, going on with it.

I am also enclosing a clipping from Sunday’s Times about the Aikens.

Best,

Charles Schlessiger

44 Redbook fiction editor, Barbara Blakemore writes, “The Joan Aiken is great fun—I love English mysteries—but it is pure escape reading. None of us here, when the chips were down, could really believe it.” HGARC, 3 March 1964.

45 Lewis Nichols, “In and out of books,” New York Times, 1 March 1964. The article describes current literary undertakings of the Aikens, including “Collected Novels of Conrad Aiken” and his “Selected Poems,” as well as Jane’s Maulever Hall, and both Wolves and Battersea by JA.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Mr Schlessiger,

I’m so sorry – I’ve got behind in my correspondence again, due to a short spell of gastric flu. Thank you for at least three letters, and the rejection notes from Good Housekeeping and Redbook. I can see that an English female suspense story isn’t the easiest thing to place in the US market, so please don’t feel obliged to go on beyond the limits of probability – I think you’ve done wonders as it is. (Just a thought – have you tried the Ladies’ Home J.? I’d hardly aspire to them except that sister Jane had a historical novel condensed into one of their long-completes in ’61.)

I’m working on another at the moment – less escapist I hope, all about a perfume factory – will send it in due course.

I’m returning the signed Doubleday agreement for BLACK HEARTS. About the payment: David Bolt, of Highams, wrote to me suggesting that as Cape are getting 10%, you and they should split the other 10% between you. I answered that, while this arrangement was obviously quite acceptable so far as I myself was concerned, it seemed hardly fair to you, unless Highams were proposing to split their English commissions with you – and that I thought the most reasonable arrangement would be for them to take 10% of the English payment and pass on to Cape who would then pay me direct, less their 10%. If this is what you wish, can you let me know, and I’ll get in touch with Cape.

Thank you for the charming clipping from the N.Y.T. – I hope Conrad was amused by it! It’s nice that the WOLVES are doing so well.

With best wishes,
Yours,

Joan Aiken

Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Miss Aiken:

I am sorry to hear about your bout with flu.

HERONDALE has just come back from the Chicago Tribune, and it has gone out this morning to the LHJ – a long shot, I think, but worth a try.

The contract for BLACK HEARTS has gone back to Doubleday. By the time your file copy comes back with the advance, we will have come to grips with the commission situation. Carol Brandt has written David Higham that you did not come to us through his office, but on your own, and that we would like to work with you direct on American rights without splitting a commission. His office handles your British and translation rights without splitting with us. I would like to work with you the way we have been these past months. I’ll let you know what happens.

What’s this about a perfume factory? Where are the science fiction stories? Did you finish cutting BLACK HEARTS? And how you?

Yours,

cs

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48 Carol Brandt: mother to Carl Brandt, both agents of Brandt & Brandt.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Charles,

Thank you for yours of March 11. I have just sent you off a large batch of fantasy/sf stories (more former than latter) to do what you think best with. Don’t try to read them all at once. They are very indigestible.

Could you think of any uses for a 20,000-word Arthurian-period fairystory? I have one which was commissioned and bought by Princess, an English children’s magazine, to use serially but they won’t be using it for quite a few months yet.

Let me know if the commission situation re David Higham won’t sort itself (if they don’t). I checked with the Society of Authors who confirmed my view and yours that as I’d gone to you independently there was no reason why they should expect to split American rights commissions. In the meantime, the longer delay there is on the contract for BLACK HEARTS, the better I am pleased, as after April 5 it will be another tax year. I finished cutting BLACK HEARTS and Doubledays suggested sending it to their London office for transmittal to New York, which I did; the London office got it O.K. so I hope they sent it on. Cape have pointed out two minor technical errors which I’ll correct on the Doubleay proofs when I get them as well. 49

I’ve just finished the job on Argosy, thank goodness (I met Jennifer Hassell there, whom I believe you know.) Now, three weeks’ school holidays, and then I want to get back on to the perfume-factory thriller which is half finished but needs rewriting. It is called TROUBLE WITH PRODUCT X. 50

I gather Isabelle Taylor is going to be in London during April; she wrote and suggested we meet, which will be nice.

49 Editorial mark in ink indicates JA wished it to be written as “correct on the Doubleay proofs as well when I get them.” Should be “Doubleday,” left uncorrected by JA.
50 Published as Trouble with Product X in the UK, Beware of the Bouquet in the US.
March 23, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I am very happy to report that David Higham has written us that there will be no objection to our working directly with you – and without the split in commission. On your magazine material – do you want to send us a carbon before sending it to Higham so we can judge the possibilities for American publication?

Send us a copy of the Arthurian period fairy story. I must warn you, though, that the children’s magazine market here is practically nil. But we might we able to do something with it, and I would very much like to read it anyhow.

I am enclosing your copy of the BLACK HEARTS agreement. The accounting department will send the advance to Cape less our 10%. I don’t think it makes much difference when the money goes to you in terms of taxes. The contract is dated February, and technically that is when you earned it. Before returning it to Doubleday, I crossed out parts of Clause 4 pertaining to illustrations, etc., and explained to Margaret Lesser that we felt this was better.

I was pleasantly surprised to see the enclosed ad in this week’s New Yorker magazine.

Yours,

best wishes to you,

Joan

PS The Junior Literary Guild wrote me for biography and so forth. Are they Doubledays (same address I see) or something separate?51

51 Junior Literary Guild was part of Doubleday.  
52 Should read “we might be,” left uncorrected by CS.  
53 The New Yorker, 21 March 1964, 187.
March 30, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I hope this reaches you before your meeting with Isabelle Taylor. I called her this morning to speak to her about NEXT DOOR TO MURDER and – damn! – found that she had already left for England.

I reread the novel over the weekend, and I like it very much. I still have the same reservation: much of the mood and characterization is compressed because you were writing with magazine in mind. Let’s see if Isabelle Taylor likes it and if she comes up with some suggestions. I hate dropping this in your lap now that you are in the middle of the perfume factory novel, but I have the uneasy feeling that it’s now or never with this one. I mean you are going to be finishing the perfume factory novel, and you will probably be going into the juvenile about Dido, and who knows where your fertile mind is going to take you after that. I will feel easier about NEXT DOOR TO MURDER if we settle it with Taylor now.

I think you should tell her that you wrote it before HERONDALE, but that you have only just sent it to me because you were not sure of it, and that I have written you of my enthusiasm. If you do not have a copy to give her, I will send her mine when she gets back.

Best,

cs
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt
101 Park Avenue
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Charles,

Many thanks for your letter of March 30 which was forwarded to me here – we’re renting a cottage for a week so the children can get some sailing while I shiver on the clifftop in a force eight zero gale; after an hour or so they are happy but numb and we have to spend the rest of the day driving about to get the benefit of the car heater as the cottage is inadequately provided, thereby seeing lots of scenery but it’s plain I am not going to get much writing done.

I am sure you are quite right about NEXT DOOR TO MURDER and I don’t a bit mind going back to work on it if Isabelle Taylor thinks it’s worth while (I’ve had Product X, the perfume one, plotted out for such a long time that picking up and dropping it makes no difference). I will mention it to her along the lines you suggest. Damn, the copy you have seems to be the only one, as David Higham seem to have lost the one I sent them for serial a couple of years ago and I don’t have my working draft any longer. Sorry about this. So I’ll tell Isabelle Taylor that she’ll be getting it from you on her return, and then I’ll be prepared to receive it back from you in due course…

Meanwhile a most exciting thing has happened: Cape rang up just before we left for Cornwall to say that a film offer had been received for THE WOLVES from an American company; 55 I didn’t gather many details, but anyway, if it comes off, I can afford to carry out my plan of nipping over in the early autumn to see Conrad and collect information for LONG KNIVES IN NANTUCKET. 56

I’ve just heard from Isabelle Taylor – I’m lunching with her on the 24th.

Best wishes,

Joan

54 Mistypes “cottage,” left uncorrected.
55 Rembrandt Films.
56 Published as Night Birds on Nantucket.
Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England  

Dear Joan:

Fine …. I’ll send Isabelle Taylor NEXT DOOR TO MURDER when she gets back.

It would be great if THE WOLVES sold to a motion picture company! I have my fingers crossed for you.

LONG KNIVES IN NANTUCKET is a fine title for the new one. It brings up images of all kinds of skullduggery.

Except for the force eight zero gale your holiday sounds like fun. I would sympathize with you and your children having to ride around in the car to thaw out, but that sounds like even more fun. I do think, though, that you should teach them how to drive so you can type away in the back seat.

Best,

cs
April 14, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

The Ladies Home Journal, I am sorry to report, is not going to make us an offer for HERONDALE. Don’t you love the differences in opinion that you come across with editors? The Journal thinks “the plot is highly plausible and gripping”; Redbook felt, “It is pure escape reading. None of us…could really believe it.” Anyway, we are going on with it, and I hope we have good news for you soon from one of the magazines.

Conrad was in the office yesterday, and we both sounded like your mutual admiration society.

Best,

Charles Schlessiger

cs
enc.

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57 “…but unfortunately, as a whole, it is not what we are looking for.” Helen DeBerry, Associate Editor, Ladies Home Journal, HGARC, 13 April 1964.
April 28, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I sent NEXT DOOR TO MURDER to Isabelle Taylor’s assistant, Marcia Magill, to hold for her return – and, of course, to tempt Miss Magill into a reading. She called me this morning to say she is mad about the book, that she has to wait for Mrs. Taylor to come back to the office next week, that they will buy it she is sure!

Miss Magill feels the book is too short. I agreed, but reminded her that you did a great job of expanding the first one with her and Mrs. Taylor’s suggestions, and that we look forward to receiving their suggestions again. We do, don’t we?

How did your meeting with Mrs. Taylor go?

I am still reading the short story collection, and I will have word for you soon on that.

HERONDALE is being published July 3rd – not October, as was originally reported. We will have to retire it from the serial market soon.

Best,

cs
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York.

Dear Charles,

Thank you for your letter. I am so pleased Marcia Magill liked NEXT DOOR TO MURDER – that seems encouraging. I had an extremely nice lunch with Isabelle Taylor who was full of fascinating gossip about crime writers. Meanwhile Highams found the spare copy of NDTM that was lost, so I’ve been rereading it. As I hadn’t looked at it for three years I was able to be very detached and found myself quite scandalised at all its faults, so if alterations are suggested I shan’t mind in the least.

Mrs. Taylor seemed rather astonished when I said I thought HERONDALE was coming out in October, so I’m not surprised to hear that it’s sooner – I shouldn’t worry any more about serial. I am really sorry you’ve had all that hard work for nothing—I’m sure the market for English fiction of that kind must be very limited.

Best wishes,

58 This is JA’s only letter lacking a typewritten date. Brandt & Brandt stamped “May 4 1964” on the letter as the received date.
May 6, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I am rather disappointed to report that the Toronto Star has turned down HERONDALE. I was almost sure they would take it: they do a mystery condensation each issue, Deborah comes from Canada, and the book is good to boot. Anyways, the fiction editor at the Toronto Star writes:

“We found this to be a very able story with good interest. However, it seemed very contrived with some puppet-like characters. For this reason we did not feel it would hold the interest of our readers enough to warrant our using it.”

By now I know that you aren’t a wilting violet, so I feel free quoting these reactions to you. After all, you have worked for the magazines and you know how reactions differ.

I am taking a long shot with HERONDALE by sending it to Cosmopolitan for the last submission. With publication so near this is like getting a foot caught in the door, but I think it’s worth it.

Did you know that Margaret Lesser was retiring? Here’s the announcement from Pub’s Weekly.

Best,

cs

59 Gwen Cowley, Fiction Editor, Star Weekly. HGARC, 1 May 1964.
May 13, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

Isabelle Taylor and Marcia Magill are getting together on suggestions to present to you for the expanded and revised version of NEXT DOOR TO MURDER, but in the meantime they want your signature on a contract.

Doubleday offer an advance of $1000.00, payable on signature, against a royalty of 10% of the retail price on the first 5000 copies sold; 12 ½ % on the next 5000 copies; 15% on all copies sold over 10,000; the same terms actually, as the ones they paid for HERONDALE.

If you approve, please sign both copies of the enclosed agreement, and return them to me. Will you please also initial in both copies inside the circles marked “initial here”.

Best,

cs
enc.
Dear Joan:

You might want to take a look at this page from yesterday’s Chicago Tribune. The New York Times had a special supplement for Children’s books, too, last Sunday; and this ad was in that one. It also mentioned that WOLVES was number eight on the best seller list for children.

Best,

cs
enc.

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60 Probably refers to Chicago Tribune, Ad 213, 10 May 1964. Contains a small illustration of a wolf.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York.

Dear Charles,

Many thanks for two letters and the clipping about Peggy Lesser and quote from the Toronto Star about HERONDALE. I’ve just been proofreading a Dictionary of social Sciences for a friend and learned that there’s no such thing as Absolute value, so I’m less and less surprised at the differing reactions to that book – but rather more surprised that Doubledays ever bought it!\(^{61}\)

The same applies to NEXT DOOR TO MURDER – of course I’m most delighted about this, as I had much less confidence. The contract seems fine (returned herewith); I suppose in theory one ought to clamour for more each time, but as we all know I wrote it before Herondale and I assume they want quite a lot of alterations* this seems to me perfectly fair. In fact it’s wonderful news! I shall be able to have the house proofed against wood-boring beetles.

I enclose a delightful letter from a little girl about WOLVES, just for fun – I wonder if you’d be very kind and ask Doubledays to send her one of my free copies of BLACK HEARTS when that comes out? I’m sure you’ll agree!\(^{62}\)

Best wishes,

Joan

*PS I’m hoping they’ll let me know about this fairly quickly as I see they want it done by July 1?

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\(^{61}\) Could not locate.
\(^{62}\) Arlene Pianko. See JA to CS, 17 June 1964. Letter unfortunately not included in the collection.
May 22, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

You and your absolute value! I had lunch yesterday with Isabelle and Marcia. I know why they bought HERONDAL. They love the book, and they love you. That's why they bought the book. Now enough of this nonsense.

You do have a little more work on NEXT DOOR TO MURDER, more than you did on HERONDAL, because you left a good deal more unsaid. Isabelle covers these points nicely in her letter, and you will do well to follow her suggestions as far as your own independence will allow. What you must strive for is to keep that feeling that the heroine is being pursued by forces that she can not quite name, that she is in danger. This is the strongest selling point in the book. Doubleday want this by July 1st, but don't worry – they won't hold you to it if you go over that date.

Remember now: we will need three copies of the script when you finish. Two for Doubleday, and one for our serial use. Maybe we will break into that market with this one.

We can't ask for more money now. In order to do this, we would have to quote sales figures to Isabelle. How can we do this now when the first book hasn't even been published yet?

I love the way Isabelle explains the fact that she would like to change some of the phrases in the book. The one she is really referring to is on page 64 of the script. If an American girl were tired from too much exertion and found out that she was knocked-up, she would be a mighty surprised girl!

63 Taylor writes, “I cannot remember if in our conversation we discussed the necessity sometimes to change phrases which mean different things in England or in America….The one we usually have difficulty with is to knock somebody up, which is a vulgarity in this country meaning to get somebody pregnant. Sometimes I think I have spent twenty years ensuring that a young policeman does not get some elderly lady pregnant when he goes around in the course of his investigations.” HGARC, 21 March 1964. Likely British definition refers to the idea of rousing someone by knocking (OED, “knocked up,” 6, 1971). Though not currently used in that sense in the US, the OED cites the 1973 National Observer as writing, “Fielding’s guide-book considerately explains that a male host may quite casually tell a female American house guest...
Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

Here is an executed copy of the agreement for NEXT DOOR TO MURDER for your files. The advance will be going to you soon from our accounting department – you will then be able to pay those men who are going to take care of the wood-boring beetles!

You do know, don’t you, that Doubleday does not like the title? I imagine a better one will come into your head while you’re working on the revisions.

I am going to have to take a while longer before reporting to you on the short stories.

I caught Mary’s show last week and was much impressed with it. You know who I thought of when I saw THE MINT, RYE, SUSSEX, and SUSSEX MAIDS?64

Best,

Charles Schlessiger

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64 Mary Hoover Aiken: American painter, Conrad’s third wife. This list refers to titles of her works.
June 1, 1964

Dear Joan:

Here is your fan letter back from Doubleday, who promise to send Miss Pianko a free copy when BLACK HEARTS comes out. She sounds like a very nice young lady, and I am sure she deserves one.

Yours,

cs
enc.

June 10, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I have sold MARMALADE WINE to Ellery Queen’s Mystery magazine for a fee of $100.00, and just so you know what rights are involved I am enclosing a copy of the agreement that I signed with them this morning. They pay by the word, unfortunately, and the story is rather short. In any event, this is a very good show case, and considering the story was published six years ago in England I am rather pleased about it. I hope you will be, too.

I am sending a copy to Jean Leroy because the use of the story in their British and foreign editions is involved.

Yours,

cs
enc.

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66 Jean LeRoy: JA’s agent for serial rights at David Higham.
June 15, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I was pleased to see from this notice in Variety that WOLVES has sold to the films! When does Mr. Snyder plan production? I think this is information that someone should pass on to Doubleday. They might be induced to work out some kind of publicity tie-in, and this of course will help sell books.

Did you know that Doubleday have set October 16th as the publication date of BLACK HEARTS? They will have samples of the jacket in about a month, and I have asked them to send me one. I will pass it on to you after I see it. I am dying of curiosity to see what they have done with the jacket. Doubleday think they might have published copies of the book in August, advance copies of course.

How goes everything with you?

Yours,

[Signature]

enc.

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67 Film not made until 1989 by Atlantic Entertainment Group and Zenith Entertainment. Mr. Snyder makes original purchase through Rembrantd.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York.

Dear Charles,

I’ve just sent off three copies of the lengthened NEXT DOOR TO MURDER with a long list of alternative titles in case some have been used already— if Doubledays don’t like any of them they’re welcome to choose their own. (Air mail, in two parcels; should get to you next week). I do hope they’re okay. Now, back to Product X.

Thank you so much for your good offices with Arlene Pianko. Heavens, they’ve now sent me 17 more letters from the whole class! I’m rummaging for an earlier book to send them.

I’m so pleased about the sale of Marmalade Wine. Fancy being in EQMM! It seems a very handsome sum for second rights.

How nice you got to Mary’s show? I wish I’d seen it. Crowbridge in NDTM is Rye, needless to say; her Rye pictures always make me homesick for the place.

I’ve extravagantly fixed to fly over for Conrad’s 17th September party and have a look at Nantucket – shall I see you then? I hope so.

yours,

Joan

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68 Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine.
69 Crowbridge: name of place in the novel to be published as The Fortune Hunters.
Charles Schlessiger,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Charles,

Thank you very much for your letter of June 15 and the cutting about Rembrandt Films. Yes, isn’t this exciting! I have been kind of holding my breath and keeping my fingers crossed about it, but to see it in print fortifies my hopes. I had lunch with Mr Snyder when he was in London, and have actually signed a contract, but they haven’t signed it yet. I gather from Jonathan Cape that they are trying to find a backer, and have got one who may put up the cash if they do a series of such films, so they are negotiating at the same time about BLACK HEARTS, which Mr Snyder hadn’t read but Cape recommended to him. But he seemed quite serious about it all, and was proposing to come back to England in the autumn and look for stately homes (probably in Scotland where there will be a bit of snow and maybe a wolf or two). He also had a child actress in mind, a gal who was in TO KILL A MOCKING BIRD (haven’t seen it but marvellous I gather).70

I’m sorry not to have mentioned it, but as I say, I have this superstitious fingers-crossed feeling. Also, I assumed that Doubledays must know already, but maybe they don’t? I’m just about to write to Seth Agnew, who is coming over here in July and suggested a meeting; I will mention it to him.71 Maybe they would have a galley they could send to Mr Snyder which might accelerate a decision about BLACK HEARTS. I’m longing to see the Doubleday jacket. I’ve seen Pat Marriott’s roughs for the English one which is beautiful – a sort of flame-rose-colour with a heraldic balloon. (Secretly, between you and me, I like her illustrations better than the Doubleday ones). BLACK HEARTS doesn’t come out over here till December. What fun Doubledays might have advance copies in August--I’d love to get one to Conrad for his birthday.

Best wishes,
Joan.

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70 The film was released in 1963; Scout was played by Mary Badham.
71 Seth Agnew: editor at Doubleday.
June 19, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I am sending you six copies of HERONDALE, under separate cover. You are entitled to ten under the agreement with Doubleday, but I have taken four of them – three for David Highams, one to follow up a motion picture inquiry that we have received. I have ordered four copies from Doubleday to replace those that I have taken.

The book looks fine, and I hope you are pleased with it.

How are the revisions for NEXT DOOR TO MURDER coming along? I feel the way I used to when I was younger with the motion picture serials on Saturday afternoons. I couldn’t wait to go back the following Saturday to find out how things were going. I can’t wait till I receive the revision. I am dying to find out how you have managed forty more pages.

All my best wishes to you – even though I haven’t heard from you since May 19th!!

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

cs
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
101 Park Avenue,
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Charles,

I owe you an apology, I’m afraid: I’ve just had a scolding from Jean LeRoy about MARMALADE WINE. It seems that simultaneously with your selling 2nd rights to EQMM, she was doing the same to Argosy. This is simply coincidental bad luck – it isn’t that David Highams are offering these stories around; far from it; apparently the editor of Argosy remembered the story which was in the sister-magazine Suspense, and asked for another use. But of course the fault is mine for not sooner giving Highams a list of the batch of Argosy stories I just sent you (I have now done this) so they could brief you on whether any of the stories had been used elsewhere. Jean tells me there was a Scandinavian use of MW, which I hadn’t known (they don’t always bother to mention small foreign sales, just lump them together). Anyway Jean will be getting in touch with you about the other stories, and Meantime I hope Ellery Queen aren’t too mad and won’t ever take another. Blame me. And I apologise again.

Yours,
Joan
June 23, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

Now that is what I call working on the right wave length! I write you on Friday to find out about the expansion of NEXT DOOR TO MURDER; it arrives on Monday.

I have only one reservation with the novel this time around: the opening in the original – due to the economy of the writing – had a starker effect and added to the nightmarish quality of the scene. This is really up to Isabelle, though, and we will see what she has to say about it.

You have done a masterful job with the rest of the book. Joanna is so much better drawn, her reasons for wanting to do away with Annette so much more believable. Of course, her winning the money is the straw that broke the camel’s back. For some reason or other, I didn’t get this the first time. As soon as I hear from Isabelle, I will let you know. Perhaps she will be writing you, herself. I will then start the script on its serial rounds.

A wrong wave length this time: I am leaving for vacation in Europe on the 17th of September. Please, oh please, manage to arrive here a few days earlier. I will be very disappointed if I don’t see you. As a matter of fact, it will ruin my trip, my first trip to Europe, and you don’t want to do that, do you?

Best,

cs
June 25, 1964

Dear Joan:

This invitation from MWA went from them to Doubleday, then to us, and I have taken the liberty of opening it. You might enjoy joining this group, and I think you should give it some thought.\textsuperscript{72}

Four more copy of HERONDALE go to you today, under separate cover.\textsuperscript{73}

Best,

cs
enc.
usc.

\textsuperscript{72} Mystery Writers of America.
\textsuperscript{73} Should read “copies.”
June 26, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan,

Here is a blind carbon of a letter I have written Jean Leroy.\footnote{CS writes to LeRoy, “I am so sorry for the confusion selling Joan Aiken’s \textit{Marmalade Wine} to Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine has caused. I had no right to commit the second British and translation serial rights without consulting you first.” HGARC, 26 June 1964.}

After this is settled, we should check the copyright position of all the previously published stories you’ve sent me. If they are printed here without the proper copyright notice, any future American rights in the stories would be ruined. It is certainly worth working with them, even in the reprint market. Once they are published there is bound to be other inquiries – tv for instance.

I am thrilled that you are back on Project X, and I apologize for coming at you with these copyright problems, rights conflicts and what-have-you’s.

Marcia called this morning to let me know that she and Isabelle are wild about the expansion of \textit{Next Door to Murder}. They are thinking of calling it \textit{The Fortune Hunters of Crowbridge}, a good title, and the similarity to the other titles is a good selling point.\footnote{\textit{Fortune Hunters of Crowbridge} is later changed to \textit{The Fortune Hunters}.}

I can not remember her name, but the child in \textit{To Kill a Mockingbird} was marvellous and would seem to be a great choice for \textit{WilloUGHBY CHASE}. It makes a good deal of sense to have Doubleday send galleys of \textit{Black Hearts} to Mr. Snyder, and I will assume that you have already written Seth Agnew about this.

Best wishes,

cs
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt
101 Park Avenue,
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Charles,

As usual I have about three letters of yours to answer. Thank you very much for all the copies of Herondale posted off which I’m looking forward to. (Motion picture inquiry? Goodness, I shouldn’t have thought it had enough plot.) And thanks for your nice remarks about NEXT DOOR with reservations about the beginning. (I agree with you; I hope Isabelle does too and chops out all the additions. I hate bits of background myself, they are what I always skip in books anyway; I wonder if one could try just writing one’s bridge passages in xxxx’s.)

Your cheque for MARMALADE WINE has come and I’m wondering if you’d like me to send it back pending complaints from EQMM that they’ve bought 2nd rights and only got 3rd?

This is calamitous that you are coming to Europe just when I’m going the other way. How long will you be over here? And will you be in England at all? Any chance of your still being here when I get back (sept 29)? I do hope so. Unfortunately I can’t put my dates forward because of children’s school dates. I’m actually flying to New York on the 15th but hesitate suggesting calling on you on the 16th because you’ll presumably be in the throes of departure.

I’m a bit anxious over Conrad’s last letters; he sounded very downcast and exhausted. What did you think when you saw him?

Regarding the Mystery Writers of America: I must confess that I simply hate joining things, specially if their activities are mainly social meetings (which I wouldn’t be able to get to anyway). But I will join if you really think it would be useful.

Best wishes
Joan.

76 “d” typewritten under “w.”
Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England  

Dear Joan:

I hope you will give the Mystery Writers of America a whirl. When you find out that it is doing absolutely no good belonging to them, you can unjoin.

Please hold on to that check for MARMALADE WINE. If Ellery Queen’s MM can not publish the story simultaneously in Britain next year, we may have to pay them back.

My travel plans are not definite yet – only that I will be leaving America some time the end of September. My plans so far include: Dublin, London, Paris and Madrid. If you are here on the 16th, I will certainly expect you to stop in here. I will be very much disappointed if you don’t.

Conrad seemed in good spirits the last time I saw him. I can understand the exhaustion; he has had a busy work year. A summer on the Cape will take care of this, though. And your arrival in September will lift his spirits. I’ll bet the anticipation already has.

Best,

cs

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77 Collected Novels, and A Seizure of Limericks both published in this year.
Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England  

Dear Joan:

Jean LeRoy has sent me a letter from the University of Minnesota requesting the right to read passages from WILLOUGHBY CHASE over radio and tv. It is customary here with motion picture contracts to restrict this kind of right for a period of time. I have therefore turned these people down. They can certainly speak about the book and review it, but they can not read passages from it. This may sound like hairsplitting to you, but it is the wisest in the end, particularly when motion picture rights are involved.

Best,

cs
June 10, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

Jean LeRoy writes me that Argosy is using MARMALADE WINE in their August issue, so I have called Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine to let them know they can now publish simultaneously here and in Britain next year. They will use “(c) copyright Joan Aiken 1958.” You can now deposit that check!

Doubleday have decided upon February as the publication for THE FORTUNE HUNTERS. Marcia tells me that you have given them excellent reasons for not liking the earlier title, and they are going along with you.\(^78\)

Best,

cs

\(^78\) Magill writes to CS, “Joan Aiken Prefers to have the new book called simply *The Fortune Hunters*, and we think she has some persuasive arguments, so we are happy to comply with her request.” HGARC, 8 July 1964.
July 13, 1964

Dear Joan:

I can’t tell whether Anthony Boucher’s review is a good-bad review or a bad-good review. Anyway, here is a copy. 79

Best,

cs
enc.

79 Refers to a review of *The Silence of Herondale* by Boucher, which is missing from the archives. Boucher, however, refers to the review in his 28 Feb 1965 article in *The New York Times* while discussing *The Fortune Hunters*: “Joan Aiken has a very pleasing touch in variations on the damsel-in-distress theme. Last year’s ‘The Silence of Herondale’ was good (in retrospect, possibly even better than I said at the time)….”
Dear Charles,

As usual I’m all behind with my correspondence – the mails here are in such a state of congestion with the work-to-rule strike that one sends things off anyway with a feeling of forlorn hope.  

I’ll hold the MARMALADE WINE cheque till I hear from you – I’m afraid Argosy slapped it right into their August issue, so it has now appeared twice over here.

I’ve joined Mystery Writers of America.

I’m sure you are right about the University of Minnesota reading passages of WILLOUGHBY CHASE on radio. I rely on your judgment entirely-it would be terribly sad to have something like that upset the film possibilities, in which I have little enough confidence as it is.

I’ve told David Bolt at Highams that I’m assuming you are Brandt & Brandt will be taking 5% (as they and Daron are) on any hypothetical film rights from HERONDAL. (It’s nice that it’s selling so well. But I hope the buyers aren’t disappointed when they find that it’s straight, not like Willoughby.)

Your holiday plans sound wonderful. But do try to put the London bit at the end of the itinerary and make it after September 29! I’d love to show you some of our part of England. And I’ll certainly hope to see you on Sept 16. Meanwhile I’m off to Scotland for three weeks with children; back mid-August.

Best wishes,

Joan

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80 Related to 1962 work-to-rule postal strike.
81 Boucher helped found the Mystery Writers of America in 1946.
82 Daron Enterprises, Inc.: a film agency. JA worked with agent Raoul Ronson.
White Hart House,  
High Street, Petworth,  
Sussex, England  
23rd July 1964

Dear Charles,

Two letters of yours have crossed one of mine – thank you for the NYT review – I must study that ending, my stepfather said it was a muddle too – and for the information about Ellery Queen. I will pay in the cheque! In haste, before total postal strike sets in…

yours  

Joan

Charles Schlessiger,  
Brandt & Brandt  
101 Park Avenue,  
New York

83 Martin Armstrong: American writer who married JA’s mother, Jessie McDonald, in 1929.
August 7, 1964

Dear Joan:

It is very nice to hear from you again – that postal strike made it seem as if a curtain of silence had descended over Britain. I am certainly relieved that it has lifted.

If any hypothetical film rights in HERONDALE are sold, there will be a 10% commission: 5% for us and 5% for the film agent with whom we are affiliated.

I am definitely leaving New York on the 17th of September, and I will be in London from the 20th to the 25th. I plan to see you on the 16th here.

Who is Daron?

How is Project X coming along?

Best,

cs
August 26, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

THE FORTUNE HUNTERS has come back from Redbook; and I am enclosing a copy of their letter. Before this it went to the Chicago Tribune; and now I am sending it to the Ladies Home Journal. 84

Will you please check your records and let me know if WHO’S MEDUSA? was sold to Suspense in 1958. I am trying it here; and I want to make sure I don’t get crossed up on the rights. Jean LeRoy wrote me that the story was never sold in England; but the copy you sent me last year is marked “Suspense, 1958”. This is one I like very much.

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

84 Rejected by Chicago Tribune. Rejected by Barbara Blakemore at Redbook, stating, “I think Joan Aiken is awfully good at thrillers, but unfortunately such material is hard for me to sell to Robert Stein. The combination of murder mystery and English background is not a particularly strong one for us.” HGARC, 25 Aug 1964.
Dear Charles,

Many thanks for two of yours and shame on me for not replying sooner. Summer holidays are frantic. It isn’t so much that I’ve been working; merely cooking masses of large meals and ferrying children about the countryside.

Yes, WHO’S MEDUSA was definitely sold to Suspense, and used by them in May 1960 but they retitled it HIT AND RUN and perhaps paid for it by that title; Jean’s records might have that instead. I like that one too. I started trying to make it into a TV play and have a first draft together with a bale of technical criticism from a friend in TV put away for some time when I have a month off.

Daron Enterprises, Inc. are the film agency that Jonathan Cape got in to handle the film rights of WOLVES; (they shouldn’t have done this really as Highams were supposed to be dealing with it, but it seems to have turned out for the best so far;) Daron were also interested in Herondale, and I’d assumed they were the agency you referred to in a letter in June who had had a copy of Herondale for a motion picture inquiry. Now I assume they aren’t! I asked David Bolt to check with you over this, as he also was speaking of a film inquiry over H. – which I’d take to be the same one – I’d hate to have wires crossed over this, like MARMALADE WINE. Though I still can’t take it seriously.

Thank you for the copy of the Redbook letter. I am afraid Mary Stewart has really scooped the English murder mystery field and I must admit she deserves to. But I’ll keep my fingers crossed for the Ladies H.J.

It’s awful--what with one distraction and another I haven’t been getting on with Product X. Instead I’ve fallen back on an old project, slightly more novel and less mystery, called THE ACCOMPLICES. I’ve done about 40,000 and another 40,000 to go, so it’s easier to take up and put down when I’m getting a lot of interruptions. But Product X will get finished in course – I always do finish anything that’s got to over 2000.

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85 Mary Stewart: English novelist, born 1916, also wrote historical novels.
Looking forward to seeing you on the 16th and sorry if this was a more than commonly disjointed letter –

Yours
Joan

Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York
Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I am sending you nine copies of the Doubleday edition of BLACK HEARTS for your files. I have kept one for mine, and I hope you do not mind. The official publication date here is the 16th of October.

Perhaps David Bolt has already written to you about the arrangement that we have worked out for commission on HERONDALE? I told him that Daron could handle this one, but that it must be done in a manner that would be the fairest for you. It is now worked that 5% goes to Daron, 5% to Highams, 5% to us. We are also under no obligation to go to them with your future books: the question of motion picture representation can be settled for each as it comes up.

Did you enjoy Nantucket? How was Conrad’s party? Are you back on the novel or on Project X? I am dying to hear from you.

Yours,

cs
enc. (9)
White Hart House,
High Street, Petworth,
Sussex, England
15th October 1964

Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Charles,

Telepathy: I’d just finished a letter to you when yours came. It answered several of my questions so I scrapped it and started again.\(^{87}\) First however I apologise humbly for not writing before to thank you for my nice outing in New York, the splendid Chinese meal and the lovely stroll along Park Avenue (New York seems the perfect place to walk in, I must have covered about 10 miles a day for the week I was there and only wish I’d got to Greenwich village sooner). How was your holiday? Marvellous, I hope – did Spain and Ireland come up to expectation and did it stay fine in London? Come back soon, and make it when I’m here next time!

My other excuse for not writing was that as soon as I got back I succumbed to an eye infection which stopped my reading or writing for a week.

I had a wonderful time in New Bedford and Nantucket (apart from slight difficulty getting to the latter because of an impending hurricane); everyone was wonderfully helpful with information and reminiscences and lifts – I’ve probably acquired enough material for ten books. It’s a delicious place. I can hardly believe it’s only a fortnight since I got back. And Conrad’s party was great fun–I was terrified at meeting such a mass of strangers but they were all very nice to me. I hope the limericks are doing well. Did Conrad tell you that a Time photographer came and took hundreds of pictures of us while C. made irrelevant but instructive conversation about the V.D. museum in Liverpool, England? I hope they give him a nice review.

D.Bolt never writes unless he must but I did gather that you’d seen him and come to an agreement, which I’m very glad about; I was worried because I couldn’t gather that Brandt & Brandt had any part in the Black Hearts film negotiations. I met Raoul Ronson of Daron after you left New York – his wife works at Doubleday so he learned I was about and rang up – he was very nice and enthusiastic and energetic but didn’t even seem to know that I had American agents. I supposed Doubledays put him straight through to Cape? Anyway I said you’d probably be getting in touch when you were back in New York. As to their dealing with future books: I leave it to you. With Cape also taking a

\(^{87}\) “mine” typewritten above “it.”
hand, as they do in the case of any books they published, it does seem to make a lot of
does seem to make a lot of parties to the deal.

Of course I was very excited to hear that the movie sale of Black Hearts was also
under way.88

I’ve just finished the job I was pecking at in New York—lengthening a woman’s
long-complete story to serial length for an English magazine, Woman who said they
might use it if it was longer. It is now about 35,000. D’you suppose there would be any
chance of Doubledays doing it as a book with another long story like Who’s Medusa?
Otherwise I can see that it is a most awkward length for the American market and I won’t
bother you with it— I simply can’t squeeze it out any longer! It is called Face in the
Dark.

Now I’m going back to my novel.

Do write and tell about your travels—I’m longing to hear if you enjoyed Spain
and what else you did in London besides seeing D.Bolt— did you get to Covent Garden?
And was your cat pleased to see you back?

And thank you again for that extremely nice evening.

Yours,

Joan

88 Rembrandt Films, through Daron Enterprises. The contract falls through due to a delay in
returning it signed by Higham. HGARC, 14 March 1965. Eventually made into television series
in the UK, 1995.
Dear Joan:

Please send me a carbon of FACE IN THE DARK. I would very much want to see if it has possibilities for publication here.

The news that you are going back to the novel is very exciting. My fingers start tapping the desk with impatience. This is one novel that I will be interested in reading! I will contain myself, though. When it comes through will be time enough.

I am sending you my copy of OF WHALES AND WOMEN by Frank B. Gilbreth, Jr. and tearsheets of THE RIGHT LITTLE ISLAND from Holiday magazine. You are undoubtedly up to your neck in Nantucket research, but you might enjoy glancing through this material.

Time has not reviewed the limericks yet – I don’t think they have. The party sounds marvellous; and I am sorry I missed it. I would love to see the pictures that were taken, but I am sure it would be impossible to get them from Time.

Europe was not to be believed! It rained only twice during the whole time we were there: five minutes in Dublin and about a half hour in Paris – on the day we were leaving. And someone tells me that the myth goes that if it rains on the day you are leaving Paris, you definitely return at some point in the future. I hope the myth is true.

I did get to Covent Garden. Tickets were completely sold out, so I had to stand from 6:00 o’clock to 12:00 o’clock for SIEGFRIED. The performance was quite good; and, of course, the house itself is a delight. London is a delight. I spent most of the time there walking. Have you ever been to Windsor Castle? This is surely the most impressive
sight in England. I was disappointed in the Tower of London, but Windsor Castle was one of the high points of the trip.

Spain was fascinating – cosmopolitan areas, deserts, then forests, mountains, motion picture sets. Actually, the set for THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE\textsuperscript{92} is still standing outside Madrid. I went to a bull fight the first Saturday in Madrid. I was thrilled and revolted at the same time. I am glad I have gone to one, but I don’t think I would ever go to another one.

Paris is exquisite. The city is being cleaned right now; and the monuments are probably as fresh looking as when they were erected. The Parisians have to pay heavy taxes for all this work; and I think this is the reason they are a bit unpleasant to the tourists.

Dublin is a nice city, one that you can do easily in a few days.

The cat was very reserved when I returned home. I thought she would run to greet me; but, no, she just sat in a corner staring out of the corner of her eyes. I suppose this is the way of cats. I had to pick her up first and then she welcomed me back.

Yours,

cs

October 22, 1964

Dear Joan:

What do you think of this? I hope it sells copies. In any event, it has made my day.\textsuperscript{93}

Best,

cs

enc.

\textsuperscript{92} 1964 film, directed by Anthony Mann.

\textsuperscript{93} The New Yorker, 24 October 1964, 245. The full-page ad includes Marriott’s illustration of the “heraldic balloon” as the centerpiece. JA describes the illustration on 18 June 1964, HGARC.
October 23, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

Mary asks me to send photographs of her drawing to you to Doubleday with instructions that they can not be used until you send approval. This creates all sorts of problems for me: I send the photograph to the mystery editor and the juvenile editor. You do not approve; and I have to withdraw the photographs. This dawns on me after I have already written Mary that I sent the photographs to Doubleday.

It seems to me much less complicated and far more practical to ask you first and then follow out your instructions. I will hold them till I hear from you.

My heard still spins from that advertisement in the New Yorker!

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

cs
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Charles,

Thank you so much for sending the advertisement. Wow! What a thing! It made my day too. How awful if it doesn’t sell very well after they’ve spent all that money.

The prints of Mary’s picture arrived here with the same post as your letter. I think they are splendid – much more enigmatical and interesting than I look (my photographs are always cross and pigfaced) – so do send them to Doubledays and bless you.

Would it be a horrid nuisance, if you are writing to the Doubleday mystery editor anyway, to ask if they could kindly mail me six more copies of HERONDALE and charge me or deduct from royalties whichever they prefer? (I want them to solve Christmas-present problems). And I apologise for burdening you with this chore but I have been housepainting all day (children are home for halfterm holiday so the place swarms with them sawing, hammering, playing chopsticks and pop records simultaneously, so it’s impossible to write) and I can’t face the thought of writing to them.

It will be a miracle if this letter isn’t covered with turquoise paint.

yours,

Joan
Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I have sent the photographs off to Doubleday; and I have asked Isabelle to have six copies of HERONDALÉ sent to you.

Tomorrow is Halloween – I hope all sorts of plots are going through your head and on to the typewriter. ¹⁴

Yours,

cs

¹⁴ Editorial mark in pencil removing first “e;” only time CS indicates any corrections on a carbon copy.
November 5, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

Isabelle has told us the good news that Doubleday has sold paperback rights in HERONDALE to Ace Books. You have probably already heard from her about it. I am so delighted that if you were here in the office now, I would dance around it with you!

You do know, don’t you, that any paperback money is split 50/50 with Doubleday? This is standard publishing procedure and the way it is in the agreement with them.

I still haven’t received FACE IN THE DARK. Did you send it to me?

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

cs
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Charles,

Thank you so much for your sendings – the Gilbreth book has just arrived. It looks splendid; I’m strongly-mindedly not going to read it till Monday when I go into hospital for a 3-day sojourn for a minor op – it looks like just the thing to take along for comic relief. And the tearsheets from Holiday were beautiful – it is a ravishing place, I felt homesick at once. However we’re definitely going back next year if I can scrape up fares for self and two huge teenage children.

I will take great care of your book and return when read; it was angelic of you to send it.

I’m mailing off FACE IN THE DARK separately; Woman have turned it down, drat them, saying there was too much childhood narrative and would I rewrite it, which I wouldn’t. So no British serial sale at present, unless Jean LeRoy comes up with something. I’m also sending a spare ms of THE FORTUNE HUNTERS which Ronson of Daron said he’d like to see; but don’t send it to them if you would rather not, I leave that to your discretion.

Yours
Joan
November 13, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

If I calculate correctly, this is your second day out of the hospital. I hope everything went well and that you are taking good care of yourself. Please keep the Gilbreth book. Consider it a “get well” gift.

You certainly have fallen in love with Nantucket if you are all set on going back next year. We will do all we can to help you scrape up the fares for you and your two teenagers! However, you are going to have to get back to the typewriter.

Conrad and Mary were here for a week between Cape Cod and Savannah. (Actually, they leave tomorrow for Washington and then they will stay in Savannah for the winter.) We had lunch together, Wednesday, at the Italian restaurant across the street from the one that we went to with you in September. Conrad seems to me to be in the best of spirits – he is enjoying all the commotion involved with the publication of the limericks. Anyone eavesdropping at our table would think they were sitting near the “Joan Aiken Admiration Society”. Mary mentioned that HERONDALE has sold to one of the British magazines. I was delighted to hear about that; and I hope it means that more interest has been created for a hardcover publication there.

Yours,

cs
Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street, Petworth  
Sussex, England  

Dear Joan:  

You may want to glance through this copy of a letter from the Star Weekly turning down THE FORTUNE HUNTERS.\(^{95}\) The script goes to Cosmopolitan today.  

And here is a clipping from the Christmas issues of McCall’s, a very nice one, on BLACK HEARTS.\(^{96}\)  

Best,  

\(^{95}\) Gwen Cowley writes to CS, “…while the story has a kind of simmering suspense throughout the tale the murder not being committed until the final chapter, the conclusion seems awkward in comparison and comes somewhat as an anti-climax.” HGARC, 16 Nov 1964.  
\(^{96}\) Could not recover.
Charles Schlessiger, Esq.,
Brandt & Brandt,
101 Park Avenue,
New York

Dear Charles,

How sweet of you to give me your Gilbreth. Thank you very much indeed. I enjoyed it enormously and it’s most instructive, isn’t it. Can I get you any English book in return? I’m a confirmed bookshopper, specially in the Charing Cross Road. Yes, I’m out of hospital now and feeling piano but improving. Anyway I wrote 40 pages of The Accomplices there so it wasn’t all wasted time. And I thought about the Nantucket story so much that the nurses probably thought I was crackers. I’m going to swap over to it for a bit now, having reached a watershed in the other one. (Sorry to work in this disjointed way but I have to arrange it with my subconscious; I am really working quite hard though). Unfortunately I have been morally blackmailed into a couple of other jobs by old pals, rewriting two short books on Israeli Wives and Rheumatism, and helping edit a Best of Argosy Bedside Book; however the first won’t take long and the second will be intermittent.97

Thank you very much for the two reviews of Black Hearts (McCalls positively stunning) and the copy of Gwen Cowley’s letter about The Fortune Hunters which seems very reasonable. Oh dear, I’m afraid now the Accomplices will be even less of a serial proposition-60,000 more now, and still no murder!

Thank you so much for your news of C & M – more than I’d got from them, the wretches.98 I do hope they are safe in Savannah by now.

best wishes,

your
Joan

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98 Conrad Aiken and wife Mary Hoover Aiken.
December 18, 1964

Miss Joan Aiken
White Hart House
High Street, Petworth
Sussex, England

Dear Joan:

I don’t know why it has taken me so long to come to grips with my feelings on FACE IN THE DARK. It must be because I like the opening section so much that I hate to admit that I feel it should be cut. Actually, it seems like two stories: the first interrupted when Meg leaves for Penleggan, the second story starting from there. You can not develop so much interest in characters and then drop them.

I felt, too, that you did not give Meg and Toby enough time together – in the text of the story – to fall in love. There seems to be so much more reader involvement in favor of George. I wonder how you would feel about starting the story with Meg arriving in Penleggan, meeting Toby and telling him her past history.

It seems to me that you should have more of Uncle Mark – you just can’t have him popping up like that in the end.

What do you think about all this? If you want me to show the script to Isabel, you are going to have to send me another copy. Mine is extremely light, many of the pages almost impossible to read. I really hope that you will agree to let this simmer a while longer in your mind, though.

Have a very merry Christmas, my dear Joan!

Yours,

cs
Your letter arrived on Christmas Eve and I’ve been intending to sit down and answer it ever since and failing to in the general scurry and turmoil which you can imagine (even the cat contributed by thoughtfully laying a mouse at the foot of my bed on Christmas morning). I hope you had a good Christmas too.

I was so pleased to hear from you, as I’d felt a sort of gap, and was awfully relieved to know it was not pneumonia but only Prendergastian Doubts about FACE IN THE DARK. I think all the points you make about it are extremely pertinent and workable. (I originally did begin with Meg going to Penleggan and clapped on all the beginning bit because the editor of Woman wanted some childhood and background. Yours is a much better solution). Don’t show it to Isabelle. Throw your nasty pale copy in the nearest bin (yes and I’m sorry about that, can’t think how I came to do it, I’m very carping when David Highams send me other people’s pale mss to read) and I’ll redo the whole story in due course, but probably not till I’ve finished my Nantucket sleighride which is now whizzing along, slightly handicapped by festivities.

A happy New Year to you!

Your
Joan
Miss Joan Aiken  
White Hart House  
High Street  
Petworth, Sussex  
England  

Dear Joan:

I love the Francis Steegmuller translation of THE OWL AND THE PUSSY-CAT! The Watteau illustrations are truly enchanting, the eyes in particular. I don’t remember ever seeing drawings that looked so real. It was very nice of you to send it to me.

Doubleday will have advance copies of THE FORTUNE HUNTERS around the middle of January.

Did you see the Christmas card the juvenile department used? It was by Robin Jacques and based on his drawings for BLACK HEARTS.

All my best for the New Year.

Yours,

Charles Schlessiger

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Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s Work 1953-2011

This bibliography includes the publisher and the year of publication for first editions in the UK and US. The UK edition is always listed first, US second, even when US publication occurred before the UK edition. When Aiken published the same work under different titles, the UK edition appears first with publisher and year; the US title, publisher, and year follow. When only one publisher and year is given, UK or US is specified parenthetically. The list gives an idea of the number of titles published only in one country (though perhaps distributed into the other). This bibliography does not contain short stories or novels published serially in magazines; only published editions and collections are included. Plays performed but never published were also omitted.

Most of the books went through multiple editions, with secondary impressions sold into paperback after hardcover. Some titles, such as The Wolves of Willoughby Chase, went through five different publishers between the first edition in 1962 and the fiftieth anniversary edition in 2012. Trouble With Product X went through six publishers between 1966 and an audio edition in 1991 in the UK. This bibliography is to give the scope of Aiken’s production during her lifetime, rather than supply a detailed bibliographical history.

For more information, see The Wonderful World of Joan Aiken in Works Referenced. The site contains a recently updated bibliography of Aiken’s work, compiled by her daughter, Lizza Aiken, and records the genre of each work. A detailed bibliography for Joan Aiken’s works for 1953 through 1967 appears in the introductory
material to familiarize readers with the books mentioned in letters 1963-64. See Bibliography of Joan Aiken’s work 1963-64 for more information on these editions.


The Mystery of Mr. Jones's Disappearing Taxi. BBC Paperback (UK): 1982.


Works Referenced

Specific articles used for this thesis are cited in footnotes where the reference occurs. This list compiles other sources consulted in the writing of the thesis. The majority of the information that makes up this selection came from the Joan Aiken Collection at Boston University, including the vast number of letters not included in the letters 1963-64. None of Aiken’s fiction works are cited here, though a number were read in partial and in full, as they appear cited elsewhere in the thesis.


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