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Guide to the Mina Loy Papers

YCAL MSS 6



by Karen V. Peltier

March 1987

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition	3
Conditions Governing Access	3
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Existence and Location of Copies	4
Associated Materials	4
MINA LOY (1882-1966)	4
Scope and Contents	5
Collection Contents	7
Series I: Writings, 1914-60	7
NOVELS	7
"Brontolivido"	7
"The Child and the Parent"	7
"Esau Penfold"	7
"Goy Israels"	8
"Insel"	8
"Islands in the Air"	8
POETRY	8
Drafts for <i>The Last Lunar Baedeker</i>	8
Other drafts	11
SHORTER WORKS	11
Series II: Other Papers, 1940-60	13
DRAWINGS AND DESIGNS	13
NOTES	13
Selected Search Terms	14

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 6

CREATOR: Loy, Mina

TITLE: Mina Loy papers

DATES: 1914-1960

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 4.25 linear feet (8 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain prose, poetry, drawings, and designs documenting the artistic career of modernist poet and artist Mina Loy.

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

Requesting Instructions

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

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

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Mina Loy Papers were donated to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library by Loy's daughter, Joella Haweis Bayer, in 1974 and 1975. Additional materials were donated by Mina Loy's grandson, Jonathan Bayer, in 2009.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 8: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Use

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

Preferred Citation

Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Existence and Location of Copies

The entire collection is available in digital form.

Associated Materials

Carolyn Burke Collection on Mina Loy and Lee Miller (YCAL MSS 778). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

MINA LOY (1882-1966)

Mina Loy, the modernist poet, painter, playwright, actress, and designer of lampshades, lived in Europe during the height of the Futurist, Dada, and Surrealist movements. Her talent, intellect, and exceptional beauty made her one of the central figures of the literary and artistic avant garde who later gathered around Alfred Stieglitz, Walter Conrad Arensberg, and Alfred Kreymborg in New York. Although Loy was a multi-gifted woman, her fame largely rests with her poetry, which is daring in its technical experimentation and feminist in its exploration of female oppression. Two collections of her poems were published during her lifetime, *Lunar Baedeker* (Paris: Contact Editions, 1923) and *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables* (Highlands, N.C.: Jargon, 1958); another collection, *The Last Lunar Baedeker* (Highlands, N.C.: Jargon, 1982), appeared posthumously.

Mina Loy, the eldest daughter of Sigmund and Julia Bryan Lowy, was born in London on December 27, 1882. She went to Munich in 1899 to study art with Angelo Jank and during this time shortened her name from Mina Gertrude Lowy to Mina Loy. In 1901-1902 she studied painting in England with Augustus John and met Stephen Haweis, whom she married in Paris on December 31, 1903. The couple lived and painted in Paris for the next three years and frequented the salon of Gertrude Stein. They moved to Florence in 1906, but their marriage collapsed in 1913 and Haweis left for Australia and the South Seas. At about the same time Loy probably had affairs with Filippo Marinetti and Giovanni Papini and her poetry, which reflected her interest in the Futurists, first began to appear in print. Loy came to New York in 1916, worked in a lampshade studio, acted in the Provincetown Theatre, and associated with the poets who published in *Others*. In New York City she met Arthur Cravan, whom she married in Mexico City in 1918 after obtaining a divorce from Haweis. Soon thereafter Cravan disappeared in Mexico and his body was later found in the desert.

When Loy returned to Paris in 1923, Robert McAlmon published *Lunar Baedeker*, which assured her a place among such modernist contemporary writers as Marianne Moore, Williams Carlos Williams, and T. S. Eliot. As the widow of poet-boxer Cravan, she maintained contact with the Dadaists and Surrealists, who saw Cravan as a hero. She continued her friendships with Marcel Duchamp, Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes and her agent Carl Van Vechten, and met many of the expatriates residing in Paris, including James Joyce and Constantin Brancusi. Although her literary career was at its height, she continued to support her family through the design and manufacture of lampshades for the shop that she opened with the financial backing of Peggy Guggenheim. "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," a semi-autobiographical poem about

Loy's Victorian upbringing, was published in two issues of the *Little Review* (1923) and in McAlmon's *The Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers* (1925). She also wrote several parallel autobiographical prose narratives on the same theme that were never published. Loy continued to paint in the 1930s, exhibiting her monochrome sand paintings in New York, and worked on another unpublished novel, "Insel."

In 1936 she moved to New York City where she remained for nearly twenty years, writing poetry and creating collages out of materials she found in back alleys and trash cans. In 1958 her poetry was republished in *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables*; the following year she received the Copley Foundation Award for Outstanding Achievement in Art and exhibited her "Constructions" at the Bodley Gallery. She died in Aspen, Colorado on September 29, 1966 after a short illness.

Loy had three children by her first husband and one by her second: Oda Janet Haweis (1903-1904), who died in infancy; Joella Synara Haweis Levy Bayer (1907-); John Giles Stephen Musgrove Haweis (1909-1923); and Jemima Fabienne Cravan Benedict (1919-).

Sources: Burke, Carolyn, "Mina Loy," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Gale, 1980), 4:259-60; Kouidis, Virginia M., *Mina Loy, American Modernist Poet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); Loy, Mina, *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover (Highlands, N.C.: Jargon, 1982).

Scope and Contents

The Mina Loy Papers contain prose, poetry, drawings, designs, and copyright inventions documenting the life of modernist poet and artist Mina Loy. The papers span the dates 1914-1960.

[Series I, Writings](#), begins with four boxes of drafts of six unpublished autobiographical novels based upon Loy's childhood in England, her student days in Germany, and her literary and art career in France and Italy. The novels are alphabetically arranged by title and their subject matter often overlaps.

Loy's childhood is the subject of three of the novels: "Goy Israels," "The Child and the Parent," and "Islands in the Air." Composed largely of fragments, "Goy Israels" probably represented Loy's first attempt to write about her stormy relationship with her family and her art school days in England. Loy, as the principal character "Goy Israels," discusses love, sex, marriage, and her Jewish identity. "The Child and the Parent," a title supplied from a fragment in the papers (Box 1, folder 10), may be an early version of "Islands in the Air." It covers Loy's life from childhood through marriage and motherhood. "Islands" ends with Loy's student days in Munich. The protagonists are "Ada" in "The Child" and "Linda" in "Islands," yet many of the chapters have similar titles and content, such as "Arrival on the Scene of an Accident" in "The Child" and "Accident" in "Islands" (Box 1, folder 12 and Box 4, folder 61). The oppression of women is the subject of chapter nine in both books.

"Esau Penfold," an unfinished work, is probably based upon Loy's early days in Florence with Haweis. In the second chapter, "Esau" and "Ova," the two primary characters, meet "Geronimo," a Futurist like Papini. Three caricatures accompany the novel and may be of Haweis.

Loy's subsequent affairs with Marinetti and Papini provide the focus of "Brontolivido," a novel set in Italy that portrays the two "Flabbergusts," "Brontolivido" and "Johannes," and their relationship with "Jemima." The material is arranged alphabetically by title or subject.

The last novel, "Insel," is loosely based upon Loy's friendship with the Surrealist painter and drug addict, Richard Oelze, during the 1930s in Paris and may have been written as a continuation of "Islands in the Air." It would logically follow "Colossus," a work about Loy's travels in Mexico with Cravan, which is not found in the papers.

Loy's poetry is housed in Box 5 and is divided into drafts published in *The Last Lunar Baedeker* and other drafts not included in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*. The poems are arranged by title and were primarily written in the 1940s. Many poems are about the United States, which she became a citizen of in 1946, including "American * a Miracle" and "Hot Cross Bum," about the "blowsy angels" who were her derelict neighbors in the Bowery from 1949-53. Some of Loy's headings are different from the published version: "There Is

No Love Alone," for instance, is entitled "Amor" on the manuscript. Many poems are also annotated with pencil sketches.

Some of the most significant other poems are "Biography of Songge Byrd," about Isadora Duncan (Box 5, folder 130) and "Esau Penfold," a free verse biography of Stephen Haweis. She also wrote a prose version of "I Almost Saw God in the Metro" entitled "A Hard Luck Story" (Box 6, folder 157). The poetry section includes reviews of *Lunar Baedeker* by Harriet Monroe and Yvor Winters, who described Loy's poems as "images that have frozen into epigrams." (*Dial*, 1926).

The series of Loy's *Writings* is completed in Box 6 with a collection of her shorter works, most of which were not published during her lifetime, except for "Aphorisms on Futurism" (*Camera Work*, 1914) and a play that mocks insincere disciples of art called "The Pamperers" (*Dial*, 1920). "Sacred Prostitute," an experimental play, satirizes the Futurist male attitudes toward women. Another parody, "Pazzerella," is a spoof of Papini's work. Her short stories are often autobiographical: "Hush Money," for example, is about the death of her father. The essays reflect her longstanding interest in religion, literature, and art. "Phenomenon in American Art," for instance, is about Joseph Cornell, an artist friend from New York. The collection also contains some early attempts at fairy tales, such as "Crocodile Without Any Tail" and even a ballet, "Crystal Pantomime."

[Series II, Other Papers](#), housed in Box 7, contains drawings and notes. Her drawings include fashion designs, a collage, and more than a dozen unidentified portraits in pencil and wash. A collection of copyright inventions include a corselet or armour for the body to correct "middle-age figure curvature," a stage set for the lyrical line "coloured folk have the moon in their eyes," and a valentine that ticks. There is one lampshade design decorated with an airplane.

Five folders of notes complete the papers. On Jews she wrote, "When the gentile world required a Saviour they nailed up the Christ, when it required a second Saviour to counteract the effects of the first, Freud was at its service." As might be expected, her other subjects include metaphysics, literature, and observations on artists such as "the aesthetic acrobat, Picasso."

Collection Contents

Series I: Writings, 1914-60

2.5 linear feet (6 boxes)

Boxes 1-6 hold Series I, *Writings*, which is divided into three sections, *Novels*, *Poetry*, and *Shorter Works*. The first section, *Novels*, is arranged alphabetically by title, and material within each title has been placed in the following order: notes, drafts, and fragments. *Poetry*, in the second section, is divided into drafts published in *The Last Lunar Baedeker* and other drafts. A folder of printed reviews completes the division. The third section, *Shorter Works*, is arranged alphabetically by title followed by unidentified fragments. A few manuscripts of verse and prose are filed in Box 7 because of their size.

NOVELS

"Brontolivido"

b. 1, f. 1	"Absolution": draft	n.d.
b. 1, f. 2	"First Costa Visit": draft	n.d.
b. 1, f. 3	"Gloria": draft	n.d.
b. 1, f. 4	"Illicit Honeymoon": draft	n.d.
b. 1, f. 5	[Marinetti]: draft of a dialogue	n.d.
b. 1, f. 6	[Papini]: notes on Johannes and Geronimo	n.d.
b. 1, f. 7	"Rome": draft fragments	n.d.
b. 8, f. 195	"Rome": draft fragments Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	undated
b. 1, f. 8	"Second Costa Visit": draft fragments	n.d.
b. 1, f. 9	"Vallombrosa": draft	n.d.

"The Child and the Parent"

b. 1, f. 10	Notes	n.d.
b. 1, f. 11-14	"The Child": drafts of chapters III-VI	n.d.
b. 1, f. 15-20	"The Parent": drafts of chapters VII-XII	n.d.

"Esau Penfold"

b. 1, f. 21	Notes	n.d.
b. 8, f. 196	Chapter I: draft fragments Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	undated
b. 1, f. 22	Chapter I: draft fragments (preservation photocopy)	n.d.

NOVELS > "Esau Penfold" (continued)

b. 1, f. 23	Chapter II: draft	n.d.
b. 8, f. 197	Fragments Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	undated
b. 1, f. 24-25	Fragments	n.d.
b. 1, f. 26	Illustrations	n.d.
"Goy Israels"		
b. 2, f. 27-29	Draft: incomplete	n.d.
b. 2, f. 30	Fragments	n.d.
"Insel"		
b. 2, f. 31	Notes	n.d.
b. 2, f. 32-35	First draft	n.d.
b. 2, f. 36-39	First draft: fragments	n.d.
b. 3, f. 40-48	Second draft: copies 1-3	n.d.
b. 3, f. 49-50	Second draft: variants	n.d.
b. 3, f. 51-56	Third draft: copies 1-2	n.d.
b. 3, f. 57	Third draft: transcript of pp. 88-92	n.d.
"Islands in the Air"		
b. 4, f. 58-69	Chapters I-X: drafts	n.d.
b. 8, f. 198	Fragments Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	undated
b. 4, f. 70-71	Fragments	n.d.
POETRY		
Drafts for <i>The Last Lunar Baedeker</i>		
b. 5, f. 72	Lists of poem titles	n.d.
b. 5, f. 73	"Aid of the Madonna"	1943
b. 8, f. 199	"America _ a Miracle" Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	1941
b. 5, f. 74	"America _ a Miracle"	1941

POETRY > Drafts for The Last Lunar Baedeker (continued)

b. 5, f. 75	"Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose": fragment	n.d.
b. 5, f. 76	"Apology of Genius II"	1930 October 28
b. 5, f. 77	"Aviators' Eyes"	1943
b. 5, f. 78	"Birth of Melody"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 79	"The Black Virginitv": photocopy	n.d.
b. 5, f. 80	"Brain"	1945 Aug
b. 5, f. 81	"Breath Bank"	1944
b. 5, f. 82	"Brilliant Confusion of Brilliance"	1945 Sep
b. 5, f. 83	"Ceiling at Dawn"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 84	"Chiffon Velours"	1944 May 6
b. 5, f. 85	"Child Chanting"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 86	"Continuity"	1943
b. 5, f. 87	"Descent of the Ganges"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 88	"Echo"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 89	"Ephemerid"	1944 Aug
b. 5, f. 90	"Evolution"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 91	"Faun-Fare"	1948 Dec 27
b. 5, f. 92	"Hilarious Israel"	1944 Dec 1
b. 5, f. 93	"Hot Cross Bum"	1949 Aug 30
b. 5, f. 94	"I Almost Saw God in the Metro" See also: "A Hard Luck Story" Box 6, folder 157	n.d.
b. 5, f. 95	"Idiot Child on a Fire-Escape"	1943
b. 5, f. 96	"Impossible Opus"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 97	"L'Inavouable Enfant"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 98	"Joyce's Ulysses": fragment	n.d.
b. 5, f. 99	"Jules Pascin"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 99a	"Lady Laura in Bohemia," fragment	1925 Aug 2
b. 5, f. 100	"Letters of the Unliving"	1949 Jun 19
b. 5, f. 101	"Maiden Song"	1944
b. 5, f. 102	"Mass Production on 14th Street"	1942 Jul 27

POETRY > Drafts for The Last Lunar Baedeker (continued)

b. 5, f. 103	"The Mediterranean Sea"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 104	"Mexican Desert"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 105	"Moreover the Moon"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 106	"Mother Earth"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 107	"Nancy Cunard"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 108	"Negro Dancer"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 109	"O Hell"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 110	"An Old Woman"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 111	"Omen of Victory"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 112	"On Third Avenue"	1942
b. 5, f. 113	"Overnight"	1943
b. 5, f. 114	"Photo After Pogrom"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 115	"Portrait of a Nun"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 116	"Property of Pigeons"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 117	"Repassed Platform"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 118	"Revelation"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 119	"Show Me a Saint Who Suffered"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 120	"The Song of the Nightingale Is Like the Scent of Syringe": fragment	n.d.
b. 5, f. 121	"Songge Byrd" See also: "Biography of Songge Byrd," Box 5, folder 130	n.d.
b. 5, f. 122	"Stravinski's Flute"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 123	"Summer Night in a Florentine Slum"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 124	"There Is No Love Alone"	1949 Jan 29
b. 5, f. 125	"Time Bomb"	n.y. Aug 31
b. 5, f. 126	"Transformation Scene"	1944
b. 5, f. 127	"Vision on Broadway"	1944
b. 5, f. 128	"White Petunia"	1944 Jul
b. 5, f. 129	Reviews	1923, 1926
b. 5, f. 149A	The Last Lunar Baedeker Printed version with manuscript corrections. Gift of Jonathan Bayer, 2009.	1923

POETRY (continued)

Other drafts

b. 5, f. 130	"Biography of Songge Byrd"	1952
b. 5, f. 131	"Crowd"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 132	"Early Botany"	1943 May 11
b. 5, f. 133	"Electric Love Release": fragment	n.d.
b. 5, f. 134	"Esau Penfold" See also: Esau Penfold, Box 1, folders 21-26	n.d.
b. 5, f. 135	"Film Face"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 136	"In Extremis"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 137	"Indelicate Light"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 138	"The Infinite Is the Obvious"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 139	"Interplay"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 140	"Intimate"	1944
b. 5, f. 141	"Jesus and Eros"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 142	"Let Us Pray"	1942 Oct
b. 5, f. 143	"Marble"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 144	"Passivia"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 145	"Pygmaleon and Galatea"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 146	"Silence"	1943
b. 5, f. 147	"Soldier"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 148	"Surfeit of Controversy"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 149	Unidentified fragments	1925-30,n.d.

SHORTER WORKS

b. 6, f. 150	"The Agony of the Partition"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 150A	"Alda's Beauty" Gift of Jonathan Bayer, 2009.	n.d.
b. 6, f. 151	"All the Laughs in One Short Story by MacAlmon": fragment	n.d.
b. 6, f. 152	"Aphorisms on Futurism"	[1914]
b. 6, f. 152a	"Bye-Thoughts"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 153	"Conversion"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 154	"The Crocodile without Any Tail"	n.d.

SHORTER WORKS (continued)

b. 6, f. 155	"Crystal Pantomime (Ballet)"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 156	"Gertrude Stein"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 157	"A Hard Luck Story": drafts and fragments	n.d.
b. 6, f. 158-59	"History of Religion and Eros": notes and drafts	n.d.
b. 6, f. 160	"Hush Money"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 161	"In Maine Greens Colony"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 162	"Incident"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 163	"Lady Asterisk"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 164	"Mabel"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 165	"The Metaphysical Pattern in Aesthetics"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 166	"Mi and Lo"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 167	"Monde Triple-Extra": fragment	n.d.
b. 6, f. 168	"The Oil in the Machine?"	1921
b. 6, f. 169	"The Pamperers": fragment	n.d.
b. 6, f. 170-71	"Pazzerella"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 172	"Phenomenon in American Art"	1950 Nov 25
b. 6, f. 173	"Piero and Eliza"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 174	"Preceptors of Childhood"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 175	"Rosa"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 176	"Sacred Prostitute"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 177	"Static"	1944
b. 6, f. 178	"The Stomach"	1921 Jul
b. 6, f. 179	"The Three Wishes"	n.d.
b. 8, f. 200	"Transfiguration": fragment Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	undated
b. 6, f. 180	"Transfiguration": fragment (preservation photocopy)	n.d.
b. 6, f. 181	"Tuning in on the Atom Bomb"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 182	"Universal Food Machine"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 183	Unidentified fragments	n.d.

Series II: Other Papers, 1940-60*1.5 linear feet (1 box)*Box 7 holds Series II, *Other Papers*, which is divided into two sections, *Drawings and Designs* and *Notes*.

DRAWINGS AND DESIGNS

b. 7, f. 184	Designs	1941, n.d.
b. 7, f. 185	Figure drawings	n.d.
b. 7, f. 186	Inventions	1940-60

NOTES

b. 8, f. 201	Miscellaneous, n.d. Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	undated
b. 7, f. 187	Miscellaneous	n.d.
b. 7, f. 188	On Art	n.d.
b. 7, f. 189	On Jews	n.d.
b. 7, f. 190	On Literature	1948, n.d.
b. 7, f. 191	On Metaphysics	n.d.
b. 7, f. 192-194	[Empty folders]	

Selected Search Terms

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

Subjects

Art, Modern -- 20th Century
Artists -- United States
Feminism
Futurism (Art)
Futurism (Literary movement)
Jewish way of life
Poetry, Modern -- 20th Century
Women

Genres / Formats

Autobiographies
Drawings (visual works)
Poems

Occupations

Authors

Names

Haweis, Stephen, 1878-1969
Loy, Mina
Marinetti, F. T., 1876-1944
Oelze, Richard, 1900-1980
Papini, Giovanni, 1881-1956