



**EAAS POSTGRADUATE
TRAVEL GRANT REPORT 2015**

**Joanna Mąkowska
Institute of English Studies,
American Literature Department
University of Warsaw**

Research period: August 17 – September 28, 2015

Host institutions: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library/Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT

Sources consulted: Mina Loy Papers, Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, Carolyn Burke Collection on Mina Loy and Lee Miller



Sterling Memorial Library, Yale's Cross Campus.

The Transatlantic Travel Grant generously provided by the European Association for American Studies enabled me to conduct research at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library from mid-August till late September 2015. A principal repository for literary archives, early manuscripts and rare books, the Beinecke houses the Yale Collection of American Literature, which is recognized for its strength is the early twentieth-century writings. The primary focus of my archive trip was to consult the Mina Loy Papers, donated to the Beinecke by Loy's daughter, Joella Haws Bayer, in 1974 and 1975. Although the library's building remains closed for renovation until the fall of 2016, I was provided with access to Loy's archived papers and other primary and secondary sources via a temporary reading room in Yale's Sterling Memorial Library.

In my dissertation, I compare the works of Mina Loy and Adrienne Rich in order to demonstrate how both poets conceptualized the body and its materiality, to what extent their corporeal writing was influenced by prevailing body discourses and what political and ethical implications it carried. Working across the modernist/postmodernist 'great divide' might be a worthwhile venture, but it also entails numerous pitfalls. Consulting Loy's archive at this particular writing stage not only helped me address some of the most pressing research

questions, but also inspired me to develop a conceptual framework aimed at dissolving the fossilized notions of modernist-impersonal-subversive and postmodernist-personal-feminist poetics.

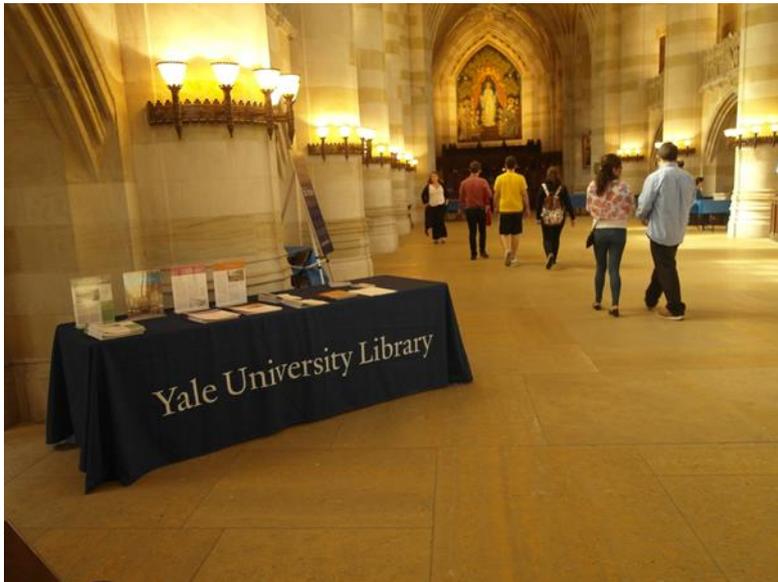
During the first half of my research visit I focused on Loy's unpublished narrative writings and polemical works. What I considered particularly relevant to my project was her autobiographical novel "Islands in the Air" and its earlier version titled "The Child and the Parent." In the draft versions of these novels, available only at the Beinecke, Loy discusses the mind-body relationship and develops her own concept of 'electrolife.' In the course of my research I was delighted to come across the draft versions of two short prose pieces – "History of Religion and Eros" (quite recently published as part of *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy*) and "Notes on Metaphysics" (unpublished) – which both provide a valuable insight into the author's approach towards corporeal materiality. The fact that Loy's take on the question of embodiment in these mainly unpublished works differs considerably from her earlier conceptualizations, prompted me to review some of my ideas and translate them into the chapter tentatively titled "Society, Consciousness and the Body in Loy's later works."

The next three weeks proved to be equally productive. I consulted Loy's shorter works, experimental essays, drafts for the poetry collection *The Last Lunar Baedeker* and other unpublished drafts such as Isadora Duncan's biography in verse composed in 1952 and titled "Songge Byrd," or the poem "Pygmaeon (sic) and Galatea" ("written eons ago"). Given that Loy's career as a visual artist exerted a profound influence on her literary output, I also looked at her drawings, designs and copyright inventions, which accompany the papers.

The wonderfully supportive Beinecke Library's staff guided me to other specialized resources relevant to my research project, namely the Carolyn Burke Collection on Mina Loy and Lee Miller. Apart from the autograph manuscripts, fragments of unpublished writings and family photographs, this recent acquisition (2011-2013) includes Loy's correspondence and Carolyn Burke's impressive research files compiled while working on Loy's meticulous biography, *Becoming Modern*. I particularly enjoyed going through Burke's research notes on Loy and Basil Bunting, a file on Christian Science and interviews with Loy's daughter, Joella. Having in mind that the Beinecke is world-renowned for its archival collections in modernism, I consulted the papers of Mabel Dodge Luhan and Gertrude Stein with a view to uncovering their correspondence with Loy. Finally, I accessed the wealth of resources in literary theory and philosophy available at the remarkable Sterling Memorial Library.

There are unquestionable benefits of my U.S. research trip which I would like to highlight in this report. First, I had a unique opportunity to advance my dissertation research by looking at primary sources I would not have been able to consult outside the United States. Second, the vast array of extra-literary sources available at Yale University's libraries helped me to contextualize Loy's later works and better understand the current trends in her criticism. Third, working on archived papers, which consist of numerous handwritten drafts, annotated transcripts, corrected proofs and notes, allowed me to witness the multi-staged process of creation and develop my research skills. Last but not least, I had a chance to collect rare materials that will be integrated into my dissertation and might contribute to enhancing my future research projects.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks and appreciation to the Beinecke Library staff for their help and support. In particular, I am grateful to Moira Fitzgerald, Head of Access Services, for her guidance both before and during my research visit. Most importantly, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the EAAS for awarding me a generous scholarship which made this wonderful academic adventure possible.



The recently restored entrance nave in Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library