



ArchivesSpace

a community served by †Lyrasis

Maxwell Bodenheim papers 9025181

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on January 13, 2025.

Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Butler Library, 6th Floor
Columbia University, Mail Code 1127
535 W. 114th St.
New York, NY 10027

Business Number: (212) 854-5153

Fax Number: (212) 854-1365

rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu

URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/rbml/index.html>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope and Content	5
Arrangement	6
Administrative Information	6
Controlled Access Headings	8
Collection Inventory	8
Series I: Correspondence	8
Series II: People	8
Series III: Writings	9

Summary Information

Repository:	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Creator:	Bodenheim, Maxwell, 1893-1954
Title:	Maxwell Bodenheim papers
ID:	9025181
ID:	MS#1590
Date [inclusive]:	1917-1981
Date [bulk]:	1917-1938
Physical Description:	2 linear feet 5 document boxes
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Maxwell Bodenheim (1892-1954) was a poet and novelist who was pervasive throughout the bohemian scenes in Chicago and New York's Greenwich Village in the first half of the 20th century. The collection consists of a broad scope of materials produced by Bodenheim from 1917 to the mid 1930s, including correspondence (mostly with his wife Minna), drafts of talks and writings, and records of business dealings with publishers and legal issues surrounding his divorce and an obscenity suit against him.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Maxwell Bodenheim Papers; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

Maxwell Bodenheim was born Maxwell Bodenheimer in May of 1892 in Hermanville, Mississippi. At the age of nine he moved with his family to Chicago. In 1908 Bodenheim was expelled from high school and joined the army. Following an attempted desertion he was

caught and jailed at Ft Leavenworth, Kansas where he served the rest of his tour of duty. After completing his service he spent time traveling around the Southwestern United States.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

In 1912 Bodenheim moved back to Chicago and worked to establish himself in the literary scene there, developing a friendship with novelist and screenwriter Ben Hecht. The two would continue to collaborate and quarrel through the end of Bodenheim's life. It was also in Chicago that he met critic and editor Harriet Monroe, and published poems in her journal *Poetry*, as well as in *The Little Review*.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

Bodenheim moved to New York in 1916 and settled in Greenwich Village. He established a friendship with poet Alfred Kreymborg with whom he had been in ongoing correspondence, and continued to publish poetry. Between 1916 and 1918 his poems appeared in journals the *New Republic*, the *Seven Arts*, the *Pagan*, and the *Egoist*, and he edited the magazine the *Others*. As an *Others* editor he became friend with poets William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore, who contributed frequently to the writing and editing of the magazine. *Minna and Myself*, his first book of poems, was published in 1918 and he married Minna Schein, for whom the book is titled, in November of that year. In 1920 she gave birth to their only son Solbert.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

Throughout the 1920s Bodenheim continued to write and publish prolifically, finishing six books of poetry and eight novels by 1930. His 1925 novel *Replenishing Jessica* brought obscenity charges against himself and publisher Horace Liveright, however both were easily acquitted. The trial brought a brief surge in Bodenheim's popularity and book sales, but he was dismayed by the damage to his reputation and wrote to friends that he felt "neglected" and "isolated." Though he remained married to Minna he had become notorious after a 1928 string of highly publicized suicides by former and current girlfriends, all apparently spurred by his

rejection, and by the end of the decade Bodenheim had firmly established himself as a resident and colorful, if poorly-behaved and sometimes recalcitrant, Greenwich Village bohemian.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

By the 1930s Bodenheim was becoming increasingly destitute but he continued to write and publish through the first half of the decade, and by 1934 he had put out another seven novels and one more book of poetry. A 1932 stint in Hollywood however, left him sick and his financial condition unimproved and in 1935 he marched with a small group on city hall to protest the dwindling writer's relief funds on which he depended to live. Bodenheim was divorced by Minna in 1938, and married his second wife Grace Finan shortly after in 1939. Finan was quickly bedridden with cancer and Bodenheim--when he was able--nursed her until her death in 1950.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

Throughout most of his second marriage Bodenheim was a regular in Village bars and streets, where he would sell poems for money to buy drinks. He lived mostly on the streets when he was not otherwise bouncing from room to room. In 1951 Bodenheim married his third wife, Ruth Fagan who was almost 30 years his younger, and the two of them slept on benches and panhandled for a living. Finally on the night of February 6 1954, Bodenheim and Fagan accepted an invitation to spend the night at the apartment of Harold Weinberg, who they had known for about a year. In an argument over the sexual relationship between Ruth and Weinberg, Weinberg shot Bodenheim in the chest, killing him, and stabbed Ruth to death with a hunting knife.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content

The collection consists of correspondence to and from Bodenheim and his wife Minna, a few files on individuals, and manuscripts and typescripts of Bodenheim's poetry, novels, plays, essays, and talks. Correspondence to Bodenheim is mostly from publishers with a few items from friends. Some personal correspondence from friends to Minna Bodenheim is also

included. The vast majority of the correspondence is from from Maxwell Bodenheim to Minna Bodenheim, and runs from the 1920s to the mid 1930s.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content

Most of the collection is made up of the manuscript and typescript drafts of Bodenheim's novels, poems, and plays. Covering the period between 1917 and the mid 1930s, the drafts contain material that Bodenheim would go on to publish both as novels and books of poetry, as well as various essays and talks that would be published in journals over the course of Bodenheim's life. The manuscripts for *Georgie MayM* (1928), *Crazy Man* (1924), and *Sixty Seconds* (1929) are included, as well as some of the material from Bodenheim's first published book of poetry, *Minna and Myself* (1918).

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in 3 series.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Butler Library, 6th Floor
Columbia University, Mail Code 1127
535 W. 114th St.
New York, NY 10027

Business Number: (212) 854-5153

Fax Number: (212) 854-1365

rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu

URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/rbml/index.html>

Revision Description

xml document instance created by Carrie Hintz EAD was imported spring 2019 as part of the ArchivesSpace Phase II migration. 2012-02-09 2019-05-20

Restrictions on Access

This collection is located on-site.

Restrictions on Access

This collection has no restrictions.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Reproductions may be made for research purposes. The RBML approves permission to publish that which it physically owns; the responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

Acquisition

Glenn Howowitz Purchase, 9/20/2011 2011-2012-M036

Acquisition

Lorne Bair rare Books Purchase, 9/20/2011 2016-2017-M133

Processing Information

Papers processed 11/--/2011 Charles Macquarie, Pratt Institute 2012.

Processing Information

Findign aid written 11/--/2011 Charles Macquarie, Pratt Institute 2012.

Processing Information

Poems (12) added by PTL, 12/16/2015 (Accn.#2015.2016.M089).

Accruals

Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared. Contact rbml@columbia.edu for more information.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Modernism (Literature) -- New York (State) -- New York
- Greenwich Village (New York, N.Y.) -- Intellectual life -- 20th century
- Bodenheim, Maxwell, 1893-1954
- Putnam, Samuel, 1892-1950

Collection Inventory

Series I: Correspondence, 1917-1981

Scope and Contents

This series contains correspondence that was exchanged between Bodenheim and his wife Minna, letters sent to Bodenheim from friends, colleagues, and publishers, and letters sent to Minna Bodenheim from individuals other than Maxwell Bodenheim. The material is arranged chronologically by year. The series also includes correspondence about Bodenheim's divorce and the suit brought against him for *Replenishing Jessica*, along with royalty statements and contracts from publishers.

Title/Description	Instances	
To Maxwell Bodenheim--General, 1919-1935	box 1	folder 1
To Minna Bodenheim		
General, 1930-1954	box 1	folder 2
From Maxwell Bodenheim, 1917-1939 <u>Physical Description:</u> (19 Folders)	box 1	folder 3 to 12
From Maxwell Bodenheim, 1917-1939 <u>Physical Description:</u> (19 Folders)	box 2	folder 1 to 9
Legal Proceedings, 1935-1981	box 2	folder 10
Contracts and Royalty Statements, 1929-1934	box 2	folder 11

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series II: People, 1920-1966

Scope and Contents

This series consists of two folders containing materials on Bodenheim's son Solbert and on Louis Grudin, respectively. Some materials relating to Solbert's childhood are included. Included in the Grudin folder are several letters from Bodenheim as well as an outline for the *Seven Sneers Manifesto* which

Bodenheim proposed to Grudin, drafts of several poems sent by Bodenheim, and Grudin's eulogy for Bodenheim, which was never read.

Title/Description	Instances	
Bodenheim, Solbert, 1920-1932	box 2	folder 12
Grudin, Louis, 1924-1966	box 2	folder 13

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series III: Writings, 1917-1932

Scope and Contents

This series is arranged into seven subdivisions by type of material--essays, novels, plays, poems, reports, shorts stories, and talks. These subdivisions are arranged alphabetically, and except for the poetry file which is arranged chronologically, the folders and materials within them are arranged alphabetically by title. The essays file contains critical essays, published and unpublished, written between the mid 1920s and 1930s. The novels file contains typescripts and manuscripts of published and unpublished novels from 1924 to 1932, including *Georgie May*, *Crazy Man*, *Six A.M.*, and *Sixty Seconds*. The plays file includes manuscripts and typescripts of various plays by Bodenheim, all of which are unpublished. The poems file contains manuscripts and typescripts of poem drafts and translations written between 1917 and the 1930s. Included are poems for *Minna and Myself* and poems from the unpublished collection *Tenderly*. The reports subseries contains drafts of undated reports by Bodenheim on Fyodor Dostoevsky and Karl Wasserman. The short stories file is made up of manuscripts and typescripts of 3 undated short stories--"Alarm Clock", "Paris Negro", and "The Silver Locket." The talks file contains Bodenheim's text for several undated talks and discussions.

Title/Description	Instances	
General	box 2	folder 14
Essays:		
"The American Menagerie" and "Crime and the Underworld", 1929	box 2	folder 15
"Georgie May Answers the 'Virtuous' Critics", circa, 1928	box 2	folder 16
<i>Laughing at Bombast</i> circa, 1930s <u>Physical Description:</u> (7 Folders)	box 3	folder 1 to 7
"The Relation of Economics to Poetry", "Should Sex Dominate American Literature?", and "What's Wrong with American Literature", circa, 1930s	box 3	folder 8
Untitled Manuscript, "Bohemia is a word often used... ", ca 1923-4 <u>Physical Description:</u> (5 pages)	box 2	folder 17
Scope and Contents		
Accession 2016.2017.M133		

Novels:

<i>Crazy Man</i>		
Manuscript, circa, 1924	box 3	folder 9
Typescript, circa, 1924 <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 3	folder 10 to 11
<i>Georgie May</i> manuscript, circa, 1928	box 3	folder 12
"Incredible Manuscript", undated	box 3	folder 13
<i>Six A.M.</i> typescript, circa, 1932	box 3	folder 14
<i>Sixty Seconds</i> manuscript, circa, 1929	box 3	folder 15
<i>Strange Girl</i> typescript, circa, 1930 <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 4	folder 1 to 2
General manuscript, undated	box 4	folder 3
<i>Dream, Boy!</i>		
Manuscript, undated	box 4	folder 4
Typescript, undated	box 4	folder 5
<i>Georgie May</i> typescript, circa, 1928	box 4	folder 6
<i>The Kitchen Absurd</i> typescript, undated	box 4	folder 7
<i>Love in Greenwich Village</i> manuscript, undated	box 4	folder 8
<i>The Merry Priest</i> typescript, undated	box 4	folder 9
<i>One Street</i> manuscript, undated	box 4	folder 10
<i>What's it all About?</i> manuscript, undated	box 4	folder 11
Typescript and manuscript, 1917	box 4	folder 12
Typescript, Li Po Translations, circa, 1917	box 4	folder 13
From <i>Minna and Myself</i> typescript and manuscript, circa, 1918	box 4	folder 14
typescript and manuscript, "Minna Poems", 1918-1919	box 4	folder 15
Typescript and manuscript, 1921-1928	box 4	folder 16
From <i>Tenderly</i> typescript and manuscript,, 1928-1929	box 4	folder 17
"Gray Rivers" published, circa, 1930s	box 4	folder 18
Reports--"Karl Wasserman" manuscript and typescript and "Fyodor Dostoevsky" manuscript,, undated	box 4	folder 19
Poems:		
"Sincerely Yours, Culture" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 1
"Poem to a Rose" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 2

"Sonnet" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 3
"Captain Simmons" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 4
"Death" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 5
"Blind" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 6
"To a Woman" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 7
"Insanity" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 8
"North Clark Street, Chicago" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 9
"Mr. Dogma Takes a Stroll" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 10
"South State Street: Chicago" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 11
"Rattle-Snake Mountain Fable I" typescript, undated	box 5	folder 12
"To Ben Reitman", ca 1923-4	box 2	folder 17

Physical Description: (2 pages)

Scope and Contents

Accession 2016.2017.M133

Short Stories

"Alarm Clock" typescript, undated	box 4	folder 20
"Paris Negro" manuscript, undated	box 4	folder 21
"The Silver Locket" typescript, undated	box 4	folder 22

Talks

Untitled manuscript and "Poetry and Greenwich Village" manuscript, undated	box 4	folder 23
"Poetry and Sex" manuscript, "What's Wrong with American Novels" typescript, and untitled manuscript pages,, undated	box 4	folder 24

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)