Marya Zaturenska's Depression Diary 1933-1935

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Franz Leopold Ranke, the Ranke Library at Syracuse, and the Open Future of Scientific History
By Siegfried Baur, Post-Doctoral Fellow
Thyssen Foundation of Cologne, Germany
Baur pays tribute to “the father of modern history,” whose twenty-ton library crossed the Atlantic in 1888, arriving safely at Syracuse University. After describing various myths about Ranke, Baur recounts the historian’s struggle to devise, in the face of accepted fictions about the past, a source-based approach to the study of history.

Librarianship in the Twenty-First Century
By Patricia M. Battin, Former Vice President and University Librarian, Columbia University
Battin urges academic libraries to “imagine the future from a twenty-first century perspective.” To flourish in a digital society, libraries must transform themselves, intentionally and continuously, through managing information resources, redefining roles of information professionals, and nourishing future leaders.

Manuscripts Processing at Syracuse: An Insider’s View
By Kathleen Manwaring, Manuscripts Processor
Syracuse University Library
After explaining the specialness of special collections, Manwaring compares the processing of books and serials, with their preselected, preorganized content, to the processing of manuscripts, which “reflect the chaos inherent in real life.” The latter requires “total immersion” in order to “discover and reflect the underlying structure of the individual’s life experience” while making his or her papers accessible to scholars.

African Americans and Education: A Study of Arna Bontemps
By Joseph Downing Thompson Jr., Director
John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African-American Documentation, Duke University

The page ends with the end of the first page.
Using the life and work of Arna Bontemps as a case in point, Thompson examines the relationship between the formation of racial identity and the culture of educational institutions themselves, not merely the intellectual, cultural, and political traditions imparted by them.

Black Abolitionists of Central New York: An Intimate Circle of Activism
By Bonnie Ryan, Associate Librarian, Reference Department, Syracuse University Library
In the spring of 1999 Ryan curated an exhibition in E. S. Bird Library titled “Intimate Circles of Activism: Abolitionists of Central New York, 1830–1860.” This article, an offshoot of the exhibition, focuses on letters to activist and philanthropist Gerrit Smith from certain African American abolitionists.

Stephen Crane’s Inamorata: The Real Amy Leslie
By Charles Yanikoski, Independent Scholar, Harvard, Massachusetts
In 1896 Stephen Crane had a love affair with a woman named Amy Leslie. Was she a denizen of the New York underworld, as many scholars have maintained? Or was she, as Yanikoski argues, a Chicago actress, theater critic, and celebrity?

Some Unpublished Oscar Wilde Letters
By Ian Small, Professor of English Literature, University of Birmingham, England
Oscar Wilde scholar Ian Small provides the historical context of four Wilde letters held in the Syracuse University Library.

Cultural History and Comics Auteurs: Cartoon Collections at Syracuse University Library
By Chad Wheaton, Doctoral Student in History, Syracuse University
With Carolyn A. Davis, Reader Services Librarian, Syracuse University Library Department of Special Collections
After discussing the importance of the comics as a subject for scholarly study, Wheaton describes selected cartoonists and genres represented in Syracuse University Library’s cartoon collection. Carolyn Davis provides a complete list of the Library’s cartoon holdings.

Marya Zaturenska’s Depression Diary, 1933–1935
By Mary Beth Hinton, Editor, Syracuse University Library Associates Courier
Selections from the diary of the poet Marya Zaturenska reveal her struggles as a woman and an artist, and provide glimpses of the intellectual scene in New York and London during the depression.

News of Syracuse University Library and of Library Associates

Post-Standard Award Citation, 1998, for David H. Stam
Post-Standard Award Citation, 1999, for Dorothea P. Nelson
Post-Standard Award Citation, 2000, for Kathleen W. Rossman
Recent Acquisitions:
  Thomas Moore Papers
  Kat Ran Press (Michael Russem)
  Margaret Bourke-White Photographs
  The Werner Seligmann Papers
In Memoriam
Marya Zaturenska’s Depression Diary, 1933–1935

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY MARY BETH HINTON

In the depression-era diary of the poet Marya Zaturenska (1902–1982), one meets many of the most influential writers and artists of the time: there is Archibald MacLeish at a literary tea, Edward Hopper at the Whitney Museum, Dorothy Parker at a political meeting, T. S. Eliot and Herbert Read at dinner in London. Figures from a more distant past often appear in Zaturenska’s insightful commentary on the books she is reading. To her diary, now at Syracuse, she also confides her literary hopes and struggles, her exquisite aesthetic perceptions, her maternal feelings, and her overwhelming anxieties about money, health, and the literary reputation of her husband, Horace Gregory (1898–1982).

Zaturenska’s education and accomplishments were attained against heavy odds. As a child she emigrated from Kiev and grew up in New York City, helping to support her impoverished family by taking odd jobs in a publishing house and a book store. While still a teenager she began to get her poems published in Poetry and other magazines. She met Willa Cather, who secured a fellowship for her to attend Valparaiso University; later, through Harriet Monroe, she got a scholarship at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, from which she graduated in 1925.¹ She published eight books of poetry and a biography. With Horace Gregory she wrote A History of American Poetry, 1900–1940 (1946) and edited six poetry anthologies. In 1938 she won a Pulitzer Prize for her book Cold Morning Sky.

Reviewers of Zaturenska’s poetry have described it as subtle, mystical, delicate, controlled, musical—but in some ways old fashioned, relying too much on conventions of the English decadent school. Although in her later years Zaturenska fell into obscurity,


Horace Gregory, the son of a successful Milwaukee businessman, graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison two years before Marya, whom he met and married in 1925 in New York City. Gregory wrote nineteen books—ten of poetry and nine of prose (one with Zaturenska); he edited or coedited eleven, and translated three books from the Latin. As a literary critic, Gregory was apparently a force to be reckoned with.

During the depression years, when the demise of the capitalist system appeared, to some, imminent, the writing community was “more than usually rife and riddled with dissensions,” writes Malcolm Cowley. “Great changes would surely take place, they must take place, and many of us felt . . . that it was our duty as writers to take part in them, at least by coming forward as writers to bear witness.” Cowley, along with many other New York writers and intellectuals, was active in the Communist Party. Horace Gregory remained aloof from it. The diary alludes to literary battles that Horace fought with Allen Tate, James T. Farrell, and others. Patrick Gregory, the son of Marya Zaturenska and Horace Gregory, believes that all these battles were politically motivated.

The depression-era diary is kept, with other papers of Marya Zaturenska, in Syracuse University Library’s Department of Special Collections, as part of the Horace Gregory collection. Also among these papers are manuscripts of her books, a series of essays, several


other diaries, holographs of poems, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia. The diary selections contained herein represent about half of the material from the second third of the diary.6

Until September 1935 Marya and Horace lived in Sunnyside, Long Island, a low-income housing development. But in early October 1933, when these selections begin, they are ending a long visit at Yaddo, the artists’ colony.7

Marya Zaturenska’s Depression Diary, 1933–1935

October 4, 1933

Francis *Criss did a portrait of me,8 very delicate and lyrical, and gave it to me. I’m so happy and pleased with it, though everybody tells me he makes me look too old. The other artists are brutal to Criss. I know they will never forgive me for sitting to him—not that they wanted to do me themselves, but that they want nobody to encourage him.

October 10, 1933

Horace and I and the children visited George Foster Peabody and Miss Pardee in their beautiful home on the Yaddo grounds.9 . . . Peabody looks like a giant from some remote golden age, vigorous, tall; charm flows

6. Selections from the first third of the diary appear in “Marya Zaturenska’s Depression Diary, 1931–32,” Syracuse University Library Associates Courier 31 (1996). Although the preprinted diary notebook begins with the year “1931,” Patrick Gregory pointed out, after the article was published, that she actually began to write in the notebook in 1932. Therefore, the title should have read, “1932–1933.” In what follows spaces between entries correspond to lines drawn between entries in the diary. Minor corrections have been made to improve the readability of the diary entries.

7. Yaddo is a large estate in Saratoga Springs, New York, which belonged to Spencer and Katrina Trask. After the Trasks lost their children, they decided to make the estate available as a retreat for artists. Yaddo was incorporated in 1922, with Elizabeth Ames as executive director. The mansion was opened for guests in 1926.

8. See the end of the article for brief biographical information about *Francis Criss and others whose names have an asterisk.

9. At the time of this diary entry, George Foster Peabody was president and treasurer of the Corporation of Yaddo, and Allena G. Pardee was secretary. For further information, see Marjorie Peabody Waite, Yaddo: Yesterday and Today (Saratoga Springs, N.Y.: Argus, 1933), 86–91.
from him, giving out vitality, wisdom, power, and goodness. He is extra-
ordinarily handsome, with his iron-gray hair, curling and luxuriant, his
voice resonant, piercing and benevolent, his manner easy and authorita-
tive; he could easily pose for the picture of Zeus, father of the Gods.

*Ruth Suckow visited us last evening in the room. . . . With her gray
hair carefully marcelled, her spectacles, her eyes round, innocent and
clear blue, her simple small town clothes and reserved manner, she does
not seem to be the sort of person who sees everything, feels everything,
and lets nothing escape. But she suddenly read to us a few portrait
sketches of people she had been writing in what she calls a “Notebook,”
one of *Evelyn Scott, one of *John Metcalfé, and one of *Grace Lump-
kin; beautiful in their psychological delicacy of detail, every nuance of
character seen, observed and entered, every virtue perceived, every little
index to the mind and soul observed deeply—it was exciting to listen to
her and a little troubling. What would she do to us?

November 6

It’s two weeks now since we’ve come back from Yaddo. . . . Francis
Criss, *Dante Fiorillo, and Dorothy Farrell saw us off. It was nice of
them—in that crowd of introverted cutthroats, and conscienceless bottom
dogs out to destroy everything because they have nothing (above all no
souls!), a little kindness, a little decency is like a glimpse of heaven.

We met *Van Wyck Brooks at *Lewis Mumford’s house. It was a treat
to meet someone like him. He’s a little stout but he has a face both sharp
and warm, a manner gay and yet sensitive. He puts one at one’s ease im-
m ediately. And his eyes, sharp, very blue, very keen and beautiful, his
most attractive feature.

For the first time since we’ve known him, Lewis Mumford looks wor-
rried, haggard and embittered. The Literary Life in N.Y. gets everyone
eventually, and the feuds become more ugly, more intense.

My heart feels congealed lately; if it could only throw off the ice, the
snow, and live again with more humor, less violence, and contentment!

November 22

Some time ago Horace got a passionate telephone call from the Inter-
national Labor Defense saying that they had had an unofficial but accurate
report that the Communists on trial in Germany for the Reichstag burn-
ing were to receive their death sentences in a few days and then were to be
executed immediately. Would Horace run down to the German con-
sulate where a group of writers would make a protest. The news sounded
authentic enough, so Horace dropped everything he was doing and
rushed downtown to find a group of militant Sunnysiders and embattled New Republicans. They were admitted into the Consul’s Office. The C. was a very tall, military looking man, his face scarred, his eyes blazing with fanaticism. “What do you mean by interfering with the affairs of the German Nation?” he shouted. The Communists began to shout back, the Consul slammed the door in their faces, and then the Communists, led by *Joe Freeman who had come with a New Masses contingent,10 began to cheer for the Reichstag prisoners . . . at which some aides from the Consulate rushed out, stood at salute, and shouted, “Heil Hitler.” Horace left with *Kenneth Burke, feeling rather silly, and upset, and futile—it was like a college cheering match. And so far the news that the I.L.D. received seems to be false.

November 23

*Muriel Rukeyser, a 19-year-old girl looking like an Early Picasso, visited us yesterday. She writes poetry and wants Horace to give her advice on it, and she wondered if she ought to return to Vassar and complete her college course, or throw herself into the radical movement. Horace told her to complete her college course first. She seemed disappointed. She told us of the tremendous reputation and legend *Edna Millay left at Vassar. . . .

I told Muriel that Edna came at the height of what I call “The Girl Poet Craze,” when thousands of young men from respectable middle-class middle-Western families came to the village to escape Babbitt and Suppression, and the Girl Poets were there to receive them—and to fulfill their dreams—and home was never like that, and Edna was the Queen of the Girl Poets. But she has left her impress so deeply on a generation that they will never let her die, or let future generations forget her. How can one speak of Victorian thought, life, letters and completely ignore Tennyson? I believe that *Léonie Adams and *Louise Bogan are finer artists than E. M., that *Elinor Wylie has a sharper, firmer touch at times, but I suppose Edna Millay will always stand at the head of the list.

Reading the Journal of *Gamaliel Bradford with the Van Wyck Brooks introduction. What a futile, petty, narrow, provincial mind, an *Amiel with all the passionate futility narrowed down to nothing but an unhappy smallness. His mind was small, his soul was not large, his perceptions shal-

10. The New Masses began in 1911 as the Masses, a New York weekly journal of social criticism with a proletarian bias. In 1918 the periodical folded and was revived as the Communist-affiliated Liberator. That, in turn, was suspended in 1924 and revived as the New Masses in 1926.
low. And all the books, read continually to no end, and all the writing, writing, writing, so unprofound, and as I think not ultimately intelligent, taken with such deep seriousness. The death of the New England tradition. I think of all the money, all the background used to prop him up, and nothing but weak whimpering to show for it.

December 6

Horace and I went to see the Whitney Museum show. Three floors full of interesting paintings. The interiors of the museum are exquisite, soft silver-gray and rose colored walls, unusual rose and silver-starred wallpaper—even the bad pictures become transfigured in such a place. I was pleased to see Francis Criss's painting that he did at Saratoga receive the place of honor at the show. We ran into *Edward Hopper, very tall, shy, a little bald, remarkably distinguished looking, and talked to him for a while. Horace said that no doubt he who had been painting American subject matter for so long would be interested to see how many young painters were copying his themes now. Hopper looked gloomy and sighed at the "American" pictures around him. "Yes they're all going native now," he said, "but I don't trust them."

Horace attended a Scottsboro defense meeting,¹¹ and sat next to *Dorothy Parker, whom he described as fat, mournful, sentimental and shy.

Prohibition recalled last night. Nobody seems to rejoice too hard just now. The drinking mood is gone.

December 12

Last Saturday we had lunch with Mrs. John Jay White and Jessie Fremont (a granddaughter of the famous Gen. Fremont who almost became President, a caustic, aristocratic, *Margot Asquith sort of person, even in looks). Also sitting next to me was a mild, bald, fattish gentleman of about 50, with small hands and feet like a sparrow, and a small fluttering, wistful voice. We had a nice talk about Henry VIII and, as he agreed with one of my pet theories (that Henry was not as brutal to his wives as might be expected considering the times, that he was just a yearning Family Man who had bad luck with his wives), I thought the gentleman rather intelligent. After he left, Mrs. White told me that he was Vivian Burnett, the original of Little Lord Fauntleroy, and the author of a charming book about his mother called The Romantic Lady.

¹¹. The notorious Scottsboro Trials concerned nine black teenagers who were accused, without evidence, of raping two white women.
January 3, 1934

Each new year is now welcomed by me with a wry smile. They come too fast now—the new years—it's as if a slow, inevitable, unchanging, un-moving, tide is coming nearer and nearer, and will at last overcome you.

January 10

Cool January days, bleak and piercing the blood. My hands and body ache with the cold, and nothing seems to keep my body, mind, and heart warm. And the worst sense of loneliness, and isolation, I have felt for years.

Got the proof of my poems from *Harriet Monroe—she will give them the lead in the February number,12 which pleased me a great deal. What will this year bring? I have never started a new year before with so much uncertainty and worry. For Horace hasn’t heard about the publishing jobs that he’s hoping for. And the Guggenheim!13

* Jim Farrell visited us Monday evening. He was catty, hypocritical and confused and blundering as when (he is staying with *Dahlberg) he kept saying, “Don’t tell Dahlberg I’ve come here” over and over again until I had to pinch myself to keep from bursting into tears with wounded pride. Dahlberg’s new novel has been turned down by a number of publishers though Horace has done all he could for it—and now Dahlberg feels that Horace hasn’t done enough, and probably blames me for it—because he knows that I’m not enthusiastic about his work—but I have never made an effort to influence Horace in any way.

February 2

We met * Winifred Bryher who has just come on a visit here from Switzerland where [she] lives. . . . She’s very intelligent, quiet, dresses in shabby clothes, and has a sweetness and sanity that warms my heart. A nice Scotch sister-in-law, a Mrs. MacPherson, was with her, very much excited at being in America. We’re going to the theatre with them today. Quite an exciting thought to have for the day. “I’m going to the theatre tonight.” We go so seldom.

Went to a tea at the Henry Marc Eliots’, T. S. Eliot’s brother and sister-in-law. . . . Mr. Henry Eliot very thin, distinguished, shy, and very much

12. That is, the February number of Poetry magazine, which Harriet Monroe edited.
13. The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, established in 1925, annually awards fellowships to scholars, writers, and artists. Horace applied, unsuccessfully, for one of these fellowships.
like a battered, slightly worn, version of his distinguished brother. Mrs. Eliot vivacious, and charming. . . . Interesting old family portraits of the Eliots, a handsome severe-looking race. . . . Two nieces of the Eliots were there—both very pretty, very young, both in the last stages of pregnancy, one of them knitting on Little Garments with a quiet ostentation. *Wytter Bynner was there. He glared at Horace when he heard his name and I remembered the resentment of the Mabel Dodge group in New Mexico because of Horace’s Lawrence book and articles. Horace smoothed things nicely by thanking Bynner for being the first person to give him encouragement in his writing. H. was an undergraduate when Bynner came out to Wisconsin on a lecture tour, saw Horace’s poems in the college paper, and praised them highly. After a while Bynner remembered and seemed placated, surprised and moved.

Victrola records of T. S. Eliot’s readings were put on: “The Hollow Men,” and “Gerontion.” Boredom and blankness on the faces of all the Eliot relations assembled. I’m afraid they’re still a little bewildered by Tommy. One old gent who prided himself on looking like *Hugh Walpole said, “How beautifully he uses words.” I felt relieved when the records were turned off.

February 14

We went to a party given for *Louis Adamic in honor of his new book which is a great success. Louis is a splendid fellow, manly, sentimental, and generous—and the party was a proof of his popularity.

We saw Winifred Bryher (Mrs. MacPherson) and her sister-in-law off to Europe. I brought the children with us. They were charming, Joanna pointing to a picture of Gandhi in one of the St. Moritz Hotel waiting rooms, saying, “Oh look at Ezra Pound!” and Patsy dashing off and disappearing in the bar room where he danced to the music, and I found him surrounded by admirers who were feeding him cookies and chocolates. We brought Bryher and her sister-in-law little gifts, and as we left she gave us her address in a little envelope. I opened it the next day and found a check for 100 pounds—$500 or so. My heart stood still. We were sick with misery, embarrassment and temptation. It’s more money than we’ve ever had before—and now of all times. Patsy is crying—

Macmillan wants to see my manuscript—doesn’t mean anything. If Macmillan takes my poems—and if Horace gets a Guggenheim—my heart

14. Mabel Dodge Luhan (1879–1692) was an American writer who entertained many famous people at her home in Taos, N.M., including D. H. Lawrence, whom she wrote about in Lorenzo in Taos (1932).
will burst. How could we endure so much good fortune? And yet I hope hope hope.

*February 15*

Dreadful news from Europe—revolution, war preparations everywhere—everything black with hatred, cruelty, greed, intolerance and bloodshed that equals anything ever seen in the Middle Ages. We pick up the newspapers with sick hearts and read them with terror and despair.

*March 4*

So busy from morning till night now that I have hardly time to eat, breathe, or think and am usually too tired to sleep.

Horace works slowly, painfully, with very little accomplished. His last poems have an air of opaque strain that tortures me, but I have no right to say anything. Only I regret bitterly, bitterly that I have not in some way built up a life and career of my own, for it would relieve me of the greatest of my mental tortures—my worry and concern over Horace’s work. Yet I would honestly prefer him to have the career, for if all the greatness were mine, I would lose ¾ of my respect for him. One wants to believe in the genius of the man one has chosen.

Saw *Archibald MacLeish* at a literary tea. . . . He is small, unprepossessing, with soft, sentimental eyes, surrounded by gushing, adoring ladies whom he lectures on poetry. Isabel Patterson amusing, Rabelaisian and a little tight. She had him reading some “proletarian” novels and said, “I know why they sent me the books. They want to kill me with boredom.”

Went to the opening of the Gertrude Stein opera *Four Saints in Three Acts.* Quite a treat. The audience as fascinating as the play. Such an assemblage of diamond tiaras, ermine coats, marvelous looking young men, beautiful and expensive women. I stood in the corridors clutching my “unborn kitten” muff, as Isabel Patterson called it, and gazed around like an overwhelmed schoolgirl.

The cellophane scenery by Florine Stettheimer was exquisite, the music light, gay, delightful, and the Negroes were enchanting. As for Gertrude’s words, they didn’t really matter. All together it was an unusually gay evening. The audience went wild. I have never heard such applause from a New York audience; so many encores, so much shouting. We ran into *William Carlos Williams.* He has aged a great deal, and looks like an old man. Even his voice is tired, aged and querulous—all his vividness and gaiety gone.
March 9

*Maxwell Bodenheim has again moved to Sunnyside and came to visit us one afternoon with his latest girl who he says has converted him to Communism. Every once in a while he would punch her in the ribs and say, “You little rebel you—you flaming little red you”—until it was hard to keep from laughing. His defense of the Communists ought to make them feel as Oscar Wilde did when he heard that his brother Willy was defending him all over London during the sodomy trial. “My God, his defense would compromise a steam engine. . . .”

An article by Horace on *Churton Collins for the Saturday Review and a poem of mine, sold to The Nation, are the achievements of this week.

. . . A clock ticking at my ear. I know no other noise so terrifying, so nerve wracking, so fine and thin and sharp and inevitable. I hate it very much.

March 14

Went to a party given for the New Masses by our neighbor Dr. Barry Burgum of N.Y.U., an appalling collection of Sunnyside Communists all gathered there, loud, noisy, impertinent. They heckled Horace so much and so often—as he said, “They wanted to know my stand on Marx, what it was yesterday, what it is today, what it will be tomorrow”—that he lost his temper, and we left feeling unhappy and heavy hearted. Horace was ill all of the next day.

Louis Adamic telephoned us last morning to say that he had asked Mr. Moe, secretary of the Guggenheim committee, what Horace’s chances were for the award, and he said that H.’s name stood at the head of the list! . . . We were desperately happy and hopeful all day. But in the evening . . .

*Eda Lou [Walton] telephoned us to say that she had heard that *Conrad Aiken (a serious competitor indeed) was applying for this year, that [E. E.] Cummings was applying for a renewal, that another poet, a mediocre and unpublished one at that but a great favorite of Harriet Monroe, was applying, which dampened our feelings very much.

April 12

Gugg. announcement came one morning (Monday) three weeks ago. All up—suddenly—like that. The blow to our morale greater than we feared.

Monday the news from Guggenheim, Saturday of that week a letter from Macmillan accepting my book of poems. It came too late. I’ve depreciated myself so long that I no longer care what people think about my poetry. And a literary career will not save me from my pathologies any

I trust nobody. I believe in no one. Evelyn Scott has been nice. *Morton Zabel has been nice in one letter. But I feel that all will desert—all will change—and the Gugg. thing has proven how many enemies H. has made by his honest criticism, his unconventional poetry, his too-sudden rise. Anonymous attacks come in our mail very often—really even a lynching phobia. I tremble desperately. Save us. Save me—oh there is no one to pray to.

But we’ll fight our way out—. We must leave Sunnyside. But how???

April 28

Bryher sent us a lovely letter and a check for 100 pounds—again wanting us to go abroad and visit her. This time we refused—we had to refuse. . . .

The bad times—the moral and spiritual and economic distress everywhere. All hatred, fanaticism and confusion around us. And all over the world—forebodings of war, disaster, revolutions, violence everywhere—even stronger spirits than mine quail before the world today.

A vague hope that the Sarah Lawrence job, which Léonie Adams got last year, may open again this year for Horace. We’ve really forgotten how to hope.

May 20

Horace got the Sarah Lawrence job—an appointment to lecture on poetry for next year. It’s only a part-time job and pays $1,500 a year. It’s a Godsend however. H. cannot now have any excuses for wasting all his talents and energies on hack reviewing.

And we’ve decided to accept Bryher’s offer and go to Europe. The opportunity may never come again.

June 9

Oh how exciting to be able to go on the boat at last and now we are leaving for something new and fresh, strange and wonderful. I’m impatient to be off. . . . The trip to Europe so long dreamed of, so long unattainable. My God we want to start at once—not a minute must be lost.

November 10

This is the first time I’ve been able to write since I’ve come back from abroad. Oh we should have gone years ago, for traveling is all they say it is. It seems to both limit and expand the world. The narrowness of our little world is exposed, and its endless possibilities revealed. We had so little
money—we couldn’t go far . . . but we at least got to know some of Eng­
land well, for we stayed there (in London) for about 3 months.

We didn’t know where we were going when we arrived in England. We
knew no one but Bryher and we hadn’t heard from her since Horace
nobly returned the passage money she sent us—and the two small babies—but all of us even Pat and Joanna were filled with the spirit of adventure.

We landed in Southampton rather late, and arrived in London at 3
o’clock in the morning at the Waterloo station. [After a miserable night in
a cheap hotel] we wandered off and . . . discovered ourselves in the neigh­
borhood of St. James Park, the most expensive part of London, but we
didn’t know it. We trudged wearily from hotel to hotel and were turned
away everywhere. We looked so wild, so shabby, so foreign, and poor. At
last on Jermyn St. we dropped into a hotel that had a shabby exterior. We
thought it might be reasonable. All of us including the children looked
hopefully at the proprietress—we were so tired. She was a tall, once-beau­
tiful woman but now very old with steel-gray eyes. The hotel turned out
to be the famous Cavendish Hotel, and she the equally famous Rosa
Lewis, the proprietress! . . .

The room [she gave us] was very uncomfortable and breakfast cost us a
pound. Our little supply of money was going rapidly. Bryher sent us an
English nurse, an elderly lady (so very British!) called Maud Stevens. She
took charge of the children for us and they became very much devoted to
her. Patsy called her “Teeone.” . . .

Then a note from Bryher asking us to have dinner at her mother’s,
Lady Ellerman. A fine old house in South Audley St., gloomy but grand,
full of atrocious pictures, but a beautiful Adam mantelpiece in the upstairs
drawing room. Innumerable suave men-servants in uniform. Lady Eller­
man a faded English beauty, large and fair and doll-faced, big blue eyes,
very deaf. Bryher, with sea-cold eyes, lovely skin, mannish clothes, close
cropped hair, seemed like a mouse in a palace. *H. D. was there, tall, very
loud, very neurotic, her face like a remodeled Greek statue. She carried a
toy leopard under one arm and a large fuzzy toy bear under the other for
Patsy. We were overwhelmed by her height, her voice, her overwhelming
cordiality.

Steevie [Maud Stevens] found a nice, modest rooming house for us in
Hampstead. . . .

Dinner with T. S. Eliot in a French restaurant at Soho. Eliot weary, ill,
but charming and witty. Seemed more American than English! Fine
drinks. I became drunk and witty too. *Herbert Read came in, solemn
and prim; [he] seemed aghast at the American gaiety.

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Eliot said he considered himself a bad critic. He only liked people who write like him. Said he considered “Ash Wednesday” his best poem.

* Dorothy Richardson and Alan Odle—very strange creatures and so British like Stevens, our nurse. D. R. a female Dr. Johnson, curiously dressed, a green net cap on her head with ribbon straps under her chin. A brilliant conversationalist. Odle very sensitive, very gaunt, tall, emaciated, very ill. They live in a tiny heatless room in Queens Terrace, but their personality enlivens it. Bryher, I understand, keeps them alive by a little pension.

Tea at the Herbert Reads. A charming, early 18th-century cottage in Hampstead, shut in a little court. Ruined by bad taste—hideous modernistic furniture shining like new tin, surrealistic pictures on the wall, a framed umbrella and framed gloves. Patsy and Joanna, who called with us, gasped as they stood on the threshold, and Patsy, always poised and smiling, suddenly let out a wild shriek and kept on screaming. Mrs. Read gave him a plate of small cakes and took him out into the garden. When we tried to get him to come in he stamped his foot and said the wickedest thing he knew: “fee fie fo fum,” the words of the giant in “Jack and the Beanstalk.”

Read a superior and more industrious * Mark Van Doren. He is Eliot’s most intimate friend and has a deep influence on him.

A visit with * Violet Hunt in her house in Kensington on Camden Hill. Like leaving the 20th century and stepping into a Pre-Raphaelite museum. Camden Hill itself on a gentle slope, the soft English sky shining down on it. The old walled houses so neatly kept, so deeply rich with flowers. The atmosphere of another culture, another age, and then Violet Hunt’s house. Curtains designed by *[Dante Gabriel] Rossetti, furniture by * Burne-Jones and * William Morris. Pictures on the wall by * Alfred [Hunt] and * Holman Hunt, an early (very beautiful) portrait of Violet Hunt by Burne-Jones, a child picture of * Ford Madox Ford by Ford Madox Brown (I think). In the entrance hall [were] autographed pictures of Henry James, [Joseph] Conrad, Robert Browning, Oscar Wilde, etc.

Violet Hunt receiving us in a very smart flowered tea gown, old gold bracelets on her arms. She looks ill and old, but has a beautiful graceful figure, slim and girlish, her eyes green-blue and beautiful, and an incorrigible air of girlish vivacity—traces of real wit, broken a little by a mind that is beginning to wander. She confuses the present with the past, the dead with the living.

Intimate stories about * Christina Rossetti, whose life she is writing and whom she disliked, and of Mrs. Dante G. Rossetti: “She came from very
common people you know. Relatives of hers still call on me. They are still very common people.” Intimate stories about the *Ruskin divorce case, as if it had happened yesterday. About Oscar Wilde: “You know he wanted to marry me, but my family were so very correct, so very Victorian. They wouldn’t allow me. What a pity I didn’t marry him. His wife was such an impossible creature, so conceited, so respectable, so very bad for him.”

She said that the Miriam of Sons and Lovers (Jessie something or other her name was) had just been down to see her with a manuscript giving her side of the Lawrence story.¹⁵ No one would take it. I heard the story from other sources too.

She said that her first break with F. M. F. [Ford Madox Ford] came over Brigit Patmore, now *Aldington’s mistress. Before leaving she asked us if we wouldn’t stay and meet her friend, “My last surviving admirer,” she called him, “a Canadian, very dull, but such a faithful fellow.” His name is [Edward] Shelley. Have you heard of him?” “No,” we said. “Oh, he was the boy in the Oscar Wilde case.” What a curious claim to fame, I thought. As we left she took us to her garden and cut a bunch of roses for me. “Carlyle planted these,” she said, “for my mother.” This seemed just a little too spooky. As soon as we left her house, I started running down the street, down and down and up again back into the 20th century.

But I must record our trip to Dublin. We went third class on an excursion boat to Ireland, full of returning Liverpool Irish going home for a holiday. The boat was indescribably filthy. Third class we discovered was steerage, over 1000 men, women, and children crowded on a deck no larger than a Staten Island ferry boat. Half naked little children were sleeping on the bare deck, women nursing tiny babies, no place to sit, no place to stand. Joanna was with us (fortunately we had left Patsy in London), and we sat on her little valise while she slept with her head in my lap. Bitterly cold, and drunken men and women shouting, babies wailing, the longest, most difficult trip I ever took. One man lying on the deck floor kept repeating over and over again in a monotonous drunken stupor, “More beer, beer is best. More beer, beer is best,” until my nerves began to bleed. I wanted to weep hysterically through sheer fatigue. One lavatory there crowded with drunken women and sleeping children, the sink full of vomit.

¹⁵. Miriam’s counterpart in real life was Jessie Chambers, who felt that her contribution to Lawrence’s (i.e., Paul’s) artistic development was negated in the novel. See Brenda Maddox, The Story of a Marriage (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 91–2.
We got on the boat in Liverpool at 8 in the evening. We arrived in Dublin at 5 in the morning—a dreary introduction to the Free State. Three hours at the customs, everybody being searched for firearms.

January 20, 1935

How fast the years fly now. I cannot bear to think of my journals filled with trivialities, of a life so wasted, of so many opportunities thrown away.

Yet last year didn’t end so badly. It began with pain but it ended up with Horace completing his new book, which he calls “Chorus for Survival,” with the Levinson Award given him from Poetry and the Shelley award (or rather part of it), a poetry prize of $380, going to me. I bought a lovely warm semi-fur coat (lapin) for myself. I have been thrifty so long. Now I want to be warm to save my energies for some work that will last, to enjoy something of the pleasures of this fleeting, disappearing world.

I feel as if this period of my life is like a January landscape, cold, frozen and calm under a starry evening. And one is not afraid of greeting another morning.

No longer hatred, and the desperate pain,
Anger’s averted face, and discontent.
The fiery passions of the world are spent,
Consumed and overwhelmed, and all in vain.
To loss, to bitterness the years were lent.

But under sombre and gray-silver stars
The spirit (lost, gray dove) descends and broods
On happier harvests, and on cooler moods,
Avoiding that which most profanes and mars
The vanishing, the long sought solitudes.

February 15

After cold weather, so sharp that one’s heart stood still when you went outdoors, a raw, damp, rather sluggish cold descends. Horace got an extra day’s work at Sarah Lawrence, and so I got the woman to help me with the housework 5 days a week. I want to write, for the first time in years, desperately. I really believe I have something to say, that I know how to say it and must say it pretty quick. Even with the help, there is too much noise, confusion, too many interruptions. The children are engaging but exhausting. The perpetual noise, a grinding nervous strain, the sense of having to stop and do something else when I start writing. (In 15 minutes I must go out and get the groceries.) But I must must get something done in my writing.
February 26

I'm in bed with a bad bronchial infection. Alternate chills and fever and a growing depression so deep that one's heart sinks to the ground and lies covered with dust. Difficult to stay quiet in bed. The children shouting, doors slamming and noise are a nightmare to me now. Why, why do useless persons like me survive. Worry . . . and the old persecution complexes. . . . Storm raging about Horace in the *New Masses.*

A party Eda Lou Walton gave for Henry *Roth's* successful new novel [*Call It Sleep*]. . . . Henry and his publishers sitting in a corner (literally) shedding tears of emotion over the good reviews.

The morning starts with a passionate desire for mail. When I see the postman my heart leaps up, as to behold a rainbow in the sky.

*Robert Hillyer* sends me kind sensitive letters, the one friend my book has made. 16 I am grateful, but I disagree with him on almost everything.

In Ireland (I must make some records) we stayed at Nora Hoult's apartment in Upper Rathmines Street. Dublin such a gray, shabby, 18th-century city. If one were born in it, one could love it. Nora Hoult took us to see *Oliver Gogarty* at his beautiful 18th-century home on Ely Street. He showed us the miraculous garden he and *George Moore* had shared. Gogarty gay, witty, full of quotations from the classic Latins, and [from] Irish authors. He was very much like the Buck Mulligan of *Ulysses.* How accurate Joyce was! No wonder we were warned not to mention Joyce's name in Dublin. Gogarty full of spite and envy and yet secret admiration for Yeats. Of Mrs. Yeats he said in his beautiful 18th-century rounded periods, "Dear Mrs. Yeats. She is a spiritualist medium, for she has neither beauty, prescience, nor wit," which I understand is really quite untrue, for a number of people have said that Mrs. Yeats was quite charming. Even the Yeats children came in for Gogarty's malice. The little girl: "She's a pretty little thing, too much of a coquette already. And the little boy: "He has a villainous temper and bad manners like his father."

March 1

The Sarah Lawrence job renewed. I want to go down on my knees in gratitude. Another year of security ahead. A nice note from Archibald MacLeish, who had just glanced over H.'s new book and said it was even on a first quick glance "vital and lovely." One wishes he had said more, but the letter was very warm and nice. Oh let it be a good omen. *Win-

16. In 1963 Robert Hillyer's widow gave Syracuse University Library a large collection of his papers and a bequest with which, in 1974, the Hillyer Room was established on the sixth floor of E. S. Bird Library.
field Scott sent us proofs of his review of the “Chorus” for the Providence Journal. It’s the review I’ve dreamed of, saying all the things I feel should be said—if only the N.Y. papers could drop their feuds and nastiness and personal rivalries and give Horace the same just, impersonal treatment. But those omens are all good. Oh let us have a happy year. Oh please, the happiness of worry lifted and good work acknowledged. “Oh rare delight, oh more than mortal bliss.”

Still ill in bed. Heavy chest, weakness, chills. My father called. Out of work, needs money. I felt sick with renewed worry, but I must do what I can. Feel guilty at the little security one has when there is so much real deep suffering. But Horace and I went through real semi-starvation and the horrors of hopeless insecurity in “prosperity” days. . . Horace’s nervous condition made it difficult to get work, and his writing even then annoyed people by having too much “social” content, so he found it difficult to get any hearing at all.

March 11

Horace’s new book out tomorrow. I hope and pray for it. Do not, dear Lord, allow it to be ignored, or to fall into the hands of those who have personal grudges, and no sense of justice and no feeling for literature.

May 8

Beautiful sunny weather and all the lilac trees in front of our house in bloom—a sight caressing to the heart and mind.

Reviews of Horace’s book ranging from guarded praise to violent abuse, and violent enthusiasm. If only the important places, the New Republic and the Saturday Review, would come out prominently in Horace’s favor—God grant they may. My nerves worn and tortured. I’m unable to eat or sleep, or write, my mind obsessed by haunting trifles.

May 10

A letter from Bryher saying that she was thinking of buying Art and Letters, the English literary magazine. 17 Would be a great blessing for us and for the many English writers who are tormented by the clique-ridden literary scene in England.

June 10

Arrived at Yaddo on the 6th. Hardness of heart, sensibilities with a

dingy veil thrown over them, I felt. I breathed in this beauty again as if I had never seen it before, but the delight, the wistful gratitude, the fresh excitement wasn’t there. Wanted to sit down and cry but the hard clouded heart prevented it.

The portrait of Mrs. Trask clutching the rose seemed to swoop down on me, as I entered the drawing room.

People here:
1. Nathan Asch—novelist whom I rather like, seems sincere, intelligent
2. Jenny Ballou—shallow, kittenish, cute
3. George Novak—a Trotskyite and an economist
4. A funny little boy by the name of Plenn, red-haired, small, freckled, shy, who is writing a history of Aztec civilization
5. *Peter Neagoë—sentimental and nice—oh the rest don’t matter. I’ve lost interest in people.¹⁸

I walk cautiously and painfully through a roomful of people like a small, defenseless animal stepping timidly into a jungle.

Oh Great Purification. Oh Thou who leads the sick soul through the Ordeal of Fire, name the day of my deliverance. For my will is now safely in your hands. Oh when the trembling heart shall burn away, when the soft bones have shrivelled into gray ash, when the intense mind breaks through the fire, dissolves, and arises clean and sharp and new to do your will—remember me who sit consumed with waiting—praying for the Rebirth by Fire. My pen is in your hand. Bless it and lend it to me for a little while.

June 11

Raining all morning. Tried to write but everything I do seems morbid and ineffectual, trifling, and diseased. No letter from H. which depresses me awfully, but a charming note from Joanna which comforts me.

Can’t get over my feeling of repulsion, fear and dislike of some people. It troubles me. I find myself reproaching myself for evil thoughts, for sins I have never committed. I keep saying “careful, careful.”

To hell with humility. I’ve been humble enough, long enough and have been taken at my own estimation. I shall try to be hard, proud, self-sufficient—expecting nothing, fearing nothing.

¹⁸. The papers of Peter Neagoë—housed in Syracuse University Library's Department of Special Collections—are of particular interest to scholars of Romanian life and folklore, and of the American literary community in Europe between the wars.
June 12
A warm, calm, shimmering day, delicate and golden. I went out for a walk in the woods. It was like walking in a dream, the long shadows of pure light, the glowing trees.

June 15
Horace is coming today. So happy; it is too difficult being without him.
A beautiful, lyrical golden light shines on the grass and radiates from an unmov ing sky. Outside a large fir tree bathed in light and covered with little golden-orange cones or blossoms. I am too near-sighted to tell which it is.
But most important of all, I want to compose a beautiful, golden, ripe and yet fresh book of poems, immortal and richly severe. One more book; it will be enough. That is important. A book like early summer, when the faint sharp freshness of spring still lingers in deeper warmth.

June 19
Horace has a bad infection in one of his feet. Barely able to walk. What a bad stroke of luck.
I've written to Macmillan about submitting a new book of poems. May the Good Angels be kind to me.
I have been reading *Cecil Day-Lewis’s A Time to Dance, an impressive little book. But I have never been able to be as enthusiastic over the work of Day-Lewis, Spender and Auden as Horace has. I feel that there is something vital, something fundamental and living lacking in them. . . . I only know that old Yeats has it, and even the ethereal Shelley had it, even old Tennyson caught it occasionally. Donne has it—but there is somehow a lack of profound human emotion in these young English poets.

June 21
Last night one of our worst days at Yaddo. Suspicion and coldness everywhere. Asch very kind however. Even Horace broke down in his room saying, “But what have I done. I am not such a bad person.” The Farrells have obviously spread a vast web of slander and hostility everywhere. Even our old friends here become cold and withdraw when we approach. . . . What is the story or stories that have caused such hostilities? They must be of an appalling nature. And it is of course impossible to find out. I find myself praying very hard at night in a sort of hopeless anguish—hoping that Horace is asleep.

June 23
A great number of rainy days. Today the sun is out. Things a little easier
now. Jim Farrell arrived 2 days ago with a great deal of noise. The still corridors shook under his tread, trembled under the loudness of his voice.

He paid a visit to Horace who was in his room nursing his infected foot and talked amiably but never meeting our eyes. He had been spreading unpleasant and untrue stories about us everywhere. He had been reciting would-be parodies of H.’s work all over town, and one particular would-be practical joke of his did H. a great deal of harm. He knew we knew all this.

He changes all his literary opinions from day to day. He had gone all over town praising *Kenneth Fearing’s work at the expense of Horace. To our surprise he said he had changed his mind about K. Fearing—that he found him too limited, that his work was too narrow, etc. Horace said with gentle calmness that he had been one of the first to praise K. Fearing’s work and had always admired it. Jim opened his mouth wide. He has never understood Horace. Jim has also gone all over town attacking Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep. We had gotten this from Henry Roth, Eda Lou Walton, Nathan Asch, who had innocently quoted Jimmy’s opinion, saying it had prejudiced him against the book. To our surprise Jimmy (knowing Horace had praised *Call It Sleep highly) broke into a sudden eulogy of the book. Horace simply said that he had great confidence in the book and in Roth’s future work, and that he had spent so much time trying to find a publisher for *Call It Sleep without success that he was happy to find his judgment on it justified. Jim then did some parodies on *Granville Hicks,19 J. Conroy, and some of the editors of the *New Masses. Like Queen Victoria we were not amused. But then we were upset. We had liked Jim and Dorothy very deeply at one time. It was hard to reconcile this person with the person whom we had really cared for.

Mrs. Ames asked us to go to Triuna this week.20 All right, we said. I want to see a new landscape. My passion for nature has become as profound as it is ignorant. I would like to be a landscape painter, or failing that I would like to revive a sort of nature painting in poetry, unconventional, profound, delicate. No matter what will happen, the earth, the trees bending over the waters, the perfect beauty and mystery of the flow-

19. The papers of Granville Hicks reside in the Syracuse University Library.
20. Triuna Island in Lake George was originally three islands, hence the name. Spencer and Katrina Trask bought the islands in 1906 as a summer retreat for themselves and their guests. Shortly thereafter they connected the three islands with bridges. The story of the purchase can be found in *Yaddo: Yesterday and Today, 86–91.
ers will remain; after the cities have crumbled, they will remain and color our lives, our thoughts, our philosophies.

In the evening we were all talking quietly when Jim burst in like a cy­clone and insisted on reciting out loud to us “Casey at the Bat.” Encour­aged by the surprised applause, he insisted on reciting “The Face on the Bar­Room Floor” (for the benefit of the artists). Encouraged by the sur­prised silence, he suddenly decided to do a proletarian dance for us. This was very funny—an excellent parody, but I understand that this dance is one of Jimmy’s favorites. He does it over and over again for each Yaddo audience of the season.

Am reading *Sainte-Beuve’s Portraits of the 18th Century. I can see why Marx hated him, and why Horace insists that he prefers *Taine, and how his style and method filtering through an inferior mind can produce—a *Gosse. He is bourgeois to the core. And yet his charm, his lucidity, his vast knowledge, his almost novelist-skill in producing a character, makes such attractive reading. With less conventional ideas, with a wider range of perceptions, he would have been—but then he wouldn’t have been Sainte-Beuve.

June 25  
*Chard P. Smith came to town, and we took Clara Stillman with us and had a few drinks at the New Clarendon Hotel, which for a while took the load of worry from my mind. And we had a fairly amusing time. Clara was witty. Chard boyishly foolish. We then drove back to Yaddo late at night and the darkness descended with my blood and we went upstairs, Horace sleepless, I tired, in a kind of stupor.

This place is like Versailles as drawn by *Saint-Simon. The reigning dynasty, the fear of being expelled from court, the intrigues, now height­ened, now lessened, the rise and fall of the royal favours, the sense of un­earned luxury, and the deep unrest, the sudden feeling of the hostile and brutal and poverty stricken world outside, crouching ominously through the beautiful rich gates.

July 1 – Triuna Island

We have been here for 3 days now. . . . Triuna is breathtaking, like a scene from a weird *Böcklin painting, or when the sun shines gay and light upon it like an island of Cytherea that should of course be peopled with *Watteau figures; all around us the gentle foothills of the Adiron­dacks and wild sparkling water always in motion all around; through the dark trees flashes of silver water, the sky seems to drown in the large lakes,
the trees seem to grow in the water. It is beautiful but so isolated and the few people whom we were glad to leave Yaddo for Triuna are here.

In the presence of people who don’t think well of you, the dilemma consists in knowing how to keep up one’s self respect. One feels them watching you for the thing they have been told to suspect in you. When you are amiable and charming their veiled suspicion is seen in their eyes. “Come out,” they seem to say, “and be yourself, your detestable natural self.” Then almost unconsciously we find ourselves becoming the unpleasant creatures we are supposed to be.

I’ve written some good poems here already, 2 of them so far. And a number of satisfactory lyrics at Yaddo. *Hildegarde Flanner is editing an anthology of woman poets for the New Republic. She asked me to contribute. It made me so pleased and happy.

Finished reading a life of William Hazlitt by Hesketh Pearson, badly and sensationally written. Called foolishly The Fool of Love. Aside from *John Clare’s I would almost say that Hazlitt’s life is the most tragic in English letters. How I admire the man’s courage and integrity, and the more I read of Wordsworth the more contemptible he becomes. But Hazlitt’s “Liber Amoris,” which I haven’t read—except from the account and quotations given by Pearson—made my flesh crawl. The romantics (some of them), *Leigh Hunt especially, had a kind of sticky vulgarity that almost justified the Quarterly and Blackwood reviewers. Hazlitt’s love letters were both pathetic and incredibly vulgar and offensive. No woman could have endured them.

Silent and cold evening. Horace has gone to his study to finish an article on American poetry for Life and Letters [Today], which Bryher has recently purchased.

The Atlantic turned down 2 of my best poems—upset for I had wanted them to be so good that even people who didn’t like poetry would feel that this was real, was good. I must write desperately, now or never, putting my finest, my most secret self into them. I must build a monument against time. And all this must be done with no thought, no hope, of fame, of publication, but in the hope that something out of it, say 3 poems out of a hundred, will be worth something, will deserve to endure, will prove that my life was not useless.

*John Cheever found a horseshoe somewhere near the water and gave it to me with an air of mock gallantry. I took it and hung it up in Horace’s study in the hope that it will bring good luck. So foolish—but I am just a
little bit superstitious, though there are moments of terrible lucidity when I see a blind, indifferent universe moving to impersonal, immovable ends, and nothing is of any use.

_July 11_

Came back after a visit to the children in Canandaigua, so long, so exhausting. The farmhouse is very attractive, but there are only 2 women taking care of 9 children (and they do the cooking, washing, etc. besides). Poor little Pat I felt was rather neglected. He looks healthy however, but I decided to take him home in 2 weeks.

Joanna is so pretty, so vivid and rosy and vivacious, but Patsy is a love. I couldn't tear myself away from him. I held on to him as long as I could. He is so affectionate and clinging. I could easily sink all my unused affections into one terrible flood of maternal love and live for nothing else—but that would be harmful for the children and bad for me.

_July 13_

Quite ill yesterday. A bad fever, violent headache and eyestrain... Mrs. Ames came and said we could stay on and on but I was too ill, and didn't care a damn.

In the afternoon the mail came, with the long-awaited contract from Covici. Felt a load off my mind. Horace childish with joy and relief.

Worried about my poetry which seems so ordinary and monotonous in form and content, and a little sticky-sweet. But perhaps I'm too hard on myself. I force myself to do a poem a day at least. The poems that are not successful I put down as so much practice, or finger exercises.

Through my study window I find myself watching the water, which is blue-black under moonlight; the reflections on it are in silver lights so intense as to be almost a pale gold. They run in a motion as fluid as electric lights on the Times Square evening news-board.

Hildegarde Flanner is taking my “Midsummer Noon” poem for the *New Republic Anthology of Women Poets*, and perhaps a small poem called “The Daisy,” which has I think a freshness and charm but I must do better. It's all too trivial.

_July 15_

Ill the last few days. Bad eye strain, cold, headaches, unable to work.

A great deal of rain here. After it cleared up, I found that near the lake edges a great number of wild roses had sprung up suddenly, such a burning rose-red-pink (I've never seen such color) and with their honey-colored hearts, like French knots in embroidery. There is nothing lovelier.
Evening. Rain. Thunder. Showers. Dampness. Caught a bad cold that of course fell on my chest and left me weak and lazy. And on looking over my little poetry notebook I find I have written only 24 poems out of which 12 are passable enough. Well this isn’t a bad record, but neither is it the record I’ve set myself—to write at least one poem a day if only to keep myself writing. The training in writing and assembling my thoughts would be a help even if the poem itself is not satisfactory.

July 17

Trouble with my eyes—perhaps unnecessary worry, but will go to an oculist tomorrow.

Talking to Abel Plenn this evening, who told me of meeting *Hart Crane in Mexico shortly before he died. Crane was living with Peggy Cowley and the atmosphere he said was tense, wild, full of suppressed hysteria and torment. Peggy he described as very small, aging, always drunk, witty. She is passionately fond of flowers and knows a lot about them, her most charming trait. Plenn thought that the combination of Peggy and Mexico was too much for Crane.

Must write more and better poetry. Now is my chance. Trifling trivialities and small pretty verses are not enough. But my mind is blank, my head aches, my heart feels dry. Today I didn’t do my daily poem. Wicked and lazy me. But I had nothing to say. You should have tried to say something if only for practice and discipline. But I’ve written in my diary instead. Is that a substitute? Perhaps—

July 21

Rainy, dull days, and two days ago a violent thunder storm, wild lightning, and the most terrific showers I’d ever seen. Was rather excited. I had never before seen nature cut loose in the country!

Went to the oculist in Glens Falls, who told me that my eyes were O.K. but that I needed glasses badly. Felt so happy and relieved, though the bad headaches continue and my eyes feel sick with an unending sense of strain.

Horace received a manuscript from Macmillan by a Leila Jones—fine technique, exquisite imagery, reminiscent of Léonie Adams without Léonie’s really distinguished mind. In the Leila Jones manuscript there is no trace of any genuine experience, any fresh interpretation; [it’s] like an exquisite but galvanized corpse. And the fine technique, the careful, pre-


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cise language, the *sweet rich lovely crystal* (favorite adjectives) become suddenly too sweet, too rich. One feels as if one has eaten too much candy, lying on a pink-silk-coverleted bed, in a room full of orchids and shaded lights. One wants to go out into the sea and air and *further further* into the cities where men struggle and pant for air and simple food. . . . The L. Jones manuscript is the best argument for social, for experimental, poetry I have discovered yet—better the "crudeness," the violence of a poem in the *New Masses*, in the little magazines, than this perfumed death.

*July 25*

Talked over the Yaddo and Triuna situation and decided to leave, though Mrs. Ames has extended our stay. The atmosphere is too tense, too full of unfathomable neuroses. And the possession of the check for $100 from Covici makes us feel free, wild, and devilishly reckless. My word—but money *does* lighten the heart and free the spirit. Why aren't the rich more brave, more violent, more independent, more brimful of good works than they are? Money seems to be such a help!

I sat secluded in a little garden seat near the water, and wrote the poem that I want to be the title poem of my new book. It has lovely and haunting lines I think. It *is* a good poem. I'm getting very fond of my growing new book. I want nothing to happen to it—nothing. This annoys me for I wanted to write it as if publication meant nothing, as if an audience meant nothing, as if only the poems and the satisfaction of writing them meant everything. But already I begin to see them in a fine book. I read the title page. I caress the binding. Oh *so wrong* and leaving me so exposed to disappointment.

A fine letter from Morton Zabel to whom both Horace and I pour out our griefs, far far too often. He is the only person whose kindness we can rely on and whose judgment will be exact and charitable and patient. He *is* a fine person, the only one who lives up to the old ideal, "A scholar, a gentleman, a Christian, a brave man." Horace answers to all these too but he would I'm afraid balk at the "Christian"—his virtues have a stoic, a pagan quality.

Heard from Muriel Rukeyser yesterday. Her book has been taken by the Yale University Press and will be published in September—such good news. I had a great desire to see her and to congratulate her in person.

*July 26*

Sad day and one in which no satisfactory work was done. My glasses troubled me. They look so ugly and disfiguring and I can't do without them—or with them, for that matter.

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Miss the children dreadfully, think and dream of them incessantly. I want them near me again. We have been separated too long.

Tomorrow we are going to visit the *Louis Untermeyers. We are looking forward to it with delight—anything to escape this Babylonian Captivity. Untermeyer’s ardent offers of friendship and hospitality are still novel and moving to us—it’s so rare. I hope we’ll have a nice time. I hope we make a friend.

It’s late now and mist and shadow have covered the waters. One solitary electric light is shining on the other side of the island. It glows hard and sharp, like a golden star.

August 14

We returned from Triuna 2 weeks ago tonight. We decided to leave soon after the Untermeyer visit, which would have been pleasant but for my eye trouble (still not completely cured), which got worse and worse. Then Horace found that he had lost the use of one arm. We rushed back to N.Y. soon after we got back to Triuna to pack our things.

I went to an eye specialist who told me that I had paralysis of the optic nerves due to nervous exhaustion. Horace was sent to a neurologist who handed in a distressing report. His whole right side had been paralyzed. He had evidently had a stroke of paralysis. My glasses gotten at Glens Fall were of course no good either. We felt sad, sick and lonely, poor and worried—and the babies were far away.

August 30 - Rockport, Mass.

Arrived at Rockport over a week ago to stay near the *Shedlovsky’s. Ted thought the sea bathing and sea air and sun would help Horace’s condition. His health seems to have improved but not so much as to relieve us of worry. With the aid of my glasses I can do a little writing but almost no reading. The town itself [an] almost deserted fishing and quarry town. Has some fine old houses almost all in bad repair. An influx of art colonists, a sorry group.

September 4

Trouble with my eyes again. Upset, worried, we intended to leave for Sunnyside yesterday but heard . . . that Sunnyside was in the throes of an infantile paralysis scare. Decided to stay on for a few more days, much to my regret.

The sea gray and clear on cool windy days fills me with melancholy at times as I watch the tide break into foam at my feet, monotonously and rhythmically, and I try to throw away uneasy thoughts, piercing nostal-
gias, and a sense of rootlessness and disorder from brain and spirit. I find it impossible to write or think in confusion and disorder, I the most confused and disorderly-minded of persons.

The slowly-growing cold that creeps around me like a tide, without sun or memory of sun. One longs for kindness, for some sort of inner fire, for peace, for some token of love and respect from those we love and respect. I fear that the chill in my heart chills others and that I draw the cold darkness too close to Horace—who deserves all light, all kindness, all respect.

September [?]

63 Kensington Road, Bronxville, N.Y. This is the first entry I have made from our new Bronxville house. On September 21 we left Sunny-side. . . . We have a 7-room house, large, sunny and airy, 2 bathrooms, the most luxurious house we've ever had. I still feel lost and terrified in it. Still there are moments when I find myself breathing fresh country air in the large beautiful bedroom, or looking out of Joanna's window in her exquisite room and see the trees light gold and red-green in the fine autumnal air, and the Bronx river flowing like a silver mist through golden grass . . . and I feel happy for a while and awed. To have come to this . . . to be able to see this every day. And then I wonder, "Will it last?" This fine house, this peaceful and lovely scenery, after slums, after furnished rooms, after airless houses and noisy streets.

The children are so beautiful. Patsy is a delight and Joanna a vision of beauty in a new sailor suit with a bright red silk tie.

Darling Muriel Rukeyser visits us frequently. And last week *John Brooks Wheelwright came and stayed overnight with us. He has a pure, sharp, original mind—a brilliant, erratic and fine person, something of a great aristocrat gone decadent—but authentic, no shoddiness, no falseness there, the old Boston stock at its mad best.

Looked over an old journal and felt heartsick over the trivialities, the petty worries that absorbed me at that time. The whole thing is so worthless. And yet it gave me a great deal of comfort and pleasure to write it. I haven't the courage to burn it. I should burn it. I'm not that way really. I was a better person—than the diary would lead anyone to suppose.

November 3

Nasty, rainy weather. Eye trouble, must stop reading, such a bore! The children wild and gay and a little nerve-wracking, so much noise and confusion, and so much trouble in getting them to bed. Horace harassed by heavy work at Sarah Lawrence, bitter literary controversies in which
he is usually singled out for the most violent, unreasonable and wildest attacks. And he makes a point of never answering attacks—with the result that one gets choked up with unspoken misery.

I try to write, but everything seems pointless, flat and commonplace. The little girl I hired amiable, languid, and not very helpful. I discovered that she spends most of her time up in her room writing poetry. I get angry sometimes and want to run upstairs, shake her and say, See here it’s either your poetry or mine. But lassitude, a sense of futility, the fantastic humor of the situation get me and I give up and retire in melancholy.

Read Henry James’ letters, but aside from their curious charm of style I find no comment on life or on people that seems over profound. The style one can say is almost all—So conventional, so snobbish, so orthodox in his life and principles: kindly to the few people he seemed to like, but the kindness of a sheltered, protected, really unknowing human being.

December 16

I have been suffering so long from what the psychologists call “depressive melancholia” that I felt like destroying this journal and being done with it forever. No news bad or good but long intense strain, discouragement.

Went to a party at *Eleanor Clark’s. I wore a bright red silk dress—and everyone said I looked very pretty. Malcolm Cowley kissed my hand as he left with a devilish air.

Muriel’s book Theory of Flight is now out and is receiving a fine reception. Horace of course had cleared the way by receiving the first storms of abuse. After the critics had vented their rage and fury on him they were willing to accept the young English Communist poets, and Muriel has no difficulty at all in being [reviewed?] and read.

I am waiting for mail now. My nerves are sick and sad. It has been a long time since we’ve seen a friend (or so it seems!) or received a long warm letter. . . . I long for the doorbell to ring and to hear the postman flinging the mail down, or the telephone to ring and a friend’s voice sudden and clear to say . . . Oh anything! Just to hear a friend’s voice.

SELECTED LIST OF NAMES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

Unless otherwise stated, the following individuals are American. In the case of writers, at least one example of their work is given.

Adamic, Louis (1898–1951), author, born in Yugoslavia; The Native’s Return (1934).
Adams, Léonie (1899–1988), poet; *High Falcon* (1929).
Aiken, Conrad Potter (1889–1973), poet, critic, writer; *Selected Poems* (1929, Pulitzer Prize)
Amiel, Henri Frédéric (1821–1881), Swiss poet, philosopher, and professor of aesthetics; *Journal intime* (1883–84).
Asquith, Margot (1864–1945), English writer and wife of Herbert Henry Asquith, prime minister (1908–1916); *Octavia* (1928).
Bodenheim, Maxwell (1893–1954), writer; *Naked on Roller Skates* (1931).
Böcklin, Arnold (1827–1901), Swiss painter who presaged Symbolist and Surrealist art.
Bogan, Louise (1897–1970), poet and poetry reviewer; *Body of this Death* (1923).
Bradford, Gamaliel (1863–1932) biographer, known for his “psychographs”; *American Portraits* (1922) and *The Quick and the Dead* (1931).
Burke, Kenneth (1897–1992), critic, philosopher, and poet; *Counter-Statement* (1931; revised 1968).
Burne-Jones, Sir Edward Coley (1833–1898), Pre-Raphaelite painter, designer, and pioneer in Arts and Crafts movement.
Bynner, Witter (1881–1968), poet and playwright; *An Ode to Harvard and other Poems* (1907; reprinted as *Young Harvard*, 1925).
Clare, John (1793–1864), English poet. Wrote *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life* (1820).
Collins, John Churton (1848–1908), English literary critic; *Study of English Literature* (1891).
Cowley, Malcolm (1898–1989), critic and poet; *Exile's Return* (1934; revised 1951). Also wrote book reviews for the *New Republic.*
Crane, Hart (1899–1932), poet; *The Bridge* (1930).
Criss, Francis (1901–1973), painter and teacher.
Dahlberg, Edward (1900–1977), novelist; *Bottom Dogs* (1929) and *Do These Bones Live* (1941; republished as *Can These Bones Live*, 1967).
Fearing, Kenneth (1902–1961), poet, novelist and pseudonymous pulp-magazine writer; *Angel Arms* (1929).
Fiorillo, Dante (1905–1950?), composer.
Flanner, Hildegarde (1899–1980), poet and New Yorker writer; *Time's Profile* (1929).
Freeman, Joseph (1897–1965) proletarian critic; *An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics* (1936). Also a founder of the *New Masses*.
Gogarty (Oliver Joseph St. John, 1878–1957), Irish physician and writer of memoirs, essays, and poetry; *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street* (1937).
Gosse, Sir Edmund William (1849–1928), English poet and man of letters; *Seventeenth-Century Studies* (1883) and *Table Talk* (1921).
Hicks, Granville (1901–1982), Marxist critic; *John Reed: The Making of a Revolutionary* (1936). Also an editor of the *New Masses*.
Hunt, Alfred (1831–1896), English landscape painter.
Hunt, Leigh (1784–1859), English poet, critic, playwright, and essayist; *Feast of the Poets* (1814).
Hunt, Violet (1866–1942), English biographer and novelist; *Tales of the Uneasy* (1910, 1925).
Hunt, William Holman (1872–1910), English painter and a founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.
Lumpkin, Grace (ca. 1903–) proletarian novelist; *To Make My Bread* (1932).

Millay, Edna St. Vincent (1892–1950), poet; *The Buck in the Snow* (1928).

Monroe, Harriet (1860–1936), poet and editor; *Valeria and Other Poems* (1892). Founder and editor of *Poetry* magazine (1912).

Moore, George Augustus (1852–1933), Irish novelist and autobiographer; *Hail and Farewell!* (1911–14). Major figure of Irish Literary Revival.


Mumford, Lewis (1895–1990), social philosopher, writer, and teacher; *The Culture of Cities* (1938).

Neagoe, Peter (1882–1960), American painter and writer, born in Transylvania; *Easter Sun* (1934).

Parker, Dorothy (1893–1967), writer, known for acerbic wit; *Enough Rope* (1926).


Richardson, Dorothy Miller (1872–1957), English novelist and pioneer of the stream of consciousness technique. Her twelve novels are known collectively as *Pilgrimage*.

Rossetti, Christina Georgina (1830–1894), English poet; *Goblin Market* (1862).

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel (1828–1882), English painter, poet, and member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; *The Blessed Damozel* (1871–79).

Roth, Henry (1906–1995), novelist; *Call It Sleep* (1934; reissued 1960) and *Mercy of a Rude Stream* (1994–96).


Ruskin, John (1819–1900), English art critic and sociological writer; *Stones of Venice* (1851–53).

Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin (1804–1869), French man of letters; *Les Consolations* (1830).

Saint-Simon, Duc de (Louis de Rouvroy, 1675–1755), French soldier, statesman, and writer; *Mémoirs* (of French court, from 1694 to 1723).


Shedlovsky, Theodore (1898–1976), chemist and author of scientific articles.


Taine, Hippolyte-Adolphe (1828–1893), French philosopher, historian, and critic; *La Fontaine et ses Fables* (1853).


Walpole, Sir Hugh Seymour (1884–1941), English novelist; *Fortitude* (1913).

Walton, Eda Lou (1896–), educator and author; *Jane Matthew, and Other Poems* (1931).

Watteau, Jean-Antoine (1684–1721), French painter known for scenes of conventional shepherds and shepherdesses.

Wheelwright, John Brooks (1897–1940), poet; *Rock and Shell* (1933).

Williams, William Carlos (1883–1963), writer and physician; *Paterson* (1946–58) and *Pictures from Breughel* (1962, Pulitzer Prize).

Wylie, Elinor (1885–1928), poet and fiction writer; *Nets to Catch the Wind* (1921).

Zabel, Morton Dauwen (1901–1964), critic and scholar; *The Romantic Idealism of Art in England* (1933). Associate editor, then editor, of *Poetry* magazine.