




Stories and Essays of Mina Loy

Mina Loy , Sara Crangle (Editor)

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Stories and Essays of Mina Loy is the first book-length volume of Mina Loy's narrative writings and critical work ever published. This volume brings together her short fiction, as well as hybrid works that include modernized fairy tales, a Socratic dialogue, and a ballet. Loy's narratives address issues such as abortion and poverty, and what she called "the sex war" is an abiding theme throughout. *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy* also contains dramatic works that parody the bravado and misogyny of Futurism and demonstrate Loy's early, effective use of absurdist technique. Essays and commentaries on aesthetics, historical events, and religion complete this beguiling collection, cementing Mina Loy's place as one of the great writers of the twentieth century.

Stories and Essays of Mina Loy Details

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From Reader Review Stories and Essays of Mina Loy for online ebook

Marcel says

Important people would be enticed at receptions into the shadows of Spanish leather or Chinese lacquer screens, for a significant talk with Virginia Cosway the lifelong friend of the master. There under the arc of the handshake, with a brief undulation of the hip, and the adjustment of the forefinger, the stomach outswung to its notable attitude, as if enticing aesthetic culture into her womb to be reborn for her audience.

- from 'The Stomach'

A woman poses before her mother's body. The decaying body on display, the suggestion of what you can't see to fear under her clothing, like in a good horror film. The eye in the back of the head under her dress. Virginia Cosway is an actress who makes the most of her bit part. The muse of the master painter, the dutiful daughter. Her aging, inspiring stomach of the pose entombed in a statue in the center of a room in a museum somewhere. People stand around it, they don't really like it. Under her dress is the eye in the back of the head, the kind that sees the other option. Her excuse, her identity, is gone. I can't possibly have a life, I must love my mother. She's ill, you see. How to be seen from the mind's eye of a mediocre woman who doesn't have much of a vision. Loy killed it. I could be her mother in that room rolling an unseen eye, unheard in can you believe this shit? If she could have stood around the statue instead of the unmoving living thing she might have found some relief. I see it too, lady.

There were dozens of things going through my head over the past week I read the many pieces in this collection. Now that I'm writing my review, of course, I am thinking of something else that Loy could do that I dug the hell out of. (I could have written many different reviews of this collection. There are many stories, plays, essays and even a ballet.) It's a detached feeling (I've written about it on goodreads before, no doubt) of wishing I could catch someone else's eye and not be alone in it. It is really much better than that that Loy does. If there were shadows on the wall she would put her finger on it, the right finger, and the feeling would be the writing on the wall of rabbits, another finger a fox. Move your wrist and it is in your hand. It is the made real of I thought I could see the bright eyes in the bushes but when I looked away it was gone.

Three boys are born in the same city on the same day in "The Three Wishes". This part killed me when the third boy, the unlawful Hyde Park, has to wait for his finally nabbed folks to get out of the big house. The boy has an exchange with the lady Mrs. Bates of the chapel. The kind of precocious talk like a kid who thinks he knows what he should say and still only delivers the kind of answers that a kid who only thinks he knows what he's supposed to say would say.

"Oh man, I want, I do so want to be good."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Bates suspiciously.

"'Cause everybody what is anybody, anybody wot don't get chased around *is*."

She had to admit to herself it was precisely what she thought.

The second boy, Jacky, cannot believe in a magic that will shine his mother's dusty curls. The first boy Ian of the sanctified home cannot keep his chaste image of his mother in her nightgown before the nude models in

his artists class. It kind of killed me the feeling of I know there must be happy families out there. Hyde in his bed adopted by the born mother. He reminds them of themselves.

I was fired with the preposterous fantasy that if woman has been the pack mule for the transgressions of man it is because by some alchemy of her actions, she is within herself incapable of sin. She undeniably behaves in all contingencies as if assured of a transcendental sanction.

- from 'Transfiguration.'

The woman next to her on the train expends herself on a vision of propriety for the narrator beside her. (I love the description of "her shrapnel eyes". Loy is so damned good.) The woman bends herself for whom? The other woman who didn't mean to hear it all that she had been after all shacking up with a man in the recommended place to stay. She depends herself on the man, transforms herself for him or for whom? It is the other woman she hates but who is it that she is playing for? I felt it in the I wish I had someone to share this with eyes of anyone else who shares space with this woman who takes and invents from those around her, for the stories and the faces for that man. I don't think too much about what he wants any more than I really want to know if any man actually likes it when I hear grown women putting on baby talk when a man is around. I feel like this when a girl gives me the die on the spot or just go away I don't care look because she wants to be alone and flirt with the man standing beside me. It only feels less deadened when I think about myself thinking about being the detective companion. Loy killed it here. I could have been on that train too. I had that feeling about other stories too.

I returned to my cubicle. The false wall resounded with arpeggios of curses and shrieked bitches. A nerve-wracking invective, yet it seemed to issue from no heart-felt conviction; rather, as if a self-trained robot, glib with practice, were testing how great a tonal strain its metal lungs, its wire vocal-chords could stand. Or a child's bravado had run amok into adulthood, before an amplified converse.

- from The Agony of the Partition

The stranger's heart beat on my compassion. The partition between two heads, the conveyed and is it shared love affair of the past. The bond between the mother and daughter, the burden of the baby and the abortion. I was drawn to the mental image of the strangers on either side of the wall where another person was relieving or reliving this past. It was like taking on another life that's not yours.

There were some darn good fairy tale kind of stories in here too. I mean this in the achingly sad kind of way not a this happened because it happened fairy tale logic kind of a way. I liked the "The Crocodile without any tail". I wanted to rescue the crocodile from the children. They have his teeth removed by magic and he loses his tail from a crocodile who still has his teeth. He is cute playing with his presents of doll crocodiles (until they get wet in the rain, anyway) but I couldn't help but feel he was better off not making the kids rich because he didn't have any teeth.

That segways me to the ballet (there are many more stories that I liked). I've never read a ballet before and I have no idea how ballets are written. It was called "Crystal Pantomime" and the story goes that a young girl is inevitably lured into peering into a crystal ball proffered by a witch. The ball shows her future that is no future. It is the prince who has all of the adventures and the girl doesn't even show up until the end when it is time to get married. I liked a lot that Loy describes a dance inspired to be like that

darting of a summer morning housefly. I am impressed that Loy would get her dancing ideas in this way. I would want to see-through the wings of the present and tiny and buzzing housefly. When I watch dancing I sleep off to somewhere else in my mind. I do this when people are talking to me. I have recently become fixated on the cockroaches I see scuttling about the parking lots at work in the mornings. When I go home there are dead cockroaches after cars have driven over them. Sometimes their corpses look as if the top half have been cut off from the bottom layer and they are laid side by side. The nothing inside remains I watch from the next to the next. I am constantly fascinated by insects of all kinds. The house-fly dance really made it for me. I see the prison of the crystal ball and the gleaming magical inhabitants costumes and it was the can't get out short life span buzzing dance style that got to me the most. I have always had a hard time watching ballets, though.

The plays were my least favorite. I read elsewhere that some were parodies of other works I am not familiar with, or responses to movements I am wholly ignorant of. I had been unaware of Futurism. There might be a history to "Rosa by Bjuna Darnes" that I am unaware of. I know the two were friends. I wasn't that into it. I recently read Barnes' *Ryder* and it was more than enough for me. Rosa and her lover, the uncle who deflowered her the Jeraboam character fight behind the walls they have been hiding from prying neighbors eyes for the past fifty years. I know they have because they fight over it. It reads like the kind of fight a person has had for a long time. They can't have been hiding too well as a neighbor comes over to demand what they have been doing to her sons. I think the plays might have been too broad for me after the suspicions and real life breathing of the stories I liked so much. Characters are named after their positions. Youth, A Man, Women, Another Man, Don Juan, Love.

For weeks, I resisted, a misery so mysteriously baseless, slowly reducing to tremulous fear the terror that appeared to invade me from something endlessly surrounding me- till it faded to the annoyance of neurosis ----- this lessening.

In the essay "My Catholik Confidante" the church keeps women doing their duty and having more babies they can survive. Loy makes her point by talking about this friend of hers who felt another person in her own pain was "like looking through a microscope at a secret world". The strangle on her life, the darkened options. "But the church says 'it's' wrong!" I can see Loy writing this to her friend who looked for another affirmation she could live with.

I liked that quality of the essays as if she was breaking down the door listened outside of something kept too inside. In the essay "The Library of the Spinx" the sphinx can keep her secret. She doesn't speak, doesn't know her own secret. She lets men write it for her. Let the sphinx not remain mysteriously silent for another to make up her mind for her. I was relieved to read this. Loy's repulsion for the woman in fiction as a joy girl, ignoring the reality of exhausting penetration, the danger and disease. I've felt this too (I wonder if the "student putting herself through college" prostitute fantasy was underway yet in her day).

I liked a lot the essay "Mi & Lo". I like how she talks to herself. I liked the way this lives in the stories like how when you have your beliefs and observances about life but there's that darkness outside quality like an up close scene in a film. If you were up close on someone and they were crying. It would be true about the person crying but how close you were could be part of the truth, the story too. I try to do it this way to not have to catch myself be a know-it-all asshole about life stuff. I wouldn't want to think I had that woman on the train in Mexico pegged when she's spending herself for that guy. I would say I don't know the whole story. I get that feeling that Loy does that in her stories. In her essays she's talking to herself to keep herself going. I really liked the Mi exchange with Lo, the answer, to if a person has a soul or not. The person who survives being the hungry child because they have to have something else to live on. Yeah, I thought that

was great. I freaking love Mina Loy's brain. I am not too sure about the plays but that could be because they don't "play" in my brain like the rest of them do and I can really get going when things "play". It's better than day dreaming about cool bugs or thinking about people until I stop myself from thinking about people too much because what if I don't really know them and have it all wrong. When you do the stories and have the shadow puppets you can get the I know this could happen and that's having those feelings but much, much better. I hope this review was okay because it is hard to try and capture so many pieces of work in one review that had more greatness than I can put into a review. I don't ever have the finger in the right spot to make the whole animal.

Kimberly says

Not sure what to make of this book. I really enjoyed the essays and a lot of the liberal thinking of social issues that can be applied to today. I just couldn't follow the short stories, poems or plays. Most, for me, were nonsense and seemed like hallucinations turned into stories? Maybe I just not intellectually at the level of Ms. Loy, but couldn't give this book high praise. Any one else's thoughts?

Ceci says

This is a bit of a mixed bag. Some (most) of the selections are so fucking good, with a few clunkers that clunk mostly in comparison to their surroundings. Overall, it's astounding and clever and esoteric and very, very lovely.

Edward says

Introduction, Acknowledgments & Abbreviations

Stories

- The Agony of the Partition
- The Crocodile without any Tail
- Gloria Gammage
- Hush Money
- Incident
- Lady Asterisk.
- In Maine: Green's Colony
- Monde Triple-Extra
- New York Camelio
- Pazzarella
- Piero & Eliza.
- The Stomach
- The Three Wishes
- Transfiguration.

Drama

- Crystal Pantomime
- The Pamperers
- Rosa
- The Sacred Prostitute

Essays and Commentary

- All the laughs in one short story by McAlmon
- Brancusi and the Ocean
- My Catholick Confidante
- Censor Morals Sex.
- Conversion
- Gate Crashers of Olympus---
- Gertrude Stein
- Havelock Ellis
- History of Religion and Eros
- The Library of the Sphinx.
- The Logos in Art.
- The Metaphysical Pattern in Aesthetics.
- Mi & Lo
- The Oil in the Machine?
- Tuning in on the Atom Bomb
- Universal Food Machine
- William Carlos Williams

Notes

Aveugle Vogel says

"a printed monkey climbed towards her heart"

Paul says

4.5 stars rounded up

Mina Loy packed a lot into her life and to say it was colourful and interesting would be an understatement. She was involved with modernism, futurism, avant-garde; she wrote poetry, a novel, short stories, essays. Loy had friendships with Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes. Her disillusionment with futurism led to her writing a feminist manifesto in 1914. Her friendships ranged widely across Europe and the US and included Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Man Ray, Marianne Moore to name but a few. She had a relationship with Arthur Cravan (a Dadaist poet-boxer (I'm not making this up) on the run from conscription). I recently discovered a novel about their relationship and his mysterious disappearance called *Shadow Box* by Antonia Logue.

This collection is a really mixed bag. There are lots of fragments and parts of essays and stories. There is a score for a ballet (very bizarre), a couple of short plays (the unfinished *The Sacred Prostitute* which satirises the subjugation of women is very good), brief essays on Stein and Havelock Ellis, essays on censorship, the

atom bomb, metaphysics and aesthetics to name but a few; and a whole collection of short stories. There is a good overview of Loy's thinking over the years. The work from her modernist period is very good and her dissection of D H Lawrence is delicious ("the almost lyrical prose of *Women in Love*"). I found some of the more philosophical stuff a little tiresome and some of the later material does not have the punch of the early work.

There is none of the poetry here, although Loy writes many of her short stories in a poetic way and she did write a novel which was published posthumously. This collection is a good introduction to Loy and the prose is excellent.

Sveta says

Great collection, but her persistent framing feminism as accepting romanticized aspects of sexism is frustrating.

Crystal says

Very enjoyable and challenging. I'll be dipping back into into this forever. It's a must-read for students of feminist modernism.

Blogbaas Van 'tVliegend Eiland says

8/10

J.M. Hushour says

Terribly misrepresented in journals, reviews, and its own back cover alike, this collection of Mina Loy's shorter fictional "works" and her inane, slapdash essays is nothing short of astonishingly bad.

Loy is archetypal awesome on paper. An avant-garde, pseudo-futurist weirdo surrealist writer who knew people like Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes--what isn't there to love already?

Lots, apparently. This is a poor collection. Let me just say first off, that it isn't all Loy's fault. Reading through her patchy, hyphen-ridden half-thought out stories, one can see the genius lurking in her prose. Unfortunately, some poor editorial decision-maker somewhere decided to publish a crop of awful-in-their-incompleteness fragments of short fiction. Some of the stories simply go nowhere. Awry and amok, there isn't anything dada-y that would keep one engaged.

Nope. And the non-fiction essays are just as bad. Half of them are simply outlines or rough notes of things, nothing coherent or even tempting to the mind.

What we get is a nice window onto a writer that could have been, not much more.

I understand the need to fill in the much-needed academic vacuum of feminist or just simply female writers in an area of aesthetics that was largely sadly wanting in prominent female figures, but trying to shoehorn in collections of mediocrities such as these is a futile, unneeded endeavor.

Lorraine says

I can't say I LOVE it but it is certainly very clever (not in an odious pretentious way). I have a feeling I'm too dumb to understand SOME stories -- some though -- that I DID get -- were incredibly well done. Probably deserves another read -- the sort of thing that would improve the more you think about it. But that's common of a 'modernist' work.

Modern Abbess says

some of her stories were like childhood parables, but with her typical visceral femininity.

Felipe says

At times sharp and funny, dull and confusing and clear, insightful, always poetic. The satire on Futurism is funny. Reflections on art are very good. Most of everything in this book is based on incomplete manuscripts.
