

THIS AND THAT: Publishing Djuna Barnes

Sigma, the name evolved from Dr. James Sibley Watson, Jr.

(<http://books.google.com/books?id=ENljuNjmehYC&pg=PA129&lpg=PA129&dq=james+sibley+watson+jr&source=bl&ots=5fhJtIsXcP&sig=cN5LeUN6m1UTFn1j23oVoMRSxjc&hl=en&sa=X&ei=gHfjUPniDKy10QH8hIDQBw&ved=0CDQQ6AEwATgU#v=onepage&q=james%20sibley%20watson%20jr&f=false>)



signing his letters to me with the Greek

It was Dr. Watson's idea that he and I publish books. We founded a press in the tradition of a private press. It was not an alternative or small press. It was to be a personal response to our reading of literature.

Our agreement, as publishers, was the same agreement Dr. Watson had with Scofield Thayer (<http://www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/America/Thayer.htm>) when they published *The Dial* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dial), 1920 – 1929. Both partners would agree on the merits of the writing and that it should be published. When Dr. Watson suggested a lawyer for our incorporation, I translated an anonymous poem from *The Greek Anthology* as a guidepost for our editorial policy.

Do you think
this grove
is consecrate,

the books by the plane-tree,

that we
will guard it,

and if a true lover has come

we crown him with ivy.

In 1979 when Octavio Paz was in Rochester to participate in a New York State Literary Center (<http://www.nyslc.org/>) program, he introduced me to the poetry of Mina Loy. The poem was "Mexican Desert." It was published in *The Dial*, June 1921 (Volume LXX, Number 6)

(http://books.google.com/books?id=_9VxFrRMihcC&pg=PA77&lpg=PA77&dq=mina+loy+%22Mexican+Desert'+The+Dial&source=bl&ots=yzcLVpYMiv&sig=E6J6Vji5LX0xlb-pltm2WzcY9NU&hl=en&sa=X&ei=fsHkUNrWBdGy0QH924DQBw&ved=0CE8Q6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=mina%20loy%20%22Mexican%20Desert'%20The%20Dial&f=false). Paz remarked that she was one of the greatest poets of the century. I had never heard of her.

I looked for more of her work, looked for everything and anything by her I could find. I came back to *The Dial*. "The Pamperers," a play, was published in *The Dial*, July 1920 (Volume LXIX, Number 1). "Perlun" was published in *The Dial*, August 1921 (Volume LXXI, Number 2), the same issue as Ezra Pound's "Three Cantos." "Poe" was published in *The Dial*, October 21, 1921 (Volume LXXI, Number 4), along with writing by Mary Butts, Hart Crane, E.E. Cummings, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound. "Apology of Genius" (<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/apology-of-genius/>) was published in *The Dial*, July 1922 (Volume LXXIII, Number 1). "Brancusi's Golden Bird" was published in *The Dial*, November 1922 (Volume LXXIII, Number 5), along with a photograph of Constantin Brancusi's "The Golden Bird." The same November 1922 *Dial* also contained T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" and reproductions of two drawings by Pablo Picasso.

Kenneth Rexroth was the next person to speak of Mina Loy to me. He called her a great writer and had urged James Laughlin of New Directions to publish her. Other than *Lunar Baedeker*, Contact (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_McAlmon), Dijon, 1923 and *Lunar Baedeker & Time Tables*, Jargon Society, Highlands, 1958, I could not find any books by her in print. Rather than do a scholarly paper on Mina Loy, I decided to publish her. I began by writing to a former publisher of hers, Dr James Sibley Watson Jr., who lived in Rochester.

Dr. Watson responded, "I recall how delighted we were at *The Dial* with Mina Loy's poems. They stopped coming, and we heard that she had married a prizefighter and gone to live somewhere in South America. I had a book of her poems" (December 15, 1980).

A former student of mine, Leigh Giurlando, a senior at Smith in 1980, was studying printing with Harold McGrath (<http://www.downstreet.net/archives/printest.html>) in Northampton as she wanted to "make" a book for her senior project. She contacted me in the fall for suggestions of what to publish. My immediate response was Mina Loy's "At The Door of The House," originally published in *Others, An Anthology of The New Verse*, edited by Alfred Kreyborg (Alfred A. Knopf, 1917). Twenty-seven copies of *At The Door of House* were handset in Bembo type and printed on Rives Heavyweight by Leigh Giurlando for her newly established Aphra Press. I wrote the introduction.

I urged Leigh to do a second book of Mina Loy's, her sequence, "Love Songs." Roger Conover contributed the manuscript. His "Notes on the Text" states, "Here the sequence has been restored to the original order and Mina Loy's editorial corrections instated to give us the first reliable text of the forgotten "Love Songs" in sixty-four years." Twenty-five hand bound copies of Love Songs were handset in Bembo and printed on Rives Heavy weight. *Love Songs* was dedicated to Kenneth Rexroth. I introduced the book with a quote from Djuna Barnes' "The Passion." "She set her tea cup down with a slight trembling of the hand, then added with mordant acerbity, 'But if a little light man with a beard had said 'I love you,' I should have believed in God."

Two books in print and no means to print others. Then along came Candace Lorimer, a graduate student in printing at Rochester Institute of Technology who was looking for a book to print for her graduate work. I wanted to see Mina Loy's "Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots," "Giovanni Franchi," and "Three Moments In Paris" in one book. They had originally been published in *Rogue I*, 1915, *Rogue II*, 1915, and *Rogue II*, 1916. I agreed to advise and work with her if we could publish Mina Loy.

A stipulation of using the Cary Graphic Arts Collection (<http://library.rit.edu/cary/about-cary-collection>) of letterpress machines and fonts was that RIT's The Press of The Good Mountain had to be listed as publisher and the book could not be sold. *Love Songs* was published in an edition of eighty copies, composed on Deepdene types and printed on Fabriano Roma paper (Fabriano Roma paper had to be dampened and printed damp). Typography, printing, and binding were by Candace Lorimer, advised by RIT faculty member Archie Provan, at the School of Printing, Rochester Institute of Technology. I wrote the introduction and dedicated the book to Kenneth Rexroth (<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/08/obituaries/kenneth-rexroth-76-author-father-figure-to-best-poets.html>) who had had a severe heart attack around Christmas in 1980 and suffered a stroke in the spring of 1981. Twenty copies were given to Roger Conover to give to Mina Loy's family. This was agreed upon for permission to print the poems.

Thanks to Jonathan Williams in 1982 The Jargon Society published Mina Loy's *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited and introduced by Roger Conover.

Djuna Barnes also had been published in *The Dial*. I had included a quote from "The Passion" as an introduction to *Love Songs*. Discussions with Candace Lorimer led me to think of publishing a one act play because of the typographical challenge of not having the book appear as a script

but have it emerge as its own art form on the printed page.

Djuna Barnes' first collection, *A Book* (1923), included her one act play "To The Dogs." She was thirty-one. Her second collection, *A Night Among The Horses* (1929), also included "To The Dogs." Then a jump. In *Selected Works of Djuna Barnes* (1962), "Spillway" included some of the stories in different form that had appeared in *A Book* and *A Night Among The Horses*. None of the one-act plays were included.

The omission of "To The Dogs" became reason to publish it. The characters were Helena Hucksteppe and her neighbor Gheid Storm. Dr. Watson and I immediately knew what we wanted to publish and why.

Helena: You will not even recall having seen me.

Storm: Can memory be taken too?

Helena: Only that memory that goes past recollection may be kept.

A copyright search turned up that "To The Dogs" was copy written by Djuna Barnes on September 27, 1920 and *A Book* was registered in the name of Boni and Liveright, Inc. on September 28, 1923 and renewed by Djuna Barnes on December 7, 1950.

I wrote to Djuna Barnes on October 7, 1981 asking for permission to publish "To The Dogs." I included a copy of *Virgins Plus Curtains*. I let her know the book would not be for sale; it was a readers' tribute to her writing. It would be printed on hand-made paper with hand-sewn binding.

She wrote back on November 6, 1981.

Thank you for sending a copy of your publication of the book of poems by Mina Loy.

If you wish to print my play, To The Dogs, you have my permission.

Please let me know when it will appear, and kindly send me a few copies,

With all good wishes.

One hundred and ten copies of *To The Dogs* were printed. The types were Linotype Granjon and Monotype Garamond display. Books with numbers 1 through 85 were printed on Tovil paper, made in England by Barcham Green Mill (paper had to be dampened for printing for the

type to be richer on the page), and the remaining twenty-five copies on Monadnock Caress. Typography, printing, and binding were by Candace Lorimer at the School of Printing, Rochester Institute of Technology.

I wrote a two-line poem to introduce the book.

Is there any way we touch
but in the moment we dream the same dream

Dr. Watson wrote a foreword. He concluded:

"In the preliminary description of the cast, Gheid Storm is treated as a pretentious and stupid male. Yet as the play progresses it is the same Storm who perceives that Helena Hucksteppe has much to offer, something that might even aspire to be termed, 'life, life itself.' Conversely she would ask more of her lover than such a man as Storm could understand or was capable of giving. A good man, Storm, respectable and all that; but he could hardly be expected to see beyond his own personal needs."

I shared progress, paper choices, and that each copy would be bound in its own slip case with Djuna Barnes on February 3, 1982.

Dr. Watson died on March 31, 1982. Before he died he had arranged for his old friend and *Dial* contributor Kenneth Burke (<http://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/21/obituaries/kenneth-burke-philosopher-96-and-new-criticism-founder-dies.html?src=pm>) to participate in a New York State Literary Center Program in a middle school. Burke learned of Dr. Watson's death when I picked him up at the airport. He taught with me in the New York State Literary Center program the next day.

I mailed Number 1 of *To The Dogs* to Djuna Barnes on April 19, 1982. I wrote her a second time in care of Frances Monson McCullough, a Senior Editor at The Dial Press who worked with Barnes, on May 26, 1982. I let her know that Number 2 was given to Dr. Watson's widow, that I had Number 3, and Candace Lorimer, Number 4. I asked her if she wanted additional copies to let me know, and also to please let me know if there was anyone to whom she wished to have copies sent.

Frances McCullough wrote me in June and August 1982. She delivered the copies to Djuna Barnes, along with my letter. Barnes was pleased and commented, "Well, this is gorgeous, but

what about the money." She had forgotten the details. Djuna Barnes

(<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/20/obituaries/djuna-barnes-dies-poet-and-novelist.html>)

died on June 18, 1982. Frances McCullough had been in Rochester viewing Dr. Watson's films when she died. She had a plaque made for Djuna Barnes with her epitaph on it and had it placed on Storm King Mountain where Djuna Barnes was born.

Notes:

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Djuna Barnes. "Head of A Polish Girl" (drawing). *The Dial*, March 1930 (Volume LVIII, Number 3).

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Djuna Barnes. "Pastoral." *The Dial*, April 1920 (Volume LXVIII, Number 4).

Djuna Barnes, "First Communion." *The Dial*, August 1923 (Volume LXXV, Number 2).

Djuna Barnes. "Rudolph Schildkraut" (drawing). *The Dial*, April 1923 (Volume LXXIV, Number 4).

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Selected Bibliography of The Writing of Mina Loy:

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Mina Loy. "The Pamperers." *The Dial*, July 1920 (Volume LXIX, Number 1).

Mina Loy. "Two Water Colors." *The Dial*, April 1921 (Volume LXX, Number 4).

Mina Loy. "Mexican Desert." *The Dial*, June 1921 (Volume LXX, Number 6).

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January 2013
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