



Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy

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The poet and visual artist Mina Loy (1882-1966) has long had an underground reputation as an exemplary avant-gardist. Born in London of mixed Jewish and English parentage, and a restless and much photographed beauty, she moved in the pivotal circles of international modernism, where her friends and lovers included Gertrude Stein, Marinetti, Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Cornell, Djuna Barnes, the poet-boxer Arthur Cravan, and the Surrealists and Man Ray. Carolyn Burke's riveting, authoritative biography brings this highly original and representative figure wonderfully alive, in the process giving us a new picture of modernism—and one woman's important contribution to it.

Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy Details

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From Reader Review **Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy** for online ebook

Rodney says

Loy's well on her way to rejoining the Modernist Hall of Fame, and Carolyn Burke deserves credit for stoking the fires with this full-scale biography, the first (but I hope not the last) word on Loy's life and achievement. Loy enjoyed a view from the center during the revolution in modern art c. 1905-1940, and her list of friends, lovers and acquaintances reads like a 20th-century Who's Who: F.T. Marinetti, Arthur Cravan, Gertrude Stein, Marcel Duchamp, James Joyce, Peggy Guggenheim, Constantine Brancusi, Walter Arensberg, William Carlos Williams, Mabel Dodge, Djuna Barnes, Ezra Pound--virtually anybody who was anybody in the international art circuit between the wars seemed to know and remember Loy.

Having famous friends is a tricky business, and in Burke's account the roll call of Loy's intimates threatens to eclipse her own distinctive work in poetry and the visual arts. Burke inadvertently assigns Loy a sort of secondary role in her own life, throwing over a deeper analysis of her poetry and prose to focus on the colorful age she lived in; she's more attracted to the parade of bohemians and makers of famous "isms" that moved through Loy's life than she is to the poetry, which gets discussed in abbreviated soundbites. Still, this is a good place to start if you're at all interested in Loy and the work that's been done on her in the decade since this book first appeared.

Wendy says

Very enjoyable and informative, although much more concentrated on social doings than on the work. However this book should lead to more serious engagement with a wonderful writer, and hopefully to the unearthing of her many lost visual works.

Thombeau says

A brilliant individual who definitely marched to the beat of her own drummer, Mina Loy was none the less unable to get her life together in ways which, oddly enough, I can relate to. Her life was long but she ended up broke and more than a little crazy. Along the way, however, she was involved with a fascinating array of characters, many well-known and artistically influential. This amazingly in-depth bio is extremely well-researched, compassionate yet non-judgemental, and also features some astute analysis of Loy's groundbreaking poetry.

Kevin O'Sullivan says

chronicle of an under-appreciated figure in the literary and artistic avant-garde who traversed the last century hitting all the important stops along the way --futurist florence, dadaist new york, interwar paris-- leaving behind important textual traces of a life lived beyond the limits of the norm; occult, erotic, indecipherable...

Velvetink says

Mentioned in The Princessa: Machiavelli for Women by Harriet Rubin.

Andrea Riley says

Burke focuses on Loy's life as special and interesting but it's mostly through Loy's beauty.

Jay Wood says

A huge achievement.

Heather Gibbons says

Fascinating, beautiful, tragic, talented, enigmatic, a little batty in the end: meet Mina Loy the Modernista. A bad mother, but an enviable mover and shaker who meets and beguiles everyone from Futurists to Red Wheelbarrowists. More than a muse, though, she actually works, making not just innovative poems and manifestoes but lamps, dresses, collages. In terms of defining artistic production and trouncing the high/low binary, Mina is more Po-Mo than Mo. Way ahead of her time and adventurous enough to make for a real page-turner.

Jason says

It is fascinating to see the modern period through the eyes of a minor artist: it corrects the hagiographies beautifully. The vanguard with their absurd ideas about achieving higher consciousness in their privileged self-regarding world could not be better lampooned in a direct satire! Nonetheless Mina Loy's honest investigations of her own sexuality make powerful reading when they appear in the text of this biography and give me an appetite to investigate her writing more.

Gemma says

I've been reading this on and off for a while. I love Mina Loy.
