
Finding Aid for the Robert Lowry papers 0149

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USC Libraries Special Collections

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Title: Robert Lowry papers

Collection number: 0149

Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 3.0 Linear feet4 boxes

Date (inclusive): 1939-1976

Abstract: Typescripts and galleys of various books by American journalist, editor, and novelist Robert Lowry (1919-1994).

creator: Lowry, Robert, 1919-1994

Biography

Robert Lowry was born on March 29, 1919, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He began his writing career at the age of eight, by his ninth year he was publishing stories in Cincinnati's daily newspaper. After his graduation from Withrow High School in 1937, Lowry entered the University of Cincinnati, where he founded and edited the magazine *The Little Man* in between jobs as an apple-picker in nearby orchards and salesman in a downtown department store.

Lowry left his hometown in 1938 to "tour the United States as a hitch-hiker". After much travel and a brief stay in New York, in 1939 Lowry returned to Cincinnati. There he published his first major story, *Defense in University City*, and followed this success with the founding of his own Little Man Press, publishing his own works until his induction into the army in 1942.

Lowry completed basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and was soon accepted for admittance to the Officers Candidate School, but was transferred overseas with the 953rd Engineers Company before he could join the OCS. Lowry served in Italy, and despite discouragement from the Army and his absence from his home press, Lowry continued to write throughout the war, publishing first *The Skyblue Lady* (1942) and then *Layover in El Paso* (1944). Lowry returned to the States and Cincinnati in 1945.

While it is known that Lowry endured many marriages and divorces, the details of these events are not clear. Indeed, in his self-published chronologies Lowry made only passing references to his wives, and excluded entirely any data on the dates of his weddings, divorces, and birth of his children. Lowry apparently married either before the war or while on leave, for after his discharge he returned to his "mother and father and sister and [first] wife Bella". A 1948-49 tour of Europe led Lowry to Rome, which was the site of his honeymoon with his second wife, Frankie. The Lowrys returned to the States when Frankie found she was pregnant and decided she wanted to have her baby in an American hospital. The family settled in an old house in West Redding, Connecticut, and for a time lived happily. Lowry worked to restore the house, wrote book reviews for *Time* magazine, and worked on his novel, *The Violent Wedding*. In 1952 things began to go awry, and Frankie committed Lowry to the Fairfield State Hospital where he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and given a series of 22 electric shock treatments. Lowry convalesced at the Bronx V.A. Hospital before returning to West Redding and his family. But the marriage was doomed, "especially," Lowry wrote, "since [Frankie] wouldn't tell me why she had to put me in the hospital in the first place." Shortly after his discharge from the hospital, Lowry moved into a hotel and his wife left with baby David for California.

1953 began a long cycle of writing, publishing, and psychotic episodes. Lowry completed and published *The Violent Wedding*, but didn't manage to enjoy his achievement long before he landed in a psychiatric hospital again; on a drive down to New York, Lowry heard the voice of God telling him that Lowry was God's christ and that he, God, was giving Lowry to the world. Lowry "nicked and bumped a number of cars" on the highway and was arrested and put into Grasslands Hospital. Lowry transferred to the Harlem Valley State Hospital, then to Fairfield State Hospital in Connecticut, where he was treated previously. A battery of psychiatrists visited Lowry, but he seemed unclear about the nature of his problem. So he convalesced and wrote--*Happy New Year, Kamerades!* was written in the hospital. Lowry escaped again and travelled to New York to visit the other woman, an actress named Katherine Keller to whom Lowry had taken a shine. Upon his arrival on her doorstep, Keller treated him royally, but her friends called the police and Lowry was removed to Bellvue Hospital. From there he transferred to the Bronx V.A. Hospital, where he was given insulin shock treatments. "Kit" Keller visited him there, and after his release from the hospital Lowry moved to Buffalo to live with her.

In 1954 Lowry flew to Mexico to complete his divorce from Frankie, then moved to New York City with Kit. For a time the couple lived in harmony, with Lowry working industriously on *What's Left of April* (1956) in a rented studio in Greenwich Village. But rot of some unidentified sort set in, and Lowry checked into the Bronx V.A. Hospital at Kit's insistence. After a month he was released to move from apartment to rooming house to hotel before he finally moved into New Haven to live with his sister. Kit wrote Lowry there, asking him to "let [her] off the hook" -- perhaps free her from an engagement? Lowry tumbled down to New York in a drunken rage, breaking down the door to Kit's apartment when she refused to admit him. Again, Lowry was arrested, and again he was hospitalized, in King's Park State Hospital.

Lowry remained at the King's Park Hospital for 5 months, into 1955. During this time he received visits from a young woman named Anne (Antoinette Lobianco) whom he had met hours before his abortive attack on Kit's door. Lowry and Anne continued to communicate after Lowry was discharged and moved to his parent's home in Cincinnati, where Anne managed to fly to see him several times. Lowry published *Cat About Town* (1955), *The Last Party* (1956), and *What's Left of April* (1956), then moved to New York in 1958 to live with Anne. Movie rights to his story *Layover in El Paso* had been bought (the movie became *That Kind of Woman*, starring Sophia Loren) and half of the money--\$1,250--received. At Anne's urging, she and Lowry married, and in 1959 the couple's first child Beirne Clem Lowry was born.

The '60s saw a struggling Lowry trying desperately to keep his family afloat. Doubleday (the New York company that had been publishing his work) began rejecting Lowry's material, and his self-published works did not sell well. He did publish stories in magazines, and he attempted to sell his manuscripts and drafts to university libraries (Boston University, Kent State University, and University of Southern California). Correspondences with Lloyd A. Arvidson, curator of the American Literature Collection of the University of Southern California, reveal what a discouraging experience this must have been: original manuscripts, galleys, and first drafts netted offers of \$1-25; libraries wished to be gifted with these materials, not buy them. But despite what he saw as parsimonious offers from USC, Lowry sold a good deal of material to the school, actively corresponding with Arvidson through 1963. But though he could offer Lowry encouragement, Arvidson could not offer him much money. But Lowry took a series of jobs to support Anne and their second son, Giacomo Lobianco Lowry, born in 1962. But Anne removed her self and the children from Lowry's home in the fall of 1962; then, failing to convince Anne to return to him, Lowry moved back to his mother's home in Cincinnati.

Lowry worked a variety of jobs in Cincinnati, ranging from telephone solicitor for Klimat Master to Assistant to the Commercial Manager at WCPO-TV. Lowry had a brief stint as copywriter for the *Enquirer*, but was let go after three months because, he wrote "of the confusion caused in me by a girl who worked in the building and whom I did not even know." Lowry continued to pursue brief affairs, brief careers, and brief periods of freedom in between incarceration at mental hospitals. His mother committed him to Rollman's psychiatric Institute a number of times, though in his notes Lowry wrote he was unsure why she said so, and believed she really had no reason. During this cycle of hospitalization and release Lowry married Mary Lou, a childhood girlfriend. Mary Lou and her mother in turn returned Lowry to Rollman's--again, Lowry was bewildered as to their cause--and in 1968 Mary Lou divorced her husband after less than a year of marriage.

Until at least 1976 Lowry lived on and off with Barbara Goodrich, though he never remarried. His notes end with an account of this relationship and with a list of the various jobs he pursued. Although he wrote and worked as a freelance editor, Lowry published infrequently; most of his last works were printed in small editions at his Little Man Press, salving his vanity but not supporting him. He eventually settled for good in his childhood home with his widowed mother. He remained with her until her death in 1987, then moved to the seedy Dennison Hotel, where he survived on social security and \$100 monthly checks from his mother's small estate. In October of 1994, Lowry was hospitalized for an irregular heartbeat, then pneumonia, and on December 5, 1994, Lowry died at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Cincinnati.

Preferred Citation

[Box/folder# or item name], Robert Lowry papers, Collection no. 0149, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

Conditions Governing Access

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.

Scope and Content

Typescripts and galleys of various books by American journalist, editor, and novelist Robert Lowry (1919-1994).

The Robert Lowry Collection is an archive of 94 items, mostly original manuscripts and self-published volumes. The dated items range from 1945 to 1976, though there are many papers whose date of creation is uncertain. The collection is housed in three boxes; the first contains manuscripts of Lowry's novels, the second and third contains manuscripts of short stories, galleys, proofs and mock-ups, original ink illustrations, press clippings, advertisements, Lowry's "Little Man Press" publications, and series of correspondence to and from Lowry. The manuscripts and galleys provide an interesting study of the progression of drafts through the process of publication, and there is considerable autobiographical material in the self-published volumes.

Conditions Governing Use

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Subjects and Indexing Terms

Lowry, Robert, 1919-1994 -- Archives

American literature--20th century--Archival resources
Authors, American--20th century--Archival resources
Galley proofs
Typescripts

What's Left of April 1956 May 24

Scope and Content

Novel; typed draft.

Big Cage 1949

Scope and Content

Novel; typed draft.

**Acknowledgments, title page Kamarades!
Be Nice to Mr. Campbell**

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Casualty

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Table of contents: Happy New Year, Kamarades!

Scope and Content

Typed table of contents for collection.

Table of contents Happy New Year, Kamarades!

Scope and Content

Written table for short story.

Day He Got Fired

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Defense in University City

Scope and Content

Short story; corrected typed draft.

Feelthy Poet

Scope and Content

Short story/poem; typed draft.

For Girlhood and for Love

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Happy New Year, Kamerades!

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Little Baseball World

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Phistairus

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Skyblue Lady

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Victim

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Happy New Year, Kamerades!

Scope and Content

18 illustrations by Lowry.

Happy New Year, Kamerades! 1954 April 5

Scope and Content

Mock-ups and proofs.

Happy New Year, Kamerades! 1954

Scope and Content

15 ink drawings by Lowry.

Happy New Year, Kamerades! 1954

Scope and Content

3 set galleys.

Happy New Year, Kamerades!

Scope and Content

1 corrected galley proof.

Alice Hess

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

All Yellow in the Sun

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Autumn Encounter

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Blond Hair and Blue Eyes

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Broke

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Cruel Day

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Discovery

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Edward, My Monster

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

For Deposit Only

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Gup: Three Adventures

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Hello Margaret, Hello

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Keepsake

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Man on Third

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Modern Story

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Nazi Midgets

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Newspaper

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Party of Dreamers

Scope and Content

Drafts of contents and title pages.

Pigglesby's Wife

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Race Track of the Dead

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Return of Edgar Allen Poe

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Sandwich Boy

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Sight of Blood

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Small Bouquet for the Armed Forces

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Ten Questions

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Writer's Confession

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Party of Dreamers

Scope and Content

Galley proof.

Layover in El Paso

Scope and Content

Short story.

Layover in El Paso 1945

Scope and Content

Short story; typed first draft.

Brief Layover in El Paso

Scope and Content

3 galleys.

Airplane Crime 1939

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

All American

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Artie Bell

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Bambino

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Blaze Beyond This Town

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Blood Wedding in Chicago

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Bridge

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Bus Driver

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

chronology

Scope and Content

Typed history.

Duck and the Rabbit

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Famous Company 1958

Scope and Content

Typed drafts of initial pages.

Floodwater! Floodwater!

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Girl New York

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Glad Rags

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Guys From Ray's Place

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Hero in New York

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Introduction: A Parade of Stories 1958 January 10

Scope and Content

Typed draft.

It's Dark in Here

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Je Ne Comprends Pas

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Little Car in Virginia

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Long For This World

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Lost Frontier

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Man Who Followed Grandma

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Marie

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Minerva's Party 1939

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Murderpie 1939

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Mustery Bus Ride

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Over Here

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Passing Star

Scope and Content

Short story; typed draft.

Thirty Years as a Writer

Scope and Content

Typed draft.

Lily

Scope and Content

3 galleys.

Lily

Scope and Content

Miscellaneous galleys.

Lily

Scope and Content

Little Man Press order forms.

Lily

Scope and Content

Miscellaneous clippings.

Lily 1966 March 1

Scope and Content

Windfall Press Order forms.

Passing Star 1963 April

Scope and Content

Magazines.

Passing Star

Scope and Content

Miscellaneous ads.

Chronology of My Life Since 1952 1975 November 21

Scope and Content

Small press publication.

Dreams 1976

Scope and Content

Small press publication.

Nut 1976

Scope and Content

Small press publication.

Nut 1960-1962
Nut May-September

Scope and Content
Letters: Lowry-Richter.

Nut 1960-1962

Scope and Content
Letters: Arvidson-Lowry.

Nut 1960

Scope and Content
Guggenheim Fellowship.