



Mabel Dodge Luhan, and Antonio Luhan (John Reed, Myron Brinig) *A Collection of Letters by Mabel Dodge Luhan together with Associated Material, 1913-57*

(Taos, New Mexico): (1913-57)

\$16,000

A collection of 12 autograph letters by Mabel Dodge Luhan and associated autograph materials, including a remarkable 21 page letter to John Reed dating from the height of their affair in the summer of 1913, a nine page letter dictated to Luhan by her Native American husband Antonio Luhan that is addressed to “Lorenzo” (D. H. Lawrence), one letter addressed to “Gertrude” (very likely Gertrude Stein), and 8 letters written by Luhan to the gay Jewish novelist Myron Brinig in 1950. Also included is a letter by Luhan sent to an admirer, and three letters written to Luhan in 1950 by a friend of Brinig who was lodging at Luhan’s home in Taos, New Mexico.

Celebrated today as “The Muse of Taos,” in December of 1917, Mabel Dodge Luhan closed her avant-garde Greenwich Village literary salon and transplanted it to a valley at the foot of the Sacred Mountain in Taos, where she built “Los Gallos” with her fourth and final husband, Tony, a local Tewa Indian. Her home became a sanctuary for many of America’s most celebrated writers and artists, and D. H. Lawrence, who did some of his best writing there in the early-1920s.

In her 1913 letter to John Reed, written at the salon she established at the Villa Curonia in Florence, she discusses in passionate detail her “deeprooted distrust of language,” her fervent need “to be used,” and how that need determines the nature of her love for him. Here is just a small part of what she says:

... I want to be used. I want it every minute. I don't want to look back ... I can't divide myself between past & future, I have to be all for what's coming ... You can perhaps scarcely credit what I am telling you. But listen – I must try & explain this more clearly ... / ... It is alright when I am taken so that I am given back added to ... I want to be used for something else that doesn't take & not give back & yet takes & takes. Now dearest here is a difference between us. I cannot stand & look – I either give or take at every moment of existence. You are a poet – You are right in being as You are – You can look. I am not a poet or a philosopher or even a woman – if I were any of those I could look only. But I can't ... I recognize that that which works in me is the ecstasy that still breathes for you in the beauty that has emerged but you can see that while I can wave a kiss to the past, that, if my joy is ahead then my eyes are turned that way ... / ... Reed I believe I love you – I believe I love you not to be personally happy in it – not to be allowed to lie back & rest in it – but for some reason for you & me to find out together ... I live more in that terrific impetus ahead which is not luxury or beautiful or rich so far as I know but which is life.

It is worth noting that the letter to D.H. Lawrence, dictated to Mabel by Tony and written entirely in her hand (circa 1924-25), also reveals the nature of much of their shared metaphysical views, especially as they relate to their attachment to Los Gallos, which Tony refers to as “The Garden”:

Dear Lorenzo, I am very glad you leave me that money. I didn't mean it to ask you anything for staying in

my house ... I don't want to make money of you ... I been on a trip. I see those Shalico's dance. You ought to been see that yourself. Yes – I saw those Shalicos come in from the mountains – very tall like this house – with feathers on the head & a mask with a nose so long & they open their mouths back & forth, I don't know how. That night they say their prayers ... after their prayers they dance all night till sun up. Then they go back up the mountains again ... After the Shalicos go way the Zunis have five nights of dancing all night ... / ... We get letters from Scientists out in the world who accuse us of “flying from Reality”, and yet other Scientists come here & after staying a little while exclaim, “This is the life!” For the Garden breeds contradiction – and thrives upon diversity, and always hidden just behind the corner – there is somehow a Smile in the air ... In this ample place each person and every happening has a surprising concreteness. Here everyone appears emphasized in his own essential quality, or maybe as though he had more appearance here than elsewhere. As though he were drawn more fully into being, more intensely become a phenomenon ... / ... Very truly we like our friends and just this time the white people all help us very much and that's why I want to show I am friends too ... That be all now. And so I send back this check. And thank you carido amigo ...

Next in chronological order are two miscellaneous letters by Luhan: one addressed to a Gertrude that could very well be Gertrude Stein, circa 1932, in which Luhan asks: *Please write & tell me if you like “Lorenzo in Taos.” One is being sent you in February. Love – Mabel (Dodge, in case you've forgotten)*; and a reply to an admirer, Helen Houston, from 1938. All but two of the remaining thirteen items (mostly letters) date from 1950, and most are written to Myron Brinig, who was living close to Luhan in Taos.

Brinig was a Jewish novelist from Montana noted for his realistic accounts of Montana's pioneers and miners, and was considered by critics as one of America's leading young writers. According to Lois Palken Rudnick, in her biography of Luhan: “Brinig was one of several homosexual artists whom Mabel attracted – he might have said trapped – into her coterie ... Mabel admired Brinig's work and hired him to edit her memoirs for possible serialization in *Cosmopolitan*. Myron read the unedited manuscript, which impressed him as much as it had Lawrence ... they maintained an on-and-off friendship for several years after ...”

Luhan's letters to Brinig include the mailing envelopes, sent from Taos and Cuernavaca, Mexico: the earliest dates from 1940, and two are addressed to Myron and his partner, George Ellsworth. Most date from 1950, when Brinig was travelling in France and Italy. They are conversational and include references to Tony and other guests staying at Los Gallos, including Brinig's friend Edward, a man of considerable wealth from Oklahoma. Here is an excerpt from a letter from March, 1950:

Dearest Myron, Your letter & prints just here. Imagine! We planted those cypresses & the formal garden when I was 21-22-or 23 yrs old! Now look at them & at me! My bed room was lovely. There was a vaulted gold ceiling with blue stars on it – that lion bed with a blue damask bedspread, grey blue, and the walls were covered with a paler shade of that damask silk. The sunken bath had a trap door in the ceiling down which Dodge used to come down, when invited, on a silken rope ladder & return the same way to his bath room upstairs ...

The collection also includes three letters from Edward to Luhan from 1950, in which he describes his journey to “the Holy City of Taos” and his 1947 visit with Mr. & Mrs. Tritton, the current occupants of Godmersham Park in England. An historically important collection, featuring several remarkable letters worthy of publication.

A complete list of the letters, including several longs extracts, follows:

1. M.D.L. to John Reed, circa summer of 1913

ALS. Seven sheets (21pp.) Villa Curonia, via delle Piazzole, Arcetri.

[Note: a three-stop ellipses indicates omission of text; a two-stop ellipses is transcribed as written by M.D.L.; the second sheet lacks two small corners on the left side, with minimal loss of text.]

Thursday morning,

Your letter has just come dear and I'm going to try & answer it right away tho' I can't express myself – I can't reveal what I think & feel. Perhaps because there is as much of one thing as of another in me, as much of St. Teresa as of Mary Magdalen - & so anything that I say is less than the truth. Perhaps that's why I have such a deeprooted distrust of language. It has betrayed me so often - & has kept back more of me than it has given. Perhaps, consistent with the dissatisfaction at the less than the all that language expresses is the same dissatisfaction with things seen & melodies heard – so small a part is filtered thro' of all that is. Or, so at least is my illusion about it. The "reason for God's sake of the Patterson Strike" [the 1913 Paterson silk strike in Paterson, New Jersey] was just that the spirit bursting & straining at the compression of externals – seemed to sweep them down & away & express itself directly ... without hardly any need of symbols. It seemed to me to forecast the possibility of the spirit in man communicating what it had to tell humanity without the limitations of external symbols – joy was expressed by joy ... the joy that was joyfully gotten over was a great spontaneous spiritual current in comparison to the amount of sadness that was gotten over by the symbolic funeral procession ... / ...

I agree with you about mankind. I know that God is renewed each time that man is born - & I know that there is nothing else except the spirit in man; but I'm eternally unsatisfied now & then - & I long with my whole heart for what I feel is coming thro' the quarrying out of matter that we will get done . . but I am impatient for it – I feel so often that nothing else counts but the moments we can spend in getting something done for that – for the pure & direct expression of the spirit in man – and I feel in cities like Venice I am only passing the time, not making time as I sometimes felt in New York. Of course I am lazy & lethargic – I want to be less so – but "it" won't let me – "it" makes me so. What I do is done only at intervals – hard - & I am fallow in between times – but never a day passes at those periods of suspension that I don't pray to be used – that I may somehow uncover something, that is buried & covered & moss grown but that is alive & wanting to be free ... I want to be used. I want it every minute. I don't want to look back. I don't want to have any memory. I don't want to know what happened. I can't divide myself between past & future, I have to be all for what's coming. I am made to want in that way. I am made eternally dissatisfied with now and with then & allowed no rest so that my fervor, boiling & fermenting in me, is at the right momentum at the instant of ignition . . I have seen this is so all my life long . . I have seen it happen so tho' I have not always known what I was doing or what was being done. But I boil & boil inside while in repose . . this is not peaceful. And how unapparent it all is ... You can perhaps scarcely credit what I am telling you. But listen – I must try & explain this more clearly ... / ...

It is alright when I am taken so that I am given back added to ... I want to be used for something else that doesn't take & not give back & yet takes & takes. Now dearest here is a difference between us. I cannot stand & look – I either give or take at every moment of existence. You are a poet – You are right in being as You are . . You can look. I am not a poet or a philosopher or even a woman – if I were any of those I could look only. But I can't. Things – survivals steal me for themselves. I get diminished by them . . and I

know I mustn't – besides I don't want to because it hurts & it doesn't hurt to be used by the future. That is pure exaltation. I recognize that that which works in me is the ecstasy that still breathes for you in the beauty that has emerged but you can see that while I can wave a kiss to the past, that, if my joy is ahead then my eyes are turned that way.

Now that is some of the truth. I can't be divided. I am all in all but I can't turn on a pivot if I am to feel that fantastic & insuperable joy of uncovering . . . can't look back without going back.

My small nature expressed all this badly & in an ugly fashion in the Ducal Palace. But I don't believe instinct is ever polite or thoughtful of others. My impatience was at fever point. I was on a leash in that palace – in that city – & tugging on it to be away – to be active – to be used. The piazza seemed, with that crowd in it to be full of dead & rotting humanity – slackness – everywhere. Contented . . . stupid – insentient . . .

Reed I believe I love you . . . I believe I love you not to be personally happy in it – not to be allowed to lie back & rest in it – but for some reason for you & me to find out together. You want me to be myself, I know. And I know I must be. I can't change my ideas which are reflections of my feelings. I hope you'll go on liking me as I am anyway. Sometimes there comes uppermost what we both like & comes at the same time. Listen – of course I love luxury & beauty of rich things & all that but more than loving I live more in that terrific impetus ahead which is not luxury or beautiful or rich so far as I know but which is life – M –

2. Tony Luhan to “Lorenzo” (D. H. Lawrence)
 (“Dictated by Tony” to M.D.L., circa 1924-25?)

Autograph Letter. Six quarto sheets (7pp.); and two additional (enclosed) quarto sheets (2pp.) titled: “The Garden.” Las Cruces, Taos, New Mexico.

Dear Lorenzo,

I am very glad you leave me that money. I didn't mean it to ask you anything for staying in my house . . . I don't want to make money of you. I been glad if you stay there like a friend. / I been on a trip. I see those Shalico's dance. You ought to been see that yourself. Yes – I saw those Shalicos come in from the mountains – very tall like this house – with feathers on the head & a mask with a nose so long & they open their mouths back & forth, I don't know how. That night they say their prayers . . . after their prayers they dance all night till sun up. Then they go back up the mountains again. They are the gods of the mountains. / After the Shalicos go way the Zunis have five nights of dancing all night . . . We get letters from Scientists out in the world who accuse us of 'flying from Reality', and yet other Scientists come here & after staying a little while exclaim, 'This is the life!' For the Garden breeds contradiction – and thrives upon diversity, and always hidden just behind the corner – there is somehow a Smile in the air. / One thing is certain, after being in this gracious, radiant place, after attaining a deeper sense of being that one gets in this golden place, the outer World seems awfully prosaic & commonplace . . . In this ample place each person and every happening has a surprising concreteness. / Here everyone appears emphasized in his own essential quality, or maybe as though he had more appearance here than elsewhere. As though he were drawn more fully into being, more intensely become a phenomenon. / He stands out in sharp relief against his surroundings – deeply etched . . . but how can one tell whether they are truly more significant

in themselves, or whether some inner chemical bodily change takes place that makes one perceive things more vividly because of one's own revived faculties? / ... things apparently trivial in themselves are events that seem carved like Greek drama out of some solid living texture ... / If one could only tell about it so as to show something awaited – / ...

... Very truly we like our friends and just this time the white people all help us very much and that's why I want to show I am friends too. / Like Manuel Mondragon [General Manuel Mondragón] he said at San Geronimo time ... / That be all now. And so I send back this check. And thank you carido amigo. / Su amigo, Antonio Luhan

3. M.D.L. to Gertrude [Stein?], circa 1932

ALS. Quarto. 1p. Taos, New Mexico.

Dearest Gertrude –

Here is Alice, John's wife & some, (maybe all, I don't know if she will take the three of them to see you) of his children! I thought you'd like to see them. I wish I were along & could go in & eat one of those enormous & perfect steaks you used to have! Do you still? Please write & tell me if you like "Lorenzo in Taos." One is being sent you in February. / Love - / Mabel (Dodge, in case you've forgotten)

[Ten letters/autographs] by M.D.L. to Myron Brinig; and to M.B. and George Ellsworth, 1940-57

1. ALS. Quarto. 1p. Taos, Monday [1940]. With mailing envelope postmarked Dec. 23, 1940.

Dear Myron, You can't imagine how much good that music does me. I live so quietly & with so little stimulation it improves my circulation ... Can you come for ... Christmas dinner remains on Xmas Day after the dance & cocktail party at Ruths? / Don't fret over being 40. Being any age in years doesn't mean anything ... The heart is nothing but a big gland after all. If you keep it alive you will be alive all over.

2. ALS. Quarto. 2pp. Taos, March 2. [1950]

Dearest Myron & George –

You are leaving Paris today & we got home 2 days ago – today a foot of snow this morning. We had a fast trip home leaving Mexico City at Tuesday noon & arriving via Laredo in Santa Fe Sunday noon ... / ... The latest news from Hollywood is the new style for women to wear their under clothes on the outside; girdle, slip, etc. on top of their dresses. Not for me, I fear! We saw Dr. H. in Santa Fe & he says Tony must have his big toe nail removed, but he cannot do it yet as he has to go into the kiva for 40 days unless the High Priest will excuse him. I hope he does! ... I miss you here & wish you'd come home soon, please. I am getting cold feet about selling the Big House – but may sell some furniture – must do something ... Much love to you & no mistake – Mabel.

3. ALS. Quarto. 2pp. Taos, March 6th. [1950]

Well – Edward has taken Kathleen's little house for a while, the one behind the Tony House. He was on his way to Oklahoma to see his brother ... Tony & I had been down to see a surgeon about his having, on his two great toes, in growing toenails – very painful ... / ... We are having those hellish March hare winds ... Jean Stafford is to be "at home" at 222 East 71st St. She must have ditched her poet & married respectably. She use to live in a barn some where! You knew her, didn't you, Myron? I suppose by now

you'll be in Roma? I will try any way – Love – Mabel

4. ALS. Two 3" x 5" sheets. Taos, March 17. [1950]

... Just back after a week in Santa Fe. Tony had big toe nails removed ... Edward in Kathleen's little house for the summer ... Still missing you both – Love - Mabel

5. ALS. Quarto. 2pp. Taos, March 27. [1950]

Dearest Myron,

Your letter & prints just here. Imagine! We planted those cypresses & the formal garden when I was 21-22-or 23 yrs old! Now look at them & at me! My bed room was lovely. There was a vaulted gold ceiling with blue stars on it – that lion bed with a blue damask bedspread, grey blue, and the walls were covered with a paler shade of that damask silk. The sunken bath had a trap door in the ceiling down which Dodge used to come down, when invited, on a silken rope ladder & return the same way to his bath room upstairs ...

6. ALS. Quarto. Taos, April 9 Easter Sunday [1950]

Dearest Myron & George –

Here we are in spring ... We are having quite a time with poor Edward! He was invited to the Young Hunters to bring his man & wife friends from Okie. ... he took the floor & started a story about his rich & beautiful sister. Said she lately built a palace in Ponca City full of magnificence, antiques of all kinds, butlers, & gorgeousness. When it was finished she decided she should give a big party so sat down to make a list. But found there wasn't anyone in Ponca City she could invite, all okies, childhood friends & acquaintances but unsuitable for that palace. Not one! So she made a big list of friends from east & west & neighboring states & they had the party & so all Ponca City felt terrible! After that she went recently to Rome to get a dispensation from the Pope, special favors to escape purgatory ... she got me included in the dispensation ...

7. ALS. Octavo. 3pp. With color halftone photograph of Calle de Las Casas 9. Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico / Box 93, Nov. 26 [1950?]

Dear Myron

From here you see one corner of the 2 portals, long, between bedrooms with rooms behind them. The grass slopes away down hill to the most lovely garden – to live in, to be in much of the time. The little guest house is down here (I am writing on the porch of it now) ... / ... The servants are nice & anxious to please ...

8. Autograph Post Card. Monterey, Mexico [1950?]

Posted from Monterey to M.B. at Taos, New Mexico.

9. Autograph (enclosure?). Quarto. 1p. "Practical notes" [1950?]

(Notes and advise, etc., to M.B. and George for traveling to Cuernavaca).

Practical notes: maybe you can rent a typewriter if you don't bring your own / You can reach Mexico City in 5 days. Good places to stop all the way – among these, after you leave Laredo are Monterey ... / ... One hour's drive over to Cuernavaca we are off the Plaza past the Palace ... Calle de las Casas 9 ... Have your car ownership papers & license along [re: public liability] ... as the Mexicans sometimes run out &

try to get a little hurt by the car so as to collect! Tell George to go & get Max to open my house & bring me a magnifying glass with green plastic frame ...

Accompanying mailing envelopes addressed to M.B. (with postmark dates):

-Taos, March 3, 1950 (Sent to Florence, Italy).

-Taos, March 7, 1950 (Roma, Italia).

-Taos, March 28, 1950 (Nice, France).

-Taos, [1950] (Nice, France).

-Taos, May 9, 1950 (Taos).

10. ALS. Large octavo. 4pp. Taos, N.M. / April 23, 1957 (with mailing envelope).

Dear Myron:

I am feeling better, but as you see from the handwriting I have to have someone write letters for me as my right hand is still stiff from falling down three weeks ago at three o'clock in the morning at the old house ...

One miscellaneous letter: from M.D.L. to Helen P. Houston, 1938

ALS (with mailing envelope). 12mo. 1p. Place and date from envelope postmark: Albuquerque, Jan. 11, 1938.

Three Letters from Edward to M.D.L., 1950

1. ALS. Octavo. 3pp. Newton, Kansas / March 4, 1950

Dearest Mabel:

Your letter from Mexico City (the last one) has pursued me like the Hound of Heaven, and when it finally overtook me in New Orleans I knew I was on my way to the Holy City of Taos ... I write this in the R.R. depot at Newton ... before I board the train for Lamy ... and, at a suitable time, I shall summon you from your elegant couch – I am beginning to speak like Proust's Bloch ... Lord Cardigan writes: "I will of course entertain Mr. Brining if he turns up here. Even now, when the shooting season is over, I can generally manage a meal for anyone who comes my way ..." / ... I hope Myron did go to see him ... [at the Savernake Forest, England] ... Love to you and Tony – Edward

2. ALS. Quarto. 1p. Taos, March 25, 1950 (illustrated with a pen & ink self-portrait).

3. ALS. Quarto. 3pp. [1950?]

Dear Mabel:

Edward Knight of Chawton, a descendent of Jane Austen's brother Edward, arranged for me to go there. I left Charing Cross in the afternoon ... and arrived at Godmersham Park at about five ... I was told by a butler, who looked like A.E. Mathews, that Mr. Tritton awaited me in the Orangerie ... I was offered tea ... / ... I went to my room to change for dinner ... / ... Mrs. Tritton showed me her first editions of Miss Austen's book ... Dinner was superb ... The Chambertin was like a melody by Mozart ... Mrs. Tritton withdrew, staggering a little, to her apartment. Mr. Tritton and I had another brandy. He offered to see me to my room ... "Excuse me a moment," he said "I've something I particularly wish to show you" ... He disappeared, returning in a dressing gown of cloth of gold. "Look!" he exclaimed. He had brought a packed of "filthy" French post cards. "Don't they give you an erection?" he asked ... [BTC#424420]

language. It has be-
trayed me so often -
has kept back more of
me than it has given.
Perhaps, consistently with
the dissatisfaction at
the less than the all
that language expresses
is the same dissatisfaction
with things seen
& melodies heard. So
small a part is filtered
thru' of all that is.
Or, so at least is my

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TEL: 19-94.

VILLA CURONIA
VIA DELLE PIAZZOLE
ARCETRI

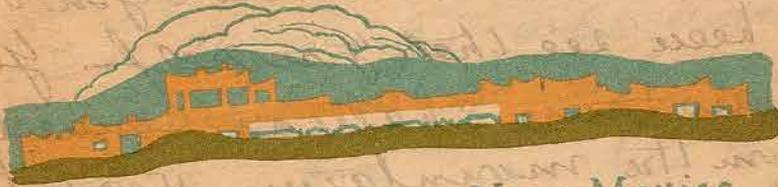
Thursday morning
Gm letter has just come
dear and I'm going to try
& answer it right away
tho' I can't express my
self - I can't reveal what
I think & feel. Perhaps
because there is as much
of one thing as of another
in me, as much of
St. Teresa as of Mary
Magdalen - & so anything
that I say is less than the
truth. Perhaps that's
why I have such a
deeprooted distrust of
myself. My life was so
can I spend in getting

The Garden.

Foreword.

For a name - we will call it the garden, this round upland valley. and if it be a real place or not is hard to say, for to some people it is real sometimes and sometimes not, to others it is never so,

with perceptions, on one life says new-rything seems to say whether thickening so



Las Cruces, Taos, New Mexico

dictated by Tony

Dear Lorenzo.

I am very glad you leave me that money. I didn't mean it to ask you anything for staying in my house but I didn't mean to ask anything because I been very glad to see using my house. Mabel - I let him use it for six months and I glad if he gave it to you if you liked it. That was very nice. I don't want to make money of you. I been glad if you stay there like a friend. I been on a trip. I see

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Dear Miss Houston -

Thank you so much for your nice letter. I am always so happy to learn I have reached people.

Sincerely yours -
Mabel Dodge Lusk



Miss Helen P. Houston.
220 N. Roosevelt Ave.
Wichita,
Kansas.

Chawton, a descendant of Jane Austen's brother Edward

... arranged for me to go there. I Cross in the afternoon and was met at a chauffeur and portman in a Rolls-Royce and Canterbury, and arrived at Godmersham not five.

... built during the reign of Queen Anne. The house, ~~was~~ was told by a butler who looks not Mr. Triton wanted. I moved thither through elms of sixty four or five years, a kind of cross

... an organ to the Cat. It has just been installed here before dinner. I've seen anything of the Roy

Family?

... melody by ... artistically. ... Clergman, at

... to her ... another brandy.

The Cathedral,
Newton, Kansas
March 4, 1950

Dearest Mabel:

Your letter from Mexico City (the last one) has pursued me like the Horned of Heaven, and when it finally overtook me in New Orleans I knew I was on my way to the Holy City of Taos. And so I am!

... a ... only ... you ... a ... Priest's ... (!) ... Do ... is ... i.e. ... letter ... other

Taos - New Mexico.

dearest Gertrude -

Lucie is alive, John's wife & some, maybe all, I don't know if she will take the three of them to see you of his children! I thought you'd like to see them. Wish I were along could go in & eat one of those enormous & perfect steaks you used to have! Do you still? Please write & tell me if you like "Lorenzo in Taos." Lucie is being sent you in February.

Love -
Mabel. (Dodge, in case you're forgotten)

Taos
March 25, 1950

Dearest Mabel and Tony:

I am overflowing with love and gratitude toward yourselves for the delightful little party last night. I don't think I've ever been happier. (The opposite cake is as yet unfinished!) How kind you were to me.

Perhaps you will come to see me when this terrible dust storm ends.

Love,

My present occupation.



