

Guide to the Eleanor Perényi Papers

GEN MSS 1771



by Brooke McManus

October 2021

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 1771

CREATOR: Perényi, Eleanor, 1918-2009 , author

TITLE: Eleanor Perényi papers

DATES: 1886-2007

BULK DATES: 1937-1988

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 5.93 linear feet (7 boxes)

LANGUAGE: In English, with a small amount of material in French, Greek, and Hungarian.

SUMMARY: The collection consists of correspondence, writings, printed material, diaries, research notes, photographs, and other papers by or relating to Eleanor Perényi. Correspondents include Perényi's parents Grace Zaring and Ellis Stone, as well as other writers such as Alfred Corn, Mary McCarthy, J. D. McClatchy, and James Merrill. Letters to her parents describe the social and political atmosphere in Eastern Europe, where she lived with her husband Baron Zsigmond Perényi, prior to and at the start of World War II. The collection also contains research notes and photographs for Perényi's biography of Franz Liszt, clippings and publications featuring Perényi's work as an editor, writer, and amateur gardener, including *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, travel diaries from trips to Italy, Greece, and Mexico, a sketchbook, and family photographs.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.perenyi>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.perenyi>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Peter Perenyi on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, 2016.

Gift of Peter Perenyi, 2016.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Eleanor Perényi Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Eleanor Perényi Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing. Information in brackets is also supplied by staff.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Eleanor Perényi (1918-2009)

Eleanor Perényi was an American writer, editor, and amateur gardener best known for *Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden* (1981), a collection of gardening essays. Her other works include the memoir *More was Lost* (1946), novel *The Bright Sword*, and biography *Liszt: The Artist as Romantic Hero* (1974), which was nominated for a National Book Award. Perényi was born Eleanor Spencer Stone on January 4, 1918 in Washington, D.C. to novelist Grace Zaring Stone and naval officer Ellis Spencer Stone. She married Hungarian Baron Zsigmond Perényi in 1937 and lived in his castle in Czech-controlled Ruthenia until the onset of the second World War. Perényi's mother wrote the anti-Nazi suspense novel *Escape* (1939) under the pseudonym Ethel Vance to protect Perényi's identity while she was living in pro-Fascist Hungary. In 1940, pregnant with her son Peter, Perényi returned to the United States; she and her husband divorced in 1945. She worked in New York as a writer and editor for *Harper's Bazaar* from 1947 to 1959 and as managing editor of *Mademoiselle* from 1959 to 1962. Perényi also contributed articles to *The Atlantic Monthly* and

Esquire. She lived for many years in Stonington, Connecticut, where she tended the garden that inspired *Green Thoughts*. Perényi died on May 3, 2009 in Westerly, Rhode Island.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of correspondence, writings, printed material, diaries, research notes, photographs, and other papers by or relating to Eleanor Perényi. Correspondents include Perényi's parents Grace Zaring and Ellis Stone, as well as other writers such as Alfred Corn, Mary McCarthy, J. D. McClatchy, and James Merrill. Letters to her parents describe the social and political atmosphere in Eastern Europe, where she lived with her husband Baron Zsigmond Perényi, prior to and at the start of World War II. The collection also contains research notes and photographs for Perényi's biography of Franz Liszt, clippings and publications featuring Perényi's work as an editor, writer, and amateur gardener, including *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, travel diaries from trips to Italy, Greece, and Mexico, a sketchbook, and family photographs.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Correspondence, 1886-2007. II. Writings and Editorial Work, 1946-1997, undated. III. Personal Papers, circa 1890-2006.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1886-2007

1.42 linear feet (2 boxes)

This series contains extensive correspondence of Eleanor Perényi and her parents Grace Zaring Stone and Ellis Stone, and letters to Perényi from other writers, friends, and associates.

Associated materials: Correspondence can also be found in Series III. Personal Papers.

Organized into two subseries: Family Correspondence, and General Correspondence.

General Correspondence

This subseries contains letters to Eleanor Perényi from Alfred Corn, Mary McCarthy and her husband Edmund Wilson, J. D. McClatchy, James Merrill and his partner David Jackson, and Gore Vidal, among others. Also included are a letter from Anna de Hirschler, a Holocaust survivor, who wore a scarf belonging to Perényi while she was imprisoned in Auschwitz, and a letter from a Polish army officer who passed through the Perényi estate in Hungary in 1940.

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent, with unidentified correspondence filed at the end of the sequence.

b. 2, f. 23	Armstrong, George	1991
b. 2, f. 24	Corn, Alfred	1980–2007
b. 2, f. 25	Davies, Nicholas	2001–2005
b. 2, f. 26	Goodman, Celia	1966–1984
b. 2, f. 27	"H-M" General	1948–2004
b. 2, f. 28	Hammer, Langdon	2006
b. 2, f. 29	Hine, Daryl [?]	1981, undated
b. 2, f. 30	Hirschler, Anna de	1978
b. 2, f. 31	Hollander, John	undated
b. 2, f. 32	Jackson, David	1965–1976
b. 2, f. 33	Julian Levy Gallery and Arshile Gorky, letters and printed material regarding	1945–1997
b. 2, f. 34	Kalstone, David [includes one letter from Perényi]	1966–1991
b. 2, f. 35	McCarthy, Mary, with photograph	1967–1988
b. 2, f. 36	McClatchy, J. D.	1980–1992
b. 2, f. 37	Meredith, William	1967
b. 2, f. 38-39	Merrill, James, with writings, clippings, and photograph	1964–2001
b. 2, f. 40	Rockefeller, Barbara	1999
b. 2, f. 41	Spiegelman, Willard	2006

General Correspondence (continued)

b. 2, f. 42	Swieykowski, Stephen	1940
b. 2, f. 43	Veloudios, Thanos	1958
b. 2, f. 44	Vidal, Gore	undated
b. 2, f. 45	Warren, Sylvia Townsend holiday card to Michael Farrano	1965
b. 2, f. 46	Westrem, Scott D.	1993-2003
b. 2, f. 47	Wilson, Edmund	1966-1967
b. 2, f. 48	Unidentified	

Family Correspondence

This subseries contains correspondence of Eleanor Perényi and her parents Grace and Ellis Stone. The bulk of the letters are from Perényi to her parents in 1938-1939 and address life with her husband Zsigmond Perényi in Eastern Europe before and during World War II. The series further contains letters from Grace Stone to Perényi, and from Ellis Stone to Grace. Also included is a letter to Ellis Stone from Phoebus B. Annorh, a seventeen-year-old boy from West Africa seeking a post in the United States Department of the Navy.

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Perényi, Eleanor to Grace Zaring Stone and Ellis Stone

b. 1, f. 1-4	1937	1937
b. 1, f. 5-12	1938	1938
b. 1, f. 13-16	1939	1939
b. 1, f. 17	1940	1940
b. 1, f. 18	undated Perényi, Eleanor to Grace Zaring Stone and Ellis Stone, undated	undated
b. 2, f. 19	Stone, Ellis to Grace Zaring Stone	circa 1939
b. 2, f. 20	Stone, Ellis, third party correspondence	1937-circa 1945
b. 2, f. 21	Stone, Grace Zaring to Eleanor Perényi	1935, 1958-1960, undated
b. 2, f. 22	Stone, Grace Zaring, third party correspondence	1886-1939, undated

Series II: Writings and Editorial Work, 1946–1997, undated

This series contains corrected typescript and autograph manuscript drafts of writings by Eleanor Perényi, and research notes for Perényi's biography of Franz Liszt and other topics, such as a 1946 lawsuit against Doubleday related to publication of Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County*. Also included are clippings of Perényi's published writings and magazines featuring Perényi's work as an author or editor.

Organized under three subheadings: Shorter Works, Research Notes, and Printed Material.

Shorter Works		
b. 3, f. 49	"Death-Bed Reading"	undated
b. 3, f. 50	"Idea file; Book lists"	1997, undated
b. 3, f. 51	"Unfinished writings on family, including the Owens; thoughts on the military having grown up as a Navy child"	undated
b. 3, f. 52	Untitled verse	undated
Research Notes		
b. 3, f. 53	Notebooks	1946–1960
b. 3, f. 54-57	Research notes for Liszt biography	undated
b. 3, f. 58	Weimar photos for Liszt book	1967, undated
Printed Material		
b. 4, f. 59	Bibliography and clippings	circa 1989
b. 4, f. 60	Clippings	1963, undated
b. 4, f. 61	<i>The Atlantic Monthly</i>	1958-1982
b. 5, f. 71	<i>Esquire</i>	1962–1963
b. 4, f. 62	<i>Harper's</i>	1946-1962
b. 4, f. 63-67	<i>Harper's Bazaar</i>	1948–1962
b. 5, f. 72	<i>Vogue</i>	1951–1970
b. 4, f. 68	<i>Yale Review</i>	1988
b. 4, f. 69	Magazines, A-C	1982–1984
b. 4, f. 70	Magazines, H	1982–1985
b. 5, f. 73	Magazines, L-S	1953–1988

Series III: Personal Papers, circa 1890-2006*1.92 linear feet (2 boxes)*

This series contains materials related to Eleanor Perényi's travels, such as diaries, photographs, and correspondence; a sketchbook with Perényi's original drawings of cats, people, and scenery; a scrapbook with reviews of her books *More was Lost* and *Green Thoughts*; family photographs; social invitations from German officials prior to World War II; and printed ephemera. Also included is a file with paperwork and photographs concerning Greek children sponsored by Perényi through the organization Foster Parents' Plan.

Arranged alphabetically by folder title.

b. 6, f. 74	Chiapas photographs	1988
b. 6, f. 75	"Diaries - Chiapas, Mexico"	circa 1988
b. 6, f. 76	Ephemera	1935-circa 1948
b. 6, f. 77	Foster Parents' Plan, Inc.	1955-1960
b. 6, f. 78	Italian travel document	1937
b. 6, f. 79	Munich guidebook	1931
b. 6, f. 80	Notes about Stonington, Connecticut friends	undated
b. 6, f. 81	"Pass to enter the settlement" from Shanghai Defence Force for U.S. Navy Captain Walter N. Vernou	1927
b. 6, f. 82-83	Photographs	circa 1890-1980s
b. 6, f. 84	Postcards [mostly blank], note from M. Berdolde [?]	1937, undated
b. 6, f. 85-87	Scrapbook Materials removed from a binder consisting of clippings about Perényi and her published works, and a memorandum she wrote regarding children with disabilities.	1946, 1981
b. 6, f. 88	Simonsen, Marjorie [caregiver for Perényi]	2006, undated
b. 7, f. 94	Sketchbook	circa 1930s-1942
b. 7, f. 95	Sketchbook - loose drawings, writings, clippings	circa 1930s-1942
b. 6, f. 89	Social invitations	circa 1930s
b. 6, f. 90-92	Travel diary Materials removed from a binder, mostly related to Perényi's travels in Italy and Greece in the 1950s while she was working as a feature and travel editor for <i>Harper's Bazaar</i> . Includes a number of photographs and correspondence.	1905, 1956-1958
b. 6, f. 93	Wedding invitations, calling cards, stationery	1937, undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives
Gardening -- United States
Women authors, American
Women journalists
World War, 1939-1945 -- Hungary
World War, 1939-1945 -- Personal narratives,
American

Genres / Formats

Photographs
Sketchbooks

Geographic Names

Greece -- Description and travel
Italy -- Description and travel
Mexico -- Description and travel

Occupations

Authors -- United States -- 20th Century
Journalists -- United States -- 20th Century

Preferred Titles

Harper's bazaar
Vogue

Names

Corn, Alfred, 1943-
Liszt, Franz, 1811-1886
McCarthy, Mary, 1912-1989
McClatchy, J. D., 1945-2018
Merrill, James, 1926-1995
Perényi, Eleanor, 1918-2009
Perényi, Zsigmond, báró, 1901-1965
Stone, Ellis Spencer, 1889-1956
Stone, Grace Zaring, 1891-1991