

# Marilyn Meeske:

## An Inventory of Her Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

---

### Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator:</b>	Meeske, Marilyn, 1928-
<b>Title:</b>	Marilyn Meeske Papers
<b>Dates:</b>	1954-1991 (bulk 1958-1970s)
<b>Extent:</b>	2 document boxes (0.83 linear feet)
<b>Abstract:</b>	The Marilyn Meeske Papers consist of personal and professional correspondence, drafts of published and unpublished works, notes, and clippings belonging to American author and editor Marilyn Meeske. The professional and personal papers document Meeske's literary efforts and her time employed by Olympia Press as well as offer a window into her personal life.
<b>Call Number:</b>	Manuscript Collection MS-04644
<b>Language:</b>	English, some letters in French
<b>Access:</b>	Open for research. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials.
<b>Use Policies:</b>	Ransom Center collections may contain material with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in the collections without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g., a cause of action under common law for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the Ransom Center and The University of Texas at Austin assume no responsibility.
<b>Restrictions on Use:</b>	Authorization for publication is given on behalf of the University of Texas as the owner of the collection and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder which must be obtained by the researcher. For more information please see the Ransom Center's Open Access and Use Policies.

**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation:** Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Marilyn Meeske Papers (Manuscript Collection MS-04644).

**Acquisition:** Purchase and gift, 1997 and 2007 (1997-02-008-P, 2007-10-001-G)

**Processed by:** Kelsey Handler, 2023

**Repository:** [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

---

## Biographical Sketch

American author and editor Marilyn Meeske was born Marilyn B. Kanterman in Michigan on January 4, 1928, to sales manager Nathan Charles Kanterman and Ruth Thal (née Lawner) Kanterman. A Jewish family, the Kantermans also had a son, Richard (1924-1930), and twin daughters, Barbara (1934-1966) and Patricia (1934-?).

For the first forty years of Meeske's life, she rarely lived in one place for more than a few years at a time. During childhood, she attended different grade schools throughout Ohio and Michigan, as well as a girls' school near Boston before returning to Detroit, where she was living at her parents' house in 1950. Her occupation was listed on that year's census as "rewriter research" in the "rewriter" industry.

Meeske's transient way of life continued into adulthood. In 1952 and 1953, she worked as a waitress on the SS *Santa Paula*, sailing between New York and Cartagena (multiple trips each year) and between New York and Curaçao. In January 1954, she married Harold E. Meeske in Jersey City, New Jersey. After living apart on different continents for several years, they divorced in the late 1950s, but she continued to use the name Meeske.

Meeske moved to Paris in 1956, where her bohemian lifestyle flourished as she became involved with Olympia Press, headed by Frenchman Maurice Girodias. Olympia Press, best known for publishing the first print of *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, mostly published erotic fiction, a genre colloquially referred to as "dirty books" (d.b.). Using the pseudonym Henry Crannach, Meeske cowrote the novel *The Pleasure Thieves* (1956) with Harriet Daimler (a.k.a. Iris Owens) and wrote *Flesh and Bone* (1957) for Olympia Press. She also served as an associate editor at Olympia before the press was shuttered in Paris due to censorship legal troubles in 1965. For a while Meeske lived in the south of France in Biot, a small village on the Mediterranean coast, and by 1963, she had returned to New York City where she continued to work for a time with Girodias and Olympia. She later moved to Los Angeles.

By 1975, Meeske had added the last name Sorel, presumably from a second marriage. As Marilyn Meeske Sorel, she cowrote *The Difference in Butterflies: A Chinese Dancer's Memoir of Her Flight from Inner and Outer Tyranny* (2007) with Yung Yung Tsuai.

Meeske wrote several other novels throughout her career under different pseudonyms: *Brandy on the Rocks* (1967) as Maryl James, *Superball* (1974) as Nicole Warfield, and *The White Island* (1975) as Nina Lansdale. Her novel *The Porridge Tasters* was never published.

---

## Sources:

In addition to material in the collection, the following sources were used:

Ancestry.com. Various census and vital records for the Meeske family.

Library of Congress. n.d. "Meeske, Marilyn." Library of Congress Authorities. Accessed December 18, 2023. <https://lccn.loc.gov/no2017117556>.

Meeske, Marilyn. 1965. "Memoirs of a Female Pornographer." *Esquire*, April 1965.

United States Bureau of the Census. 1950. "1950 Census of Population and Housing, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, 85-144, Sheet 4." April 29, 1950. Ancestry.com.

---

## Scope and Contents

The Marilyn Meeske Papers, 1954-1991 (bulk 1958-1970s), consist of personal and professional correspondence, drafts of published and unpublished works, notes, and clippings belonging to American author and editor Marilyn Meeske. The professional and personal papers document Meeske's literary efforts and her time employed by Olympia Press as well as offer a window into her personal life. The papers are organized into two series: I. Correspondence, 1954-1991, undated; and II. Professional Material, 1958-1969, undated.

Series I. Correspondence is arranged in alphabetical order by correspondent's last name and contains incoming letters of personal and professional nature. The personal correspondence is often remarkably warm in tone and reveals many long-lasting relationships—sometimes spanning decades—that Meeske kept with those she met in a professional capacity early in her career. Correspondence from Scott Bartlett and Douglas Houchens arrived in two separate folders apiece; contents from each were combined into one folder per correspondent during processing, with contents within each folder kept separate by paper sleeves. At the end of the series is one file of assorted correspondence that contains letters that were originally kept in two separate folders: one unlabeled and one labeled "misc." with a list of names.

Correspondents with notable volume featured in the series include Olympia Press owner Maurice Girodias (includes an accession that was received separately in 2007 that consists of photocopies of several memos, letters, and a synopsis for a book project), artist Douglas Houchens, cartoonist Muriel J. Lathrop, author Iris Owens, writer Stephen Schneck, and Olympia Press assistant Miriam Worms. Of further special interest is correspondence from writer Peter Matthiessen, novelist and screenwriter Terry Southern, and comedian Lenny Bruce, which includes manuscripts to three or four of Bruce's comedy routines.

Series II. Professional Material, containing material associated with Meeske's writing and time as an editor at Olympia Press, is arranged into two subseries: A. Works, and B. Olympia Press.

Subseries A. Works, arranged in alphabetical order by title of work, contains writing by Meeske and incoming correspondence related to one published novel, one published *Esquire* article, and one unpublished novel. Subseries B. Olympia Press consists of drafts of cover copy, notes, and lists of book titles created by Meeske in her role as associate editor at Olympia Press.

The arrangement of the material closely reflects Meeske's own organization of her papers, as received at the Ransom Center. Typically, Meeske filed her material in folders labeled with the name of the correspondent or title of the project. The original folders were not retained during processing, but where they bore writing other than the expected title, photocopies of the original folder were added to the folder's contents.

The collection arrived with a detailed dealer's list of the materials, which is kept in the collection file and can be requested for viewing, though it must be noted it contains several inaccuracies.

---

## **Related Material**

The Ransom Center's Philip O'Connor Collection contains one letter from Marilyn Meeske.

---

## **Index Terms**

### **People**

Bruce, Lenny.  
Crannach, Henry.  
Eager, Allen.  
Fuchs, Ernst, 1930-2015.  
Girodias, Maurice.  
James, Maryl.  
Lansdale, Nina.  
Matthiessen, Peter.  
Meeske, Marilyn.  
Owens, Iris.  
Rubington.  
Sackler, Howard.  
Schneck, Stephen, 1933-.  
Southern, Terry.  
Warfield, Nicole.

### **Organizations**

Olympia Press (New York, N.Y.).

Olympia Press (Paris, France).

**Subjects**

Authors, American--20th century.

Censorship.

Erotic literature, English.

Publishers and Publishing.

Small presses.

Women authors--20th century.

**Places**

Biot (France).

Los Angeles (Calif.).

New York (N.Y.).

Paris (France).

**Document Types**

Correspondence.

Manuscripts.

---

**Series I. Correspondence, 1954-1991, undated**

Baker, Albie, 1978-1986, undated	<b>Container 1.1</b>
Bartlett, Scott, 1967-1981	<b>Container 1.2</b>
Bassett, Tarn; includes one letter to Meeske from Bassett's daughter Lucy Stephens (1979) and one letter to Meeske from Bassett's husband Ion Gresser (undated), undated	<b>Container 1.3</b>
Bronsteen, Ruth, 1967-1968, undated	<b>Container 1.4</b>
Bruce, Lenny; includes manuscripts of comedy routines, 1962	<b>Container 1.5</b>
Eager, Allen; contains three poems and one photocopy of Jazz Review clipping, undated	<b>Container 1.6</b>
Elbert, Joyce, 1978-1981	<b>Container 1.7</b>
Fiore, Carlo, 1969-1976, undated	<b>Container 1.8</b>
Fuchs, Ernst, 1957-1958	<b>Container 1.9</b>
Gaveau, Daniele, 1974-1979, undated	<b>Container 1.10</b>
Gilbert, Celia; includes poem, 1974-1986	<b>Container 1.11</b>
Girodias, Maurice; includes synopsis 'Book Project: "Revolution Explained to Daddy"' (1970), 1958-1973, undated	<b>Container 1.12</b>
Gresser, Gisela ("Tessy"), 1978-1991, undated	<b>Container 1.13</b>
Hahn, Lenora G., 1987, undated	<b>Container 1.14</b>
Hayes, Harold, 1965-1969, undated	<b>Container 1.15</b>
Hills, L. Rust, 1972, undated	<b>Container 1.16</b>
Hirson, Roger O., 1967-1968, undated	<b>Container 1.17</b>
Houchens, Douglas, 1978-1982, undated	<b>Container 1.18</b>
Kaup, Lila, 1964-1969, undated	<b>Container 1.19</b>
Lathrop, Muriel J. ("Moo"/ "MooMoo"), 1962-1974, undated	<b>Container 1.20</b>

List, Shelley, undated	<b>Container 1.21</b>
Matthiessen, Peter, 1961, undated	<b>Container 1.22</b>
McKeand, Carol Evan, 1969, undated	<b>Container 1.23</b>
Meeske, Harold, 1959-1974	<b>Container 1.24</b>
Meier-Graefe, Annemarie ("Bush"), 1959-1978	<b>Container 1.25</b>
Metcalf, Gina, 1973-1984, undated	<b>Container 1.26</b>
Owens, Iris (pseudonym Harriet Daimler), 1958-1969, 1974, undated	<b>Container 1.27</b>
Pratt, Sandy, undated	<b>Container 2.1</b>
Rabe, Claire, 1963, undated	<b>Container 2.2</b>
Rubington, Norman (pseudonym Akbar del Piombo), 1957, 1990, undated	<b>Container 2.3</b>
Sackler, Howard, 1961-1979, undated	<b>Container 2.4</b>
Schneck, Stephen, 1962-1964	<b>Container 2.5</b>
Sherwood, James, 1969	<b>Container 2.6</b>
Southern, Terry, 1957-1958, undated	<b>Container 2.7</b>
Stevenson, John ("Steve"), 1974-1980, undated	<b>Container 2.8</b>
Straus, Roger W., 1971-1972	<b>Container 2.9</b>
Upham, Dorothy, 1972-1976, undated	<b>Container 2.10</b>
Valaōritēs, Nanos, 1963-1967, undated	<b>Container 2.11</b>
Worms, Miriam, 1963-1979, undated	<b>Container 2.12</b>
_____, Edwina, 1967-1973	<b>Container 2.13</b>
Assorted Correspondence, 1954-1986, undated	<b>Container 2.14</b>



**Series II. Professional Material, 1958-1969, undated**

## Subseries A. Works, 1958-1969

Brandy on the Rocks (Lancer Books, 1967; written under the pseudonym Maryl James). Correspondence from reader, 1969 **Container**  
2.15

Memoirs of a Female Pornographer (Esquire, 1965). Manuscript, tear sheets, correspondence from publisher and readers, 1965 **Container**  
2.16

The Porridge Tasters (unpublished). Synopsis, undated; Correspondence from agent and publishers, 1958-1965 **Container**  
2.17

## Subseries B. Olympia Press, undated

Drafts and notes, undated **Container** 2.18

Lists of book titles, undated **Container** 2.19