



# SENATE HOUSE LIBRARY

## University of London

### IDENTITY STATEMENT

<b>Reference:</b>	MS1172
<b>Title:</b>	Lahr family papers
<b>Dates:</b>	1897 - 1973
<b>Level:</b>	fonds
<b>Extent and Medium:</b>	6 files
<b>Name of Creators:</b>	Lahr, Charles (1885-1971) political activist and publisher Lahr, Oonagh (fl 1961-1971) poet

### CONTEXT

**Biographical/Administrative History:** Charles Lahr was born Karl Lahr in 1885 at Wendlesheim in the Rhineland Palatinate, Germany. During his teenage years he became first a Buddhist and later an anarchist. In 1905, to escape conscription into the German army, he left Germany for London. On arriving in London he worked as a baker and expressed his political involvement by joining and frequenting anarchist clubs. By 1914 Lahr had taken work as a razor grinder and had joined the British Section of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). He began to accumulate books at around this time as he moved from residence to residence in the Kings Cross area of London. He also let rooms to people he met through his political activities. Designated an enemy alien, Lahr was interned in Alexandra Palace in London from 1915 to 1919. After the war Lahr returned to his trade and continued his involvement with the IWW, where he met his future wife, Esther Archer, whom he married in 1922. Lahr and Archer both joined the Communist party in 1920, but left in 1921. It was during this brief membership that the Lahr met and became friends with Liam O'Flaherty. In 1921 Lahr took over the Progressive Bookshop at 68 Red Lion Square, Holborn. The bookshop became a centre for new writers and political activists from around the world, and specialised in the sale of radical literature and first editions. Lahr's first moves into publishing came in when K. S. Bhat recommended the editors of the New Coterie to take the magazine to the Lahrs. From 1925 onwards Lahr started publishing items on his own account, often using his wife's maiden name to counter anti-German prejudice. During 1925 to 1927 these took the form of offprints from New Coterie, and then articles within the magazine itself. In the publishing world he was in close contact with writers such as D. H. Lawrence, T. F. Powys, James Hanley, A.S.J. Tessimond, Liam O' Flaherty, Paul Selver, Russell Green, George Woodcock, Rhys Davies and several others. The New Coterie ran until 1927, and in 1930 Lahr launched his Blue Moon Booklets and a year later the Blue Moon Press. However, by 1933 Lahr was having financial problems. In 1935 his difficulties came to a

head when he was found guilty of receiving stolen books and was sentenced to six months imprisonment. However, after his release he continued his publishing activities although on a much reduced scale. The bookshop continued to be a focus for radicals and revolutionaries. The bookshop in Holborn was bombed in May 1941. Lahr moved the bookshop to several locations in central London before finally moving it to the headquarters of the Independent Labour Party at 197 Kings Cross Road, London. Charles Lahr died in London in 1971.

*References:* R. M. Fox, 'Lahr's Bookshop' in *Smoky Crusade*, Hogarth Press, 1938, pp. 180-188. D. Goodway, 'Charles Lahr: Anarchist, Bookseller' in *London Magazine*, Jun-Jul 1977, pp. 47-55.

**Oonagh Lahr**, the daughter of Charles and Esther Lahr, is a poet and a classical scholar. Her poetry has been published with other New Wave poets such as Bill Pinder and Desmond Hertzberg.

## **CONTENT**

**Scope and Content:** Correspondence in English and German; personal papers including a marriage certificate, birth and death certificates, a savings book, passports and Certificates of Registration, Identity and Naturalization and a poster and sketches, including one of D. H. Lawrence.

## **ACCESS AND USE**

**Language of Scripts:** English

**Conditions of Access:** Open, but access to some archive collections may be restricted under the Freedom of Information Act or the Data Protection Act and some files may be closed. Please contact Special Collections for details. 24 hours notice is required for research visits.

**Conditions of Reproduction:** Copies may be made, subject to the condition of the original. Copying must be undertaken by Special Collections staff, who will need a minimum of 24 hours to process requests.

- MS1172/1 Correspondence (Charles Lahr). 1932 - 1971**  
 23 letters and postcards, the majority of which are in German, addressed to Charles (Carl) Lahr from family members, friends and colleagues, including Oswell Blakeston, a birthday card and a letter from Lahr requesting a claim for war damage be settled.  
 1 folder  
 Open, subject to conditions outlined at fonds level.
- MS1172/2 Personal Papers (Charles Lahr). 1926 - 1966**  
 The following personal papers: a birth certificate (1926); a receipt for a deposit on a house (1929) and charges for the purchase of the freehold (1954); a Certificate of Identity (1953); a Certificate of Registration (1934) and a passport (1966).  
 1 folder  
 Open, subject to conditions outlined at fonds level.
- MS1172/3 Correspondence & Personal Papers (Esther Lahr). 1921 - 1973**  
 2 letters to her in German and a letter from her in English; a Certificate of Registration (1922); a Post Office savings book; a passport (1921); a Certificate of Naturalization (1941); a marriage certificate, in Hebrew and English, (1922); Certificates of Death for Esther Lahr (1970) and Rose Levy and a photograph of Samuel Argeband her father.  
 1 folder  
 Open, subject to conditions outlined at fonds level.
- MS1172/4 Correspondence (Oonagh Lahr). 1971 - 1973**  
 2 letters to her from Alec Bristow mentioning her fathers funeral and poetry.  
 1 folder

Open, subject to conditions outlined at fonds level.

**MS1172/5 Correspondence (Miscellaneous) 1897 - 1959**

1 letter in English to "Dear Friend" from John Peet (1959); 1 letter in German to "Friz Schonbeck" from Martha (1950) and a postcard to "Annie Jones" (1897).

1 folder

Open, subject to conditions outlined at fonds level.

**MS1172/6 Poster & Drawings No dates**

A poster for "Tale" by Rhys Davies; a pencil drawing signed "Delin (?); a print of D.H. Lawrence and an unknown portrait.

1 folder

Open, subject to conditions outlined at fonds level.

**MS1172/7 Correspondence and certificates c1897-c1970**

Includes notes to Charles Lahr from "Leo", 1970; marriage certificate suggesting that Esther Lahr originally owned the bookshop. Also birth and marriage certificates.

1 folder

Open, subject to conditions outlined at fonds level.