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## Guide to the Ezra Pound/John Richmond Theobald Correspondence, ca. 1957-1977

### Collection number: Mss 99

Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara

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#### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Ezra Pound/John Richmond Theobald Correspondence,

**Date (inclusive):** ca. 1957-1977

**Date (bulk):** (bulk 1957-1958)

**Collection Number:** Mss 99

**Creator:** Pound, Ezra,--1885-1972

**Extent:** .2 linear feet (1 box)

**Repository:** University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Department of Special Collections  
Santa Barbara, California 93106-9010

**Physical Location:** Del Sur

**Language:** English

#### Access Restrictions

None.

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#### Preferred Citation

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## Acquisition Information

Purchase, 1977.

## Biography

From 1941 to 1943, the influential American poet Ezra Pound made over 120 pro-Fascist radio broadcasts directed at British and American troops over Radio Rome in Italy. A proud and vocal supporter of Benito Mussolini, Pound was arrested in 1945 and extradited to the United States to stand trial for treason. However, in an attempt to save him from the death penalty, Pound's attorney, Julien Cornell, arranged to have the poet declared insane. The government prosecutors did little to challenge the diagnosis, and allowed Pound to be incarcerated at St. Elizabeths Hospital, a federal asylum outside Washington, D.C. He remained there until eventually being released, though still legally insane, in 1958. He immediately returned to Italy, where he lived until his death in 1972.

During his time at St. Elizabeths, Pound remained an extremely active literary figure, as his activities within the hospital grounds were unrestricted. He received visitors almost daily, and corresponded with numerous poets, writers, students, and scholars, including John Richmond Theobald, a teacher of English literature at San Diego State University. Between April 1957 and February 1958, Pound corresponded routinely with Professor Theobald, sending him letters typed in his own idiosyncratic shorthand.

John R. Theobald was born near Simla, India to British parents in 1903. While teaching at SDSU, he attempted to assemble a poetry anthology textbook with the novel idea of allowing living poets to choose the works by which they would be represented. This led him to contact Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeths Hospital. Their mutual interests in Eastern philosophy and literary gossip led to a continuing correspondence, which ended shortly before Pound was released from the hospital. Theobald died in December 1989.

Further information about Ezra Pound may be found in numerous sources, including:

- *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound* (Cambridge, U.K., 1999).
- Gallup, Donald Clifford. *Ezra Pound, a Bibliography* (Charlottesville, Va., 1983).
- Wilhelm, James J. *Ezra Pound: The Tragic Years, 1925-1972* (University Park, Pa., 1994).

## Scope and Content of Collection

Pound and Theobald began their correspondence in 1957, when Theobald was preparing a poetry textbook and was seeking input from the living poets to be included. Although gruffly stating that his poems were not meant for adolescents, Pound insisted that Theobald continue to correspond with him. At first reluctant, Theobald agreed, and for nearly a year they traded letters on a regular basis. Pound's obscure references often baffled Theobald, but they discovered a mutual interest in Eastern philosophy that often sustained the conversation. Eventually, Theobald became embarrassed when one of his students sought to capitalize on his connection with the famous poet, and the correspondence dwindled. It finally came to an end following Pound's release from the hospital and his subsequent return to Italy.

The collection also contains a draft of an essay written by Theobald explaining the origins of the correspondence and his reflections upon it, a reproduction of a drawing of Pound by Sherri Martinelli, and a carbon copy of a letter to his friend Mark Sellon that Theobald had sent on to Pound, thinking it would interest him. Pound returned the letter, with a single annotation in the margin, along with a note bearing his comments.

The correspondence was published in *Pound/Theobald Letters* (Black Swan Books, 1984), edited by UCSB professor Donald Pearce and Herbert Schneidau of the University of Arizona [Spec PS3531.O82 Z497 1984].

## At UCSB:

Ezra Pound/Elisabeth W. Schneider Collection. (Mss 114).

Pound, Ezra. 1 typescript manuscript, "Firdusi: Complaint of his Old Age," translated by Basil Bunting and with holograph notes by Ezra Pound and Louuis Zukospskyl, ca. 1932. (SC 596).

Pound, Ezra. 1 ALS to Arioste L. Finlay, Greenwich Village poet and protege of Pound. Washington, D.C., 26 Dec. 1947. (SC 597).

Pound, Ezra. 1 TLS to Dr. Rene Taupin. Rapallo, Italy, 12 Feb. 1930. (SC 598).

Pound, Ezra. 1 TNS to M. J. Tambimuttu. Rapallo, Italy, 4 Mar. [1939?]. (SC 599).

Pound, Ezra. 1 typescript ms signed, with holograph annotations, "HAFIZ: Ghazal," a literal translation between the couplets, n.d. (SC 600).

## Other Published Correspondence:

*Ezra Pound & Japan: Letters & Essays* (Redding Ridge, Conn., 1987).

*The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941* (London, 1951).

[Agresti, Olivia Rossetti]. *I Cease Not to Yowl: Ezra Pound's Letters to Olivia Rossetti Agresti* (Urbana, Illinois, 1998).

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- [Anderson, Margaret C.]. *Pound/The Little Review: The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence* (New York, 1988).
- [Cravens, Margaret]. *Ezra Pound and Margaret Cravens: A Tragic Friendship, 1910-1912* (Durham, N.C., 1988).
- [Cummings, E. E.]. *Pound/Cummings: The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and E. E. Cummings* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1996).
- [Cutting, Bronson]. *Ezra Pound and Senator Bronson Cutting: A Political Correspondence, 1930-1935* (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1995).
- [Dudek, Louis]. *Dk--Some Letters of Ezra Pound* (Montreal, 1974).
- [Ford, Ford Madox]. *Pound/Ford, the Story of a Literary Friendship: The Correspondence between Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford and Their Writings about Each Other* (New York, 1982).
- [Henderson, Alice Corbin]. *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson* (Austin, Texas, 1993).
- [Ibbotson, Joseph Darling]. *Letters to Ibbotson, 1935-1952* (Orono, Maine, 1979).
- [Laughlin, James]. *Ezra Pound and James Laughlin Selected Letters* (New York, 1994).
- [Lewis, Wyndham]. *Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, the Correspondence of Ezra Pound* (New York, 1985).
- [Pound, Dorothy]. *Ezra and Dorothy Pound: Letters in Captivity, 1945-1946* (New York, 1999).
- [Shakespeare, Dorothy]. *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespeare, Their Letters, 1909-1924* (New York, 1984).
- [Thayer, Scofield]. *Pound, Thayer, Watson, and the Dial: A Story in Letters* (Gainesville, Florida, 1994).
- [Theobald, John Richmond]. *Letters* (Redding Ridge, Conn., 1984). [From UCSB Special Collections, Mss 99].
- [Williams, William Carlos]. *Dear Ez: Letters from William Carlos Williams to Ezra Pound* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1985).
- [Williams, William Carlos]. *Pound/Williams: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1996).
- [Zukofsky, Louis]. *Pound/Zukofsky: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky* (New York, 1987).

Series 1. **General**

Box 1: 1            **Essay by Theobald on the history of the correspondence, 1977**  
Box 1: 2            **Drawing [reproduction]of Pound by Sherri Martinelli, n.d.**  
Box 1: 3            **Correspondence to Mark Sellon, n.d.**

Series 2. Correspondence - Theobald to Pound

Box 1: 4	24 May 1957
Box 1: 5	1 June 1957
Box 1: 6	7 June 1957
Box 1: 7	14 June 1957
Box 1: 8	21 June 1957
Box 1: 9	29 June 1957
Box 1: 10	6 July 1957
Box 1: 11	[July 1957]
Box 1: 12	7 Aug. 1957
Box 1: 13	24 Aug. 1957
Box 1: 14	28 Aug. 1957
Box 1: 15	7 Sept. 1957
Box 1: 16	15 Sept. 1957
Box 1: 17	18 Sept. 1957
Box 1: 18	20 Sept. [1957]
Box 1: 19	1 Oct. 1957
Box 1: 20	21 Oct. 1957
Box 1: 21	4 Nov. 1957
Box 1: 22	26 Jan. 1958

Series 3. Correspondence - Pound to Theobald

**Scope and Content Note**

Abbreviations are the same as those used in John Richmond Theobald's *Letters*; P1 = Pound letter #1, TLS = Typed Letter Signed

Box 1: 23	26 Apr. 1957 [P1/TLS]
Box 1: 24	8 May 1957 [P2/TLS]
Box 1: 25	16 May 1957 [P3/TLS]
Box 1: 26	21 May 1957 [P4/TLS]
Box 1: 27	28 May 1957 [P5/TLS]
Box 1: 28	29 May 1957 [P6/TLS]
Box 1: 29	3 June 1957 [P7/TLS]
Box 1: 30	11 June 1957 [P8/TLS]
Box 1: 31	12 June 1957 [P9/TLS]
Box 1: 32	17 June 1957 [P10/TLS]
Box 1: 33	25 June 1957 [P11/TLS]
Box 1: 34	1-2 July 1957 [P12-13/TLS]
Box 1: 35	10 July 1957 [P14/TLS]
Box 1: 36	22 July 1957 [P15/TLS]
Box 1: 37	3 Aug. 1957 [P16/TLS]
Box 1: 38	13 Aug. 1957 [P17/TLS]
Box 1: 39	26 Aug. 1957 [P18/TLS]
Box 1: 40	3 Sept. 1957 [P19/TLS]
Box 1: 41	5 Sept. 1957 [P20/TLS]
Box 1: 42	8 Sept. 1957 [P21/TLS]
Box 1: 43	11 Sept. 1957 [P22/TLS]
Box 1: 44	17 Sept. 1957 [P23/TLS]
Box 1: 45	20 Sept. 1957 [P24/TL]
Box 1: 46	24 Sept. 1957 [P25/TL]
Box 1: 47	4 Oct. 1957 [P26/TLS]
Box 1: 48	17 Oct. 1957 [P27/TLS]
Box 1: 49	24 Oct. 1957 [P28/TLS]
Box 1: 50	31 Oct. 1957 [P29/TLS]
Box 1: 51	3 Feb. 1958 [P30/TLS]
Box 1: 52	4 Feb. 1958 [P31/TL]
Box 1: 53	19 Oct. 1958 [P32/TLS]