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Guide to the Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn Papers

YCAL MSS 177



by Diane J. Ducharme

July 2003

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 177

CREATOR: Quinn, Mary Bernetta

TITLE: Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn papers

DATES: 1948-1985

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.67 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain correspondence, writings and notes, photographs, and newspaper clippings relating to Sister Bernetta Quinn's scholarly work on the poetry of Ezra Pound and other modern poets. Correspondents include Robert Bly, Guy Davenport, Caroline Gordon, James Laughlin, Denise Levertov, Robert Lowell, Mary de Rachewiltz, Olga Rudge, Holly Stevens, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren. Subjects include Sister Bernetta's scholarly work; writing and American poetry in general; conference and symposia plans; and personal news.
The Writings and Notes series contains notes and drafts on the Cantos by Sister Bernetta and typescripts of works by Robert Penn Warren, Robert Bly, and James Wright. Personal Papers includes photographs of Pound-related sites and persons in Brunnenberg and Venice.

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

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.quinnb>.

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

Gift of Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn, 1968-1985. For further information, please consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn Papers are 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

Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Former call numbers: Za Pound Quinn, Za Quinn, and Uncat Za Ms 333.

Associated Materials

[Ezra Pound Papers, YCAL MSS 43.](#)

SISTER MARY BERNETTA QUINN, OSF, 1915-2003

Sister Bernetta Quinn was born Viola Roselyn Quinn in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin in September 1915. She entered the Franciscan Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes in 1934 and made profession of vows three years later. Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn earned a B.A. from the College of St. Teresa in 1942, an M.A. in English from Catholic University in 1944, and a doctorate in English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1952.

Sister Quinn was a teacher throughout her adult life, first on the elementary and secondary levels and later at many colleges, including Norfolk State College, the University of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo, and Allen University. From 1954 to 1967 she was a member of the English Department faculty at the College of St. Teresa in Winona, Wisconsin.

She also authored several scholarly studies of Modernist poetry, including *The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* (1955); *Ezra Pound: An Introduction to the Poetry* (1972); and *Randall Jarrell* (1981), as well as numerous scholarly articles and book reviews.

In 1983 she retired to Assisi Heights in Rochester, Minnesota, and that same year published a small collection of poems, *--dancing in stillness*. In 1997 she celebrated her diamond jubilee as a Franciscan Sister. Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn died at Assisi Heights on February 24, 2003.

Scope and Contents

The Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn Papers document aspects of Sister Bernetta's literary studies and friendships, particularly those related to the poetry of Ezra Pound. The papers span the dates 1948-1985 and have been organized into four series: I. Correspondence; II. Writings and Notes; III. Personal Papers; and IV. 1985 Addition.

[Series I, Correspondence](#), is housed in Boxes 1-2 and is alphabetically arranged by name of correspondent. With the exception of letters from Ezra Pound himself, the majority of the files contain one or two letters written to answer queries by Sister Bernetta, to thank her for book reviews or articles, or to arrange meetings and talks. This category of correspondents includes the poets Gregory Corso, Robert Creeley, David Gascoyne, Galway Kinnell, Robert Lowell, William Meredith, Seán O'Faoláin, and Louis Zukofsky, and the scholars Marie Boroff, Philip Booth, J. Hillis Miller and Norman Holmes Pearson. The letters of Denise Levertov, for example, are primarily concerned with her request that Sister Bernetta review a volume of Vietnam War protest poetry, while the letter from William T. Stafford explains a confusion between himself and the "poet William Stafford whose mail I occasionally get."

Sister Bernetta's letters from Ezra Pound are located in folders 48-52. Subjects include Pound's humorous comments on Catholicism; her interpretations of his poetry, particularly the *Cantos*; lists of books Pound recommends to Sister Bernetta; and frequent references to his own political and social views. A letter of June 8, 1952 offers her detailed advice on teaching Dante's *Paradiso*: "the gt/ heave/ to set up gradations of states of consciousness.... give pupil idea of main architecture." A letter written for "Xmas 1952" contains a long discussion of his theories on usury.

Through her interest in Pound and his poetry, Sister Bernetta met and became friends with several members of Pound's family, including his daughter Mary de Rachewiltz and her mother Olga Rudge. Rudge's letters to her are almost entirely concerned with practical arrangements for her 1967 visit. Mary de Rachewiltz's correspondence with Quinn is more extensive and varied in subject matter. The letters contain personal and family news, particularly news of her children; her work on Pound's archive and her writing of her memoir *Discretions*; reflections on Pound's life and poetic reputation; and news of various scholarly conferences and meetings devoted to Pound's poetry. The collection also contains several letters from de Rachewiltz's children to Sister Bernetta.

Several other correspondents are closely connected to Sister Bernetta's long-standing interest in the poetry of Ezra Pound. Letters from Marcella Spann and Viola Baxter Jordan decline to contribute personal memories of Pound to an unidentified work. Letters from Guy Davenport, Peter Russell, and James Laughlin discuss news of Pound's failing health, his death in 1972, and the progress of Pound studies in the United States, particularly with reference to the Pound Center at Yale. A letter by Laughlin from 1976 notes that "there should be no more efforts to try to 'correct' Ezra's spellings" and goes on to note "his remarkable ear, and his disregard for the niceties of the eye." A few letters from Guy Davenport comment on C. David Heymann's *Ezra Pound: The Last Rower*, while others describe Davenport's lectures on Pound's work.

Letters by Robert Bly, located in folders 2-4, contain plans for meetings, comments on current reading and on poetry in general, and discussions of Sister Bernetta's critical work. For example, a letter dated 20 July 1963 details Bly's thoughts on the idea of "symbolism" in modern poetry, and goes on to describe "[Thomas's] desire to fill the poem with such energy that the reason retires exhausted and allows the poem to sink down into the instinctual waters." The letters of Robert Penn Warren contain personal and family news, descriptions of vacation activities, and encouragement and critiques of Sister Bernetta's own writing and academic pursuits.

[Series II, Writings and Notes](#), is housed in boxes 2-4. The first subseries, Writings, contains several articles and poems written by Sister Bernetta Quinn, including "The Metaphoric Spirit" and "A Few Steps Toward Reassessing Stevens." Folder 85 contains a mimeograph sheet titled "The Fourteenth Way of Looking at a Blackbird," which is apparently the record of a group poetry project based on the Stevens poem.

The second and third subseries, Notebooks on *The Cantos* and Other Notes, consist almost entirely of notes on the content and interpretation of Pound's later cantos as well as bibliographical material relating

to Pound. Folder 100 holds notes on Pound's appearance and conversation during Sister Bernetta's 1967 visit with him and Olga Rudge in Rapallo, including Pound's observation that "Rouse's Homer [is] not very musical."

The final subseries, Writings of Others, is alphabetically arranged by author. There are several folders of poems by Robert Penn Warren; folder 109 contains what Warren refers to as the "manuscript" of his 1968 collection, *Incarnations: Poems 1966-1968*, with the letter that accompanied the gift. James Wright is represented by "The Minneapolis Poem" and "Four Dead Sons (for Sister Bernetta)," as well as by typescripts carbon of other works.

[Series III, *Personal Papers*](#) is organized into the subseries Newspaper Clippings and Photographs, both alphabetically arranged. Folder 125 contains an interview with Sister Bernetta, while folder 124 holds obituary notices for Ezra Pound. Photographs include three folders of color photographs taken in and around Schlöss Brunnenberg in 1974; photographs of Venice taken in 1976; and a portrait of Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1948-1979

0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

Series I, *Correspondence*, is arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

b. 1, f. 1	Amanuddin, Syed Includes typescript poem, "Ezra Pound"	1973 Jan 30
b. 1, f. 2-4	Bly, Robert Includes printed copy of "Letter to Miguel Otero Silva"	1963-75
b. 1, f. 5	Booth, Philip	1974 Apr 4
b. 1, f. 6	Boroff, Marie	1963 Mar 2
b. 1, f. 7	Borter, Robert J.	1971 Jun 9
b. 1, f. 8	Bradley, Scully Page 2 of letter only	1965 May 29
b. 1, f. 9	Carter, Mary	1973-74
b. 1, f. 10	Close, Virginia	1966 Apr 17
b. 1, f. 10	Cole, Thomas	1954 May 20
b. 1, f. 11	Corso, Gregory Photocopy	n.d.
b. 1, f. 12	Creeley, Robert	1975 Aug 9
b. 1, f. 13-14	Davenport, Guy	1974-78
b. 1, f. 15	De Loach, Allen With typescript of article on <i>Cantos</i>	1970 Sep 30
b. 1, f. 16	Doyle, Charles	1974 Jan 17
b. 1, f. 17	Dyke, Barbara	1977 Mar 19
b. 1, f. 18	Fitzgerald, Joan	1970
b. 1, f. 19	Gascoyne, David	1975 Aug 1
b. 1, f. 20	Gay, K. C.	1972 Aug 30
b. 1, f. 20	Giovannini, Giovanni	1973
b. 1, f. 21	Gordon, Caroline	1950-55, n.d.
b. 1, f. 22	Hanson, Polly	1975
b. 1, f. 23	Howley, William With photocopies of letters to Howley from EP	1976

b. 1, f. 24	Ignatow, David	1979 Jan 4
b. 1, f. 25	Jarrell, Mary	1976 Jul 23
b. 1, f. 26	Jordan, Viola Baxter	1969 Aug 1
b. 1, f. 27	Keane, Gerard M.	1963-65
b. 1, f. 28	Keene, John S.	1965 Feb 5
b. 1, f. 28	Kenner, Hugh	1950 May-Jun
b. 1, f. 29	Kinnell, Galway	1969, n.d.
b. 1, f. 30	Klappert, Peter	1973, 1974
b. 1, f. 31	Lane, Gary	1977 May 2
b. 1, f. 32	Laughlin, James	1969-76
b. 1, f. 33	Levertov, Denise With ALS to Levertov from Dennis Rottman and dummy sheet for <i>Winning Hearts and Minds</i> .	1972-74
b. 1, f. 34	Logan, John	1966-74
b. 1, f. 35	Lowell, Robert	1956, 1969
b. 1, f. 36	Lucas, John	1959-76
b. 1, f. 37	Lyle, David	1969 Apr 22
b. 1, f. 38	McLean, Jean Robert	1964 Aug 20
b. 1, f. 39	Marcus, Mordecai	1970 Nov 19
b. 1, f. 40	Meredith, William Written on photocopy of "Squire Hazard Walks"	n.d.
b. 1, f. 41	Miller, J. Hillis	1966 Mar 4
b. 1, f. 42	Morse, Samuel French	1961-62
b. 1, f. 43	Nichols, Bruce	1970-72
b. 1, f. 44	[O'Conner], William	1965 Jan 21
b. 1, f. 45	O'Faoláin, Seán	1965 May 11
b. 1, f. 46	Pearson, Norman Holmes	1973 Mar 30
b. 1, f. 47	[Peterson, Walter] Scott With typescript photocopy of "A Doctor's Ultimate Case History"	1970 Jun 19
b. 1, f. 48-52	Pound, Ezra With TLS from Dorothy Pound, 1950 Apr 18	1949-66, n.d.

b. 1, f. 53-56	Rachewiltz, Mary de With ALS from William Goodreau to Mary de Rachewiltz, 1969 Feb 18	1967-76
	Rachewiltz, Patrizia de See: Vroom, Patrizia de Rachewiltz de, Box 2, folder 75	
b. 1, f. 57	Rachewiltz, Siegfried de (Walter)	1968-76, n.d.
b. 1, f. 58	Raine, Kathleen	n.y. Nov 3
b. 1, f. 59	Rudge, Olga	1967
b. 1, f. 60	Russell, Peter	1979 Oct 19
b. 1, f. 61	Saunders, Silvia	1970 Sep 26
b. 1, f. 62	Shakespeare, A. F.	n.d.
b. 1, f. 63	Sherrard, Elizabeth M.	1962 Nov 18
b. 1, f. 64	Sorrentino, Gilbert	1976 Jan 3
b. 1, f. 65	Spann, Marcella	1970 Sep 28
b. 1, f. 66	Stafford, William T.	1966 Feb 26
b. 2, f. 67-68	Stevens, Holly Includes carbons of letters to others relating to <i>Yale Review</i>	1964-75
b. 2, f. 69	Stevens, Wallace Typed transcripts?	1948, 1952
b. 2, f. 70	Sutton, Walter	1962 May 27
b. 2, f. 71	Tate, Allen	1949-68
b. 2, f. 72	Tate, Isabella Gardner	1965 Dec 29
b. 2, f. 73	Thirlwall, John C.	1960-66
b. 2, f. 74	Unterecker, John	1964-72
b. 2, f. 75	Vroom, Patrizia de Rachewiltz de	1967, n.d.
b. 2, f. 76	Wallace, Betty	1982 May 11
b. 2, f. 77-81	Warren, Robert Penn	1965-78
b. 2, f. 82	Weales, Gerard With typescript poem, "Eighty"	1970 Sep 9
b. 2, f. 83	Weber, Sally	1975
b. 2, f. 84	Williams, Florence	1961-63
b. 2, f. 85	Wright, Annie	1973-75
b. 2, f. 86	Wright, James	1961-74

b. 2, f. 87	Zukofsky, Louis	1976 Jun 16
b. 2, f. 88	Unidentified and first name only	1972-79

Series II: Writings and Notes, 1961-1981*0.63 linear feet (1.5 boxes)*

Series II, *Writings and Notes*, is organized into subseries and each subseries arranged alphabetically by title, with the exception of the Writings of Others subseries, which is arranged alphabetically by author.

WRITINGS

b. 3, f. 89	"An Afternoon in Wyncote," typescript, corrected	1967 Mar 31
b. 3, f. 89	"A Few Steps Toward Reassessing Stevens," typescript, corrected	n.d.
b. 3, f. 90	"The Fourteenth Way of Looking at a Blackbird," mimeograph of group poetry exercise	1969 Mar 27
b. 3, f. 91	"The Metaphoric Spirit," printed, in <i>Margins</i>	1974 Aug-Sep
b. 3, f. 92	"Second Look at L'Heureux," newspaper clipping, <i>Boston Sunday Herald</i>	1967 Apr 2
b. 3, f. 93	"Two Poems by Sister Bernetta Quinn," printed, in <i>The South Carolina Review</i>	1975 Nov
b. 3, f. 94	"Warren and Jarrell: The Remembered Child," typescript photocopy, corrected	n.d.

NOTEBOOKS ON *THE CANTOS*

b. 3, f. 95	"Canto 42ff"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 96	"Canto 74" (2 notebooks)	n.d.
b. 3, f. 97	"Canto 81"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 98	"Canto 96"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 99	"Canto 98" and "Canto 99"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 100	"Cantos 101 and 102, 103"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 100	"Cantos 101 and 104"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 101	"Canto 105, Canto 106, Canto 109"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 102	"Canto 110"	n.d.

OTHER NOTES

b. 3, f. 103	"Dartmouth College Notes"	1965
b. 3, f. 104	"Ezra Pound's Brunnenberg library (in part): May 1967"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 105	"Notes from my 1967 visit to Rapallo"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 106	"Pound holdings at SUNY-Buffalo"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 107	Untitled notebook Contains notes on <i>Cantos</i> and other Pound writings; notes on other authors; notes on friends of Pound	[ca. 1967]

WRITINGS OF OTHERS

WRITINGS OF OTHERS (continued)

	Goodreau, William	
b. 3, f. 108	"When there is no reason to be sad.... for Sister Bernetta" Typescript	n.d.
	Russell, Peter	
b. 3, f. 109	"In Honorem Beati Ignati Antiochae," typescript, inscribed to Quinn	1970 Dec 30
b. 3, f. 110	"Gloss: Ayre not Ayer," typescript, inscribed to Quinn	1979 Mar
	Stevens, Wallace	
b. 3, f. 111	"Two or Three Ideas," photocopy, annotated	n.d.
	Warren, Robert Penn	
b. 4, f. 112	"Ballad of Mr. Dutcher and the Last Lynching in Gurton," printed copy	1974 Jan 24
b. 4, f. 113	"Bad Year, Bad Man," typescript carbon	n.d.
b. 4, f. 114	<i>Incarnations: Poems 1966-1968</i> , typescript and typescript carbon, corrected With: TLS from RPW to Quinn, [1968] and bibliography of RPW (incomplete)	[1968]
b. 4, f. 115	"Jingle in Tribute to a Great Poem by Marianne Moore," typescript, annotated	n.d.
b. 4, f. 116	"News Photo," magazine clipping, annotated in two hands	1974
b. 4, f. 117	"Polly on Royal Street before the Raw Face of God," newspaper clipping	1971 Jan 7
b. 4, f. 118	"Rattlesnake Country," <i>Esquire</i> clipping	n.d.
b. 4, f. 119	"Reading Late at Night, Thermometer Falling," <i>New Yorker</i> clipping	n.d.
b. 4, f. 120	"Saul at Gilboa," typescript carbon and printed copy from <i>Southern Review</i>	n.d.
b. 4, f. 121	"Solipsism and Theology," printed copy	n.d.
b. 4, f. 122	"Sunset Walk in Thaw-Time in Vermont," typescript photocopy	n.d.
	Welch, Dennis M.	
b. 4, f. 123	"Robert Lowell's 'Where the Rainbow Ends': A Post-War Act of Faith?," printed copy in <i>The Charter</i>	1971 Spr
	Wright, James	
b. 4, f. 124	"Four Dead Sons (for Sister Bernetta)," typescript carbon With typescripts carbon of "America for Me," "Sirmione," "The Wheeling Gospel Tabernacle," and "Young Don't Want to be Born"	n.d.
b. 4, f. 125	"The Minneapolis Poem," typescript carbon	n.d.
b. 4, f. 126	"New Prose Poems," in <i>American Poetry Review</i>	1974

Series III: Personal Papers, 1961-1981*0.21 linear feet (0.5 box)*Series III, *Personal Papers*, is organized into two alphabetically arranged subseries.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

b. 4, f. 127	Gilbert, Jack	1964 Nov 16
b. 4, f. 128	Jarrell, Randall	1961 May 28
b. 4, f. 129	Pound, Ezra	1972-73
b. 4, f. 130	Quinn, Mary Bernetta	1981, n.d.
b. 4, f. 131	Warren, Robert Penn	1974, n.d.
b. 4, f. 132	Other clippings With tourist map of Rapallo	n.d.

PHOTOGRAPHS

b. 4, f. 133-135	Brunnenberg album Color photographs labeled by Quinn; subjects include Schlöss Brunnenberg, interior and exterior; members of the de Rachewiltz family; views of the Alps	1974
b. 4, f. 136	"Photographs of Venice, 1976" Black and white photographs of Pound-related sites in Venice, labeled by Quinn	1976
b. 4, f. 137	Quinn, Mary Bernetta With ALS to Donald Gallup, 1973 Apr 23	1967
b. 4, f. 138	"Rie and family" Color photographs of girl and family members	1978

Series IV: 1985 Addition, 1984-1985*0.21 linear feet (1 box)*

Series IV. 1985 Addition is organized into two alphabetically arranged subseries.

WRITINGS

b. 5 / Folder 139	"Dead in Venice," poem, typescript (photocopy), signed	1984-85
b. 5 / Folder 140	"First Visit to San Michele," poem, typescript (photocopy), signed	1985 May 4
b. 5 / Folder 141	"Poem for a Troubadour of Greenwich Village (Paul Blackburn)," poem, typescript (photocopy), signed	1985 May 4
b. 5 / Folder 142	"Waiting Outside the Classroom at SUNY, Buffalo, for Robert Creeley," poem, typescript (photocopy), signed	1985 May 4

OTHER PAPERS

b. 5 / Folder 143	Bibliography	1985 Apr
b. 5 / Folder 144	Letter to David Schoonover, typescript, signed	1985 May 4

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

American literature -- 20th Century
American poetry -- 20th Century -- Archives
Modernism (Literature)
Poets, American -- 20th Century

Genres / Formats

Photographic prints

Names

Bly, Robert
Davenport, Guy, 1927-2005
Gordon, Caroline, 1895-1981
Laughlin, James, 1914-1997
Levertov, Denise, 1923-1997
Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972
Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972 (Cantos, Criticism,
Textual)
Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972 -- Homes and haunts
Quinn, Mary Bernetta
Rachewiltz, Mary de
Rudge, Olga, 1895-1996
Stevens, Holly, 1924-1992
Tate, Allen, 1899-1979
Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-1989
Wright, James, 1927-1980