

Guide to the Correspondence Concerning "The Question of Ezra Pound"

YCAL MSS 180



by Diane J. Ducharme

November 2003

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 180

TITLE: Esquire correspondence concerning The question of Ezra Pound

DATES: 1957

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection consists of alphabetically arranged correspondence between readers of Esquire Magazine and the magazine's editors concerning an article by Richard Rovere on the question of Ezra Pound's possible release from his continuing incarceration in St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Insane. Respondents include John Dos Passos, Robert Graves, Norman Mailer, Kenneth Rexroth, William Carlos Williams, and Richard Wilbur.

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

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.esquire>.

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 *Esquire* magazine, 1958.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The *Esquire* Correspondence Concerning "The Question of Ezra Pound" 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

Esquire Correspondence Concerning "The Question of Ezra Pound." Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Former call number: ZA Pound *Esquire*.

Scope and Contents

The *Esquire* Correspondence Concerning "The Question of Ezra Pound" consists of letters received by the magazine in response to an article by Richard Rovere which appeared in the September, 1957 issue. A few letters are accompanied by copies of the magazine's requests for permission to publish. The papers all date from 1957 and have been alphabetically arranged in one series, *Correspondence*.

Esquire's publisher, Arnold Gingrich, sent out advance copies of Rovere's article to a number of American and English literary figures with a request for comments on "the question of Pound's release" from St. Elizabeth's Hospital in the summer of 1957, then the subject of private discussions between Archibald MacLeish, Robert Frost, and the Department of Justice. Authors who sent comments include Van Wyck Brooks, John Dos Passos, Robert Graves, Norman Mailer, Marianne Moore, Howard Nemerov, Kenneth Rexroth, William Carlos Williams and Richard Wilbur. Many letters contain editorial markings by the *Esquire* staff. For example, any references by the letter writers to *Esquire's* solicitation of a response were scored for deletion.

Possibly due to careful selection by the magazine, the literary responders mostly favor Pound's release, often offering to sign petitions or join "any campaign" toward that end. Most, including Marianne Moore, express distaste for Pound's political views but refer to them as "a crotchet" not meriting further punishment. A common theme is that Pound has "suffered enough." Kenneth Rexroth, however, notes that "He is not being punished. If he is sane enough to be guilty of advocating genocide he is being indulged." John Dos Passos warns that "the Kasper disaster has been doing his case a good deal of harm," a reference to the recent Federal arrests of the violent segregationist and Pound disciple John Kasper.

The collection also contains several responses from students and disciples of Pound, including Giovanni Giovannini, T. David Horton, Charles Martell, and Sheri Martinelli. Mostly unsolicited, these letters present lengthy rebuttals of the treason charge; defenses of Pound's economic theories; and passionate denials that Pound is a racist. Martinelli, for example, sends a description of Pound's appreciation for the music of Charlie Parker ("Yardbird").

Finally, there are a few unsolicited responses from *Esquire* subscribers, most dated late in 1957. These are largely negative and highly critical of both Pound and his supporters. Arpine Hardidiau accuses Pound's sympathizers of being "blindly loyal to one of their select circle. Since when has talent been a justification for viciousness?" Leslie Hedley suggests that "fascist Pound be traded to fascist Franco Spain" along with his "admirers," while J. W. O'Banion writes, "Is he Crazy? Was Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Lenin crazy? Hell NO."

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1957

0.21' (1 box)

Series I, *Correspondence*, is arranged in alphabetical order.

| | | |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | American Civil Liberties Union | 1957 Aug |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Barolini, Antonio | 1957 Dec 2 |
| b. 1, f. 3 | Bower, Warren | 1957 Sep |
| b. 1, f. 4 | Brooks, Van Wyck | 1957 Aug |
| b. 1, f. 5 | Bryant, William | 1957 Nov 13 |
| b. 1, f. 6 | Chase, Richard | 1957 Sep 24 |
| b. 1, f. 7 | Dos Passos, John | 1957 Sep |
| b. 1, f. 8 | Dreijmanis, J. | 1957 Sep 30 |
| b. 1, f. 9 | Fowlie, Wallace | 1957 Aug-Sep |
| b. 1, f. 10 | Frank, Joseph | 1957 Aug |
| b. 1, f. 11 | Giovannini, Giovanni | 1957 Sep |
| b. 1, f. 12 | Graves, Robert | 1957 Aug-Sep |
| b. 1, f. 13 | Hadidiau, Arpine | 1957 Nov 23 |
| b. 1, f. 14 | Hedley, Leslie | 1957 Nov 1 |
| b. 1, f. 15 | Horton, T. David | 1957 Sep |
| b. 1, f. 16 | Lytle, Andrew | 1957 Sep |
| b. 1, f. 17 | McCloskey, Burr | 1957 Aug 29 |
| b. 1, f. 18 | Mailer, Norman | 1957 Sep 9 |
| | Malin, Patrick Murphy | |
| | See: American Civil Liberties Union, Box 1, folder 1 | |
| b. 1, f. 19 | Martell, Charles | 1957 Aug 15 |
| b. 1, f. 20 | Martinelli, Sheri | 1957 Oct |
| b. 1, f. 21 | Moore, Marianne | 1957 Aug |
| b. 1, f. 22 | Nemerov, Howard | 1957 Aug 31 |
| b. 1, f. 23 | O'Banion, J. N. | 1957 Nov 4 |
| b. 1, f. 24 | Rexroth, Kenneth | 1957 Sep |

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| b. 1, f. 25 | Rodman, Selden | 1957 Sep 21 |
| b. 1, f. 26 | Schorer, Mark | 1957 Sep 13 |
| b. 1, f. 27 | Sitwell, Osbert | 1957 Sep |
| b. 1, f. 28 | Williams, William Carlos | 1957 Sep |
| b. 1, f. 29 | Williamson, Lamar | 1957 Aug |
| b. 1, f. 30 | Wilbur, Richard | 1957 Aug-Sep |
| b. 1, f. 31 | Unidentified | 1957 Nov 15 |

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.

Preferred Titles

Esquire (New York, N.Y.)

Subjects

American literature -- 20th Century
Competency to stand trial -- United States
Poets, American -- 20th Century
Treason -- United States

Names

Dos Passos, John, 1896-1970
Gingrich, Arnold, 1903-1976
Graves, Robert, 1895-1985
Mailer, Norman, 1923-2007
Martinelli, Sheri
Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972 -- Political and social views
Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972 -- Public opinion
Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972 -- Trials, litigation, etc.
Rexroth, Kenneth, 1905-1982
Rovere, Richard H. (Richard Halworth), 1915-1979
Wilbur, Richard, 1921-2017
Williams, William Carlos, 1883-1963

Corporate Body

American Civil Liberties Union