



University of Pennsylvania
ScholarlyCommons

Unique at Penn

The Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare
Books and Manuscripts

5-9-2013

Ezra Pound and Overdue Poetry

Arthur Mitchell Fraas

University of Pennsylvania, fraas@upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/uniqueatpenn>

 Part of the [History Commons](#)

Fraas, Arthur Mitchell, "Ezra Pound and Overdue Poetry" (2013). *Unique at Penn*. 9.
<https://repository.upenn.edu/uniqueatpenn/9>

Fraas, Mitch. "Ezra Pound and Overdue Poetry" Unique at Penn (Posted 9 May 2013):
<http://uniqueatpenn.wordpress.com/2013/05/09/ezra-pound-and-overdue-poetry/>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/uniqueatpenn/9>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

Ezra Pound and Overdue Poetry

Abstract

Contextual essay about Ezra Pound, his time at Penn, and his overdue poetry book from the Penn Libraries.

Keywords

Ezra Pound, Book History, Poetry

Disciplines

History

Comments

Fraas, Mitch. "Ezra Pound and Overdue Poetry" Unique at Penn (Posted 9 May 2013):

<http://uniqueatpenn.wordpress.com/2013/05/09/ezra-pound-and-overdue-poetry/>

Unique
at penn

PENN Libraries
blogs

Nothing can more effectually contribute to the Cultivation & Improvement of a Country, the Wisdom, Riches, & Strength, Virtue and Piety, the Welfare & Happiness of a People, than a proper Education of Youth, by forming their Manners, imbuing

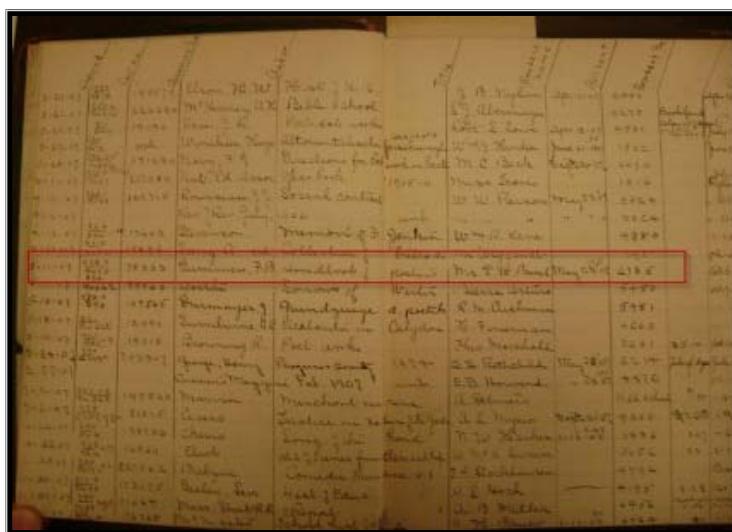
09
Thursday
MAY 2013

Ezra Pound and Overdue Poetry

POSTED BY MITCH FRAAS IN POSTS

≈ 1 COMMENT

As long as there have been circulating libraries there have been readers who just couldn't manage to return books on time. Several weeks ago, I found myself at the University Archives reading through some of the records of the Penn Libraries from the early 20th century. Within the stacks of book orders, ledgers recording the expense of **feeding a library cat**, and assorted correspondence, are a set of journals recording overdue books and late returns. Flipping through the pages I stumbled on an entry which piqued my curiosity.



— Record of Overdue Books and Fines. University of Pennsylvania Archives UPB 55, Box 6.

The entry recorded an overdue notice for a book checked out on May 11th, 1907. The book didn't seem too remarkable – "Gummere, F.B. Handbook of poetics" – but I was struck by the tardy borrower, reader number 2785: "Mr. E.W. Pound."

□ WELCOME

Welcome to Unique at Penn, part of the family of University of Pennsylvania Libraries blogs. Every week this space will feature descriptions and contextualization of items from the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. The site focuses on those materials held by Penn which are in some sense "unique" - drawn from both our special and circulating collections, whether a one-of-a-kind medieval manuscript or a twentieth-century popular novel with generations of student notes penciled inside.

□ RECENT POSTS

- A Founder's Book
- Reading Chaucer through Dryden's Eyes
- Fabulously Illustrated and Easy to Carry
- Always check the endpapers
- Indian diaries at Penn

□ ARCHIVES

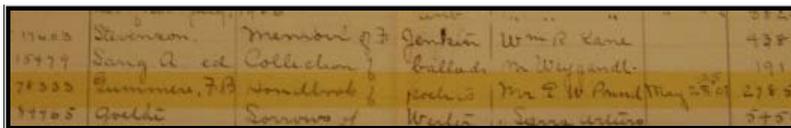
- April 2014
- February 2014
- January 2014
- December 2013
- November 2013

+ Follow

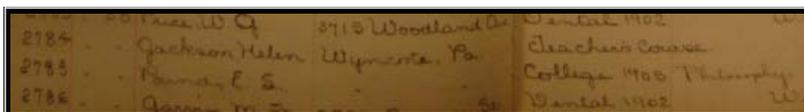
Follow "Unique at Penn"

Get every new post delivered to your Inbox.

Join 60 other followers

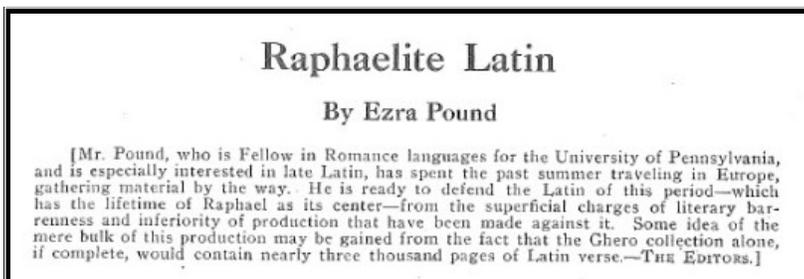


A quick look at a separate ledger of reader numbers showed reader 2785 to be “E.S. Pound” [sic] from Wyncote, Pa. of the College class of 1905:



– Ledger of Library Readers’ names, University of Pennsylvania Archives UPB 55, Box 6.

This confirmed my suspicions that the overdue borrower was indeed the famous poet Ezra Pound who came to Penn from Wyncote in 1901 as a member of the class of 1905. He left Penn for his junior and senior years, graduating from Hamilton College in 1905. That year he returned to Penn for a masters program in Romance literature (apparently taking up his old reader number!). Pound completed his degree in 1906 but his last year at Penn, academic year 1906-07, was an unpleasant one. He failed to receive a fellowship to continue in the doctoral program and was told he would no longer be retained as an instructor [1].



– One of Ezra Pound’s first published works of criticism “Raphaelite Latin” *Book News Monthly* 25.1 (September 1906), p. 31

The book Pound checked out that unhappy spring was an edition of Francis B. Gummere’s *A Handbook of Poetics for Students of English Verse* (Boston, 1885 – other eds.:1888, 1892, 1895,1898,1902). Today the Penn Libraries hold three copies of the text in two different editions but unfortunately none appear to be the exact copy which Pound failed to return on time [2]. In Spring 1907, the semester in which he checked out the book, Pound was enrolled in five graduate courses: Chaucer with Prof. Clarence Child (1864-1948), Drama with Prof. Felix Schelling (1858-1945), Literary Criticism with Prof. Josiah Penniman (1868-1941), an independent study in Current Criticism, and Contemporary Poetry with Prof.

Powered by WordPress.com

- January 2013
- December 2012
- October 2012
- September 2012
- August 2012
- July 2012
- June 2012
- May 2012

☐ AUTHORS

- adminuatpa
- Alexander Devine
- Dianne Mitchell
- Jacqueline Burek
- Regan Kladstrup
- Marissa Nicosia
- Mitch Fraas
- Michael P. Williams
- Richard Griscom
- Nancy Shawcross
- Pushkar Sohoni

☐ LINKS

- Penn's Apps on Tap
- Penn's Rare Books Cataloging Blog
- Penn Libraries Catalog (New Franklin)
- Penn's Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- DigitalPenn
- Penn in Hand
- Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts

☐ LATEST FROM

Cornelius Weygandt (1871-1957)[3]. This last class, entitled in full: "The Development of English Poetry from 1850 to the Present Day" met from 11-1 every Saturday and seems a likely candidate for requiring a text like the *Handbook of Poetics* [4].

It is curious to think of what Pound, one of the 20th century's most famous poets, would have thought about Gummere's "Handbook" on poetics at the time- did he keep the text beyond its due date out of interest or just forgetfulness? We do know that Pound had a decidedly negative opinion of Weygandt's class that spring, later writing "Weygandt [was] afraid I should think I might do something" [5]. This however didn't keep the professor from later asking Pound for a free copy of his poetry, a request that Pound found exasperating [6].

Though a fascist later in life, Pound was not an inconsiderate library patron. Issued an overdue notice on May 28th, he promptly returned the book the next day. One wonders if this was perhaps his last act at Penn, for with the school year ending and no degree, in early June 1907 he put the university behind him and began tutoring in New Jersey for the summer. He taught briefly that Fall at Wabash College in Indiana before leaving for Europe in 1908. Pound never got his Ph.D. and didn't have much love for Penn as an institution over the rest of his life [7]. While I don't know if he returned books late again, librarians might take comfort in the fact that upon leaving Penn he "complained bitterly" about the absence of a suitable college library [8].

The Penn Libraries have a significant collection of material on Ezra Pound. The Special Collections Center, for instance, houses several collections of research notes, correspondence, and primary materials by and about Pound, most notably Ms. Collections 181, 182, 183, and 510.

[1] For a basic account of his time as a graduate student at Penn see James Wilhelm, *The American roots of Ezra Pound* (New York, 1985), pp.152-54 and Anthony Moody, *Ezra Pound: poet* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 27-33.

[2] Penn's copies are of the 1885 edition and 1892 edition. For a facsimile of the third edition see <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.49015000813957>

[3] Course list from Spring 1907 from Pound's graduate record, cited in Wilhelm, p.182.

[4] A detailed list of graduate courses for 1906-07 can be found on

PENNRARE

- Leonard B. Meyer papers, 1935-2008 May 6, 2014
- The Joseph G. Rosengarten collection April 30, 2014
- Old Friends Reunited April 24, 2014

SUBSCRIBE TO UNIQUE AT PENN



pp. 301-302 of the [University of Pennsylvania Catalogue for that year](#). Pound's university notes and essays are held at the [Beinecke](#) and it would be interesting to see what kinds of assignments he produced for Weygandt.

[5] Letter to John Quinn, 19 April 1917: *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn: 1915–1924*, p. 108. For a remark on the class noting that the reading was better than the lecturer see Wilhelm, p. 154. Weygandt's autobiography, which makes no mention of Pound, was published in 1946. See http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/franklin/record.html?id=FRANKLIN_1953673

[6] See *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941* (London 1950), p. 173.

[7] His attitude towards Penn is most famously evidenced in a letter he wrote to the alumni secretary in April 1929 on receiving the alumni newsletter:

"The matter of keeping up one more otiose institution in a retrograde country seems to me to be the affair of those still bamboozled by mendicancy, rhetoric, and circular letters." *Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, pp. 302-3.

[8] See Wilhelm, p. 166.

Twitter Facebook

SHARE THIS:

Loading...

RELATED

[A Founder's Book](#)

In "Posts"

[Moment in Time](#)

In "Posts"

[Early Taishō Japanese Juvenile Pocket Fiction: Tatsukawa Bunko and its Imitators](#)

In "Posts"



About Mitch Fraas

Mitch Fraas is the Scholar in Residence at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. He is also the interim director of the Penn digital humanities forum. At Penn, Mitch works on a variety of projects cutting across

general and special collections, with a special focus on digital humanities. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in history from Duke University and earned his bachelor's degree at Boston College. His doctoral dissertation examined the legal culture of British India in the 17th and 18th centuries, arguing for the existence of a unified early modern British imperial legal culture whether in Philadelphia, Bombay, or London.

[View all posts by Mitch Fraas »](#)

[◀ Previous post](#)

[Next post ▶](#)

1

THOUGHT ON “EZRA POUND AND OVERDUE POETRY”



Simran Thadani *said:*

May 10, 2013 at 7:01 pm

“absence of a suitable college library” *snicker*

Thanks for digging up and highlighting this bit of Penn history, Mitch!

REPLY

LEAVE A REPLY

Enter your comment here...

The conclusions and views presented on posts within “Unique at Penn” reflect those of their writers and do not represent the official position of the University of Pennsylvania or the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.