

Topic Page: [Pound, Ezra \(1885 - 1972\)](#)

Summary Article: **Pound, Ezra Loomis**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1885–1972, American poet, critic, and translator, b. Hailey, Idaho, grad. Hamilton College, 1905, M.A. Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1906. An extremely important influence in the shaping of 20th-century poetry, he was one of the most famous and controversial literary figures of the century—praised as a subtle and complex modern poet, dismissed as a naive egotist and pedant, condemned as a traitor and reactionary.

In 1907, Pound left the United States to travel in Europe, eventually settling in England. There he published a series of small books of poetry—including *Personae* (1909), *Exultations* (1909), *Canzoni* (1911), and *Ripostes* (1912)—which attracted attention for their originality and erudition. In England he came to dominate the avant-garde movements of the time—first leading the imagists and later championing vorticism. Both these movements sought to free post-Victorian verse from its staleness and conventionality. Pound encouraged many young writers, notably T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. In the early 1920s he moved to Paris, where he became associated with Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway.

By 1925 Pound was settled in Italy, where his literary ideas started to take a political and economic turn. Discouraged by the faults and failings of English and American democracy, he began to develop many of the theories that were to make him unpopular in Great Britain and the United States. During World War II he broadcast Fascist and anti-Semitic propaganda to the United States for the Italians and was indicted for treason. He was brought to the United States for trial and from 1946 to 1958 was confined to a hospital in Washington after being ruled mentally unfit to answer the charges. On his release he returned to Italy, where he remained until his death at the age of 87.

Pound's major works are *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1918), *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), and the *Cantos* (1925–60), a brilliant, though sometimes obscure, epic work. Weaving together such diversified threads as myth and legend (particularly the story of Odysseus), Chinese poetry, troubadour ballads, political and economic theory, and modern jargon, the *Cantos* attempt to reconstruct the history of civilization. Pound's translations, noted more for tone and feeling than for scholarly accuracy, include the Anglo-Saxon "Seafarer," poems from the Chinese, the Confucian books, Japanese No drama, Egyptian love poetry, and Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*.

See Ezra Pound: Poems and Translations (2003), ed. by Sieburth, R. ;

his collected early poems, ed. by M. King et al. (1982);

The Cantos of Ezra Pound (1972, rev. ed. 1996);

his music criticism, ed. by R. M. Schaefer (1977);

his letters to James Joyce, ed. by F. Read (1968);

the memoirs of his daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz (1971);

biographies by N. Stock (1970, rev. ed. 1982), H. Carpenter (1988), and A. D. Moody (3 vol., 2007-2015);

Conover, A. , Olga Rudge and Ezra Pound (2002);

Kenner, H. , The Pound Era (1971);

studies by M. L. Rosenthal (1978), M. Alexander (1979), S. Schwartz (1985), G. Kearns (1989), A.

Gibson, ed. (1993), M. Coyle (1995), T. F. Grieve (1997), W. Pratt, ed. (2002), and D. Swift (2017);
bibliography by D. Gallup (1983).

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