

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

**The Life of  
Ezra Pound**

**Noel Stock**



## The Life of Ezra Pound

First published in 1970, this is a detailed and balanced biography of one of the most controversial literary figures of the twentieth century. Ezra Pound, an American who left home for Venice and London at the age of twenty-three, was a leading member of 'the modern movement', a friend and helper of Joyce, Eliot, Yeats, Hemingway, an early supporter of Lawrence and Frost. As a critic of modern society his far-reaching and controversial theories on politics, economics and religion led him to broadcast over Rome Radio during the Second World War, after which he was indicted for treason but declared insane by an American court. He then spent more than twelve years in St Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Washington, D.C. In 1958 the charges against him were dropped and he returned to Italy where he had lived between 1924 and 1945.

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Noel Stock



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EZRA POUND

*Noel Stock*



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*To my wife*

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# Acknowledgments

The author has obtained permission to quote from the works of Ezra Pound, but the granting of that permission must not be taken as conveying Ezra Pound's approval of the quotations selected nor of the context in which they appear.

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# Preface

When I first began to read Ezra Pound's poetry in Melbourne in 1946 he was a figure as remote as Keats or Rimbaud. In those days I had read only a few of his books: the *Selected Poems* with an introduction by T. S. Eliot, *The Pisan Cantos*, one or two prose books, and in 1951 *The Letters of Ezra Pound*. I knew vaguely that he had been connected with the beginnings of the 'modern movement' in English poetry, that he held strong views on economics and politics, and that he had got into trouble because of some broadcasts he had made over Rome Radio during the war; but if these things made him seem different and exciting, they were also remote, for they had occurred in Europe and America. The turning-point was in 1953 when I wrote to Hugh Kenner, Professor of English at the Santa Barbara College of the University of California, about his recently published book, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*. In a postscript to his reply of 8 August he suggested that I get in touch with Pound and gave me his address: St Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C., the insane asylum to which he had been committed by an American court. I wrote, not knowing what to expect, and received a reply immediately, the substance of which was that if I was as well read as I seemed to be, then it was time for me to go into action. And from that moment he instructed me how to, writing more than a hundred letters (between forty-five and fifty thousand words) in the next five years.

I well remember Kenner's warning in 1954 to be careful of Pound's politics; I paid little heed and was soon involved in Social Credit and similar activities. I joined a Social Credit newspaper, *The New Times*, and to Pound's great satisfaction began to publish unsigned or pseudonymous items which he sent from Washington. I posted him copies of each issue which he distributed to those whom he considered active or in other respects worthy. In 1956 I also started a literary magazine called *Edge* in which he played a considerable part. It was typical of his drive and energy that shortly afterwards *Edge* was noticed in the Rome weekly *Il Caffé*; the notice was not signed by Pound but part of it had been composed by him in the exaggerated terms which he reserved for

## PREFACE

such occasions. 'In October 1956', it said, 'the centre of intellectual life of the English-speaking nations was transferred to Melbourne, Australia. After *The Little Review* (1917-29) no English or American review has approached the vigour of the Australian review *Edge*. . . .' He also praised *Edge* to a correspondent in Tokyo with the result that young Japan was informed of its importance in a periodical called *The Rising Generation*.

In 1956 I reviewed Pound's *Rock-Drill* (cantos 85 to 95) in the Australian magazine *Meanjin*, a copy of which I sent to Washington. He liked it and within a short time was distributing photo-copies of it. For the next few years I was embroiled in Poundian ferment: I received copies of dozens of periodicals and leaflets in which he had a hand or of which he approved and wanted circulated; at his behest I wrote letters to publishers urging them to publish books he thought important and to writers informing them of matters which for one reason or another Pound did not wish to mention directly; and in looking back through old material I see that I even signed a declaration which he published in the United States: 'Every man has the right to be born free of debt.'

I left Australia in 1958 to live in England and was on the high seas when in April he was released from St Elizabeths Hospital. I had met his daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz, during a visit to Rome in 1955, and now, on my way through Italy again I stayed at her home, Brunnenburg Castle, at Tirolo di Merano in the Italian Tirol, shortly before Pound himself arrived from America. The following year, with my wife and our two daughters, I moved to a flat at Brunnenburg. Pound was away at the time but told me to examine his collection of books and papers. I first met him at Rapallo in the summer of 1959 and in the autumn when he returned to Brunnenburg I edited a collection of his essays published in 1960 under the title *Impact*. I saw him often at this time and met him occasionally later when he went to live in Venice and Rapallo. His wife, Dorothy Pound, continued to spend part of each year at the castle and I had many opportunities to talk to her about Pound's life in London before and during the First World War and in Paris and Rapallo between the wars. And so, in 1966, when Routledge & Kegan Paul asked me if I would undertake a detailed biography of Pound, I reflected that the time was probably ripe to attempt a balanced account of his extraordinary life.

It remains that I should make some acknowledgments. First, I owe much to other books, particularly Charles Norman's *Ezra Pound* (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960) and *The Case of Ezra Pound* (Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1968); others which proved helpful were B. L. Reid's *The Man from New York*, *John Quinn and His*

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*Friends* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1968); *Pound/Joyce*, The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, edited with commentary by Forrest Read (New Directions, New York, 1967); Julien Cornell's *The Trial of Ezra Pound* (John Day, New York, 1966); Patricia Hutchins's *Ezra Pound's Kensington* (Faber & Faber, London, 1965); and Michael Reck's *Ezra Pound A Close-Up* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1967). Of great assistance in disentangling the steps leading to Pound's release from St Elizabeths Hospital was Harry Meacham's *The Caged Panther, Ezra Pound at St Elizabeths* (Twayne Publishers, New York, 1967), which was sometimes useful for other periods as well. For much information on A. R. Orage and *The New Age* I am indebted to *The New Age under Orage* (Manchester University Press, 1967) whose author Wallace Martin also kindly answered numerous questions about T. E. Hulme, Imagism, and Pound's London years. Other books consulted included *A Casebook on Ezra Pound*, edited by William Van O'Connor and Edward Stone (Thomas V. Crowell, New York, 1959); *The Annotated Index to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, by John Edwards and William Vasse (University of California Press, 1959); and Eustace Mullins's *This Difficult Individual Ezra Pound* (Fleet, New York, 1961).

For unfailing kindness and patience in correspondence and also when I visited the United States I wish to thank Warren Roberts and his staff at the Humanities Research Centre of the University of Texas and Mrs Mary Hirth and her staff at the Academic Centre Library at the University of Texas. I owe similar thanks to Donald Gallup of Yale, not only for answering questions by post and assisting me in every way when I visited the Yale Library, but also for his *Bibliography of Ezra Pound* (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1963). Thanks are also due to the following: The United States Department of Justice, for answering questions about Pound's legal position at various times; A. N. L. Munby of King's College, Cambridge, for several T. S. Eliot items and other assistance; William Fleming, for information about his correspondence with Pound and for tracing material kindly made available by the Latrobe Library, Melbourne; Mrs R. McNair Wilson and Michael McNair Wilson, for making available very useful material among the papers of the late R. McNair Wilson; Mrs Mary Hemingway for placing the Pound-Hemingway correspondence at my disposal and Dr Carlos Baker for his generosity in going through it for me; Professor James McAuley and Dr Laurie Hergenhan of the University of Tasmania, for assistance concerning Frederic Manning's correspondence with Dorothy Shakespear (Mrs Dorothy Pound); Rabindra-Sadana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, for sending me copies of Pound's letters to Tagore; and the Essay Society at St John's College, Oxford, and the college Librarian H. M. Colvin, for information

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I should like to express my heartfelt appreciation of the assistance I received from Carl Gatter of Wyncote, Pennsylvania, who told me all he knew of Pound's early life and traced for me persons and events long passed into obscurity; he was also an enthusiastic guide when in 1967 I visited Wyncote, graciously inviting me to stay at his home, 166 Fernbrook Avenue, the house in which Ezra Pound had been brought up. He also helped me to collect photographs.

And finally I should like to thank Ezra Pound, Olga Rudge and Mary de Rachewiltz for their assistance and kindness over a period of many years; and Mrs Dorothy Pound not only for assistance in many forms but for her patience in the face of numerous questions and requests. During the course of the book I have quoted from unpublished

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work by Pound, unpublished letters, and also from a number of uncollected pieces, the copyright of which belongs to Ezra Pound: for permission to use this material and to quote from the poet's books I must thank Mrs Dorothy Pound in her capacity as committee for Ezra Pound.

Brunnenburg

Noel Stock

# I Childhood

## 1885/1901

Hailey, Idaho, was a frontier town of about two thousand people when Ezra Pound was born there on 30 October 1885. His father, Homer Pound, ran the United States Land Office, a position which doubtless carried a certain prestige, but not (if we judge by the local newspaper) very much weight. When the poet's grandfather, Thaddeus Coleman Pound, arrived five months earlier on a tour of his mining properties, the *Hailey Times* of 20 May reported: 'Thad. C. Pound, former Governor of Wisconsin, and father of Homer L. Pound, register of the U.S. Land Office here, found his mining interests in a bad way when he arrived in Hailey a few days ago. His claim, the Alturas, on Warm Springs Creek was jumped, ore and all, the morning he arrived, and on his claim, the Acme, in Smoky, there was a cross location saddled. He is disgusted.' The same issue announced, much as if it were the date of the next council meeting, that horse-thieves were busy on Wood River. The general attitude of the population to the finer things of life, and the rollicking, back-slapping humour, are seen in an anecdote which Pound recalled for Ernest Hemingway in a letter of August 1955. After Homer Pound had built a house for his bride, they were joined by her mother, Mrs Mary Weston from New York. Finding no curtain in her attic window she hung up a fancy petticoat, which caused Homer to be inundated next day with inquiries about his female guest. It was some time before he lived it down.

Ezra Pound arrived into this frontier atmosphere by way of a 'disorderly trek of four or five generations across the whole teeming continent', as he wrote many years later. There were in the family the usual stories about money – all families, it seems, have seen better days – and the usual hints about ancestry. There was talk of their having arrived on the American shore aboard the *Lion*, at a suitably short interval after the *Mayflower*; of a plantation in early New England bearing the name Weston; and of Quakers and whalers by the name of Pound who landed originally in New Jersey and later settled in Pennsylvania. Pound was related on his mother's side to the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and to Captain Joseph Wadsworth who

## CHILDHOOD, 1885/1901

in 1687 stole the Connecticut charter and hid it in Charter Oak, to protect it, apparently, from the designs of the Governor-General. He saw in childhood an engraving, possibly of the eighteenth century, of Wadsworth entering the room to steal the charter, and he heard how the captain swept out the candles on the table with a swish of his long cloak. He was taken when he was eight or nine to Hartford to look at a large stump with a young tree growing out of it, which was said to be *the oak*. Closer to his own day we may observe, among much that was thoroughly correct and dull, such curiosities as a relative who rode behind the first locomotive, a sixteenth cousin named Loomis who was said to have sent an 'electric signal' between ships, without wires, in the 1860s and was thought crazy, a grandfather who corresponded with the local bank manager in verse, and a great-uncle Albert who inclined towards the Episcopal Church because it interfered 'neither with a man's politics nor his religion'.

The most important figure in the poet's immediate background was grandfather Thaddeus (son of Elijah), who was born in a log cabin in Elk, Warren County, Pennsylvania, in or about 1832. He married Sarah Angevine Loomis from a family of horse-thieves: charming people, an old lady from Upper New York State once told Pound, in fact the nicest people in the county, but horse-thieves. It was never hinted, as far as I know, that Thaddeus contracted this weakness of his wife's family and no breath of suspicion, that I know of, ever attached to him in regard to the thieves active at the time of his visit to Idaho. We may safely assume that his marriage into the Loomis family and the activity on Wood River in 1885 were in no way connected.

Thaddeus and Sarah travelled west to Wisconsin and settled at Chippewa Falls, where he learnt the lumber business, starting as a bookkeeper, set up the Union Lumbering Company on his own account, and for a time prospered, doing, it was said, more than a million dollars' worth of business annually. Sarah supervised the preparation of meals for about forty lumbermen and Thaddeus, to maintain his prestige, used to wrestle with them. He also 'used to watch his gang saws in person', Pound wrote, 'to be sure the planks were one and a quarter inch thick before planing'. This was to ensure that 'a foot of lumber after planing was one foot square and an inch thick', no scamped planks being delivered. Thaddeus served in the State Assembly, as member and Speaker, became Lieutenant-Governor of Wisconsin, and was three times elected to Congress. He and Sarah separated and he 'took to himself a second feminine adjunct, without sanction of clergy'. He also built three railways, and boosted Morse's telegraph.

The highest point he reached nationally, according to family tradition, was when he was promised a seat in President Garfield's cabinet;



spring of 1883 he received from Washington a wire saying that President Arthur had appointed him 'register' of the Hailey Land Office. He was unable to find Hailey on the map. 'I was given transportation over the U.P. and Oregon Short Line, Wood River branch, that passed me over the line to the "end of the road". If I remember aright I arrived on the "first train in". It was some weeks later before we were able to open the office – in July. Then the long line of applicants for lands that seemed worthless to me began to file in. Then months of contests and trials – it took about two years to get matters adjusted. . . .' It was a time, in places like Hailey, when fortunes were made overnight. The handyman you paid to saw your kindling wood might tell you (as Homer's did) when you asked him a few days later to saw some more, that he had ten thousand dollars in the bank and a mine to sell. And legal arguments were sometimes settled with revolvers. 'I assure you,' Homer said, 'that the first four years of the Land Office were somewhat interesting. There were times when it seemed as if one might be mutilated by some angry seeker after lands.' In 1919 he gave to the *Philadelphia Ledger* a story how the recently appointed American ambassador to France, Hugh C. Wallace of Tacoma, Washington, had 'once grabbed a 42-calibre six-shooter revolver from the wall of his office to avenge an insult to a friend'. Fortunately, said Homer, 'we prevailed upon him not to carry out his threat'. The incident is recorded by Ezra Pound in a number of places, notably 'Retrospect: Interlude' in *Polite Essays* (1937). He met Wallace in Paris after the Armistice of 1919, a very tired, mild, white-haired man in whom it was difficult to recognize the young man of thirty-six years earlier who had announced his intention of dealing once and for all with the 'son of a bitch' who had insulted his friend.

When Isabel's mother arrived in Hailey to see her grandson she stayed for a time at the hotel. She was horrified to discover that there was no lock on the door. A man wouldn't lock his door out there, Homer later told his son, otherwise 'they'd suspicion you'. What disturbed Isabel about the hotel was that conversations filtered through the flimsy walls.

Hailey was five thousand feet above sea-level and the air did not agree with her. When the baby was about eighteen months they moved to New York. Pound tells us in his autobiographical reverie, *Indiscretions*, published as a series of articles in 1920 and as a small book three years later, that they travelled east during the Great Blizzard of 1887, behind the first rotary snow-plough. When baby Ezra's cough disturbed the others in the sleeper, the inventor of the snow-plough cured him with a dose of sugar saturated with kerosene. The family stayed first with Frances A. Weston at her boarding-house

at 24 East 47th Street. In the spring of 1888, when the baby was two and a half, he was taken to Newport for the season. His first toy, he says in a footnote to his essay on Henry James (1918), was a rather slow and well-behaved lift, in New York apparently, while he was either living there or on holiday. When he was three the family, including also Mrs Mary Weston, went to stay with Thaddeus on his farm in Wisconsin, which numbered among its other inhabitants great-grandfather Elijah and Elijah's elder brother. In June 1889, Homer, Isabel, and child moved to Philadelphia where Homer took up an appointment as assistant assayer at the United States Mint. It was here that the young Ezra grew up and went to school and began his literary career with letters to Santa Claus.

For two years the Pounds lived in a brick row-house with tiny lawn, porch and polished walnut door at 208 South 43rd Street, West Philadelphia, which was then at the city's edge. The house still stands, with a white door in place of the polished walnut. They then moved to 417 Walnut Street, Jenkintown, ten miles north of Philadelphia, but connected to the city by the Reading railroad. An old resident of Jenkintown, Miss Grace Ridpath, recalled many years later that when Ezra was about five the maid would call him so that his mother could read him 'the classics' before his afternoon nap. When he was six they bought a spacious house in nearby Wyncote, five minutes' walk from the Jenkintown station. This was 166 Fernbrook Avenue which was his home for the next sixteen years. It is still there, much as it was in Pound's day, and still bears the same street number.

The ground floor consisted of a large hall and dining-room, front and back parlours, a kitchen and a pantry. Upstairs there were four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a sitting-room, on the first floor, and three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a store-room, on the second. There was a closet in the 'Tower Room' upstairs in which his mother once placed him after some particularly odious offence. The house was furnished in Victorian style, plus a few heirlooms. There were three family portraits: 'Uncle Ezra' after whom Pound was named, a great-grandmother, Hannah How, and a William Page portrait of Mary Wadsworth Parker, who married Harding Weston and had Isabel for daughter. Homer planted a row of trees – pear, peach and cherry, and possibly others – down the right side of the yard, and in the rear garden corn and sweetpeas. There was also at the back a large apple-tree with a swing.

It seems that Pound's first school was run by a Miss Elliot, after which, at the age of six or seven, he attended for a year or more the Cheltenham Hills school at Wyncote run by a well-known family, the Heacocks. One of his boyhood friends was Edward (Ned) Heacock who

was drowned young while canoeing on a wild river out Oregon way. His next school was a temporary establishment run by Miss Florence Ridpath in a house which is still standing at the south-west corner of Greenwood Avenue (then Station Road) and Fernbrook Avenue, only a minute or two from the Pound home. An official school, presided over by a severe mistress in marked contrast to the pleasant Miss Ridpath, was opened a quarter of a mile further up Greenwood Avenue. Out of school Ezra and his pals roamed the nearby hills, in those days still uncleared, and there was a cave in which they played by the local creek. He and another boy were almost drowned rescuing a dog caught in a flash flood. The boys built various huts and other constructions out of packing boxes in the Pound apple-tree.

Rising Philadelphia families like Widener, Stetson and Wanamaker, began to build their medieval castles, renaissance palaces and Elizabethan manor-houses in the countryside surrounding the city. Some of the grandest of these edifices were within a mile or two of the Pound house. But even in Fernbrook Avenue itself there were neighbours on the way up. The Sheip boy, next door, kept telling Ezra that his father was an important man who made cigar-boxes. The Kunkles erected a Victorian house immediately opposite and further up Fernbrook Avenue Cyrus Curtis worked on his *Ladies Home Journal*. Ezra peering over the banister when Curtis came to dinner was struck by the square-cut beard. George Horace Lorimer of the *Saturday Evening Post*, who lived only two doors away, took short-cuts through the Pound backyard. There is something in the tone of Pound's later references to Lorimer, as in *Guide to Kulchur* (1938) when he says that the 'vulgar' Lorimer 'honestly didn't know that there ever had been a civilization', which provokes the suspicion that there may have been some sort of clash, physical or intellectual, between the successful journalist and the young poet quite early in his career.

While the neighbourhood generally became richer and more pretentious, the Pounds continued to make do on Homer's salary as assistant assayer. They lived and ate well, better than the same family could ever hope to do today, and Isabel always kept a maid; but there was no money to spare and Ezra was sometimes conscious of the fact that some of his friends and acquaintances were better off than he was.

Visiting the Mint, with its Greek columns, at the corner of Juniper and Chestnut Streets in those days, he was fascinated by the inner workings, not least his father's skill with a gold balance which enabled him to weigh a man's signature scrawled for the occasion on a visiting-card. He mixed with the assayers and drank in stories about 'gold bricks', which he still remembered in 1944 when he wrote his pamphlet on the 'Economic Nature of the United States'. 'Gold bricks' were false

ingots made of lead covered with a layer of gold; some even were solid gold in parts to enable the swindler to bore in and demonstrate their genuineness. It was a period in America when anybody had the right to have his own gold coined at the official mint, and many who had been duped brought their bricks to Homer to have them converted into coin, only to be told that they were mostly lead. When Grover Cleveland was elected for a second time in 1893 – he had been President 1885–89, was succeeded by Benjamin Harrison, but came back again in '93 – the Administration called for a recount of the silver coinage. The boy watched in the light of gas flares as workmen stripped to the waist in the mint vaults shovelled the coins into the counting machines. The scene remained in his memory and there was still a touch of wonder forty-two years later when he wrote to Sir Montagu Webb, a British businessman interested in monetary reform, that 'Silver I saw, as no Aladdin, for when Cleveland was elected there was the recount of four million in the Mint vaults, the bags had rotted, and the men half-naked with open gas flares, shovelled it into the counting-machines, with a gleam on tarnished discs'. And in canto 97, in the book *Thrones* (1959), he speaks of silver dollars,  $37\frac{1}{4}$  grains silver, 'as I have seen them by shovels full lit by gas flares'.

He visited New York regularly to stay with Mary Weston at 596 Lexington Avenue or at the boarding-house on East 47th Street. With his great-uncle, Mr Weston, and later his great-aunt, he walked through the fruit and vegetable markets in search of provisions; on one such occasion he was struck by the fact that he alone of all the bystanders seemed curious about a huge jack-knife thrown in pursuit of a fleeing male figure. To the boy from Wyncote the incident was unique; to the others, including apparently his Aunt Frank, as she was known, it was in no way remarkable. Here in New York, as at home, politics was in the air. He listened to his elders discuss the 'Free Silver' campaign of 1896 when William Jennings Bryan and the reforming party sought (according to the oratory of the time) to prevent the banking class from its attempt to crucify mankind upon a cross of gold. He must have paid great attention to these discussions and absorbed the significance of the nodding heads and weighty pauses. How otherwise to explain the story, which we have on his own authority, in *Indiscretions*, that even at the age of six he was so seized with indignation at the result of a national election that he hurled his rocking-chair across the room.

The Pounds attended the Wyncote Presbyterian Church, called Calvary, where Homer taught Sunday school. It was a wooden building located on the north-east corner of Fernbrook Avenue and Station Road, opposite Miss Ridpath's unofficial school. It was later rolled to a new

site in Fernbrook Avenue, accompanied by a host of small boys including Pound. The Presbyterian minister was the Rev. Carlos Tracy Chester; his son, Hawley, with whom Pound played as a boy, called on him during a honeymoon visit to Paris about 1920. One of their childhood pranks together was to invent a djinn to scare and perplex another boy who bored them with his company. Hawley's sister, Anna, made an impression on him, mainly, it seems, because of her fanatical adherence on the metronome during piano lessons. It is not clear when exactly Pound first began to have his doubts about Presbyterianism, or Christianity in general, but the seeds of his later rejection of Christianity were sown at Sunday-school or during bible class; or, perhaps, at the Christian Endeavour Convention in Boston which he reports as having attended at 'a precocious age'. He said of the Hebrew Scriptures in his 1938 essay on 'Mang Tsze: The Ethics of Mencius' that it was only with the greatest and most tortuous difficulty that the Sunday-school had got a moral teaching 'out of these sordid accounts of lechery, trickery and isolated acts of courage'. In 1940 he complained in a letter to an American Jesuit, Fr Francis Talbot, of the 'modern habit of trying to get everything down to the level of the young men's bible class'. And in a letter in 1958 to the historian R. McNair Wilson, he said that he had been brought up a Presbyterian, 'but it began to seem phoney' under a minister by the name of Lower. This was the Rev. William Barnes Lower who in 1901 took over Calvary Church from Carlos Chester. He was a great organizer and in the words of a local historian, 'Young peoples' groups were started and the whole church was alive with activity'. Pound was still attending church sometimes, even if mainly for the music, when he was nineteen, and still thinking in what we may call Christian terms. If doubts formed early about organized religion and the meaning and import of the Bible, if he began to formulate religious thoughts independently of Christianity, there is still no single overwhelming turn to be traced and recorded because the process was a slow one, intermittent, and by no means consistent.

At the age of ten he seems to have been a happy boy: a well-behaved, slightly spoilt, only child, of above-average intelligence. He was now known by the family and among his friends as '*Ra*', pronounced *ray*. He went with his mother to New York in the spring of 1896. His father, who remained at Wyncote, was requested by Isabel, through her son, in a letter written to 'Dear Pa' on 28 April, to 'douse the palm if you haven't watered it'. 'Ma' was busy 'scribbling thread on the scurt of the dress she made the waist of the other day'. They hoped to come home the first of next week, but didn't know the day. 'Ma Weston' had been invited to return with them but had refused.

Signed 'E.L.P.' When his mother and Homer went to New York later in the year he wrote on 15 November to tell her that he had been in to Philadelphia to see a minstrel show. He declined to send her a full description which, he said, would fill ten sheets of paper, but contented himself with a list of the 'chief topics': 'McKinley Bombarded' (William McKinley, President of the United States 1897-1901), 'Bicycle Crazy' and 'Our Public Safety'. At Wanamaker's Store he had some cream, 'more than we could eat'. He asked her to buy him some stamps, a list of which she would find in the upper outside pocket of Homer's overcoat. If his handwriting was poor it was because he had sprained his little finger at football. And the letter was signed 'X Ra', which in letters a year later became 'X ray'. It was typical of Isabel's sense of duty that she went each evening to the Jenkintown station to meet her husband on his way home from work; and later when the walk back, up Fernbrook hill, became too much for her, she waited beautifully dressed at the door.

In the summer of 1897 he was in New York again with his mother. He was pleased when he wrote to Homer on 7 June because Aunt Frank had promised to have his wheels cleaned. He began to be active in tennis and fencing: repairs still visible in the stained glass on the hall-landing at Fernbrook Avenue testify to the tennis balls which hit the glass while he was practising against the side of the house. He also played chess and in winter skated on Wanamaker's pond nearby.

At the age of twelve he entered the Cheltenham Military Academy only a mile or so up the road from his home at Wyncote. There he studied English, arithmetic, history, Latin and Greek and wore a uniform. He said years later that he could stand everything about the Academy except the drill. Latin and Greek were taught by a Wyncote man, Frederick Doolittle, who was known among the cadets as 'Cassius' or 'Lean and Hungry Look'. For part of the time Pound boarded at the Academy and decked the walls of his room with photographs and posters advertising reigning beauties of stage and music-hall. Midway through January 1898 he and a boy named Reed went to Philadelphia to perform a fencing act as 'picked' representatives of the Academy. 'We did ourselves proud,' he told his mother, 'and have been excused from all drill since and will be for some time to come.'

In February Wyncote was under snow and on the 6th Ezra and a friend called Tom went sledging. They started in the Pound driveway, went down Fernbrook Avenue which falls away steeply to Station Road and then up the road to Cheltenham Hills. He also took a sleigh ride with Levi Bean, one of the founders of Calvary Presbyterian Church, who had the livery stable on Station Road opposite the foot of Fernbrook Avenue. Ezra helped Mr Bean to hook on the horses and they went up

past Glenside – a village adjoining Wyncote – and back. Sometimes he hired a ride with Mr Bean in a horse and buggy at one dollar for the afternoon. Bean had a lift whereby a carriage could enter the stable at the lower or Station Road level and be driven out of the attic door onto the top level of the hill behind. It is not clear whether this device served any important purpose but it pleased greatly Ezra and his companions.

In June 1898 as the school year came to a close he had ice-cream, cake, eight lemonades and crackers after 'Skinny' Dayton, whose name was Dayton Larzelere, beat him in the high jump at the Academy sports. He looked forward to the coming 'declamation contest' which he hoped to win. I do not know the outcome for certain but I seem to remember Pound telling me, or perhaps I read it somewhere, that he did in fact win. On 10 June he celebrated in verse the approaching end of term:

Four more days until vacation  
Then we leave this — plantation,  
No more Latin, no more Greek  
No more smoking on the sneak. . . .

The summer of 1898 he spent abroad on a three months' tour with his Aunt Frank who believed in travelling prepared. She carried in her luggage ninety-seven (according to Pound) little tissue-paper parcels of green tea prepared in advance for the pot. They were distributed throughout her luggage, ever since the occasion when they had all been discovered on top of a single case, to the amazement of a customs official. Towards the end of June and early in July they saw the sights in London: the two which he liked best were the Tower and St Paul's. The 'chief warden' of the Tower he noticed had five medals and was a 'Scotchman'. They went to Kenilworth Castle and to Warwick which he was impressed to discover was 'still' the home of the Earl of Warwick who only the week before had played host to the Prince of Wales. At Stratford he saw 'Shakers birth-place, tomb and memorials', and at Cowes had large strawberries with Devonshire cream. They left London on 4 July and travelled to the Continent, Ezra celebrating American Independence Day, he told his father, by depositing his breakfast and his lunch in the depths of the English Channel. At Brussels they stayed at the Grand Hotel de Saxe where on 5 July he sat down to write an account of his travels to Homer. On receiving news of the fall of Santiago in the Spanish-American war the young patriot dashed off a postscript 'Vive l'Amérique. Hurrah, Santiago has fallen'. After Brussels the route seems to have included Cologne, a journey

down the Rhine to Bingen, Mainz and Heidelberg, a stay in the Alps (Lucerne and Como), and then Florence, Naples, Rome and Venice. It would appear that they also visited North Africa; for there was a photograph in Pound's possession for many years which perpetuated the marvellous vision of Aunt Frank's wide figure in white bodice and hat sitting upright on a narrow mule in Tangiers. They returned to the United States in September.

It must have been about this time or the following year that a man by the name of H. Spencer excited his interest in Greek poetry by reciting a long passage from Homer, after a game of tennis. The incident hung in his mind. In *Guide to Kulchur* he said that hearing the Greek poetry read aloud was worth more to him at the age of thirteen than grammar; and he referred to it again in canto 80 in the *Pisan Cantos*:

and it was old Spencer (,H.) who first declaimed me  
     the Odyssey  
 with a head built like Bill Shepard's  
 on the quais of what Siracusa?  
     or what tennis court  
 near what pine trees?

Of his early reading and taste I know little: only that grandmother Weston read him a great deal of Sir Walter Scott and that his awakening years were 'adorned with the bustuous noises of Kipling'. Beyond that there is a passing reference in the essay 'The Teacher's Mission' (1934) to the fact that Ibsen's name was known to him when he was at preparatory school, and a letter of the same year in which he says that as a child he heard people talking about Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. James Whitcomb Riley was a household name with his poems of rural and semi-rural America and we know that Pound read him: I assume it was when he was a boy but I have no proof.

From Military Academy he went to the Cheltenham Township High School, one stop along the Reading railroad at Elkins Park, to prepare for university. He was fifteen when he left there in 1901. The original building of 1884 is no longer used as a school. There was no sign of Ezra Pound either there or at the present school when I visited them a year or two ago, nor had the school official to whom I spoke even heard of him; the only scrap I could find was a plaque on the wall with the name Homer L. Pound among the Board of Directors responsible for the new building of 1905.