



EZRA POUND TO HIS PARENTS

Letters 1895-1929

EDITED BY MARY DE RACHEWILTZ,
A. DAVID MOODY, AND JOANNA MOODY

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Ezra Pound
to his Parents

'Being family to a wild poet aint no bed of roses
but you stand the strain just fine.'
(EP to HLP, 9 January 1909)



'My Dear Son . . .
Growl and grumble some more'
(HLP to EP, 4 February 1919)

ISABEL AND HOMER

A Double Memoir¹

MARY DE RACHEWILTZ

What one learns in the home one learns in a way one does not
learn in school. (EP, 1960 Interview)

On 9 April 1865 Lee surrendered; on 14 April President Lincoln was assassinated. On 23 and 24 May soldiers of Grant and Sherman marched down Pennsylvania Avenue, and then returned to their homes—as would their son's sons from the Great World War. This we read in the printed address delivered on 'Lincoln Night' on 12 February 1921, inscribed to Mr Homer Pound by T. Elliott Patterson, a cherished memento. The Civil War had left its mark on both the Weston and the Pound sides of the family. The photograph of 'Honest Old Abe', who in 1863 had established 'Thanksgiving' as a National holiday, was kept in the Pound family album. The tone of Lincoln's speeches, the background, and the interest in Mazzini were transmitted from father to son and left traces in the poet's mind. 'Poll-ticking' in the family must have been heated indeed if a child throws his little rocking chair across the room because the wrong man has been elected President. The *Jenkintown Times Chronicle* for 7 November 1896 published E. L. Pound, aged 11 years:

A Political Fact.

There was a young man from the West,
He did what he could for what he thought best;
But election came round,
He found himself drowned,
And the papers will tell you the rest.

Homer's line followed the events of the times, while Isabel's was upholding the saga of the Pilgrims, reinforced by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Courtship of Miles Standish* of which more than 10,000 copies were sold in London the day it was published. The connection to the grandson of the former Plymouth schoolmaster, Peleg Wadsworth whose forebears had early settled in Duxbury,

¹ Parts of this Memoir were first printed as 'Pound as Son: Letters Home', *Yale Review* 75.3 (1986) 321-30.

was to be kept up—his success a model to follow. In the 1880s the bones of the forefathers were still being dug up in New England, while the Quakers sought new frontiers.

Tenderest of greenhorns, HLP was called in Hailey, according to Waller B. Wiggington (*Rendezvous*, Winter 1969); *una pasta d'uomo* [soft as dough/ a sweet bun] by the people in Rapallo. In Wyncote, despite headlines in the local paper: 'No more Italians . . .', he had quietly defied the stupid suburban prejudices and raised money for the poor, welcomed immigrants to the Calvary Presbyterian Church where he taught Sunday School and was active as administrator. Both in Hailey and in Wyncote the local papers reported on his activities, well researched by Noel Stock (*Ezra Pound's Pennsylvania*) and Emily Wallace. In 1955, W. C. Williams wrote a vivid description of Homer in 1904 and 1905:

. . . he had the usual slight stoop to his shoulders affected by all old school gentlemen. . . kindly, cultured voice, not without a good laugh close to the surface. . . When he spoke to me he reminded me of my own father, a touch of the old world though his accent was pure Philadelphia.

And W. B. Yeats, speaking of Pound's father and mother:

I don't think I ever met so charming a couple . . . There is one thing that puzzles me—how these people so intelligent and perfectly honest could admire the artistic horrors which Quinn was showing them

In Gais in my Tyrol they spoke with respect of a kind and humane *Mensch*. Standing in the cramped stable, with his son to translate, he told the small farmer—the horse in his stall to the left, the two cows and the heifer to the right and the pig sty in the opposite corner—of how his grandfather had clipped the horns of ten (in time it grew to a thousand) cows on their Wisconsin farm and they gave no more milk. So the small Tyrolean farmer could laugh with his neighbours at the stupid Americans, establishing somehow a link to Wisconsin cattle-owners through the generous grandfather who gave the farmer's wife a beautiful golden brooch and a gold chain with three coral cameos to keep for the child. And to my mother he gave a rare gold coin, set in a medallion with a lock of blond hair, all trinkets lost through World War Two.

My own memories: swinging on his foot; sitting on his knees while he drew a funny face on his breakfast egg in his hotel room in Bolzano; showing me how to 'shadow-play' with my hands on the wall. Listening to a language I could not understand. Scant snippets of childhood memories. His own candid reminiscing he set down after his retirement in Rapallo at his son's bidding, in *Small Boy. The Wisconsin Childhood of Homer L. Pound*. It was only after reading about the smell of fresh pine, the floating on a raft down the Mississippi and his encounters with lumbermen, that I realized how close our worlds were. And: *All ages are contemporaneous*.

The daguerrotypes, the silver, as well as a fair number of books—J. R. Lowell's *The Biglow Papers* (1885), among them—that had belonged to Mary

Weston, come from Isabel. Homer, apart from Congressional Directories, seems to have valued two items: his mother's edition of the Robert Burns poems with the annotation: 'This little book was given to me by my father when I was 8 years old, in the year 1844. It is the only one he ever gave me besides my school Books'. In 1958, Pound annotated in the back: 'Angevine mother of Homer L. Pound'. Celebrating Burns Night may have been a Loomis family tradition, along with Lincoln Day on 12 February. The other book Homer kept was O. S. Fowler's first edition of *The Practical Phrenologist*. Whether in 1875 he met Fowler or merely used his text to measure his talents—or lack of—is open to speculation, but in 1932, prodded perhaps by Ezra, the numbers scribbled on the fly leaf show that he figured out he was 17 at the time. At that same age J. Q. Adams was also in a quandary. In Canto XXXIV, though in a different context, we find '... phrenology and animal magnetism ...'.

The *Diary of John Quincy Adams* must have provided much conversation between father and son in Rapallo in the early '30s while the *XI New Cantos* were being written. In Canto 99, with Pound's mind on filiality: 'prolong the animal spirits', seems to answer some of his own questions. Homer had brought with him the *documenta* making history. From his appointment to the General Land Office in 1882, to his Pension Certificate as Assistant Assayer in the Philadelphia Mint in 1928, together with the impressive 1914 Joint Resolution passed by the Wisconsin legislature relating to the death of Honorable Thaddeus Coleman Pound, not to mention scrap books with articles on and by T.C.P. and his speech in Congress that found entry in Canto 22.

When Wharton Barker in 1914 and others later on asked him to write his father's biography, he politely declined, saying his pen was not up to the task. In *Small Boy* he dropped hints about records to be found in the City Court House, 'Pound versus Pound' (p. 38) and he calls his father 'padre' when at age 12 sent to school, after his parents' divorce, but he leaves the plot for a Pirandello to unravel. He himself was too honest and compassionate and did not want to speak of the 'darker sides'. Even Weyerhaeuser, the 'Lumber King', mentioned negatively in Canto XXII as 'Warenhauser', was to him plain 'Fred' and not a dishonest man.

Homer only wrote of things he knew first hand and understood, like his report of the 1902 visits to foreign Mints and the hearty welcome he received as an emissary from the Philadelphia Mint. He would describe the coining presses, the automatic planes for adjusting planks working very accurately, the changing of designs, etc.:

On Friday, July 25, 1902, I visited the Mint at Rome, or as it is called della R.Zecca. Mr. Benton of Rome introduced me to Ing. Israel Sacerdote, Direttore della Zecca, and acted as interpreter. The Mint is situated back of the Vatican . . .

Paris, August 21st. Place de la Monnaies . . . Like Italy, the Government changes the design of the franc often . . . no granulations are taken. Wood and coal are used as fuel, and I saw no evidence of any new machinery.

'Isabel and Homer: A Double Memoir'

On the 3d day of September 1902, I visited the Royal Mint of London, England, and presented letter of Superintendent of Philadelphia Mint to the Deputy Master. . . . [And there follows the detailed description of the melting, furnaces, machines, coining, and the firm conviction that] we have the best institution for the coinage of monies in the world and the United States Mint of Philadelphia is held in high esteem by the bankers of Europe. . . . after having exchanged and used the coin of Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France and England, am still of the opinion that our coin is superior, both in design and workmanship.

Nowhere, he said, had he seen assay balances equal to the ones used by himself.

His interest in coins and coining never died down. As early as 1898 he learnt about the extraction of gold from seawater and corresponded with the President of The Electrolytic Marine Salts Co, in Boston, after having experimented and taken notes on 'panning' during his stay in Hailey. He wrote an article for the *Times Chronicle* on where gold can be found. Throughout his life he recorded and preserved what lay in his field and pursued little known topics, such as 'The trial of the monies in the Pix' as reported in the 1643 *Journal of the House of Lords*.

There is a small envelope in the case containing the 1928 coins of the Irish Free State, with his note dated 'Rapallo Italy Dec.3-1929': 'This set of Irish coin was presented to me by Mr & Mrs William Butler Yeats. Mr Yeats was chairman of the Committee that authorized these coins minted = Homer L. Pound'. With it there is also a letter from the Deputy Master & Comptroller of the Royal Mint, London, 4 December 1929, informing him that the Mint Report for 1927, with a Plate illustrating the New Irish Free state coinage, was exhausted, but the one for 1928 will be ready shortly. It must have been a happy beginning of his retirement, seeing his profession recognized and moving into the Rapallo apartment which he and Isabel took over from the Irish Senator, along with furniture cat and canaries. He probably remembered attending the Yeats Lecture in Philadelphia in 1914, and the letter from this famous poet, approving of his son's engagement to the 'very clever, very charming, very beautiful' daughter of an old friend of his.

By 1929, life in Wyncote had become a problem, and the worst economic depression in American history was already being felt. Homer had wondered whether 'Dictator Mussolini' would allow them to live in Italy after his retirement, and he wanted to know what his son thought of the Italian leader. 'Mama thinks he is needed to put, or keep Italy in order.' Pound encouraged his parents to join him, and Mr and Mrs Homer L. Pound were booked as passengers on the S. S. Minnekahda, leaving New York for London on 1 June 1929. The retirement annuity of 999 and 96/100 dollars was raised to \$1200 in July 1930. Despite the Depression, the years ahead promised serenity.

In Rapallo, Homer was immediately taken into the confidence of his son and there followed trips to Gais to visit me and to Venice, while Isabel was left behind and tried to concentrate on learning survival Italian. The aborted draft

of a letter to an imaginary friend—*Mio Caro Amico*—betrays a slight resentment at husband and son having gone to Lake Garda and the Dolomites and leaving her alone.

Maddening as it must have been to be told by his mother what to do and wear—even as late as 1939, before his trip to America, Isabel presented him with a list of whom to see, what bus to take in Washington, etc.—it was comforting to have an ally in Homer. In his youth, the 'bondage of the blood' the 'pigsty of the family' had to be broken in order to follow his inner voices. When he was fired from his teaching job, his first reaction was 'don't tell mother', but by the time he was 'recalled' he had made up his own mind and decided to go his own way. In his father he had complete confidence: 'If a man commit murder/ Should his father protect him? . . . He should hide him'. (Canto 13) Yet within Confucian authority, there are subtle distinctions between sincerity and veracity, degrees of loyalty and affection. The needle on Homer's scale weighing gold and a man's signature constantly trembling, as Ixion, the sensitive antenna of the race who carried the burden of writing 'the epic of the capitalist era'—David Moody's definition of the Cantos.

1942 found the old man stranded with a broken hip in the Rapallo Hospital and his son 'read him a few pages of Aristotle . . . to take his mind off it. Also to keep my own work in progress' as he told his listeners—if any—folks back in America. The vintage of the Civil War, 'Grapes of wrath', was flowing into World War Two and into Ezra's 'work in progress'. Hard to tell what was foremost on Homer's mind as he lay dying. From the correspondence we learn how strong the pressures of World War One had been: 'Yes—what about this war matter? We are wondering if Ezra Pound—will now be a little more charitable to his Native Land—and help all he can over there. Lovingly Dad.'

Homer never doubted the talents of his son and the importance of the P O E M. A letter opened by the Censor, written off the cuff, 10 June 1917, and addressed to 5 Holland Place Chambers:

My dear Son. Guess we better let W[oodrow]W[ilson]—out of our correspondence—WW and Mc—.Dad has to work under the regime—Will send the books as soon as I find them—Found one copy Ovid—last evening—will send you list soon.

Well this morning came the P O E M.

It took my attention—on the train—and I was in town almost before I knew it—It was a cool clear morning—I walked along the street with my head up—and felt the stimulus of the spirit—that breathed out from the MSS. I have been very busy all day—but at odd times have taken a fly—at the Poem. You wish a first impression—Well—

In reading it I can feel its sweep—and it is as I imagine like one going up in an Airship—The Mechanician has honored me with a seat—and we are soon up in the pure azure—

Time and space are nothing—We sweep the whole world—and just as we lose on ourselves—he drops me out—and here I am just pegging away—and it will be some time before the next Mss—comes—

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I thank you for the compliment. My opinion does not seem of much value—but I am glad that in that little room—in London a son of mine can lose himself in such matters—but but—may I be permitted to suggest that as the poem is not for the Yahoos—for after the first word it soars away above the crowd so use a different word than 'hang'. It seems to me 'Listen—all—would be a better word—ask D—if I am not right—

Has your proof been corrected—Look on page 17—'it happened—and now to think—you have it so—

I may be wrong—

Page 16 Prosperine—page 22 Proserpine—which is right—

I will read the poem more carefully when I get home this evening—of course there are many words and names that I do not understand as you well know—but nevertheless it gives one a desire to see the places—I wish, some day we can go over them together—

Lovingly Dad

Homer L Pound [signed in ink].

Perhaps the son would have done well after all to tone down the invectives instead of increasing them. Yet he remained the 'Mechanician' in Homer's eyes who kept running errands for him and followed also his political lead. Homer wrote letters to Senators, encouraged Social Credit, and, once settled in Rapallo, collected 'Durrant's Press Cuttings', indexed the reviews and articles pasted into a copybook which Isabel had started to use for her Italian exercises, thus complementing the scrapbooks containing articles by and on T. C. Pound, all this serving as background for Cantos, and lending his native speech to 'Ezra Pound Speaking'. He was spared the outcome of his son's misplaced American Patriotism.

What Homer would have liked mentioned in the Cantos was 'Uncle Joel's Panacea', and Pound may have remembered it at the very end, in canto CXIV. He is recorded among the 'good guys in the family' for having read Locke. A copy of his book had turned up in an antiquarian bookshop in Texas: Uncle Joel's 'Locke' found in Texas—associated with H. L. P's mention of Del Mar on Essay Commission. It's very much the Loomis-Pound side of the family that wins the day.

I wonder if the 'old man' who spoke of his 'forgettery' when he couldn't promptly recall a name, yet vividly remembered his dreams and delighted in telling them, considered the strange destiny of landing under the hill where Marconi, with his experiments, usurped the glory of Mahlon Loomis, the original inventor of world-famed wireless telegraphy. In *Radio's 100 Men of Science* by O. E. Dunlap (1944), we have a detailed biography of this 'Pioneer in aerial telegraphy'. On 21 May 1872, the US Congress listened to a long speech on the principle 'causing electrical vibrations . . . convertible into human language . . . disturbance to the remotest shores' and *almost* passed the Bill requesting \$50,000 to develop his invention, but the idea was dismissed as 'absurd'. Loomis was ahead of his time; he died, it is said, heartbroken. The

case was widely covered in the Press and in 1925 Mary Texanna Loomis dedicated her *Radio Theory and Operating* to Dr Mahlon Loomis. There is an ironic echo in Canto 38, of the Pope showing 'curiosity / as to how His Excellency had chased those / electric shakes through the atmosphere'. Whether Homer knew about the Loomis Radio College in Washington is not certain.

I know of no Loomis correspondence after the 1912 letter from Elisha Loomis, compiler of *The Loomis Family in America*, published in 1906. Homer's letters from folk back home were from his sister's family in Philadelphia, the Foot cousins, and the Busha and Patterson cousins in Big Timber, Montana. At least since the 1905 Loomis Convention it was taken for granted in the family that:

We of the Tribe of Joseph—son of John Loomis of Braintree in the County of Essex, burnt at Canterbury in 1566, for heresy: that is for being a protestant . . . in 1632 passengers on the 'Lion' . . . in 1636 went to Hartford with Rev. Thomas Hooker. . . . America need never despair as long as there are Loomises to burn.

Whether Homer paid the \$1 to become a member of the Loomis Family Association is not recorded, but he had two copies of the 1906 Brochure and kept the genealogical charts up to date. Pound made ample use of the contents, and given that 'the muses are daughters of memory' one can sense a groping for roots in *Thrones*, Canto 96 in particular.

Isabel Weston Pound, the poet's mother, and her mother, Mary Weston, still remain somewhat elusive figures. If granddaughters knew how much I regret not having sufficiently questioned or listened to Isabel, the only grandparent I have known as an adult, they might find a way to draw old ladies from their caves or off their shelves (in E. M. Forster's words). They might even be patient enough to crouch at the foot of their pedestals and pick up threads.

Fortunately Isabel was an imaginative talker, but she recalled places rather than people and never spoke of either her parents or her son, only of Homer.

During World War One, she had tried to enlist. She wanted to become an aviator, but was assigned to skinning tomatoes. Thus ended her only attempt at a career.

The earliest letter we have is one Isabel wrote to her mother from Hailey, Idaho, on 22 May 1885, and it footnotes what seemed 'lore' in *Indiscretions*. It's a four-page letter confirming that there were lands, silver mines, and railroads to attend to, revealing an unbounded enthusiasm for the Camas Prairie with its streams and gulches. 'At one eminence we had a picture before us like Bierstadt's Rocky Mountains, peak after peak . . . Looking down the gully, . . . I could but think of the old patriarchs looking over into The Land of Canaan'.

Oddly enough, there is not a word about a baby to be born in October.

Isabel's wedding reception had been held on 26 November 1884 in the house of her uncle, Ezra Brown Weston, at 24 East 47th Street, New York, with the Rev. J. Clement French performing the marriage ceremony. We have only a few scraps of evidence: newspaper clippings, the invitation, the raw silk wedding dress, an ivory and lace fan, and a few bits of exquisite Tiffany silver. Isabel 'liked pretty things' and had a natural inclination for rhymed verse and polysyllables.

She also possessed nonchalance. On 1 June 1929, when she and Homer left for Europe to join their son in Rapallo: 'she got up from the table and walked out of the house without even clearing the breakfast plates'. This is the only viva-voce recollection of her I have, from one of her contemporaries, Esther Heacock, a Wyncote neighbour whom I visited in 1963.

The house on Fernbrook Avenue and its staggering list of contents was put up for auction. All clutter was left behind, including a small painting of herself which she either disliked (though it's 'pretty') or discarded because her son had not asked her to bring it along with the other family portraits. The present owner of the house kindly salvaged the picture, which now serves as the frontispiece to *Indiscretions* (in *Pavannes and Divagations*, 1958).

It was William Carlos Williams, prompted by Norman Holmes Pearson in 1955, who left us a detailed description of Ezra Pound's mother. She had liked him and trusted him as a friend. In her late thirties, with her hair done up in a careless but attractive manner, she struck the young medical student as shy and aristocratic, somewhat mysterious, as though about to take wing. He played the fiddle and she accompanied him on the piano after dinner. She also played for the song sessions at the young people's parties, and her chocolate cake was famous, though she was an indifferent housekeeper, as Williams recalls. She clearly was never interested in menial work:

She seemed to be rather surprised at the presence of her own son in the house which must, I think, have affected him to make him in his own eyes much of a changeling . . . She was to me a charming somewhat aloof figure, mother of a son who was absolutely not to be understood, a genius to whom she had given birth by inscrutable laws.

And how well did the son understand his mother? Their relationship was very intense, and hence sometimes strained. 'Pa' remained 'Dad' to the end, but 'Ma' became 'Mother,' and the tone was always somewhat formal. She impressed upon Ezra—'Ray', as she used to call him—her sense of decorum and her values. Even as a boy he realized she was under some kind of stress, but she was determined to keep up appearances. There was of course a lot of superficial banter, and at the age of 3 he seems to have committed some obscure misdeed (probably when he called his grandmother, Mary Weston, a 'steer'), whereupon his mother told him he was no longer a gentleman. Yet she continued to dress him in velvet, à la Lord Fauntleroy (the heavy lace collar and cuffs still exist), and oddly enough, Pound wore velvet dinner jackets all his life,

though it raised eyebrows. He once did call his mother a 'proud presbyterian peacock' when she sent him a rather unfortunate photograph of herself dressed up for some occasion, looking majestic, severe, wearing an enormous clump of black feathers on her hat and a feathery black stole, totally unbecoming and in sharp contrast with pink and dimply Aunt Frank (Frances Weston), smiling in ivory lace and pearls. Both felt the need to reform each other. In a letter from Venice in 1908 he apologizes for not having recognized her right to hold ideas differing from his own and for his 'lack of intelligent sympathy' with her aims and views.

She would have liked him to compete with the Ivy League Pounds and Longfellows, had he not so quickly wrecked his academic career at Wabash. In Europe the obvious thing to be was an American ambassador. From London in 1909, under pressure to find a real job and make a living, he confessed to her: 'I never voluntarily do anything but write lyrics and talk to my friends.' So she suggested he write an 'Epic to the West'. Ezra reacted with a four-page tirade: 'What has the West done to deserve. it?' And did she not know that an epic needed a beautiful tradition, a mythical or historical hero and a damn long time for the story to lose its garish details and become encrusted with beautiful lies? Yet a most fruitful seed had taken root, and he hoped his scrawl would amuse her and begged her not to take it too seriously. Secretly he kept trying to live up to her expectations, showing off social engagements she would approve: 'Weekend with Lady Low in Dorset—not far from Pound, Poundsbury and Blandford.' Playing along with his mother's ambition, he sought lectures, teaching jobs, employment in the Foreign Service. He even considered making money. In 1910 he returned to New York ostensibly for this purpose, but in fact could not escape being a poet. He spent most of his time working on Guido Cavalcanti's sonnets. Having waited eight months, hoping in vain for some suitable position, a scholarship from the University of Pennsylvania, or recognition, he returned to Europe and wrote to his mother: 'I regret your lack of reconciliation.—You never seem to consider my necessity to live.—However, what's the use of arguing. I have my work to do and must choose my own way of getting it done.'

Pound also chose to marry into a family his mother would accept. Isabel had tried to salvage her son's engagement to H. D. years earlier. Now she complied readily with his wishes when he asked her to invite Dorothy Shakespear to their home in Wyncote. On 22 February 1914, he wrote her: 'I dare say I am going to be married. The family has ordered the invitations & stuff for the curtains etc. In which case I shall not come to America & if you want to inspect us you will have to come over here.' When he sent the 'curious announcements of the prenuptial reception', he discouraged his parents from attending the April ceremony, yet a few weeks later he suggested that his mother come to London in May and enclosed her fare.

To his fiancée, who was speculating about her future mother-in-law's handwriting, he gave a swift appraisal on 25 March 1914:

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Mother's handwriting??? New York, born 14th St. & second ave. when it was the thing to be born there, porched house, 23rd. st. also at proper time. Uncle's estate on Hudson, reckless rider. Married wild H.L.P. & went to a mining town, returned east to domesticity—traditions, irony, no knowledge of french literature in the original, admiration for the brothers De Goncourt. Early painting lessons, penchant for the pretty—horror of all realism in art. Belief in the pleasant. Would like, or would have liked—to see me in the Diplomatic Corps—'Ambassador to the Ct. of St. James.' Believes that I should be well clothed. Prude if god ever permitted one to exist.

If by 'prude' the son meant that his mother was a woman of extreme propriety in conduct and in speech, he was correct. Homer would admit knowing of the darker side of some family member, but preferred to speak well of them and to say that he himself was not able to measure up to expectations. Isabel, knowingly or not, cut people dead, refused to acknowledge the existence of those who failed to meet social requirements, and ignored messages which threatened convention. But she was extremely loyal to her family and faced disasters with dignity and style. Nor did she pass judgment. She made statements and acted upon them: 'talking as though things were as she would have wished them but as they were not', according to Father Desmond Chute, an English friend of the family in Rapallo.

Homer and Isabel went to London together to meet their daughter-in-law and her family. Isabel's Wadsworthian background did not draw the kind of favourable response she had expected, yet after Homer's return to Philadelphia she stayed on for a while to live near her son. 'It has seemed very natural to have you here and quite odd now without you', he wrote to her when she was on her way home, un-resigned to her son's exile but aware that he 'had his work to do'.

Questioned by psychiatrists in 1946, Ezra Pound said that the death of his maternal grandmother when he was 15 was the first real sorrow he could remember. In *The Cantos* and elsewhere he celebrates his grandfather Thaddeus C. Pound, whose economic theories resembled his own. His maternal grandfather, Harding (Haddy) Weston, is treated lightly in *Indiscretions*.

I do not know when or how Isabel came in contact with her father. He had enlisted in the Civil War when she was barely 2 years old. When she identified for posterity some of the numerous daguerrotypes she inherited from her mother, her father as a young man gets a mere 'Harding Weston. Son of Grandfather James Weston.' In 1922 she had received a letter from the chaplain of the National Military Home in Dayton, Ohio, informing her that he was writing at her father's request. He said that the old man attended chapel and Bible class regularly but was in the hospital ward and would soon transfer to Hampton Home in Virginia. Isabel sent this letter on to her son and wrote on the back: 'This letter may give you a truer idea of your grandfather's condition and of US methods of dealing with disabled volunteer soldiers. Grants Forum has been the place where H. W. has aired his notions these many years.' The rest of the letter deals with news of her club, political elections, young

professors at the University of Pennsylvania who admired Pound, and the autumn weather: 'We live in a golden glow, no frost nor dead leaves.' For more information about Isabel's father we must turn to the Harding Weston records in the National Archives: 'I am now upward of 80 years old and cannot make ends meet.' In 1915 he declared that he had not seen his wife for over thirty years, but he evidently knew that his daughter was married and living in Philadelphia. He may not have known that his wife, Mary Parker, had died in, and was buried with, her people in Hopkinton, Massachusetts—to keep up her ties, through her mother, with the Wadsworths.

Harding Weston started in 1905 to put in claims for his services as second lieutenant in the New York Volunteer Cavalry from 1861 to 1862. He had 'answered the first call by President Lincoln', but there is no evidence of wounds or medals. He gave as his profession 'newspaper and advertising man', which throws some light on Isabel's cryptic statement, 'he has aired his notions'. In 1922 he was finally granted \$72 per month and became a pensioner in the National Military Home.

It was Homer who wrote to Ezra of the visit he and Isabel paid to his grandfather at Soldier's Home, Old Point Comfort: 'It is a great relief to your mother to have made the visit. For the past three years we have been talking about it. . . . He was somewhat interested in your photograph and reads without the aid of glasses.' At the bottom of the photo shown him, Homer had copied: 'Make strong old dreams / lest this old [our] world lose heart', and the old man had commented: 'That's fine.' The following year, on 10 February 1926, a telegram from Governor Thomson announced: 'Harding Weston died last night. Funeral ten o'clock Monday.' And it is again Homer who informs his son:

You will see by the enclosed that Harding Weston is no more. We will not go down to the funeral. Too long a trip and Mama not feeling equal to it. When we were there last July she left word as to just what to do and he will be buried in the Soldiers' Cemetery there among hundreds of others. And that ends that, now will come the settling up of his effects of which there is little left.

I have found no comment in Pound's letters to his parents either on the visit or the death. His life was hectic just then. Homer was alarmed; Isabel was suffering a 'nervous spell'. At her club an acquaintance whose son had just returned from Paris congratulated her for being a grandmother, but neither Ezra nor Dorothy had informed her that they were expecting a baby. Although those must have been hard times for Isabel, one has but scanty evidence of her emotions. She invited her son to take her into his confidence with her customary restraint: she wrote to him that several families in Wyncote had adopted children. The hint misfired completely. After that the surface shows no further ripples. Homer and Isabel celebrated their forty-second wedding anniversary somewhat sedately.

It is hard to imagine that Homer, when he had been up to Gais with Ezra to see his granddaughter, would have kept it secret from Isabel. He might have

passed on the injunction: don't tell him that I told you. And Isabel was expert in ignoring what she did not approve of, trained by her own mother to 'ignore' her father. More likely, though, Homer would have feared one of her 'states' and, out of kindness, decided not to upset her.

When the complexity of Ezra's and Dorothy's *ménage* was finally revealed to her, she was sententious: 'one disloyalty leads to another', apparently ignoring the fact that her son's loyalty to his wife had allowed her daughter-in-law to present her with the photographs of a grandson. She refused the 'strange child' Ezra had tried to smuggle in, because 'one can not transfer affection'. In this mother and son were identical: once an idea had taken root in the mind it remained there—indestructible. The picture of the perfect wife must remain: a beautiful lady with dowry and culture who bears a son and always stands by her husband. Only a divine mind, alias Athena, decides between right and wrong. In good families one tries to avoid arguments, so it is put in writing:

July 31 / 39

Villa Raggio [Rapallo]

Dear Son

The situation is to me amazing – one disloyalty provokes another is understandable but why continue the deception so many years one cannot transfer affections –

Why be rude to your Mother, when we meet in Rapallo or elsewhere

y - v - t

Mother

It took Homer a few days longer to react:

Aug. 3 [1939]

[Rapallo]

My Dear Son.

A clap of Thunder out of a clear sky could not have been more startling than yours and D's letters. For over 10 years we have been here. D. has been giving us Omar's photos o k and it is hard to realize the truth. Why did you suggest our remaining? As matters have developed there is no pleasure in our continuing here.

We shall arrange to - depart -

Your Old

Dad

These two letters are among the few preserved in Pound's private files—what provoked them has been destroyed.

In November 1940 Homer requested that certain dividends be deposited in his Jenkintown Bank, which might indicate that cash was needed and available for the trip home. They were all packed and ready to return to America. But did not. What prevented Homer was perhaps not only Isabel's pride but his son's need that he should stay with him. After that date all business seems to have been conducted in Isabel's hand. Homer fell and broke his hip. War