With the first publication, in this edition, of all the surviving letters of Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961), readers will for the first time be able to follow the thoughts, ideas, and actions of one of the great literary figures of the twentieth century in his own words. This first volume encompasses his youth, his experience in World War I, and his arrival in Paris. The letters reveal a more complex person than Hemingway’s tough-guy public persona would suggest: devoted son, affectionate brother, infatuated lover, adoring husband, spirited friend, and disciplined writer. Unguarded and never intended for publication, the letters record experiences that inspired his art, afford insight into his creative process, and express his candid assessments of his own work and that of his contemporaries. The letters present immediate accounts of events and relationships that profoundly shaped his life and work. A detailed introduction, notes, chronology, illustrations, and index are included.
THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF
THE LETTERS OF
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

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On 1 July 1925, Ernest Hemingway wrote exuberantly to his friend F. Scott Fitzgerald from the Spanish mountain village of Burguete: “We are going in to Pamplona tomorrow. Been trout fishing here. How are you? And how is Zelda?” “God it has been wonderful country,” he exclaimed, then remembered his audience: “But you hate country. All right omit description of country.” Hemingway wondered what would be Scott’s idea of heaven and declared, “To me heaven would be a big bull ring with me holding two barrera seats and a trout stream outside that no one else was allowed to fish in and two lovely houses in the town; one where I would have my wife and children and be monogamous and love them truly and well and the other where I would have my nine beautiful mistresses on 9 different floors.” He urged Fitzgerald to write to him at the Hotel Quintana in Pamplona: “Or dont you like to write letters. I do because it’s such a swell way to keep from working and yet feel you’ve done something.”

Hemingway always distinguished between letter writing and writing that counts, but this letter only goes to show the enormous interest and vitality of his correspondence. That next week in Pamplona, with his wife Hadley and a coterie of fellow expatriate friends from Paris, he plunged into the noisy nonstop public celebration of the annual fiesta of San Fermin and privately faced the real-life conflict between rectitude and desire that he had described to Fitzgerald in jest. By the end of the month, he was already well into the first draft of what would become The Sun Also Rises, the 1926 novel that would launch his career and forever transform a provincial Spanish town into an international literary mecca. Although he was a confident and ambitious writer from the start, even the young Hemingway could not have dreamed that in the ensuing decades and into the next century, pilgrims by the tens of thousands would descend upon Pamplona the second week of each July to revel in the streets, drink red wine from goatskin botas, and run with the bulls—drawn largely by the force of his imagination.

In a 1950 letter to Fitzgerald’s biographer, Hemingway recalled Ford Madox Ford’s advice that “a man should always write a letter thinking of how it would
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read to posterity.” He remarked, “This made such a bad impression on me that I burned every letter in the flat including Ford’s.” He continued:

Should you save the hulls a .50 cal shucks out for posterity? Save them. o.k. But they should be written or fired not for posterity but for the day and the hour and posterity will always look after herself. . . . I write letters because it is fun to get letters back. But not for posterity. What the hell is posterity anyway? It sounds as though it meant you were on your ass.2

Unguarded and never intended for publication, Hemingway’s letters constitute his autobiography in the continuous present tense. They enrich our understanding of his creative processes, offer insider insights into the twentieth-century literary scene, and document the making and marketing of an American icon. They track his moods and movements, capture his emotions in the heat of the moment, and reveal a personality far more complex and nuanced than many might expect from his sometimes one-dimensional public persona. At times he would vent his anger in a letter and then not send it—usually wisely. He could be tender, boorish, vulnerable, critical, and self-critical, and he could be wickedly funny. However casually or hastily fired off, each letter records with immediate intensity the experiences and impressions of the day and hour: much of it raw material later to be transformed, by the alchemy that Hemingway the artist brought to bear, into some of the most enduring works of literature in the English language.

Few writers’ lives have been as closely examined as Hemingway’s, both as he lived it and in the decades after his death. Since the publication in 1969 of Carlos Baker’s authorized biography, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, at least six additional biographies have appeared, Michael S. Reynolds’s richly textured study running to five volumes. Counting memoirs by family members and friends, pictorial volumes, collections of his conversations and conversations about him, and books focusing on his relationships with particular people or places, the volumes devoted to Hemingway’s life number in the dozens. As Reynolds observed, “A biographer connects up the dots to draw the picture just as we did as children. First, of course, he must find the dots of data, leaving as little space between them as possible.”3 The unpublished letters hold untold thousands of new details to enhance the picture. The author’s son Patrick Hemingway has said in support of the present edition, “Ernest Hemingway was a prodigious letter writer. His correspondence has been the principal source for his biographers, none of whom to date have succeeded in presenting the man as vividly as he does himself in his letters.”4

The letters represent the last great unexplored frontier of Hemingway studies. And because Hemingway was always, as Edmund Wilson pointed out as early as the 1930s, a “gauge of morale,” a barometer of his times, interest in his letters is...
more than biographical. Hemingway’s first widely read book—a groundbreaking modernist experiment in English prose published in Paris in 1924 and expanded into his first trade collection of short fiction in 1925—was famously titled *In Our Time*. His work perennially reflected the temper of his times. In *The Sun Also Rises* he captured the postwar malaise of the so-called “Lost Generation”; in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), the World War I experiences that precipitated that mood of disillusionment and dislocation; in *To Have and Have Not* (1937), the inequities and anxieties of the Great Depression; in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), the complicated tragedy of the Spanish Civil War; and in *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), the dignity and grace of a Cuban fisherman battling brute natural forces while dreaming of Joe DiMaggio. Hemingway was always of the moment, and in both substance and style, his work stands as a chronicle of the twentieth century.

Among modern writers the breadth of Hemingway’s appeal is remarkable, if not unique, transcending political divisions and national borders. At a low point of relations between the United States and Cuba, a month after his suicide and just four months after the Bay of Pigs invasion, it was with the personal cooperation of both Presidents John F. Kennedy and Fidel Castro that Hemingway’s widow, Mary, traveled to Cuba in August 1961 and removed a small boatload of papers and belongings from their Havana bank vault and from Finca Vigía, Hemingway’s home from 1939 until shortly before his death. Those papers—letters, notes, manuscripts, fragments, galley proofs, and other documents—now form the core of the Ernest Hemingway Collection at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, the world’s largest Hemingway archive. The Finca itself, where Hemingway spent half of his writing life and where he received the international press when awarded the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature, is now the Museo Hemingway, dedicated in 1962 as a national museum of Cuba. Four decades later, Hemingway again served as a bridge between the estranged nations, as an unprecedented cooperative agreement between the Cuban National Council of Cultural Patrimony and the U.S.–based Social Science Research Council provided for the conservation and preservation of the thousands of pages of his papers remaining at Finca Vigía, the originals to stay in the collection of the Museo, with copies to be deposited at the Kennedy Library. In November 2002, Fidel Castro appeared at the Finca to add his signature to the agreement in a poolside ceremony witnessed by a crush of journalists and reported in the international news media. The 2009 opening of the Finca papers to researchers, both by the Museo Hemingway and by the Kennedy Library, once more attracted international attention.

A roster of Hemingway’s correspondents reads like a twentieth-century *Who’s Who*: Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gerald and Sara Murphy, John Dos Passos, Archibald MacLeish, Janet Flanner, Charles
Scribner (three generations of them), Maxwell Perkins, Pablo Picasso, Ingrid Bergman, Gary Cooper, and Marlene Dietrich, to name a few of the luminaries. He also corresponded copiously with family members, including his parents and grandparents, five siblings, four wives, three sons, and numerous in-laws, and with friends scattered across continents. Even after attaining global celebrity, he responded conscientiously and generously to students and strangers who wrote to express their admiration, ask questions, and seek advice or autographs.

On his desk in the library at Finca Vigía sits a rubber stamp that reads, “I never write letters. Ernest Hemingway.” Perhaps he had it made to ease the burden of correspondence, perhaps someone gave it to him as a joke, but if he ever actually used the stamp in place of writing a letter, the evidence has yet to be found. As Carlos Baker put it, “All his life after adolescence Hemingway was a confirmed, habitual, and even compulsive correspondent for whom communication was a constant necessity.”

Letter writing was a habit that Hemingway’s parents fostered in their children from an early age. What might be considered the earliest surviving “Hemingway letter,” dated 26 December 1903 and addressed to “My own dear Ma Ma,” enumerates the Christmas gifts he received from members of the family and from Santa Claus. Written and signed “Your son Ernest” in his father’s hand, it bears the scribbles of the three-and-a-half year old “author.” When the teenage Ernest went away—whether to canoe the Illinois River with a high school friend in April 1917, or to tend the family farm in northern Michigan during the summer of 1919—his father sent along pre-addressed stamped postcards, by which his son could and did keep in touch. Correspondence was a habit that Hemingway felt important to instill in his own sons, from whom, when they were apart, he expected regular letters, and to whom he would express his pleasure or disappointment regarding their spelling, grammar, and penmanship. Some of Hemingway’s earliest letters are marked with circled dots, signifying “tooseys” or “toosies,” the family term for kisses. That, too, was a custom he shared with his sons. Even into their adulthood, Hemingway would end his letters to them with whimsical drawings bearing such captions as “Finca kuss” or “mango kuss” in letters from Cuba or, when writing from Africa, a “LARGE (Dark Continent) kuss.” Patrick Hemingway had not realized that this was a family tradition predating his own generation until at the age of seventy-eight he was shown a 1912 letter from Ernest to his father, Dr. Clarence Hemingway, and immediately recognized the circled dots as symbols for kisses.

Throughout his life, Hemingway thrived on the contact of letters and constantly urged family and friends to write. “Screed me and tell me all your troubles,” he wrote in his characteristic slang to his sister Ursula in 1919. “Screed a man,” he implored his friend Howell Jenkins in 1922. “Slip me the dirt in its totality,” he
wrote conspiratorially in November 1925 to his sister Madelaine ("Sunny"), referring to other siblings by nicknames: "I’ve heard nothing but the official versions for a hell of a long time. Those kind of bulletins are as dry as official communiques of the reparation commission. Let me have the frigid on the paternal, maternal, Masween, Carol, Liecester, misspelled, Ura and all. Write again and slip me the frigid."

While eagerly soliciting letters from others, he often apologized for the quality of his own. In December 1925 he wrote to This Quarter editors Ernest Walsh and Ethel Moorhead from the village in the Austrian Tyrol where he and his wife Hadley were spending their second winter: "Write me here. Letters are tremendous events in Schruns. I can write a better letter when I’ve one to answer."

To Archibald MacLeish he sent a similar plea: "It is Sunday today so there isn’t any mail. And by the way if you ever write letters for god’s sake write to us down here. We have a swell time but letters are terribly exciting things in Schruns . . . Write me a letter. I wont turn out such a dull mess as this again. Tell me all the dirt. We miss Scandal very much here." 10

As much as he loved to get letters, he often procrastinated in writing them. He variously viewed correspondence as a diversion, a lifeline, an exasperating obligation, and, at worst, a peril to his work. Less than two months after he arrived in Paris, pursuing his vocation as a writer of fiction while making a living as a reporter for the Toronto Star, he wrote to his mother on 15 February 1922: "I am sorry to write such dull letters, but I get such full expression in my articles and the other work I am doing that I am quite pumped out and exhausted from a writing standpoint and so my letters are very commonplace. If I wrote nothing but letters all of that would go into them." 11

In March 1923, en route from Italy via Paris to Germany to cover the French occupation of the Ruhr, he reported to his father that he had been thirty-eight hours on the train and in the past year had logged nearly 10,000 miles by rail. Affectionately and apologetically he added, "I hope you have some good fishing this spring. I appreciate your letters so much and am dreadfully sorry I dont write more but when you make a living writing it is hard to write letters." 12

It would be a recurring theme. In November 1952, enmeshed in settling the estates of his mother and his second wife, Pauline, both of whom had died the year before, he wrote in exhaustion to Scribner’s editor Wallace Meyer:

I want to get the hell away from here and from the daily destruction of correspondance. That doesn’t mean that I do not want to hear from you when there is anything I should know. I can dictate in an hour what will keep two stenographers busy all day. But writing letters by hand in the mornings, when he should work or exercise, is the quickest way for a writer to destroy himself that I know. 13

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Two years later in a letter to Charles Scribner, Jr., he sent his best regards to Meyer: "He knows that when I don’t write I am not being snotty or touchy. It is the logistics of work. If you are writing well there is no thing left in you to write letters with."  

Hemingway once described his letters as “often libellous, always indiscreet, often obscene and many of them could make great trouble.” His letters are written in a range of voices, varying according to mood and occasion and calibrated to each audience with perfect pitch. “What he wrote is always performance,” Patrick Hemingway said of his father’s letters. “Of course, a person is always writing to a person. They’re always taking a tone with that person, but isn’t that the way we behave with people? I’m sure he didn’t behave with Charles Scribner, the old man, the way he behaved with me.”

When what he wrote privately ended up in the public print, Hemingway was not pleased. After he was wounded as an eighteen-year-old volunteer ambulance driver in Italy in World War I, he was agitated to discover that two of his letters home had appeared in the local Oak Park, Illinois, newspaper, courtesy of his proud father. “Now Kid who in hell is giving all my letters out for publication?” he asked his sister Marcelline in a letter of 23 November 1918. “When I write home to the family I don’t write to the Chicago Herald Examiner or anybody else—but to the family. Somebody has a lot of gall publishing them and it will look like I’m trying to pull hero stuff. Gee I was sore when I heard they were using my stuff in Oak Leaves. Pop must have Mal di Testa.”

Even as he sought and was gratified by popular and critical attention to his work and would become the most public of writers, he closely guarded his privacy. On 12 October 1929, just fifteen days after the publication of A Farewell to Arms, he happily reported to his mother: "I have not yet heard how the book is going but hear it has had very good reviews and Scribners cable ‘splendid press. prospects bright.’" But, he cautioned, "If anyone ever wants to interview you about me please tell them that you know I dislike any personal publicity and have promised me not to even answer questions about me. Don’t ever give out anything. Just say your sorry but you cant. Scribners have the same instructions. If I’m to write at all I have to keep my private life out.”

It would be a lifelong struggle. His letters of the 1950s reflect his deep ambivalence and wariness about the growing interest of biographers and scholars, including Charles Fenton, Carlos Baker, and Philip Young, whose attentions he found worrisome and intrusive, even as he engaged in correspondence with them.

As early as 1930, Hemingway letters were on the market as collectors’ items—a development he found disconcerting. A group of nine letters he wrote to Ernest Walsh was touted in the March 1930 catalog of the Ulysses Book Shop in London as “a complete revelation of the man as he really is.” Maxwell Perkins informed...
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Hemingway on 8 April that Scribner’s rare books department had purchased the letters to get them out of circulation, and he offered to destroy them or return them to Hemingway unread. Hemingway responded: “It certainly is a crappy business to find your own personal letters up for sale—am going to quit writing letters.” 18 He did not, and as the decades passed, his letters only increased in interest and value. In July 1952 he wrote to Meyer, Perkins’s successor, asking if the head of Scribner’s rare books department had recently bought any letters he had written. If so, Hemingway wrote, “I would like a list of the purchases he made in order that I may be relieved of some correspondents.” 19

Two months before his fifty-ninth birthday, Hemingway typed out a directive, sealed it in an envelope marked “Important / To be opened in case of my Death,” and placed it in the safe at the Finca. Dated 20 May 1958, the note reads: “To my Executors: It is my wish that none of the letters written by me during my lifetime shall be published. Accordingly, I hereby request and direct you not to publish, or consent to the publication by others, of any such letters.” 20


As Baker notes in his introduction to Selected Letters, Hemingway did, in fact, consent during his lifetime to the publication of a few of his letters or extracts from them. These included three abridged letters in Edmund Wilson’s The Shores of Light (1952), four letters in Donald Gallup’s The Flowers of Friendship: Letters Written to Gertrude Stein (1953), and one to the chief librarian of the Oak Park Public Library on the occasion of the library’s fiftieth anniversary, published in the 15 February 1954 Library Journal. (Hemingway had missed the celebration dinner but wrote on 10 June 1953 to say, “I was at sea . . . or I would have sent you a message telling you how much I owe to the Library and how much it has meant to me all my life.” He enclosed a $100 check to cover any costs of making and distributing copies of his message and added, “If you find that I owe any fines or dues you can apply it against them.” 21) A few of Hemingway’s letters to his German and Italian publishers, Ernst Rowohlt and Arnoldo Mondadori, also appeared in print: one (in English) in Rowohlts Rotblonder Roman (1947) and three (translated into Italian) in Il Cinquantennio Editoriale di Arnoldo Mondadori, 1907–1957 (1957). And Hemingway permitted Arthur Mizener to quote from his letters to F. Scott Fitzgerald in The Far Side of Paradise, the 1949 biography of his old friend.

Hemingway wrote some letters expressly for publication, including letters to editors or columnists of various magazines and newspapers, answers to
questionnaires, blurbs to promote the books of other writers, and the occasional commercial product endorsement. He may, however, have regretted his endorsement of Ballantine Ale after a two-page advertisement appeared in the 5 November 1951 issue of Life magazine, featuring a facsimile of his letter on his stationery headed “FINCA VIGIA, SAN FRANCISCO DE PAULA, CUBA.” After The Old Man and the Sea was published complete in Life (1 September 1952), he “got smacked with 3800 letters.” “An awful lot of them got through straight here due to the Ballantine ad which published my address,” he reported to a friend in November 1952. “I answered one whole school at Louisville Ky. and am going to answer another whole school,” he claimed. But, he said, “I am a writer and not an homme des lettres. So I am going to drift now and not have an address for a while so my conscience won’t bother me about answering kids (all of whom I will answer until I have to cast off) and I want to write again and not write letters.”

Despite Hemingway’s 1958 directive, after his death additional letters appeared in print, in part or in full, including two to Sylvia Beach (both in English and in French translation) in Mercure de France (1963); seven to Milton Wolff, last commander of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War, in American Dialog (1964); and four, quoted in Italian in Epoca (1965), to Adriana Ivancich, the aristocratic young Venetian with whom he became infatuated in 1948 and upon whom he modeled the character Renata in Across the River and into the Trees (1950). When Mary Hemingway publicly objected to what she felt was A. E. Hotchner’s extensive unauthorized use of Hemingway’s letters in his 1966 book Papa Hemingway: A Personal Memoir, Philip Young, a professor at The Pennsylvania State University, took up her side with an exposé in the August 1966 Atlantic Monthly called “On Dismembering Hemingway.” Although Mary lost the case in court, “in the face of a common enemy Mary and I became friendly,” Young recalled. She subsequently invited him, along with Charles W. Mann, Chief of Rare Books and Special Collections at The Pennsylvania State University Libraries, to catalog her late husband’s papers. At the time, the papers—gathered from Cuba, their house in Ketchum, Idaho, the back room of Sloppy Joe’s bar in Key West, and elsewhere—were stored in her New York City bank vault and in shopping bags in her apartment closet. Young and Mann’s 1969 volume, The Hemingway Manuscripts: An Inventory, was the first public accounting of the 19,500 pages that Mary would donate to the Kennedy Library and that would become accessible to scholars with the 1980 opening of its Hemingway Collection.

Audre Hanneman’s landmark 1967 volume, Ernest Hemingway: A Comprehensive Bibliography, included entries for 110 Hemingway letters partially quoted in print or published in full. Her 1975 supplementary volume listed 122 more. Many had appeared as extracts or facsimiles of letters in sale catalogs and dealer listings.
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Hemingway at Auction, 1930–1973, compiled by Matthew J. Bruccoli and C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr., reproduced pages from sixty auction and fifty-five dealer catalogs describing Hemingway books, manuscripts, and letters that had been offered for sale. “Most remarkable in recent years has been an almost magisterial series of sales of letters in which Hemingway the old battler scores in the same league with such older pros as Goethe,” wrote Charles W. Mann in his introduction to that 1973 volume. He marveled that auction sales of Hemingway books, letters, and manuscripts to date had totaled $130,342.75: “One would like to hear Ernest Hemingway’s reaction to it,” he remarked. While to the present-day reader the sum may sound quaint (a single 1925 letter from Hemingway to Ezra Pound sold at Christie’s in London for £78,000 in 2007, equivalent at the time to more than $157,000), Mann cited it as evidence that reports of the decline of Hemingway’s reputation were greatly exaggerated. But what Mann found most intriguing was the glimpse that these catalogs and advertisements provided of Hemingway’s correspondence: “Finally, Hemingway with his guard down in his letters remains a startling, aggressive, compelling writer. As we will never read his collected letters, these pages will remain the only medium through which, however fragmentarily, we can still occasionally hear his voice.”

The intensity of scholarly interest in Hemingway’s correspondence (and attendant frustration at its inaccessibility) before the publication of Baker’s selected edition is evident in E. R. Hagemann’s 1978 “Preliminary Report on the State of Ernest Hemingway’s Correspondence.” Taking into account the sixty-eight extracts from Hemingway’s letters to Mary Hemingway in her 1976 memoir, How It Was, Hagemann counted approximately 83,000 words “in the public print.” Compiling “Hemingway epistolary wordage” was painstaking and tedious work, he said, “but what has been revealed up to now demands an even greater effort. This is not a demand for literary gossip or prurience; it is a demand for literary history. But there it is! Hemingway’s note of 20 May 1958. Never has a dead man’s hand lain heavier on academic excellence.”

It was in May 1979 that Mary Hemingway and her attorney, Alfred Rice, in consultation with Charles Scribner, Jr., decided to publish a volume of Hemingway’s letters. “There can be no question about the wisdom and rightness of the decision,” Baker remarked. On the publication of his father’s letters in light of the 1958 directive, Patrick Hemingway commented, “If you don’t want them published, burn them. That’s the only way you’re going to prevent it. It’s like a great heap of cellulose, you know. It’s going to burn.”

Since the 1981 publication of Selected Letters, two additional volumes focusing on Hemingway’s letters have appeared, each representing both sides of his correspondence with one person: The Only Thing That Counts: The Ernest Hemingway/Maxwell Perkins Correspondence, 1925–1947, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli with

Other clusters of Hemingway letters, some previously published, have appeared in books including Hemingway in Cuba, by Norberto Fuentes (1984); Hemingway in Love and War, edited by Henry S. Villard and James Nagel (1989); and Letters from the Lost Generation: Gerald and Sara Murphy and Friends, edited by Linda Patterson Miller (1991; expanded edn., 2002). The published memoirs of Hemingway’s siblings also include some of his letters. Quotations from them appear in Madelaine Hemingway Miller’s Ernie: Hemingway’s Sister “Sunny” Remembers (1975; rpt. 1999), and selections of complete letters are featured in the revised editions of My Brother, Ernest Hemingway by Leicester Hemingway (1961; rev. edn., 1996) and At the Hemingways by Marcelline Hemingway Sanford (1962; rev. edn., 1999). Running with the Bulls: My Years with the Hemingways (2004) by Valerie Hemingway (née Danby-Smith), who served as his secretary and married his son Gregory after Hemingway’s death, includes an October 1959 letter she received from Hemingway. And Strange Tribe: A Family Memoir (2007) by Gregory’s son John Hemingway includes extracts of correspondence between his father and grandfather. A few additional extracts or letters, representing Hemingway’s correspondence with Jane Mason (Havana friend, perhaps lover, of the 1930s), Lillian Ross, and Ezra Pound, have appeared in magazine pieces.29 Scattered extracts and facsimile reproductions of letters have continued to appear in auction catalogs and dealer listings over the years.

While these publications testify to the interest in and value of the letters (and their perennial marketability as collectibles), together they account for only a fraction of Hemingway’s more than 6,000 surviving letters, underscoring the need for a comprehensive scholarly edition. The Kennedy Library holds more than 2,500 outgoing Hemingway letters, and Princeton University Library holds approximately 1,400 (among the papers of Sylvia Beach, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Patrick Hemingway, Carlos Baker, and others, in addition to the Scribner’s archive). The rest are scattered in scores of additional institutional repositories and private collections around the world. Among repositories with significant holdings are the Library of Congress, New York Public Library, Newberry Library, the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, and the libraries of Yale, Pennsylvania State, Indiana, and Central Michigan Universities, Knox...
College, Colby College, and the Universities of Chicago, Delaware, North Carolina, Tulsa, Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Maryland, South Carolina, Virginia, and Reading (England).

The Cambridge Edition of The Letters of Ernest Hemingway brings together for the first time as many of the author’s surviving letters as can be located, approximately 85 percent of them never before published. The edition is authorized by the Ernest Hemingway Foundation and the Hemingway Foreign Rights Trust, holders, respectively, of the U.S. and international copyrights to the letters. This collection will provide scholars and general readers alike with ready access to the entire corpus of Hemingway’s extant letters, those that previously have appeared in print as well as the thousands new to publication. The edition is planned for publication in more than a dozen volumes, with letters organized chronologically by date of composition. The edition includes only letters written by Hemingway, but the incoming letters of his many correspondents will inform editorial commentary throughout.

Because Hemingway did not routinely keep copies of his letters and because they are so widely dispersed, locating the letters has been a massive undertaking, requiring resourceful archival research and grassroots detective work. In addition to procuring copies of letters from the dozens of institutional archives known to hold Hemingway correspondence, we also sent blind-search letters of inquiry to more than 500 other libraries and institutional repositories in the United States and abroad. The edition has benefited from the generosity and interest of scores of scholars, archivists, aficionados, book and autograph specialists, collectors, and surviving correspondents and their descendants, including members of Hemingway’s extended family, who have provided valuable information or shared copies of letters. Our transcriptions have been meticulously compared against the original documents on site visits whenever possible.

Since the launching of the edition project was publicly announced in the spring of 2002, it has attracted considerable attention, not only in scholarly circles, but in the news media, nationally and internationally. As a result of this widespread publicity, as well as our own queries, published in such venues as the Times Literary Supplement and the New York Review of Books, dozens of people around the globe have contacted us to share information or copies of letters in their possession. To cite just a few examples, Walter Houk, the widower of Hemingway’s part-time secretary in the late 1940s and early 1950s (otherwise employed by the U.S. Embassy in Havana), has shared copies of her transcriptions of 120 letters that Hemingway dictated into a wire recorder, as well as letters that Hemingway wrote to her, reporting domestic details and discussing his work in progress. John Robben, of Greenwich, Connecticut, sent copies of three letters that Hemingway wrote to him in the early 1950s in response to a critique he had written.
for his college newspaper of the newly published *The Old Man and the Sea*. He was astonished that the great writer would take the time to respond to “a 21-year-old college student who had the temerity to critique his work,” evidence, he says, that Hemingway was “a caring and understanding person.”30 We also were contacted by a relative of Roy Marsh, who piloted the plane that crashed in Africa on 23 January 1954 with Ernest and Mary aboard and who also was a passenger with them on the rescue plane that crashed the following day. Living in retirement in the Seychelles islands, Captain Marsh sent scanned copies of his letters via electronic mail.

To date we have gathered copies of Hemingway letters from nearly 250 sources in the United States and abroad, including more than 65 libraries and institutional repositories, and more than 175 dealers, private collectors, and Hemingway correspondents. We will continue to pursue extant letters for the duration of the edition project. The final volume will feature a section of “Additional Letters,” to include those that come to light after publication of the volumes in which they would have appeared in chronological sequence.

It is the particular wish of Patrick Hemingway that this be a complete collection of his father’s letters, rather than a selected edition. “I think the real interest from writers’ letters is all of them,” he has said. “Let the cards fall where they may. People can make up their own minds.” We aim for this edition to be as inclusive as possible, comprising all of Hemingway’s outgoing correspondence that we can locate, including postcards, cables, identifiable drafts and fragments, in-house missives, and letters he completed but put away unsent. Yet even in a “complete edition,” some editorial judgment regarding selection is required—especially given Hemingway’s celebrity, which has made a collector’s item of nearly anything he signed, from checks to bar coasters, and given his own tendency to save nearly every scrap of paper he handled, including bills and grocery lists. We do not as a rule include book inscriptions, except those that the editors consider substantive or of particular interest. For the most part only one authorial copy of each letter exists; thus we have faced few problematic issues of textual history and textual variants. When such issues do arise, they are addressed in the notes that follow each letter.

Letters are transcribed whole and uncut whenever possible. When letters are known only through facsimiles or extracts appearing in auction catalogs or dealer listings, we publish whatever portions are available, citing their source. Such extracts typically reflect the most substantive and interesting aspects of letters, and while they are no substitute for the original documents, they can serve as place markers in the sequence of letters until such time as complete originals may become available.

For the preservation of Hemingway’s earliest letters, we can be grateful to his mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, who meticulously maintained volumes of
scrapbooks for each of her six children, pasting in correspondence as well as photographs, locks of hair, a swatch of fabric from a christening gown, crayon drawings, baby teeth, program booklets for concerts and Sunday School pageants and high school dances, and other memorabilia of their young lives. The five volumes she compiled for Ernest date from his birth through high school graduation, and another volume that she prepared for his grandparents covers his World War I experience. Perhaps it was the value his family placed on the well-documented life that fostered Hemingway’s tendency to maintain a paper trail of his own. Like many writers, he saved drafts, manuscripts, and galley proofs of his published work, manuscripts of work in progress, and carbon copies of some business letters. But over the decades and through multiple moves, he also preserved drafts and false starts of letters, completed letters that in the morning light he thought better of mailing (sometimes scrawling “Unsent” across a dated envelope), and sliced-off outtakes of letters he scissor-edited before sending.

Fortunately, too, for this edition, Hemingway was famous enough at an early enough age that many of his correspondents beyond his family saved his letters. And beginning in the 1920s, many recipients of his letters were sufficiently well known themselves that their own correspondence has been preserved in archival collections.

We are aware, of course, that some of Hemingway’s correspondence simply does not survive, whether by accident or intent, for personal or political reasons. For example, the bulk of Hemingway’s letters to Juanito Quintana, proprietor of his favorite hotel in Pamplona and friend since the 1920s, were lost (along with the hotel) in the Spanish Civil War. Five surviving letters, written in Spanish in the 1950s, are held in the collections of the Princeton University Library. 31 Sadly for scholarship, if understandably from the recipients’ perspective, among the letters known to be lost are those he wrote to some of the most important women in his life. In late 1918 and early 1919 he carried on an intense correspondence with Agnes von Kurowsky, the nurse with whom he fell in love at the American Red Cross hospital in Milan and who served as a prototype for the character Catherine Barkley in A Farewell to Arms. “I got a whole bushel of letters from you today, in fact haven’t been able to read them all, yet. You shouldn’t write so often,” Agnes wrote to him on 1 March 1919. The next week she broke the news to him in a “Dear Ernie” letter that she was engaged to marry another man. 32 Domenico Caracciolo, a dashing Italian artillery officer and heir to a dukedom, jealously forced her to burn all of Hemingway’s letters, before his family objected to the notion of his marrying a common American and the romance ended.

Hemingway’s courtship correspondence with his first wife, Hadley Richardson, was even more intense, judging from the tone and volume of the surviving letters she wrote to him: nearly 200, totaling more than 1,500 pages, between November

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1920 and their marriage on 3 September 1921. In 1942, fifteen years after leaving her to marry Pauline Pfeiffer, he reminisced fondly and nostalgically to Hadley, “I sometimes think that I wrote you so many letters to St. Louis from Chicago at one time that it crippled me as a letter writer for life. Like a pitcher with a dead arm.” Characteristically, Hemingway kept her letters all his life. His widow Mary returned them to Hadley after his death, and after Hadley’s death in 1979, her son John found them in a shoe box in her Florida apartment. The vast majority of Hemingway’s letters to Hadley, however, do not survive. As her biographer Gioia Diliberto reports, “Hadley burned them one day after their marriage collapsed, one of the few outward signs of her rage and sorrow.”

Nor do many of the letters survive that Hemingway wrote to Pauline, whom he divorced in 1940 to marry Martha Gellhorn. After Pauline died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1951, her twenty-four-year-old son Patrick received a call from her executor, saying she had left instructions that all of her correspondence was to be burned. “So, unlike some of these people, at least she was logical,” Patrick recalled. “She didn’t want her correspondence to be immortalized. That was the way to deal with it. And he was shocked. I was shocked. He said, ‘Pat, if you want to go in and look through it, if you think that anything shouldn’t be burned . . .’ And I said, ‘She said burn it. Burn it.’” The letters were destroyed in accordance with her wishes.

Hemingway claimed to have rewritten the ending of A Farewell to Arms thirty-nine times before he was satisfied. Surviving manuscripts prove he was not exaggerating; the Kennedy Library has cataloged forty-one variants in its collection. In contrast to the painstaking craftsmanship of his published work, his letter-writing style was spontaneous and informal. In 1952 he wrote to his editor:

> It could be argued that I have no right to speak of English Prose since I mis-spell and make errors of grammar in letters. But this usually happens because my head races far ahead of my hands on the type-writer, my typewriter sometimes sticks and over-runs and my time in this life is so short that it is not worthwhile to look up the proper spelling of a word in the dictionary when writing a letter. The spelling and construction of my letters is careless rather than ignorant. I try to avoid the level on which I write seriously when I write a letter. Otherwise each letter would take all day. As it is too many take much too much time that should go into writing.

Of the relationship between his father’s letters and his writing for publication, Patrick Hemingway commented, “I don’t think they interfered much with his writing. I think it was just another part of his brain, and I don’t think he ever mulled over them or tried to reach his idea of perfection with them. He just wrote them. But he was engaged with the person he was writing to.” In the New York
Times Magazine} piece that allowed the first public glimpse of Hemingway’s letters shortly before the release of Selected Letters in April 1981, James Atlas also remarked on the difference between Hemingway’s professional and personal writing, expressing surprise “that such a hoarder of words as Ernest Hemingway should have been so garrulous in his letters”: “After a day that produced perhaps 500 words, he might turn out a 3,000-word letter the same evening. And where in his work he labored to be as tight-lipped as possible, to intimate rather than describe emotion, in his correspondence he was profligate, expansive, anecdotal.”

Lively, colorful, and idiosyncratic, Hemingway’s letters present numerous challenges to the reader (and transcriber) not privy to the experiences, in-jokes, and private lingo that he shared with his various correspondents. He conferred upon family and friends a sometimes bewildering array of nicknames, in many cases more than one per person. Hemingway variously addressed his sister Marcelline as “Marce,” “Mash,” “Masween,” “Ivory,” “Old Ivory,” and “Antique Ivory.” Hadley was “Hash,” “Bones,” “Binney,” “Feather Cat,” “Miss Katherine Cat,” “Wickey,” and “Poo.” Conversely, a single nickname might apply to different persons: “Kitten” was a term of endearment not only for Hadley, his first wife, but for Mary, his last. Sometimes he and someone close to him affectionately shared a nickname, as when he addressed a letter to Martha Gellhorn as “Dearest Beloved Bongy” and signed it “Bongy.” In his youth he and his friend Bill Smith had done the same, writing to each other as “Bird,” “Boid,” or (in a Latin variation on the theme) “Avis.” Hemingway’s sons John, Patrick, and Gregory were almost always “Bumby,” “Mouse,” and “Gigi.”

Hemingway signed off his letters with multiple variants on his own name. Before he became “Papa,” in early letters he was not only “Ernie,” but “Oin,” “Oinbones,” “Miller” (his middle name), “Old Brute” (sometimes shortened to “O.B.” or amplified to “Antique Brutality”), and “Wemedge.” His high school nickname “Hemingstein” morphed to “Stein” or “Steen,” and sometimes a sketch of a foam-topped beer stein served as his only signature. From here the private patois spun on, as rainbow trout became “rainsteins” and the Dilworths (the Horton Bay family who ran the local blacksmith shop, chicken dinner establishment, and guest houses) became the “Dillsteins” and even “Stilldeins.”

The linguistic acrobatics that marked much of his correspondence with Ezra Pound, the master of modernist innovation, were already evident in Hemingway’s much earlier letters to the friends of his youth in Oak Park and up in Michigan. Suffering a head cold in mid-March 1916, he apologized to his friend Emily Goetzmann for the lateness of his letter in prose mimicking his nasal congestion (throwing in an allusion to a popular poem for good measure): “On pended gknees I peg your bardun vor the ladjness of this legger. Bud a gombination of monthly
examinachugs and Bad goldt are my eggsccuse, or to quote ‘them immortal lines,’
the brooks are ruggig–also my gnose.” To Bill Smith he wrote on 28 April 1921,
“Laid non hearage from you to some form of displeasure with the enditer and so
after a time stopped screenage.” His slang is fluid, with some words changing
meaning with the context, and occasionally it is nearly impenetrable. As a rule, we
leave it to readers to experience Hemingway’s language on their own as he wrote it,
without editorial intervention or attempts at explication.

In transcribing the letters, we have made every effort to preserve verbatim
“Hemingway’s endearing or exasperating idiosyncrasies” of mechanics and style,
as Baker put it. These include his well-known habit of retaining the silent “e” in
such word forms as “loveing,” “haveing,” or “unbelievable,” and the invented
“Hemingway Choctaw talk,” stripped of articles and connectives, that Lillian Ross
captured in her famous (or infamous) 13 May 1950 New Yorker profile of the
writer. The letters exhibit Hemingway’s often exuberant love of language, as he
plays with such phonetically spelled and humorously conflated inventions as
“Yarrup” (for Europe), “genuwind,” “eggzact,” “langwiges,” “Alum Mattress”
(for alma mater), and “Christnose” (as in “CHRISTNOSE IVE BEEN
INFLUENCED BY EVERY GOOD WRITER IVE EVER READ BUT OUT OF
IT WE COME, IF WEVE GOT ANYTHING, HARD AND CLEAR WITH OUR
OWN STUFF,” from a typewritten 1925 letter to composer George Antheil).

Hemingway employed languages other than English in his letters as well, with
varying degrees of expertise. Some letters of his teenage years are peppered with
fractured high school Latin. Throughout his life he inserted into his correspond-
ence a variety of words and phrases of other languages as he encountered and
acquired them: Italian, French, German, Spanish, and Swahili, in some of which he
eventually became fluent, if not always achieving grammatical perfection. Even
when using English words, he sometimes adopted the syntax of another language:
a linguistic cross-over that he also experimented with in his published works, as
when he evokes the inflections of Spanish dialog in For Whom the Bell Tolls. In an
18 November 1918 letter written from the American Red Cross hospital in Milan
on stationery with the letterhead “Croce Rossa Americana,” he refers to a “cross
red nurse”—imitating the grammar of Italian, while playing on the meaning of the
words in English. From the Finca in 1942 he wrote to Martha Gellhorn with
pleasure and pride in her skill as a writer after reading her Collier’s magazine
account of a rugged Caribbean “cruise” she made on a thirty-foot potato boat in
hurricane season in order to report on German submarine activity in those waters.
In his praise, he mixes Spanish syntax with his own “Choctaw talk,” declaring, “Ni
Joyce ni nobody any better ear than my Bong has now.”

When not taking deliberate liberties with the English language or experimenting
in another, Hemingway generally was a sound speller, and his handwritten letters

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exhibit few errors, apart from occasional slips of the pen. But his typewritten letters often are riddled with mechanical errors that he did not bother to correct. As one example, he often did not depress the shift key sufficiently, resulting in oddities like “I8ve” instead of “I’ve,” or causing only a portion of an uppercase letter to appear, suspended above the line. When he mistyped a word or phrase, rather than stop to erase and retype it accurately, he typically would type a string of x’s through the mistake and continue on, or sometimes simply retype his correction or revision over the original attempt with more forceful keystrokes. “This typeing is a little woosy, but the light is bad and I am trying to make speed,” he explained in a 17 December 1917 letter to his parents, in which a number of sentences end not with a period, but with the symbol “¾”.

The condition of his typewriter was frequent cause for colorful comment. “Calamity has in the language of the Michigese Moss Back ‘Laid hold of’ the typer,” he reported in a handwritten letter from northern Michigan to an unidentified friend in late September 1919. “It just let off a series of jarring whirrs like an annoyed rattler and quit frigidly. The main spring I imagine.” In a letter of 10 January 1921 to his mother he wrote, “Love to you, pardon the rotten typer—it’s a new one and stiff as a frozen whisker.” To his friend Kate Smith he explained in a letter of 27 January 1922 from Paris, “Don’t get to thinking I can’t spell, I can’t this is an accursed French typer and the key board is rotten to work.” “THIS MILL IS DIRTY AND ONLY FUNCTIONS IN THE UPPER REGISTER,” he wrote to Little Review editor Jane Heap in 1925, “SO IF I NEED THE EMPHASIS USUALLY GIVEN BY CAPITAL LETTERS I WILL INSERT SOME PROFANE PHRASE OR VULGAR EJACULATION LIKE SAY HORSESHIT FOR EXAMPLE.”

To silently correct spelling and punctuation or to regularize capitalization in the letters would strip them of their personality and present a falsely prettified and homogenized view of the letters his correspondents received. Such tidying up also would render meaningless Hemingway’s own spontaneous “meta-commentary” on the imperfections of his letters (“Excuse the bum spelling and typographicals,” he wrote to his father on 2 May 1922), as when he took a phonetic stab at writing words in a foreign language or a proper name and followed it with a disclaimer such as “Spelling very doubtful.” And it would render invisible Hemingway’s comical manipulations of people’s names, as when he addressed Sylvia Beach as “Dear Seelviah,” or Ezra Pound as “Dear Uzra,” or referred to poet and publisher Robert McAlmon as “MuckAlmun.”

Yet in attempting to preserve the strong idiosyncratic flavors of Hemingway’s epistles, we do not want to give readers what one scholarly editor termed “literary dyspepsia.” So as not to tax the reader’s patience or ability to focus on the sense of the letters, we have regularized the placement of such elements as dateline,
inside address, salutation, closing, signature, and postscripts. We also normalize Hemingway’s often erratic spacing and paragraph indentation. For example, frequently he would type a space both before and after punctuation marks or hit the space bar two or three times between words, creating a visual quirkiness that we do not attempt to reproduce in print. We are mindful that no published transcription of a typed or handwritten letter can ever fully capture its appearance on the page. This is not a facsimile edition, and for those wishing to study in depth the physical characteristics of a letter, no printed rendition can substitute for an examination of the original.

In order to avoid what Lewis Mumford termed the “barbed wire” entanglements of too many editorial marks,44 we rely primarily on notes, rather than more intrusive symbols within the text, to supply necessary contextual information, translations of foreign words and passages, and first-mention identifications of people in each volume. Annotations appear as endnotes immediately following each letter.

In addition to an introduction discussing Hemingway’s life, work, and correspondence of the period represented, each volume includes a brief chronology of events in Hemingway’s life and career during that span of years, a note outlining editorial policies, a roster of correspondents represented in that volume, a selection of illustrations, and relevant maps. The back matter of each volume includes a calendar of letters, an index of recipients, and a general index to the volume. The final volume will contain a comprehensive index to the complete edition.

A more detailed description of editorial practices and procedures appears in the Note on the Text. Our aim is to produce an edition that is at once satisfying to the scholar and inviting to the general reader.

Publication of Hemingway’s collected letters will be a crucial step forward for the study of American literature and literary modernism. Hemingway has had an indelible impact on English prose—and on the popular imagination. Nearly every book he wrote since 1925 remains in print. He has had an uncommonly prolific posthumous career. Dozens of previously unpublished or uncollected stories, articles, and poems have appeared in new collections of his work. And several major new books have been published since his death, edited from manuscripts he left behind in varying stages of completion. These include A Moveable Feast (1964), Islands in the Stream (1970), The Garden of Eden (1986), and two editions of his “Africa book”: True at First Light (1999), edited by Patrick Hemingway, and a complete unabridged edition, Under Kilimanjaro (2005), edited by Robert W. Lewis and Robert E. Fleming. A Moveable Feast: The Restored Edition, edited by the author’s grandson Seán Hemingway, was published in 2009.

Ernest Hemingway is arguably the most widely recognized and influential of all American writers. More than a half century after his death, interest in his life and
work is seemingly insatiable, his iconic stature unshakable, his celebrity still global. Serious writers and readers must come to terms with his artistic legacy. Few writers’ letters can rival his in importance and interest—both for scholars of modern literature and for the reading public.

Hemingway’s letters present fresh and immediate accounts of events and relationships that profoundly shaped his life and work. “We go to the front tomorrow,” the eighteen-year-old volunteer ambulance driver wrote home on a picture postcard from Milan on 9 June 1918. A month later he would be wounded seriously in a mortar explosion and hospitalized in Milan, where he would fall in love: experiences that fueled his fiction, from “A Very Short Story” (a version of which first appeared in his 1924 in our time) to A Farewell to Arms. On 14 February 1922, newly arrived in Paris and about to take his place among the expatriate writers and artists of the Left Bank, he wrote to his mother back in Oak Park: “Paris is so very beautiful that it satisfies something in you that is always hungry in America.” “Gertrude Stein who wrote Three Lives and a number of other good things was here to dinner last night and stayed till mid-night,” he reported. “She is about 55 I guess and very large and nice. She is very keen about my poetry.” He continued, “Friday we are going to tea at Ezra Pounds. He has asked me to do an article on the present literary state of America for the Little Review.” Hemingway’s description of Pamplona’s fiesta of San Fermín in a July 1924 letter to his mother is particularly striking, considering that his own novel, published two years later, would forever alter the scene: “It is a purely Spanish festa high up in the capital of Navarre and there are practically no foreigners altho people come from all over Spain for it.”

Hemingway’s letters express and provoke the gamut of human emotions. They are by turns—and sometimes simultaneously—entertaining, informative, poignant, silly, wrenching, depressing, outrageous. Surprising to some readers will be the extent to which the letters contradict the common image of Hemingway the solitary artist, adventurer, and tough guy, unencumbered by if not estranged from his family. To be sure, the family relationships were complicated and at times contentious, but despite the strains, the ties did bind. The letters show Hemingway’s less familiar but no less honest faces: as loving husband, as proud father, as playful and devoted brother, and as affectionate and ever-dutiful son. They reveal other less familiar facets of the writer as well: Hemingway the political observer, the natural historian, the astute businessman, the infatuated lover, the instigator and organizer of festivities, and the everyday Hemingway. Even when writing about the least literary of subjects—financial transactions, brands of motor oil, the necessity of car insurance, varieties of avocados and mangoes growing at the Finca, what provisions to take on a hunting trip or aboard his beloved boat Pilar, the logistics of his children’s travels, remodeling plans and roof repairs—he
was rarely dull. His briefest cables capture his inimitable voice: “SUGGEST YOU UPSTICK BOOK ASSWARDS,” he wrote in December 1922 to his employer, Frank Mason, who had suggested that his expense reports did not match the accounting books.

Hemingway was famously competitive about his writing. “You should always write your best against dead writers,” he advised William Faulkner in a 1947 letter, “and beat them one by one.”46 To Charles Scribner in 1949 he confessed, “Am a man without any ambition, except to be champion of the world.”47 He told Lillian Ross: “I started out very quiet and I beat Mr. Turgenev. Then I trained hard and I beat Mr. de Maupassant. I’ve fought two draws with Mr. Stendhal, and I think I had an edge in the last one. But nobody’s going to get me in any ring with Mr. Tolstoy unless I’m crazy or I keep getting better.”48 Yet Hemingway did not view his correspondence as art (even if it was always performance) and regarded it lightly. He did not recognize the letter as one of his own richest and strongest genres.

In “Old Newsman Writes: A Letter from Cuba,” published in Esquire in 1934, Hemingway declared:

> All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you; the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was. If you can get so that you can give that to people, then you are a writer.49

While he always drew a clear distinction between the importance of letter writing and “real” writing, the same standards of judgment can be brought favorably to bear on his own letters, written without thought of their lasting power, or self-consciousness of their testimony to his prowess as a writer. Each letter is a snapshot capturing the news of the day and mood of the hour. Together they form a vast album, a detailed and candid record not only of his own extraordinarily eventful, complicated, and accomplished life, but of the places and times in which he lived and on which he made his mark. Ernest Hemingway’s collected letters constitute a rich self-portrait of the artist and a vivid eyewitness chronicle of the twentieth century.

NOTES

1 EH to F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1 July 1925 (PUL; SL, 165–66). A key to abbreviations and short titles used in this volume follows the Note on the Text. Unless otherwise cited, all letters quoted in this introduction are included in this volume.
2 EH to Arthur Mizener, 12 May 1950 (UMD; SL, 695).