George Sylvester Viereck correspondence with John Thomas Head
1929–1956
(bulk 1955–1956)

Abstract: The George Sylvester Viereck correspondence with John Thomas Head consists of letters, manuscripts, and other materials spanning the dates of 1929 to 1956. The correspondence (bulking 1955–1956) reflects an on-going literary exchange and mutual interest in Viereck's re-emergence into the literary scene.
**Descriptive Summary**

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<td>Creator:</td>
<td>Viereck, George Sylvester, 1884-1962.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Title:</td>
<td>George Sylvester Viereck correspondences with John Thomas Head</td>
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<td>Inclusive Dates:</td>
<td>1929–1956</td>
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<td>Bulk Dates:</td>
<td>1955–1956</td>
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<td>Extent:</td>
<td>.3 linear ft. (75 items)</td>
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<td>Language:</td>
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**Administrative Information**

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<td>Location:</td>
<td>Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: <a href="http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/">http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/</a></td>
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<td>Access Restrictions:</td>
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George Sylvester Viereck

German-American author George Sylvester Viereck was born December 31, 1884, in Munich, Germany; he died March 18, 1962, in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Prior to World War I, Viereck enjoyed some literary fame as a poet. His German heritage became a focal point of his prolific and varied career as a poet, propagandist, interviewer, essayist, playwright, and novelist, and he publicized his pro-German sentiments in a variety of self-run periodicals during World War I and World War II. Viereck maintained that bias due to his political activities prevented publication and fair reception of his work.

After the war, Viereck continued to write: in addition to his journalistic activities for the Saturday Evening Post and his work for his own periodical, Viereck published a study of propaganda, Spreading Germs of Hate (1930) and The Strangest Friendship in History: Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House (1932). Viereck also became known for his interviews with famous contemporaries, many of whom he numbered among his personal friends, including Kaiser Wilhelm II, George Bernard Shaw, Sigmund Freud, and Albert Einstein.

World War II renewed Viereck's propagandistic activities; he wrote and worked for the German-American Economic Bulletin and helped found Today's Challenge in 1939. Viereck's public defense of Nazism and many of its policies during this period led to his arrest in October 1941 for violation of the 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act. In 1942, Viereck was convicted and sent to prison, only to be released a year later when the Supreme Court overturned the decision. Yet in 1943, Viereck was again convicted and imprisoned until 1947. His incarceration inspired many poems and a memoir, Men Into Beasts (1952).

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John Thomas Head

John Thomas Head was born in Ringgold, Georgia. George Sylvester Viereck called Head "a person stepping straight out of the Renaissance. A modern Leonardo Da Vinci," for his wide range of interests (F1 June 13, 1955). Head attended a preparatory school in Chattanooga, and in 1951 obtained a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a master's degree in philosophy. Head received his Ph.D. from Emory University and remained there as a professor of philosophy. In 1955, Head was in charge of small non-profit theatre group, and in addition to directing, Head also wrote his own plays.

Sources:

Biographical information also derived from the collection.
Scope and Content Note

The George Sylvester Viereck correspondence with John Thomas Head consists of letters, manuscripts, and other materials spanning the dates of 1929 to 1956. The correspondence (bulking 1955–1956) reflects an on-going literary exchange and mutual interest in Viereck's re-emergence into the literary scene.

Included in addition to the autographed typescript letters from Viereck to Head are carbon copies of Head's outgoing letters. Additional materials sent by Viereck to Head are also present, and include some Viereck's typed manuscripts, tear sheets of Viereck's published poems, a chapter of Elmer Gertz's manuscript of a biography of Viereck, an autographed photo of sexologist Dr. Albert Moll, dated 1929, and a carbon copy of a questionnaire detailing George Bernard Shaw's thoughts on Viereck, dated 1935. The bulk of the correspondence is between George Sylvester Viereck and John Thomas Head, although some miscellaneous items are present; these appear in the correspondence series and remain in chronological order: postcard to John Thomas Head from "Phillip Allen"; a carbon copy of letter from Head to "Margaret"; and miscellaneous envelopes that once contained letters from Viereck to Head.

The correspondence begins with something of a fan letter to Viereck—with Head expressing his appreciation for Viereck's poetry and sympathy at the unfair treatment his literary work has received because of his politics. Because of Head's theatrical activities, he was initially interested in producing Viereck's plays, and some of their early correspondence discussed revisions for staging. Viereck also sent Head his more obscure works, and Head offered criticisms as he read them. Head's belief in his literary merit developed a professional relationship that aimed at publishing new Viereck works: Viereck began to work on an autobiography (More Lives Than One) and a novel (A House of Lesser Virtue), and Head was editing a collection of Viereck's poems (My Holy Satan) while also composing a critical article titled "Buried Genius: A Study of the Poetry of George Sylvester Viereck." Their publication endeavors became frustrated, and Viereck discontinued work on his autobiography in February 1956. There is no evidence to suggest that these works were ever published under these titles.

The correspondence also shows that out of the literary discussion and the professional dealings taking place, Viereck and Head developed a personal friendship as they shared stories, promised and realized visits, and even traded photographs of themselves.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Head, John Thomas--Correspondence.

Viereck, George Sylvester, 1884-1962--Correspondence.

Topical Terms

Authors, American--20th century--Correspondence.

Publishers and publishing--History--United States--20th century.

Form/Genre Terms

Correspondence.

Manuscripts (document genre)

Tear sheets.

Photographs.

Occupation

Authors.

Personal Contributors

Head, John Thomas, correspondent.

Related Materials in this Repository

MSS 603 George Sylvester Viereck letters to Eric and Era Posselt
Arrangement

The letters are arranged chronologically followed by manuscripts and other material.
Detailed Description of the Collection

George Sylvester Viereck-John Thomas Head correspondence, 1955–1956

1955 February–1955 July [Box 1 F1]
18 items
June 7, 1955, letter from Head to Viereck is incomplete.

1955 August–1955 December [Box 1 F2]
23 items
The letter of August 9, 1955, includes a one-page synopsis of Viereck's proposed novel, *A House of Lesser Virtue*; "I think the book has some merit." Circa November 1955, one page of a letter from Viereck to Head

1956 January–1956 April. August 1956. [Box 1 F3]
19 items
The letter of March 19, 1956, includes a typescript table of contents page for *Nineveh*. Also includes a carbon of a one page letter from Head.

George Sylvester Viereck manuscripts, 1955 2 items

24 pages
See also Viereck's May 24, 1955, letter to Head

"My Holy Satan: An Anthology of Fifty Years of Song", undated [Box 1 F4]
7 pages
This item, a 7-page typescript of the table of contents, represents the collection of Viereck's poetry Head was editing; thus, this item was likely created by Head, who decided on the arrangement. See also Head's November 20, 1955, letter to Viereck.

Published materials by and about George Sylvester Viereck, 1929, 1935, 1955, and undated 12 items

"Portrait of a Fairy Queen and Other Prison Poems", undated [Box 1 F5]
8 pages
Tear sheets from *American Aphrodite*

"Report from Inferno", undated [Box 1 F5]
Tear sheets from *American Aphrodite*

"Laughter in Hell: Jail Portraits and Other Poems", undated [Box 1 F5]

6 pages

Tear sheets from *American Aphrodite*

"The Bankrupt", 1955 [Box 1 F5]

4 pages

Pamphlet of Viereck's poem with foreword by the author

"Sex Is a Demon," review of Gordon Merrick's *The Demon of Noon*, undated [Box 1 F5]

5 pages

Tear sheets from *Good Times*, vol. 2, no. 15

*The Kaiser on Trial*, 1937 [Box 1 F5]

Dust jacket

The Maid of Orleans [by Fredrick Von Schiller] / adapted from the German by George Sylvester Viereck, undated [Box 1 F5]

1 page

Tear sheet of title page

"A Deadly Parallel", undated [Box 1 F5]

1 page

Typescript compilation of excerpts of reviews of Viereck's *The Invincible Adam*.

"Trial of Poet" by "J.W." , 1955 January [Box 1 F5]

2 pages

Tear sheets from *The Stylus*. Short essay on Viereck, followed by two of his poems

"Questionnaire Concerning George Sylvester Viereck" by George Bernard Shaw, 1935 February 15 [Box 1 F5]
Carbon copy of handwritten responses to questionnaire. Autographed and dated by Shaw

"To George S. Viereck from Dr. Albert Moll … July 13, 1929, Berlin", 1929 [Box 1 F5]

Autographed photograph of sexologist Dr. Albert Moll

Viereck, George Sylvester, 1955 [Box 1 F5]

1 page, 3 copies

Carbon copy of Viereck's entry in Twentieth Century Authors 1955 edition

Elmer Gertz manuscript, undated 1 item

"Chapter Twenty-Four: Struggling Against the Tide", undated [Box 1 F6]

29 pages

Typescript of chapter from Gertz's biography of Viereck, sent by Viereck to Head. This chapter may have been part of a larger manuscript in Head's possession; referred to as the "Gertz manuscript" throughout the correspondence in this collection, Gertz published his biography of Viereck in 1978, titled Odyssey of a Barbarian.