

# The Knight and the Troubadour

## Dag Hammarskjöld and Ezra Pound



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*Dag Hammarskjöld and Ezra Pound*

*Marie-Noëlle Little*



Dag Hammarskjöld  
Foundation



In Memoriam

Bengt Nirje

(1924-2006)



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# Foreword

In September of 2001, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation commemorated the Secretary-General's life, forty years after his death in an airplane crash at Ndola. The event, held at his alma mater in Uppsala, had as its theme, 'Dag Hammarskjöld: A Leader in the Field of Culture.' One of the main speakers was Marie-Noëlle Little, who had just published *The Poet and the Diplomat*, a beautiful tale about the friendship between two remarkable intellectual giants, Dag Hammarskjöld and Alexis Leger; and about the relationship between diplomacy and poetry, 'an important, not to say essential, complement to diplomacy,' to use Dag's description.

In the audience was Bengt Nirje whom I first met in December 1955 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, where I served as Personal Assistant to the Secretary-General. On holiday from literary studies at Yale University, Bengt had quite unexpectedly become a substitute for the U.N. correspondent for Radio Sweden. I was then unaware that Dag had just assigned Bengt to assist in the efforts to liberate Ezra Pound from St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C. Long afterwards, in the late 1990s, Bengt described to me the chain of amazing coincidences by which he had become involved in the Ezra Pound case and, of course, I encouraged him to write about this fascinating story.

After the 2001 commemorative program, I introduced Marie-Noëlle and Bengt, who had never met. In the course of a long luncheon conversation centered on Dag, I asked Bengt to tell his story, which sounded even more captivating. The three of us quickly agreed that it would be a great idea if Marie-Noëlle could cooperate with Bengt on his far-from-finished project to make a book out of his story.

8 | Marie-Noëlle Little has now written another important work of biography and literature, *The Knight and the Troubadour*, which reveals a previously unexplored facet of Hammarskjöld's life and the extent of Ezra Pound's influence among Swedish poets and writers. Once again, Marie-Noëlle has told a remarkable story of a poet and a diplomat that will interest and intrigue many readers.

When my time at the United Nations was over in 1956, I received a first edition of *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, one of Dag Hammarskjöld's favorite authors, and a note from Dag with these words: 'An American adventure as a token of The Great Adventure – our years together in America.' I did not know at the time that Ezra Pound would be part of the adventure, but I am not surprised he was. I am glad that in *The Knight and the Troubadour*, the story has finally been written and brought back to life.

*Per Lind*

Stockholm, December 2010



*Per Lind*

# Preface

This is a story that has never been told or, at least, in the way it should have been told. This is a story about truth and treason, hope and despair, about generosity and selfishness. A story about famous men, their silences, and their secrets. Or is it just about life?

As real stories sometimes remind us of legends, with elements of mystery and even some danger, this one starts over a hundred years ago at a small college in New York State on a hill overlooking a peaceful valley, and ends more than half a century and two World Wars later in northern Italy at an old castle, perhaps once visited by minstrels and troubadours. The pivotal year is 1945 when the American poet Ezra Pound, who has been giving speeches over Rome radio, is first arrested in Italy by a group of partisans, and later by the F.B.I. Pound is then brought back to the United States and confined at St. Elizabeths psychiatric hospital in Washington D.C. for almost thirteen years, before he is allowed to return to Italy in 1958. These are the harsh facts of the official version; but to my surprise, I discovered other versions. It seemed that everybody arrested Pound, and everybody liberated him, as well.

The talents of a troubadour are necessary to tell this version of the story, dormant for half a century, which I discovered in the fall of 2001 in Uppsala, Sweden, where I presented my book *The Poet and the Diplomat*<sup>1</sup> at the International Conference on 'Dag Hammarskjöld and the 21st Century,' commemorating the death of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations and his legacy. At the end of the conference, as I was about to visit the garden of a dear 'friend' of mine, Carl von Linné, I met two Swedish gentlemen: Per Lind, who had been Dag Hammarskjöld's Personal Assistant, and Bengt Nirje, who had known both Hammarskjöld and Ezra Pound. Bengt Nirje could not wait to tell me his own version of the Ezra Pound story, and the mysteries he

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<sup>1</sup> *The Poet and the Diplomat: The Correspondence of Dag Hammarskjöld and Alexis Leger* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

was still trying to solve. Later that day, after seeing all the documents he had gathered, I understood how significant a story this was, and how my many years of work in Hammarskjöld studies would be an excellent excuse to help him write a book. How could I refuse?



*Alexis Leger and Marlene Hammarskjöld*

I never met Dag Hammarskjöld, but I went to the same French school as his niece Marlene, in Stockholm, where I was born (of French parents). In the mid-1970s, while pursuing my doctoral studies in the United States, I returned to Sweden to do some research on the Swedish poet and writer Harry Martinson, who had just received the Nobel Prize, and the French poet and diplomat Alexis Leger (also known as Saint-John Perse), who had received the Nobel in 1960. In the Royal Library archives in Stockholm, I discovered the letters between

Dag Hammarskjöld and Alexis Leger that led to my return, years later, to work on the French edition of their correspondence. I had a chance then to read most of the letters in the Hammarskjöld Collection, and I remember quite well reading a few unusual ones Ezra Pound had written to the Secretary-General. Of course, I knew nothing of Hammarskjöld's involvement in the Pound case. In fact, I thought that he could not have intervened (because of his position at the United Nations) and that he mentioned Pound in his correspondence only because of a possible Nobel Prize. Little did I know that some twenty years later I would be working on a book about Pound and Hammarskjöld, and in Clinton, New York, not far from the college Pound had attended.

When I first compared my own discovery of the Pound/Hammarskjöld documents with the discovery of the Lascaux caves by those young boys in France in 1940, I did not realize how appropriate the comparison was. If I needed the talents of a speleologist to bring to light a story that otherwise would have remained buried in library archives, I also

needed the same discretion that at first surrounded the Lascaux discovery. From the beginning, it was obvious that this project would mark a breakthrough in literary history and would even re-write history to some extent.



*Mary de Rachewiltz*

Writing such a book, I soon discovered, was like putting together a giant puzzle with missing pieces and others that did not fit. At times, I even felt as if I were directing a play with conflicting stories and too many characters. Had I kept a journal, it would have been equally fascinating to write about the making of the book, the people I met along the way, those I imagined, and others who passed away before I could reach them. They are all part of this story, somehow. So are the hundreds of letters I read, others I knew about but never found, secrets I discovered, and doors that

had to remain closed. Being able to travel easily between languages and cultures helped me to erase barriers, and allowed me to better understand the story I was discovering. Perhaps even more significant were some of the places I visited, such as the sixteenth-century Uppsala Castle where Hammarskjöld grew up, and Brunnenburg Castle in the Italian Tyrol where I met a real princess, Mary de Rachewiltz, daughter of Ezra Pound. In her golden guest book, I wrote a few lines about my long journey to the castle on that stormy summer night in 2003 and about the story I was writing of the brave Swedish knight who helped to liberate a troubadour, also known as ‘the gaped panther.’

This is their story...

12 | *The Prologue*<sup>2</sup> provides the background necessary to understand two very different worlds and educations and, at the same time, establishes the two locations where I wrote this story, Clinton and Uppsala.

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2 Some of the preliminary research and writing that I did before I started working on the *The Knight and the Troubadour* is published in my article, 'Ezra Pound and Dag Hammarskjöld's Quiet Diplomacy' in *Critical Currents* 2 (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2008), 37-52.

# Prologue

## College Hill and Castle Hill

*It stands on a lovely hilltop near Clinton in the State of New York; stands in a noble park still marked out with the treaty stones of the Indians, placed there as a pledge of sanctuary when first the school was built. Men whose business takes them to all universities, both in this country and Europe, have told me that, except for the University of Upsala<sup>1</sup> in Sweden, the Hamilton campus is the most beautiful in the world.<sup>2</sup>*

This story starts over one hundred years ago, in the autumn of 1903, on that lovely hilltop surrounded by rolling fields, dairy farms, and deeply wooded areas where, to this day, one often sees deer and wild turkeys, and hears coyotes howling at night. Several miles uphill, where College Hill Road meets Skyline Drive, almost touching the sky, one can see in the distance the silver shores of Oneida Lake, the largest in the state, and many other hills and valleys eventually leading to the Adirondack Mountains, the largest natural park in the whole country. For many of the students on the Hamilton campus in 1903, however, the world is much smaller, and walking between the dormitory and the library may be the longest journey of their day, especially in the winter. Few students even venture down to the village of Clinton, although one of them, a tall, young man, is often seen walking up and down College Hill by himself and all around campus, lost in thought. You cannot miss him. Not because he is always walking alone, but rather, because of his unusual attire and hairstyle.<sup>3</sup> He is a transfer student from the University of Pennsylvania. His name is Ezra Weston Pound.

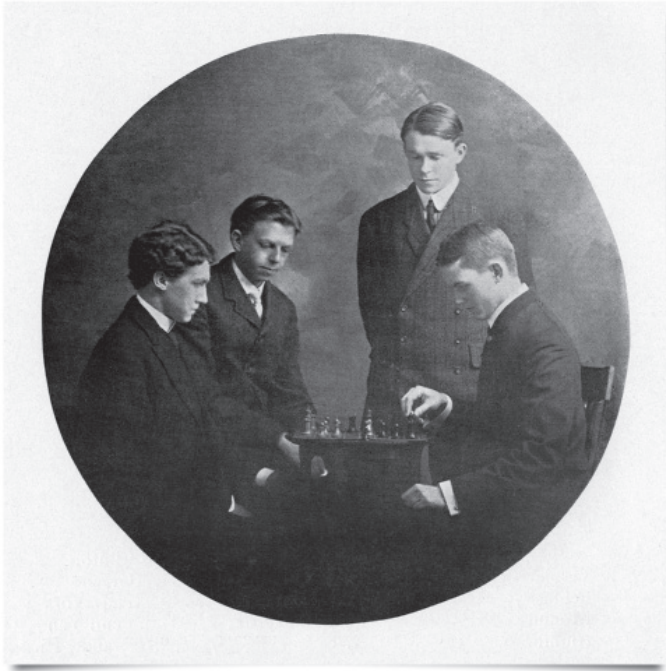
Is something troubling him, you wonder, besides changing classmates, adjusting to new dorm rooms, and being farther away from home?

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<sup>1</sup> Uppsala (old spelling).

<sup>2</sup> As described by American journalist Alexander Woollcott (1909 Hamilton graduate), and quoted by Samuel Hopkins Adams in 'The Sacred Grove,' a chapter in *A. Woollcott, His Life and His World* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), 44.

<sup>3</sup> A 1901 Freshman class photo showed Ezra at UPenn already making himself noticed, as the only one wearing a *béret* and white scarf. See photo insert in Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988).



*Ezra Pound (left), at Hamilton College*

No one knows why he has changed his middle name from Loomis to Weston, a name from his New England family roots. Did he want to distance himself from the famous Loomis Gang horse thieves who, although not directly related to his own family, had their hideout not far from Hamilton College in the Nine-Mile Swamp? Or did the other family name of Weston sound better, reminding him of 'Out West' and Idaho, where he was born? We don't really know all the reasons why he left Pennsylvania, either, but we do know that Ezra chose Hamilton for its small size and its reputation.

His first impressions were very good when he visited the school that June. He even liked the President, Reverend Melancthon Woolsey Stryker (also known as 'Prex'), who seemed to like the young man well enough to let him transfer to the 'Hill,' and with all his credits, even though he had not excelled at the University of Pennsylvania (which in part would explain the need for a change in scenery). So, Ezra arrived in the fall, by train and trolley, all the way from Wyncote, Pennsyl-

vania. His mother, who wanted to check out the college, came along, which did not help his reputation among his new classmates. Similar anecdotes suggest that Ezra may not have been popular from the very beginning, although we are told that he did not give up trying to fit in (which, as we know, does not sound like him). He was one of only three students who did not join a fraternity.<sup>4</sup> In other words, his books became his best friends.

Pound's devotion to his studies and the advanced subjects he chose may surprise today's average college student, but in those days, at least in small colleges, extracurricular activities were not as numerous and did not interfere as much with studying. Like many other small, private colleges in the United States at that time, Hamilton was run like a British boarding school where the boys were a close-knit unit bound by strict rules and punishments. In previous centuries, when colleges were often run by priests or missionaries, religion and strong ethical values were intertwined with a good education. Samuel Kirkland, who was a missionary to the Oneida Indians, founded Hamilton-Oneida Academy in 1793. It was chartered in 1812 as Hamilton College, the third college in New York State.<sup>5</sup> In the early days, in 1827, the first rule established by the Trustees was that 'no student be received or suffered to remain who does not sustain a good moral character.'<sup>6</sup> Students also had to live on campus, obtain permission to leave the grounds, and turn off their lights by 10 p.m.

Rules were not as strict when Ezra came to the Hill, but the two hundred or so young men, with hardly forty per graduating class, were like a big family, and the professors were true educators. In those days, the emphasis was on teaching students to become good orators, which was reinforced by sermons during the daily, mandatory chapel attendance. Although rules have changed since then, the College's mission is still to provide a well-rounded education and to maintain the same high standards while allowing for greater freedom of thought. Hamilton's current homepage describes the college as 'a national leader for teaching students to write effectively, learn from each other and think for

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4 The University of Pennsylvania had sent a telegram to Delta Kappa Epsilon saying: 'under no consideration pledge Ezra Pound' (Carpenter, 47).

5 Hamilton celebrates its 200-year anniversary in 2012. Alexander Hamilton, U.S. statesman and first Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, was a member of the first Board of Trustees of the Hamilton-Oneida Academy.

6 E. P. Powell, 'New England's First College Out of New England,' *New England Magazine*, 20 (March-August 1899): 464.

themselves,' a line of conduct that Pound would have embraced, with the difference that he learned more from his professors than from his peers, and others may have learned more from him, later on, in the literary circles where he was a leader.



*Hamilton College Chapel*

In retrospect, Hamilton College seems to have been the right place for Ezra to study, and his years at the college had a formative influence on his life. I am not referring to eccentricities in clothing, hairstyle, spelling, or speech, but to the lasting effect that Ezra's favorite Hamilton College professors had on his character and his development, and to the twenty-three out of thirty-six courses he took in languages, primarily French. More than a quarter century after Ezra graduated, one of his favorite professors, Joseph Ibbotson, 'Bib,' recalled that Ezra's study of 'Old French Provençal with Dr. Shepard influenced him more profoundly than anything else in his college courses.'<sup>7</sup> Pound's love of poetry and his fascination with the French Troubadours were to inspire him for years to come; and he communicated this passion to others in London, Paris, Rapallo, and even St. Elizabeths Hospital. Like the

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7 In a 1933 letter from Joseph Ibbotson to Alexander Woollcott (MacLeish Collection, Greenfield Community College, Greenfield, MA).

Troubadours, Pound wandered through Europe (and traveled back and forth to America), acquiring a coterie of friends and disciples and becoming one of the most famous outcasts among poets since François Villon. Pound's own talents as a troubadour and his ear for music are, of course, reflected in the many voices and languages of his *Cantos*. Indeed, the 'Sacred Grove' may well have been the place where Ezra Pound, the poet, was born.

It was only years later, when Pound was living in Rapallo on the Italian Riviera, that a November 1932 article in *The Hamilton Literary Magazine* described him as 'a Troubadour at Hamilton,' even if the author was surprised that there were no specific signs of Pound's poetic talents when he was a student there. In fact, Ezra's real achievements, if any, 'bottled on that desolate mountain top,'<sup>8</sup> were writing, reading as much as possible, and talking about his ideas at such length that he wearied even his favorite professors. Thanks to 'Shep,' he discovered Dante, certainly the highlight of his studies; and it was when visiting 'Bib' that he claimed to have found the idea for his *Cantos*. When Ezra was about to graduate, his very first poem in print, a translation of the Provençal poem 'Belangal Alba,' appeared in the May 1905 issue of the *Hamilton Literary Review*, thus launching his career as a poet and as a translator. A month later, Ezra Weston Pound earned a Bachelor of Philosophy with a second prize in French.

Ezra told his friend Williams Carlos Williams, that his time at Hamilton had been two years of 'hell,'<sup>9</sup> but those years were to be more important than he could imagine. Ezra had established strong ties with his alma mater, mostly with his professors, especially Shepard and Ibbotson. He continued to write to 'Shep' until the early 1930s and to 'Bib' until the early 1950s while he was still at St. Elizabeths. He often sent them, as well as other professors, first editions of his books. Ibbotson, who was the college's librarian from 1911 to 1936, started collecting many of Pound's publications. Subsequent librarians followed his lead, and as a result, the largest Pound Collection in an undergraduate institution is now housed at Hamilton College's Burke Library.

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8 Which is how he described Hamilton in a letter to his father in 1904, to excuse his running off to Ithaca for a few days (Carpenter, 54).

9 Carpenter, 48.



*Uppsala Castle*

Ezra Pound graduated from Hamilton College the summer Dag Hammarskjöld was born in Jönköping, Sweden in July of 1905. Dag was two years old when his father was appointed governor of Uppsala County. The family moved to Uppsala and lived in the rather somber sixteenth-century Uppsala Castle – with its dungeons and eight-foot-thick walls – that was once the home of Swedish royalty. The castle was Dag’s home for some twenty years. Uppsala was still a small country town well-known for its university and its thirteenth-century cathedral, the largest in the country. When traveling to the city today, one can see the twin black spires of the cathedral from miles away, and then the large castle on the hill, dull and gray in old photographs, but a pastel red in real life. And, one can’t miss seeing the swarms of black birds that often seem to take over the city, sweeping by or landing, with a loud, piercing whistle.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were strong bonds between the townspeople and the farmers, as the old Uppsala was surrounded by extensive farmland, as was the small town of Clinton in New York State. This similarity led me to compare the Uppsala and Hamilton campuses just as Woolcott had done, and consider the common interests that Ezra and Dag might have shared as young scholars.

As a student at Uppsala University, Dag had, like Ezra at Hamilton College, an interest in languages, literature, and poetry that lasted throughout his life, even in the middle of political crises. For Dag Hammarskjöld, the diplomat, there were no boundaries between poetry and politics, and, with tragic consequences, the same was true for Ezra Pound, the poet.

Although the surnames Pound and Hammarskjöld share a similar suggestion of weight and strength, the two young men could hardly have been less alike. Their upbringing and youth were worlds apart. Ezra's colorful and somewhat complicated family history reminds us of characters from the best American novels. According to one of his biographers: 'It was indeed an All-American ancestry, ranging from whaler to New England blue blood and patent-medicine peddler, from pioneer, lumberman, and railway builder to failed hotel proprietor.'<sup>10</sup> If one believes some of the stories and legends, propagated by Pound himself and others, there may also have been horse thieves, Red Indians, and even a pirate among the ancestors and relatives of his All-American family.

Ezra's paternal grandfather, Thaddeus Coleman Pound, was the lumberman in the family, and quite a character. Born in a log cabin in Elk, Pennsylvania in 1832 and raised as a Quaker, he later married Sarah Angevine Loomis and settled in Wisconsin. He started a lumbering company and built railroads, which somehow led him to a political career as Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin and later as a member of Congress. His only son, Homer, might have become an army officer, had he not stepped off the train taking him to West Point Military Academy. Ezra later admired his father's change of mind.

Homer married a 'city girl,' Isabel Weston, in New York in 1884. She was related to the colonial family who founded Weston, Massachusetts, and more distantly to the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. They first settled in Hailey, Idaho, where Homer was working at a Government Land Office registering mining claims, and they later moved to Philadelphia where he worked as an assistant assayer in the United States Mint. Ezra grew up in a typical upper class home in the suburbs and acquired a set of strong values from his parents, who were very involved with the Presbyterian church.

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<sup>10</sup> Carpenter, 7.

Ezra, like his grandfather, was quite a self-confident and serious character. Or as Pound would say (about others), 'a seereeyus kerakter.'<sup>11</sup> Dag had perhaps more strength of character and was certainly more formal and reserved, and even shy as a youth. Their personalities and their respective cultures were markedly different, as were their birthplaces. Young Ezra was born 'in the clapboard house on Second and Pine, not far from the forty-seven saloons of Hailey,'<sup>12</sup> a small mining town in Idaho, on the Western Frontier of the New World, 'In a half savage country, out of date;/ Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn.'<sup>13</sup> Dag's birthplace was in the Old Country, in the south of Sweden, in Jönköping, a city founded in the 13th century. His first home was a splendid villa, *Liljeholmen*, surrounded by a beautiful garden and overlooking Lake Vättern, Sweden's second largest lake.

Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl's full name was even longer than Ezra's, with *Hjalmar* for his father, *Agne* for his mother Agnes, and *Carl*, perhaps in memory of his relative, the poet and novelist Carl Jones Love Almqvist. The Hammarskjölds, an old family from southern Sweden, belonged to the aristocracy. One of their ancestors, Peder Michelson, was a cavalry captain who was awarded knighthood by King Carl IX in 1610. The family coat-of-arms included a golden shield adorned with four iron bullets between a pair of crossed hammers. In earlier generations, the Hammarskjöld forefathers were mostly country gentlemen or military officers, but they later distinguished themselves in important administrative, political, and diplomatic posts. Dag's father, Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, had an impressive career as a minister of justice, minister of education, minister to Denmark, governor of Uppsala County, and Prime Minister. The family had a strong literary background, extending back at least to the poet Lorenzo Hammarskjöld, who early in the nineteenth century wrote the first literary history of Sweden.

There were solid family ties within the Hammarskjöld family, even though the father was often away or needed solitude for his work. Dag, who was the youngest of four boys, did not know what it was to be an only child, as Ezra was, nor would he have understood how Ezra could be so close to his father, when Dag himself was closer to his mother.

11 In a 1936 letter to his publisher James Laughlin (quoted by Carpenter, front page).

12 Carpenter, 9.

13 'E.P. Ode pour l'élection de son sépulchre' ('Ezra Pound: Ode to be Written on His Sepulcher') from *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1957), 61.

However, both Ezra, called 'Son,' and Dag, called 'Pysen' (the little one), seem to have been the favorite members of their respective families. We know perhaps more about Dag's youth than Ezra's, thanks to the many letters Dag and his brothers wrote to each other and to their parents, and the letters Hjalmar and Agnes exchanged.<sup>14</sup>

BENGT THELIN **Dag**  
**Hammar skjöld**

BARNET • SKOLPOJKEN • STUDENTEN



*Book cover showing Dag as a child, a young boy and a student*

Reading was certainly one of Dag's favorite occupations, and poets and writers became 'personal friends' for this rather lonely young boy. Literature had 'a profound personal and existential meaning' for Dag while growing up, and some fictional characters became his role models.<sup>15</sup> One could even say that books remained his best companions throughout his life. The books that were found in the Secretary-General's briefcase and on his night-table after the Ndola plane crash, were described in great detail, as if it was surprising that literature had been so much a part of Hammar skjöld's daily life.<sup>16</sup>

Both at home and at the schools Dag attended, religion was an important part of his upbringing. When he entered Högre Allmänna Läroverket (upper secondary school) at age eleven, he acquired a broad knowledge of religious faiths beyond Christianity, a liberalizing tendency that was reinforced by the international exposure he received at home, thanks to his father's posts and travels. Another important influence in ecumenism came from Nathan Söderblom, the Archbishop of Uppsala, who was a close friend of the Hammar skjöld family, and whose son

14 In *Dag Hammar skjöld, Barnet Skolpojken Studenten* (Stockholm: Carlsons, 2001), Bengt Thelin quotes many of those family letters as he retraces, step by step, Dag's life as a child, a schoolboy, and a student.

15 Both quotes, Thelin, 87.

16 The dedication of the United Nations Dag Hammar skjöld Library (after his death) can be seen as both an honor and a symbol.

was one of Dag's classmates. Many of the religious and spiritual books he read were significant to his development as well. For his religious confirmation at age sixteen, Dag received a copy of *De Imitatione Christi* by Thomas à Kempis, who became one of his favorite authors. Dag's education and religious upbringing laid a strong foundation that later influenced his work at the United Nations.<sup>17</sup>

As a child he also developed an interest in nature which, of course, has always had a special place within Swedish culture, but even more so for the young boy growing up near the Uppsala Botanical and Linné gardens, walking to school every day, and later, hiking in the mountains with his friends. Dag, who was also interested in science and in reading Maeterlinck<sup>18</sup> when he was a teenager, thought he would like to be a scientist.

However, when he started his studies at Uppsala University in 1923, Dag first chose to study languages, perhaps following in the footsteps of his father, who had majored in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Dag studied French and read French literature in the original texts. He also became interested in philosophy and took courses offered by the founder of the Uppsala school of philosophy, Axel Hägerström, whose rejection of metaphysical suppositions and subjectivism was highly controversial.

Uppsala, founded in 1477, was the oldest university in Sweden and in all of Scandinavia. In medieval times it was primarily a theological school, and through the years it started offering young noblemen a well-rounded education, which included riding, fencing, drawing, French, and Italian. The University nowadays, with its forty thousand students and many interdisciplinary programs, is also well-known for its musical program, which includes a long choral tradition. But at the turn of the twentieth century, there were fewer than two thousand students, and when Dag was a student there, about three thousand (with women in the minority). Since 1887, the University motto, inscribed over the entrance of the lecture hall, has been, "To think freely is great, but to think rationally is even greater."<sup>19</sup>

17 The Meditation Room he created at the U.N. being one example (Thelin, 69).

18 Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), Belgian writer, known for his plays and his essays on bees and flowers (Nobel Prize, 1911).

19 The motto ("Tänka fritt är stort, men tänka rätt är större") is a quote from Swedish writer Thoman Thorild (1759-1800).

Dag was more involved in his studies than in the social life on campus, even though he belonged to the 'Upland's Nation.' The 'Nations' were (and still are) traditional groups that all students have to join, usually according to their hometown or province. The system of dividing students into Nations can be traced back to the early days of the University of Paris and other early medieval universities. Dag is known to have given his first notable speech in 1929 at a formal event of his Nation, of which he had become the 'curator.'

In 1925, Dag earned an undergraduate degree in French, philosophy, and economics. After a semester at the University of Cambridge, he went on to earn a law degree at Uppsala in 1930, the same year he was appointed secretary of the Unemployment Commission in Stockholm, at age twenty-five. The appointment coincided with his father's retirement and the family's move to Stockholm, where Dag pursued his studies and earned a doctorate in economics from Stockholm University in 1933.

Both the traditions of the Hammarskjöld family and those of the schools and the University Dag attended in Uppsala helped to build his personality and his values and to prepare him for a bright future. Those years were the foundation of the *homo religiosus*, the *homo politicus*, and last but not least, the *homo mundi*.<sup>20</sup>

Shortly before his death, Hammarskjöld, living then in New York City, wrote a small booklet, *Slottsbacken (Castle Hill)*,<sup>21</sup> the title of which refers to neither the castle nor the town but to the link between the two, a hill where the townspeople met, where children played and went sledding. This poetic reminiscence about his boyhood, his home in the old castle, and Uppsala, ends with a memory of graduation ceremonies and a question, 'How many come back?'<sup>22</sup> In retrospect, it is a hauntingly prophetic last line, as Hammarskjöld was buried, just a few months later, in the old town cemetery.

20 As Bengt Thelin concluded in his Epilogue (203).

21 *Slottsbacken* was published by the Swedish Touring Club in 1962, and *Castle Hill*, in 1971. Both editions have been reprinted since Uppsala University's 500th anniversary in 1977.

22 *Castle Hill* (Uppsala: The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2000), 21.



*Castle Hill*

# Chapter I

## The Troubadour

(1905-40)

In 1905, after graduating from Hamilton College, Ezra Pound returned to his hometown of Wyncote to attend graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, where he took courses in Latin, Italian, Old French, and Old Spanish. He also continued to pursue his study of the troubadours – a passion that would last for the rest of his life. After being awarded a Master of Arts degree in the spring of 1906, Ezra received a fellowship to work toward a doctorate. The title of his thesis was ‘The *Gracioso* in the plays of Lope de Vega.’ The choice of the topic may have been his professor’s more than his own, but the profile of the *gracioso* increasingly described Pound himself who, as a poet, often played the part of a juggler of words, and an acerbic wit, always at the service of his knight – Poetry.

His fellowship allowing him to travel to Europe, Ezra sailed off to Gibraltar and arrived in Madrid in early May, to start his research on Lope de Vega, but eventually spent most of his time visiting the Prado Museum and exploring the region. He continued on to southern France, visited Bordeaux, Blois, and Orléans, and then arrived in Paris, where he explored the city, before ending his pilgrimage in London. This territory was not new for the young American, who was returning to some of the places he had visited in 1898, as a thirteen-year-old on his first three-month Grand Tour, with his Aunt Frank and his mother. He went back in 1902 with his aunt and parents, but this third time around, he was traveling by himself.

When Ezra finally returned to Wyncote in August of 1906, he brought back *Le secret des troubadours*, a strange little book by the French Rosicrucian<sup>1</sup> Joséphin Péladan, bought in a small bookstore in the Latin Quarter in Paris. It was popular in France, but perhaps not the best choice for his first book review in a conservative Philadelphia publication, even though Ezra did not reveal all the details about the secret practices of the troubadours’ mysterious religion. He described the

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1 The Rosicrucians are a secret society of mystics, formed in late medieval Germany.

book as ‘filled with the snap of brilliant conclusions,’ but one of Pound’s biographers concluded that it was ‘a typically Rosicrucian hotchpotch of Gnostic religion, occultism, and vague sexuality.’<sup>2</sup> It was mostly an interest in occultism and mysticism that attracted Ezra to Péladan’s story, and Ezra’s own secret, if any, was his enchantment with Europe. Although Italy and Venice were not part of his travels in 1906, this was the time the young poet fell in love with Europe and found ‘the imaginative terrain of his life.’<sup>3</sup>

In troubadour style, Pound courted the women in his life – those he met as a young man and, later on, the ones he really loved – with veneration and respect, wrote them letters and poems, and gave them new names. Hilda Doolittle, whom he met during his freshman year in 1901, became ‘Dryad’ because she looked and behaved like a tree-nymph. She also became his fiancée, and then his disciple and life-long friend.



*Hilda Doolittle*

After his sojourn through Europe, Ezra resumed his studies at the University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 1906, but because of misunderstandings and quarrels with some of his professors, his doctoral fellowship was not renewed at the end of the academic year, and he had to look for work. He began tutoring in the summer of 1907 for a wealthy New Jersey family near Trenton, where he met his new girlfriend-to-be, Mary Moore. After a carefree summer, Ezra left for the Midwest, to start his first teaching job as lecturer in French and Spanish at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. He adjusted the best he could to this small college and small town, while some of his students had to adjust to their gifted but eccentric teacher. The young poet may not have been their best teacher, but he loved to

2 Carpenter, 67.

3 Peter Ackroyd, *Ezra Pound and His World* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 117.

entertain discussion and to exchange ideas. He managed, nevertheless, to meet regularly with groups of students in the evening to discuss the arts. He had similar audiences at Hamilton College and almost everywhere throughout his life, including at St. Elizabeths. Ezra also wrote poems and corresponded with both Mary and Hilda. He sent Mary two 'Villonaud' poems celebrating the poet Villon and a 'Na Audiart' poem, which was a particularly interesting and dramatic monologue inspired by the story of the knight and troubadour Bertran de Born. The French troubadour was trying to create a composite portrait of the ideal Lady, from all the women he had known and desired, including Lady Audiart, as an attempt to seduce her. So was Ezra, it seems, since he was simultaneously courting Hilda, Mary Moore, and another Mary Moore (from Crawfordsville).

Unfortunately, one of Ezra's female acquaintances, a girl from a burlesque show passing through town, led to the loss of his first academic job. According to some versions of the story, he rescued the actress in a snow storm and gave her his bed for the night. His two landladies immediately alerted the President of the college, and the young teacher-poet was fired. 'The Crawfordsville incident' did not help Ezra when he returned home to Wyncote nor when he sought to resume his studies at the University. By then, Mary Moore of Trenton was already engaged to someone else, so Ezra begged Hilda Doolittle to follow him to Italy. But when he asked Professor Doolittle for his daughter's hand, the indignant father put an end to their hopes for a marriage with a withering remark to Pound: 'Why, you're nothing but a nomad!'<sup>4</sup>

So, once again, in March of 1908, the young American poet sailed off to Gibraltar on a grand new voyage, ready to conquer Europe, but without Hilda Doolittle. He may not have fully realized at the time how much his European experiences would shape his life, nor did he know that he was bound for an exile that would last some thirty years – and even more, if one does not count his 1939 visit to the U.S.<sup>5</sup> Years later, the significance of that voyage seems to have inspired Pound to open his first *Canto* with the image of a ship setting sail 'on the godly sea.'<sup>6</sup>

After spending some time in Spain, Ezra traveled around northern Italy as a carefree troubadour 'moving from castle to castle, singing his songs

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4 Carpenter, 82.

5 Pound's exile (not counting his 1910 and 1939 visits) lasted 37 years.

6 *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 3.

of love for woman after woman,<sup>7</sup> before finally settling down in Venice, his beloved 'Queen of the Adriatic.' She helped him recover from his Wabash College wounds and provided him with another summer sheltered from reality. 'Gods float in the azure air,' the poet later wrote in the *Cantos*.<sup>8</sup> During this idyllic summer in Ezra's life, an ominous situation, foreboding in its synchronicity, was developing: 'in nearby Forli, a young man named Benito Mussolini was writing angry editorials for the socialist newspaper *Avanti*.'<sup>9</sup>

Venice's '*Bella Epoca*' was the scene of a new beginning for the young poet whose first book of poems, *A Lume Spento*,<sup>10</sup> was published (thanks to his settlement with Wabash College). He sent a copy to William Butler Yeats, who found the book 'charming.' 'A Venetian critic' in a London newspaper echoed Yeats's sentiments: 'This poet seems like a minstrel of Provence at a Suburban musical evening.'<sup>11</sup> The critic was apparently Ezra himself. Who else would have linked Provence with musical recitals but Ezra, the self-styled troubadour? He had, in fact, become a tour manager for his friend the pianist Katherine Ruth Heyman,<sup>12</sup> travelling to Venice, then Paris, and soon afterward to London.

Ezra reached London in August of 1908, full of energy and already 'seeking what giants & dragons [he] may devour.'<sup>13</sup> Indeed, like a cowboy with 'whip in hand,' wearing a sombrero or one earring, the young American poet charmed, rallied, and also annoyed many a giant and dragon. Within two years he would be known all over London. He gave up being Katherine's tour manager in favor of arranging his own literary 'Grand Tour,' with visits to publishers, bookshops, and tea parties, in addition to hours of writing poetry. He had tea at the home of 'the most charming woman in London,' Olivia Shakespear. Her daughter Dorothy was charming as well – or rather, she was charmed by Ezra. Olivia had fallen in love, years earlier, with one of the giants, William Butler Yeats (later called the 'Eagle'). Ezra was anxious to meet this Irish bard, whom he considered to be the greatest living poet writing in

7 J.J. Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), 192.

8 *The Cantos*, 11.

9 Wilhelm, *American Roots*, 193.

10 'With Quenched Tapers' (a citation from Dante, describing a burial ceremony).

11 Both quotes are in Carpenter, 95.

12 Pound had met her while he was at Hamilton College.

13 Carpenter, 97.

English. He soon courted both Olivia and Yeats (who no longer were lovers), and did not pay much attention to Dorothy.

When his new collection of poems, *Personae*, became a sensation in literary circles in the spring of 1909, Yeats declared Pound ‘a great authority on the troubadours,’ and critics praised his perfect ear for verbal music.<sup>14</sup> By then, Ezra had joined a new gang, the Poets’ Club.<sup>15</sup> The young troubadour was indeed fortunate to meet influential people, who in turn introduced him to others, in a social whirlwind that was at times hard to follow. He gave lectures on medieval Romance literature, later published in his first critical book, *The Spirit of Romance*, thus keeping alive his ‘temperamental sympathy’ with the troubadours.

Even though Yeats had declared, ‘There is no younger generation (of poets). E. P. is a solitary volcano,’<sup>16</sup> Ezra was still trying to ‘make it big’ in London. In addition to writing and publishing, he often reviewed his own works anonymously. Anxious to become financially independent, he had also started applying for jobs in the United States, where he finally returned in the summer of 1910. In New York City he tried a money-making scheme with a Frank (‘Baldy’) Bacon he knew; but things did not work out. The young troubadour was much more successful in seeing his ‘court,’ Hilda and friends from Hamilton College days, again. He also met with Witter Bynner, poetry editor for *McClure’s*, who was more interested in his ‘happily cuckoo troubadour’ outfit (‘one tan and one blue shoe, and a “shiny straw hat” with a ribbon adorned with “red polka dots”’) than in his poetry.<sup>17</sup> The young Londoner’s poetry did not impress the newly formed Poetry Society of America either (and the feeling was mutual).

By February of 1911, Ezra was back in Europe and, by August, back in London. London was, of course, *the* place to be, even though Ezra was soon off to Paris, where he started working with Walter Rummel on the music of the troubadours and also on some troubadour translations. Back in London, Ezra saw Dorothy Shakespear to whom he was more or less engaged by now, but soon Hilda arrived, followed by Mary Moore. Ezra’s friend Rummel complicated things by telling Hilda about Dorothy. It would have been as impossible to separate this young

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14 Michael Reck, *Ezra Pound: A Close-Up* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 13.

15 Members included T. E. Hulme, F. S. Flint, and Ford Madox Ford (editor of the *English Review*).

16 Carpenter, 137.

17 Carpenter, 151.

troubadour's work from his circle of friends, as it later would be to separate the *Cantos* from some of his politics and ideas.



*Ezra and Dorothy (1910-1912)*

Ezra's main excuse for leaving the United States (as he wrote to his parents) had been the lack of anything new in New York for him, at least for his own work – poetry. In London, he found what he wanted, the opportunity to create a new literary movement. Ezra rallied his friends, Richard Aldington and Hilda Doolittle, who became 'Imagistes,' almost overnight, it seems. Others soon joined or were inspired by the movement, one of the most ardent followers being T. S. Eliot. Then, Hilda and Aldington emerged as a couple, married, and followed Ezra to Paris in the spring of 1912, where he was to work with Walter Rummel on troubadour music and do some research of his own.

Ezra's research led him to map out what may have been even more significant for him – a long walking tour of Provence in the summer,

following Justin H. Smith's route as described in his book *The Troubadours at Home*, going from castle to castle, covering some twenty-five miles a day. He was finally 'home' again, recording some of his impressions in poetic forms: 'I have seen the fields, pale, clear as an emerald/ Sharp peaks, high spurs, distant castles.'<sup>18</sup> This would be one of several such walking tours through the years to come. And much later on, in Pisa and at St. Elizabeths, the old troubadour wrote about many of those roads in his *Cantos*. They were his 'secret garden.'

Back in London, Ezra continued to be a loyal troubadour by serving others, and also poetry. Harriet Moore started the American quarterly *Poetry* in 1912 with Ezra as 'foreign correspondent,' a position in which he flourished. Ezra sent her many poems, including his friends' work, and the school of Imagism was officially launched in the March 1913 issue. He was very much at home in his role of editor and even more so in his new role as Yeats's secretary (and soon, his editor!). During those years, Ezra helped many a giant and dragon – including Robert Frost, D. H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot – with their finances, as well as with their writing. Amy Lowell, who was also in London, soon seemed to appropriate Imagism after Pound and Lewis turned to Vorticism, a more intensive movement that included all the arts. The first issue of *Blast: Review for the Great English Vortex* followed, in 1914. And so did the First World War, which a year later claimed one of Ezra's best friends, the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. 'There died a myriad,/ And of the best, among them/ . . . Charm, smiling at the good mouth,/ Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,' Ezra later wrote.<sup>19</sup>

Ezra and Dorothy Shakespear married in 1914 and spent most of the war years in London, and with Yeats at his Stone Cottage in Sussex. Ezra was also the official (but unpaid) literary agent to Eliot, Lewis, and Joyce, among others. At the same time, he started exploring new territory with Japanese and then Chinese texts, poems, and translations. He published his walking tours of Provence in *Poetry* and started working on his 'endless poem,' of which *Three Cantos* appeared, one by one, in *Poetry*, in 1915.

18 In 'Provincia Deserta' (*Personae*), quoted by James Laughlin, *Pound as Wuz: Essays and Lectures on Ezra Pound* (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1987), 79.

19 *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1957), 64.

A striking portrait by E. O. Hoppé of Ezra Pound in London in 1918 offers a perfect example of a talented photographer able to catch what others – even the Imagists – could not put into words. Pound, who had not yet committed any of his political errors, was as grandly impressive in the photograph as his reputation in the European literary world was at the time. The young poet with an eagle-like profile seems too big for the chair he is barely sitting on, his hand curved like a claw, his coat too long and spread on the floor, and his legs reaching almost outside the frame – as if he were a giant of heroic proportions. Pound, who described his own birth as that of the ‘infant Gargantua,’ had become a striking person, a passionate artist, and a poet who was larger-than-life.



*Ezra Pound (by E.O. Hoppé)*

Although Joyce later called him ‘a miracle of ebullieny, gusto and help,’<sup>20</sup> Pound’s behavior had started to change around 1916. He was often tactless, imperious, irritated, or irritating (in his letters, at least). Pound, the literary critic, was also becoming a critic of society; and meeting Clifford Hugh Douglas, founder of the ‘Social Credit’ movement, near the end of WWI, marked the beginning of his life-long quest for social and economic reform, among other ideals.

Ezra was still a troubadour at heart, however, and in 1919, he took off for another even longer walking tour of Provence with Dorothy (joined by Eliot later on). He continued working on his ‘endless rhapsody’<sup>21</sup> of the *Cantos* and, around that time, was also writing *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, a sequence of poems on the London literary scene of the time. When the poem was published in late April of 1920, the Pounds did not realize that its publication would mark their farewell to England and signal a significant departure in Pound’s life as a poet.

The ‘solitary volcano’ that Yeats had met in 1909 finally erupted in the Paris of the Roaring Twenties, but Pound’s experience during the few years he spent there had more of an effect on others than on himself. This was no longer the Paris he had known before the war. The quintessential ‘American in Paris’ was not Ezra Pound, but George Gershwin, strolling through the streets of the *Gai Paris* in 1920, absorbing sounds, impressions, and moods for his famous orchestral tone poem. Paris was all music, all art, and all fashion – a much needed, joyous atmosphere after *La Grande Guerre*. For the French, the Roaring Twenties were *Les Années Folles*, the crazy years of Cocteau, Picabia, Brancusi, the Dadaists, the Surrealists, and other groups, whose company the troubadour enjoyed. What was also ‘roaring’ in Paris, besides new cars and horns ‘à la Gershwin,’ was the music: Stravinsky, Ravel, Copeland, Thomson, Satie, ‘*Les Six*’ (including Milhaud, Poulenc, Honneger). The première of George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique* even led to a riot. Meeting Antheil and working with him influenced Pound in his own musical compositions, as did his introduction to Olga Rudge, an American violinist.<sup>22</sup> Although the troubadour was not a composer, his opera, *Le Testament de Villon*, ‘anticipated the style of a number of modern composers who chose to learn from medieval music.’<sup>23</sup> In June of 1926, Pound was in Paris for the première of *Le Testament de Villon*, attended by Joyce,

20 Louis Menand, ‘The Pound Error,’ *New Yorker*, June 9 & 16, 2008. 123.

21 Carpenter, 354.

22 Pound’s liaison with Olga Rudge grew into a lifelong relationship.

23 Carpenter, 391. See selections from *Le Testament* in ‘Ego Scriptor Cantilenae: The Music of Ezra Pound,’ CD 1005-2, Other Minds, 2003.

Hemingway, Eliot, and also Djuna Barnes and Virgil Thomson. A year later, when Olga Rudge tried to introduce Antheil's music to Mussolini, she unintentionally became the link between Mussolini and Pound.



Olga Rudge

Ezra, who felt at home in the French capital, started dressing and acting like a poet, but an older, more dignified one than the young Londoner he had been, wearing a black cape and a velvet *béret* and carrying an ebony cane.<sup>24</sup> The Pounds soon moved closer to the famous cafés where Ezra spent much of his time. Sylvia Beach's new bookstore and lending library, *Shakespeare and Company*, was a popular place to gather, and Sylvia used her business to help publish Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922. The

other lost soul, besides Joyce, was Eliot. By the time *The Waste Land* was published, with its dedication 'for E.P. /miglior fabbro/ from T.S.E. / Jan. 1923,' Eliot was known as a saint and Pound as the best 'craftsman' since Arnaut Daniel.<sup>25</sup> Pound also met E. E. Cummings, whose poems he had promoted while in London, and who later referred to Pound as 'the true trailblazer of an epoch.'<sup>26</sup> The other giant on that trail was Ernest Hemingway, and according to the legend, Hem' taught Ezra to box while Ezra taught him to write.<sup>27</sup> The results were Hemingway's prose vignettes, edited by Pound and published as *in our time*, and soon thereafter, a contract for Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (published in 1926). As the literary reputations of Hemingway and others were ascending, the troubadour was tiring of Paris and preparing to move on.

Had Paris in the mid-1920s become too noisy, too distracting, or just too constricting for the American eagle of a poet? Was Paris too much of a village for the nomad and troubadour-at-heart? Or had Pound simply realized that he was not the only American in Paris? He had declared a few years earlier, that a new historical period he called 'the

24 John Tytell, *Ezra Pound: The Solitary Volcano* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 167.

25 The dedication was later changed to 'For Ezra Pound/ Il miglior fabbro' by Eliot when the poem was reprinted. 'Il Miglior Fabbro' was also the title Pound had given to his chapter on Arnaut Daniel in *The Spirit of Romance* (and originally, Dante's praise for Daniel). See Carpenter, 415-16.

26 Carpenter, 402.

27 'He's teaching me to write . . . and I'm teaching him to box,' declared Hemingway (Carpenter, 424).

Pound Era'<sup>28</sup> had begun. In retrospect, the opposite was true. The earlier London and Paris years, between 1908 and 1924, constituted the praiseworthy and productive 'Pound Era.' The period that followed – a truly 'historical period' because it ended with the Second World War – was marked by Pound's involvement in politics and ideologies that tarnished his name and eventually led to his arrest. Those years were nevertheless devoted to composing *The Cantos*, reminiscent in its epic proportions to *La Légende des siècles* [*The Legend of the Ages*] that Victor Hugo wrote in part during his twenty-year, forced political exile.



Rapallo

In the fall of 1924, Ezra and Dorothy Pound left Paris for Italy and chose to live on the Ligurian coast, in Rapallo, described by Yeats as 'the thin line of broken mother-of-pearl along the water's edge.'<sup>29</sup> Pound had never wanted children, but soon after he settled in Rapallo, his mistress, Olga Rudge, discreetly gave birth to their daughter Maria, in July of 1925 in northern Italy. A year later, Pound's wife Dorothy gave birth to her son Omar in Paris. Omar was primarily raised in England by his grandmother until he went off to boarding school. Maria, raised by a Tyrolian family on a farm in the small village of Gais in the northern Alps<sup>30</sup> until her teenage years, visited her parents off and on. Olga moved

28 Tytell, 7.

29 E. Fuller Torrey, *The Roots of Treason: Ezra Pound and the Secrets of St. Elizabeths* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), 122.

30 Like her father, the 'infant Gargantua,' born in a small mining town in Idaho, and her great grandfather, Thaddeus Pound, born in a log cabin and raised as a Quaker. Maria later changed her name to Mary when attending a boarding school in Florence.

to Venice to be closer to Pound, and later to the hills near Rapallo. A gifted violinist, she had a positive influence on Pound and inspired his work, as did the pianist Katherine Ruth Heyman, the other female musician in his life.<sup>31</sup>

The mid-1920s and the 1930s were, in most ways, intense and productive years for the poet, who worked on many of his *Cantos* and pamphlets. A regular flow of writers and friends visited Ezra and Dorothy Pound in Rapallo, some returning every year and some, such as Yeats, deciding to move there and join the colony of American and British exiles, including Pound's parents. New disciples were attending 'Eziversity' seminars, which took the form of discussions, often at Pound's favorite restaurant around lunch time, or even after a game of tennis or a swim.<sup>32</sup> Among them was eighteen-year-old James Laughlin, Pound's publisher-to-be.

While on the surface these appeared to be good years, something had changed in Pound's character. Some noted that he had lost touch with reality; they found his correspondence alarming and his *Cantos* difficult to understand, while others were simply shocked by his behavior. John Brown, a student at Hamilton College, wondered what had happened to 'the high priest of Imagism,' who was now just 'the editor of an obscure little transatlantic monthly called *Exile*,'<sup>33</sup> a literary journal that became more and more political in tone, despite Hemingway's warnings about the dangers of mixing poetry and politics. Pound also fell under the influence of two French intellectuals with Fascist and anti-Semitic leanings: Louis-Ferdinand Céline and especially Charles Maurras.<sup>34</sup> Although he admired Céline mostly as a great writer, Pound later quoted several of his anti-Semitic remarks in his radio broadcasts.<sup>35</sup>

31 In a 1920 review of one of Olga's recitals for *The New Age* [under the pseudonym of William Atheling], Pound's praise for the 'delicate firmness of her fiddling,' echoed his description, many years earlier, of Katherine's 'dreaming fingers' (Carpenter, 378).

32 A Pound scholar attending the 2005 Pound conference in Rapallo asked to see 'Eziversity' as if it were a real university.

33 As he wrote in 'A Troubadour at Hamilton' (*op. cit.*, *Prologue*), Brown did not know yet that he would soon follow Pound's footsteps, majoring in medieval studies and Romance languages, and spending time in Paris before and after the war, meeting Sylvia Beach and others. During the war he most probably also met Archibald MacLeish, and James Angleton when he was at the Offices of War Information and of Strategic Services.

34 Céline's famous *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932) was followed by several anti-Semitic and Fascist pamphlets; and Maurras was at the head of the right-wing anti-Semitic *Action Française*. See Tytell, 228; Carpenter, 588-89.

35 Controversy erupted in France when Céline appeared on (and was removed from) the 2011 list of national commemorations. The 50th anniversary of one of France's most read and translated writers will not be commemorated because of his anti-Semitism. <http://francfiles.org/blog/tag/louis-ferdinand-celine/>

Pound's meeting with Mussolini in 1933 was, of course, a catalytic event, but by then Pound was already on a singular path, drifting farther away from Joyce, Yeats, and Wyndam Lewis, and devoting more and more energy 'to free the world from the vices of Usura or Monetary Crime'<sup>36</sup> and from the tides of war. Pound's writings were often attacks, and some of his letters were angry in tone. Sadly, by the late 1930s Pound was no longer in tune with many of his old friends, although he kept attracting young poets and being himself attracted by new ideas.



*Ezra and Dorothy Pound (late 1930s)*

If it had not been for the war, Pound might have resumed his walking tours through Provence and his work on the music of the troubadours. His favorite instrument, however, was his typewriter. He used it almost as a pistol, firing away in a fury, rattling and pounding, ignoring punctuation as much as civility, oblivious to the casualties of lost friendships and diminished respect. Like Mussolini who, a quarter of a century earlier, had been writing angry editorials for socialist newspapers, Pound wrote over one hundred articles and letters to periodicals in 1934, and even more in 1935. He wrote too much, often in a frenzy, and became impatient and intolerant. He continued

writing to Mussolini and started writing to United States Congressmen and Senators. He even wrote to President Roosevelt, at first hoping to take part in the New Deal, and then trying to educate the President about Social Credit, as he had tried to do with Mussolini.

Pound's friends had encouraged him to return to America on more than one occasion in 1937 and 1938 to lecture and to visit; but when he finally sailed to New York in the spring of 1939, he was on a crusade to

<sup>36</sup> Wilhelm, *American Roots*, 210.

help stop the war, or at least to prevent Roosevelt from leading the U.S. into the war. Pound believed that America would benefit from his political insight at this critical juncture as much as England had benefited from his literary leadership two decades earlier. The difference was that Pound had remarkable talent as a poet, but not as an emissary for peace.



*James Angleton at Yale*

The one person anxiously awaiting Pound's visit (and rarely mentioned, if at all, in Pound biographies) was James Jesus Angleton, the famous spy-to-be. At the time, Angleton was a young Yale University student, eager to make a name for himself in the literary world. He had already interviewed and photographed Pound<sup>37</sup> in Rapallo in 1938 and had been 'incorporating [himself] into a sort of Ezra Pound information bureau' ever since (as if in training for his future counterintelligence networks). Angleton not only wanted Pound to be the 'Godfather' of his newly launched magazine, *Furioso* (with its first issue to include Pound's 'Introductory Text-Book'), but

also wanted to invite him to give a poetry reading at Yale and, with the help of Archibald MacLeish, at Harvard University.<sup>38</sup> Just one day before Pound's arrival in New York, Angleton wrote to him about a 'wide open' field, the radio!

Maybe this will interest you. MacLeish is the innovator and he is writing about it for the first issue. The idea is that every American has a couple of ears and that the ear is half poet. That by radio a vast crowd is reached which gets the muse by flicking a button. Hence whole masses can hear and obviously enjoy poetry. The poet chooses social subjects and whatever he pleases. ...The field is wide open. After MacLeish's AIR RAID broadcast, the station received more letters from all over than ever before. From farmers and all other classes. This is good and we have only started. Please comment.<sup>39</sup>

37 Angleton gave two of his Pound photos to the F.B.I. in 1943.

38 Angleton also mentioned waking up a friend at 2 a.m. to play Pound's *Villon* on his violin in his pajamas, and saying that 'he hadn't played anything with such strangeness.' Angleton to Pound, January 19, 1939 (Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT).

39 Angleton to Pound, 19 April, 1939 (Beinecke).

Angleton was anxious to hear the ‘sage,’ but did not realize that he might have given Pound – who had heard a radio broadcast of his opera *Villon* in 1931 – new ideas about using the air waves for matters other than poetry and music.

During his two-month American tour, Pound stayed mostly with friends, among them the Cummings in New York and William Carlos Williams in New Jersey. Some were annoyed by his political statements, others surprised by his appearance. Expecting to see ‘a dashing bohemian in a French béret,’ they saw instead a tired-looking man holding a brown paper bag for his overnights.<sup>40</sup> Williams, as a physician, was also worried about his old friend’s well-being, and he was right in his diagnosis: ‘the man is sunk, in my opinion, unless he can shake the fog of fascism out of his brain.’<sup>41</sup>

While in Washington, Pound attended a session of Congress and had a chance to meet with Congressman George Tinkham of Massachusetts, Senator William Borah of Idaho, Under Secretary of State Christian Herter, and many other known and less known politicians; but he never made it to the White House, as his request to meet with President Roosevelt was not honored. The political troubadour had failed in his attempts to convince his country or even his friends about the need to reform the economy.

Pound was also on a mission to reform education and to clean up what he called the ‘filth of the Universities,’<sup>42</sup> in particular, the way history was taught in America. Nevertheless, at Yale University, he was limited to the topic of modern poetry, with the excuse that economics might be ‘over-technical’ for Yale students.<sup>43</sup> After the visit, Angleton drove Pound to Cambridge, where he was scheduled to give a poetry reading at Harvard University (and where he also had a chance to meet Archibald MacLeish for the first time). This was his first reading in years, since the ones for *BLAST*, and students listening to him reading and yelling may have thought it was a real ‘blast.’ The same was true during the recording of some of Pound’s poems, which he asked to read accompanied by kettle drums.

40 J. J. Wilhelm, *Ezra Pound: The Tragic Years 1925-1972* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 152.

41 Williams to Laughlin, June 7, 1939 (Carpenter, 562).

42 Carpenter, 557.

43 Andrew Manning to Pound, April 25, 1939 (Beinecke).

During his American tour, Pound was better at playing tennis and beating all of his partners at Yale, Harvard, and Hamilton. His alma mater bestowed on him an honorary degree with a long citation recognizing his achievements and saluted him at the commencement ceremony with an *à propos* remark:

Your Alma Mater, however, is an old lady who has not always understood where you have been going, but she has watched you with interest and pride if not always with understanding. The larger public has also been at times amazed at your political and economic as well as your artistic credo, and you have retaliated by making yourself – not unintentionally perhaps – their gadfly.<sup>44</sup>

After the ceremony, when another honored guest made some anti-Fascist remarks, Pound entered into a heated argument with him.



*Elihu Root jr (son of Elihu Root, Nobel Peace Prize, 1912), H. V. Kaltenborn and Ezra Pound, at Hamilton College in 1939*

Pound sailed back to Italy on June 17, with plans to return soon, but his return trip had to be postponed because of America's involvement in the war. Angleton kept him posted on his progress in organizing an exhibit

<sup>44</sup> See full speech in C. David Heymann, *Ezra Pound: The Last Rowler* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 90.

of Pound works at the Yale Library and in inviting him to deliver the Yale Bergen Lecture.<sup>45</sup> Angleton repeatedly suggested that Pound send all his manuscripts and letters to Yale, to be stored there safely.<sup>46</sup> Pound had also exchanged letters with Angleton's father in Milan, and they saw each other again in Rapallo.

Pound was certainly concerned about the outbreak of the war, but because he was living in Italy, he was somewhat sheltered from it at first, and was therefore able to resume his work on the *Cantos*.<sup>47</sup> Music continued to play an important role in his relationship with Olga Rudge. The couple worked on Vivaldi concerti they had discovered and organized several concerts, which spurred on the Vivaldi revival after the war.<sup>48</sup> Playing tennis was also part of Ezra's daily life, and he kept Olga informed of his victories on the courts, while commenting on the hostilities. Olga replied, 'All the Brits running 'round in gas masks and Him piling up tennis scores?' and she added, 'Whoever will be editing His epistles in the year 2000 will be surprised.'<sup>49</sup>

While Europe was at war, in Rapallo, Pound was *Il poeta*, dressed like a prince or a member of the Riviera crowd; once again, a commanding figure, seemingly larger than life:

All around people stopped moving. It was as if a siren had sounded and nobody could hear anything or even move until it had stopped. ...They were all looking at a man advancing in giant strides. He was tall and broad, with a pointed beard. He had on a white suit that, large though he was, literally flowed from him. The spotless trousers wrapped around his legs as he walked, the shining coat billowed in the breeze. There was a towel tied about his waist and the fringe from it bobbed rhythmically. His hat, which was white too, had been slapped on at a dashing angle. He marched by me, swinging a cane, ignoring the awed Italians, his eyes on an interesting point in space.<sup>50</sup>

45 The professor in charge of the Bergen Lecture had been opposed to inviting him, with the excuse that 'Pound is crazy.'

46 Most of them ended up at Yale, after Pound's death.

47 *Cantos LII-LXXI* were published by Faber and Faber in January, 1940.

48 Carpenter, 520-21.

49 Anne Conover, *Olga Rudge and Ezra Pound: 'What Thou Lovest Well ...'* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), 138. Olga and Ezra always addressed each other in the third person (which later confused the F.B.I.).

50 Elizabeth Delehanty, 'A Day with Ezra Pound,' *New Yorker*, April 13, 1940. 92-93.

After looking like a revolutionary Yankee in London and a *poète maudit* in Paris, Pound (now a doctor of letters) finally looked like one of the respected notables in Rapallo, but he was distinctive enough that passersby would stop to look at him. And that ‘interesting point in space’ could be read as a metaphor for Pound’s obsessions – one of which was his opposition to the war, as attested by the many letters, riddled though they were with pro-Mussolini and pro-Hitler sentiments, that he wrote in those years hoping to prevent the outbreak of the conflict. Like the troubadours of the crusades, Ezra Pound had become combative in his eagerness to save the world.



Ezra Pound (by Rolando Monti)

## Chapter II

# ‘The Devil’s Box’

(1940-49)

It is often said that in order to understand the *Cantos*, one should be familiar with all the great works, the Classics, and many a foreign language. The same is true of understanding Pound’s intellect and persona: one should have a detailed and comprehensive picture of all of Pound’s interests and obsessions over the years, including his fascination with the sacred love cult of the troubadours. In his biography, Carpenter concluded that Pound’s ‘obsession with the Mysteries was therefore an oblique contribution to his growing irrationality and loss of judgment as the 1930s advanced.’<sup>1</sup> But even more so were his obsessions in the political and economic arenas and his complex attempts at trying to save the world. Pound’s Fascism and anti-Semitism have been the subjects of many books and articles, attempting to explain why this American Villon is still ‘in purgatory’, as Leon Surette’s book title suggests: *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism*.<sup>2</sup>

In a strange twist of fate, Pound himself prophetically cursed what would lead to his downfall, when he mentioned the ‘Devil’s box’<sup>3</sup> of a radio, left by a friend in the spring of 1940. Was it the spark that eventually led Pound to choose the airwaves to communicate with the widest audience? Or was he still under the influence of the pro-Nazi broadcasts of Father Charles Coughlin, whom he had heard in America?<sup>4</sup> Like many in his generation, Pound was fascinated by the new technology that supported nationwide radio networks for mass communication, but unfortunately, that ‘god damn destructive and dispersive devil of an invention’<sup>5</sup> eventually short-circuited Pound’s best intentions for peace.

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1 Carpenter, 513.

2 University of Illinois Press, 1999.

3 The often misquoted ‘Devil’s box’ was a ‘Devil Box’ in Pound’s letter to Ronald Duncan (March 31, 1940). See D. D. Paige, ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1950), 343.

4 Carpenter, 561.

5 Paige, *Letters*, 342.

On January 21, 1941, Pound started recording for 'the American Hour,' and enjoying this new 'vurry funny' technique even more than the typewriter.<sup>6</sup> His radio scripts had the same tone as his letters, articles, and some of his conversations; and his delivery over the air was similar to his manner of speaking in his poetry readings and recording sessions at Harvard. The main difference was that his 'Ezra Pound speaking' sessions, broadcast several times a week, were reaching a much wider audience in Europe, the U.S., and the Pacific. Pound wanted his audience to 'listen to historic information in order to understand fascism and how to beat the financiers.'<sup>7</sup> However, those broadcasts, which MacLeish later described as being 'obscene, rambling, spiteful, and altogether foolish,'<sup>8</sup> did not amuse all of his listeners, especially not the Italian Military Intelligence department and the American ambassador.

When Pound started talking on the radio with his own highly political voice, disturbing and even menacing consequences began to loom. The Federal Communications Commission (F.C.C.) in Washington had started monitoring some of his broadcasts as early as the fall of 1941. Although the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor should have put an end to the broadcasts, Pound resumed them after a while, speaking in a voice 'that had begun to assume a rasping, buzzing quality like the sound of a hornet stuck in a jar.'<sup>9</sup>

Pound made several unsuccessful attempts to return to America in 1941-42, and when he tried to renew his passport, the U.S. Consulate Office imposed conditions that would have severely restricted his chances of returning to Italy, where Pound's family, including his elderly parents, were living. His family situation was complicated, as well, and it was not clear whether Olga, Mary, and Pound's parents were to accompany him. However, travel plans were finally canceled when Homer Pound broke his hip and became ill. Then, in late January of 1942, the Italian Supreme Command decided to allow Pound and his family to remain in Italy, which may have encouraged him to continue with his radio talks. Despite his Fascist salutes, Pound considered himself an American citizen and, therefore, still free to express his opinion, which unfortunately was becoming more and more vitriolic.

6 As he wrote to Laughlin (Carpenter, 584).

7 Carpenter, 587.

8 MacLeish to H. H. Bundy, Sept. 10, 1943. See R. H. Winnick, ed., *Archibald MacLeish: Letters 1907-1982*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 317.

9 Tytell, 265.

Washington's monitoring of the radio programs went on for several months, and by December of 1942 the F.B.I. had started its investigations of Pound. J. Edgar Hoover's men went to the home of William Carlos Williams in New Jersey and to the cottage of Ronald Duncan in England, among other places. All of those interrogated were also asked if they could 'recognize Pound's voice' on the radio broadcasts (who couldn't!), although they probably did not realize that recognizing the voice, in itself, would be valuable evidence for the F.B.I. in building a case against Pound. Many people, upset with Pound and quick to condemn him for his ideas, cooperated with the F.B.I. special agents by volunteering information and names, and providing books and letters.

In the many hundreds of F.B.I. documents, despite the censored names, one can recognize the interrogations of James Laughlin, Theodore Spencer (Harvard), and the Angletons, both father and son.<sup>10</sup> Hugh Angleton stated that Pound's political beliefs were 'eccentric and unsound,' and said that he would be 'quite happy to testify.'<sup>11</sup> The same was true of James Angleton, who stated that 'although it would be distasteful for him to do so he would be willing to testify against Dr. Pound if it became necessary'<sup>12</sup> (a surprising response, but perhaps typical of a counter-intelligence mindset). Angleton added that 'it was largely due to his suggestion' that Pound came to the U.S. in 1939, a claim that Pound refuted as false.<sup>13</sup>

Two major events in the summer of 1943 were to have a profound effect on the Italians and on Pound's life. Victor Emmanuel, king of Italy, had Mussolini arrested in Rome on July 25. The next day, a Federal Grand Jury in Washington indicted Ezra Pound on charges of treason. After hearing the news of his indictment, Pound wrote to United States Attorney General Francis Biddle on August 4, one of his few

10 F.B.I. Freedom of Information Release Documents Concerning Ezra Pound, 100-34099, section 2, serial 31 to 70 (EP Collection, Burke Library, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY). Regarding the Angletons, see Michael Holzman, *James Jesus Angleton, the CIA, and the Craft of Counterintelligence* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 29-30.

11 F.B.I. file no. 61-179 (Burke).

12 F.B.I. file no. 61-213 (Burke).

13 In the May 1940 *Yale Literary Magazine*, Angleton wrote: 'Mr. Pound expressed the desire to lecture at Yale and thought it reason enough for returning to America after 30 years of self-imposed exile.' In a June 7 letter to Angleton, Pound took issue with his statement: 'it is inexact/ in fact it aint so at all, to suggest that I went to the U.S. in order to lecture at Yale. I said I wd/ be pleased to do so, but it was NOT a reason for being in the U.S.A.' And he added: 'I did not LECTURE at Haavid. I read Cantos' (Beinecke).

well-crafted and well-typed, polite letters. Arguing in his own defense, he wrote: 'I do not believe that the simple fact of speaking over the radio, wherever placed, can in itself constitute treason.' And he added that 'free speech under modern conditions becomes a mockery if it does not include the right of free speech over the radio'<sup>14</sup> (a belief he later echoed in a *Canto*, as 'free speech without free radio is a zero'<sup>15</sup>). The Attorney General never replied. To him Pound was a still traitor.

MacLeish and Hemingway did the best they could to help Pound, and shared their concern with others as well. Hemingway wrote to Allen Tate (Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress), that they had 'an absolute and complete obligation to oppose any hanging' of Pound, even if he 'ought to go to the loony bin;' and he described the broadcasts as 'absolutely loony drivel.'<sup>16</sup> Allen Tate replied that the only one who could intervene was MacLeish, who was well-known in Washington as Librarian of Congress<sup>17</sup> and Assistant Director of the Office of War Information. Tate's letter was intercepted by postal censorship, and a report sent by J. Edgar Hoover to Assistant Attorney General Tom Clark indicated that Tate had shown Hemingway's letter to MacLeish. MacLeish, in turn, wrote to the Assistant Secretary of War, Harvey H. Bundy, that Pound should be 'brought to civil trial,' thus preventing 'a half cracked and extremely foolish individual' from being conferred with 'martyrdom' and preventing the Allied Forces from shooting him.<sup>18</sup>

The Armistice between Italy and the Allied forces was signed on September 8, and while others were concerned about his fate, Pound needed to bring some peace to his own soul. A couple of days later, he left Rome on foot and started out on his journey north, armed with a map, a walking stick, and sturdy boots. After several days on roads and trains, Pound arrived at his destination – the village of Gais where his daughter had been raised. He had come to tell her the truth. Not about his indictment, but about Dorothy and Omar, who were unknown to Mary at that point.

14 Heymann, 136-138.

15 *The Pisan Cantos LXXIV*, 426.

16 Carlos Baker, ed., *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters 1917-1961* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981), 549-50. In 1956 Hemingway wrote to Pound about that letter, telling him that they were all ready to get hanged with him (Baker, 865).

17 Contrary to what appears in various Pound publications (including mine!), MacLeish was not yet Librarian of Congress at the time of Pound's 1939 visit. His nomination was official June 29, and he assumed his duties October 2, 1939 (until 1944, at which time he became Assistant Secretary of State).

18 Winnick, 317.

Mary was surprised, of course, but mature enough, at age eighteen, to understand and to make the best out of a situation that was more difficult for her father than for her. Someday, if there is a film to tell the true story about Ezra Pound, one of the more poignant sequences may very well be his long journey north to the Tyrolean Alps that September of 1943.

Early in the spring of 1944, the Germans, who were occupying Rapallo, gave Ezra and Dorothy twenty-four hours to leave their seaside apartment. They moved in with Olga in the hills, at Sant' Ambrogio. Pound soon resumed his work on the *Cantos*, which was perhaps his only way of escaping a situation at home that was tense at times. Things were tense on the war front, as well. On April 27, 1945, Mussolini and his mistress were killed by partisans. The Germans were urged to surrender, and American troops soon started arriving and occupying Rapallo. Pound was anxious to meet with the American soldiers, to explain his situation and the radio broadcasts, as well as to give them information about Italy, but apparently they were not interested. The Department of Justice, however, had not forgotten about Pound.

On January 24, 1944, Attorney General Francis Biddle had written to Secretary of War Henry Stimson requesting that if and when Pound were arrested, 'he be thoroughly interrogated' and 'an effort be made to locate and interview persons, particularly American citizens, having information regarding his acts of treason.'<sup>19</sup> Judging from the many documents the F.B.I. continued to gather, an effort was made, and it finally led to Pound's arrest in May of 1945.

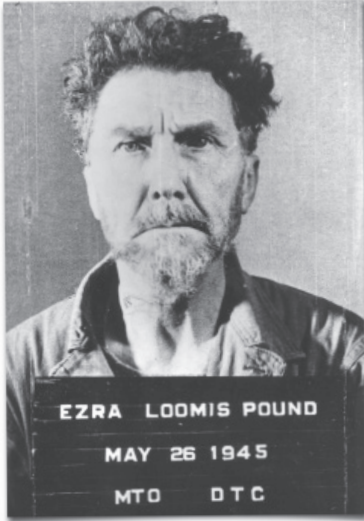
Legends abound regarding the arrest. During my 2003 visit at Brunenburg Castle when I asked Pound's daughter for details, she said that 'everybody arrested Pound.' Mary then showed me a small vignette in a 2003 newsletter from *Writers and Artists in Idaho*, stating that 'Pound's life was saved after WWII through the efforts of fellow-Idahoan and top C.I.A. official James Angleton.'<sup>20</sup> The young Yale student, after joining the Army in 1943, had indeed passed to the dark side of poetry – espionage.<sup>21</sup> Appointed head of the X-2 branch in Rome the fall of 1944,

<sup>19</sup> Carpenter, 625-26.

<sup>20</sup> Angleton joined the C.I.A. in 1947.

<sup>21</sup> Angleton worked under his former Yale English professor, Norman Holmes Pearson, who had become chief of the X-2 counter-intelligence branch of the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) in London. Angleton's father had also been recruited by the O.S.S. during the war, which may explain his willingness to testify in the Pound case.

he was in charge of X-2 operations for all of Italy by the spring of 1945. In other words, Angleton was in Rome around the time of Pound's arrest. What he did exactly, if anything, to help Pound, is not clear, but he must have known of his arrest.<sup>22</sup>



*Ezra Pound, arrested*

The more official version regarding Pound's arrest is that on May 3, 1945, having heard of a reward, two Italian partisans dressed like bandits came to the house, knocked on the door with a gun, and kicked it open, shouting 'Seguici, traditore!' ['Come with us, traitor!'].<sup>23</sup> They arrested Pound and brought him down the hill to their 'headquarters.' Although Pound was released the same day for lack of an arrest warrant, he decided he needed to contact the American authorities, so he set off for their headquarters – an outing that apparently led to a second arrest when he met a group of partisans and a black soldier<sup>24</sup> in the Carchio mountains. They

brought Pound to Viareggio to Special Agent Joseph Greco who, as the person in charge of the 92nd Infantry Division<sup>25</sup> and of the Counter Intelligence Center Suspect Cage, 'screened thousands of refugees' and 'detected and confessed many enemy espionage and sabotage agents.'<sup>26</sup> Greco recalled that 'the partisans had no idea who Pound was but they did know that he must have been bad news because he wore leather boots and a type of hat that caused the partisans to feel that Pound was a Fascist persona.'<sup>27</sup> Greco turned Pound over to Special Agent Frank

22 It is still not clear whether Angleton visited Pound or not, after his arrest (Holzman, 66).

23 Carpenter, 642.

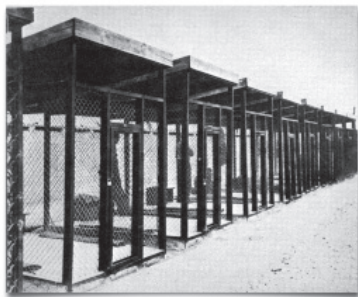
24 Joseph Greco only stated that Pound ran into a group of 'Yugoslavian partisans' (in a letter to M.-N. Little, April 29, 2004). The black soldier is mentioned by Julien Cornell, *The Trial of Ezra Pound: A Documented Account of The Treason Case by the Defendant's Lawyer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 19.

25 The African-American 92nd Infantry Division is often referred to as the 'Buffalo soldiers.'

26 As stated in a letter from Greco's Commanding officer (sent by Greco to M.-N. Little).

27 In April 29, 2004 letter from Greco to M.-N. Little.

Amprin who had been sent by the F.B.I. to Genoa to interrogate Pound thoroughly. Amprim interrogated Olga (who had accompanied Pound), as well as Dorothy in her home, and he confiscated many of Pound's documents and letters, including his typewriter.



*High-security cages*



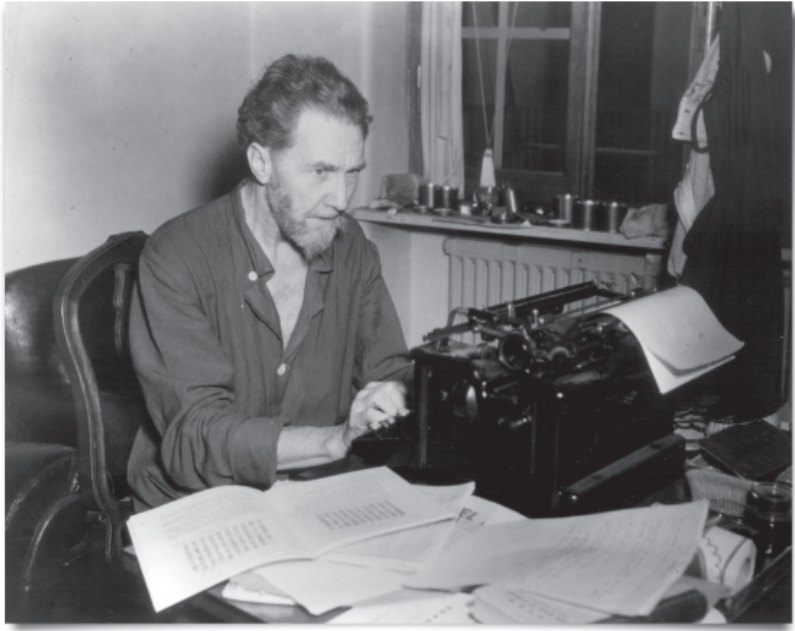
*Disciplinary Training Center*

It took a while for the F.B.I., the Counter Intelligence Corps, the State Department, and all others involved to decide what action should be taken next. Finally, on May 24, Pound was handcuffed and taken from Genoa to the U.S. Army's Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa, where he was locked up in a high-security cage for almost a month. Pound called it the 'gorilla cage,' and later described his predicament as that of 'a caged panther.' Exposed to the elements – blazing sun, rain, and cold nights – he had a difficult time at first, but was eventually moved to the medical compound. Despite his age Pound survived these rough conditions, thanks to his physical fitness at the time of his arrest, and later wrote about the experience: 'If the hoar frost grip thy tent/ Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent.'<sup>28</sup> He exercised, played imaginary tennis, and fenced by himself with a stick; but best of all, he was soon able to use a typewriter at night in the medical center. 'The constant clanging and banging of his typewriter, which he punched angrily with his index fingers, were always accompanied by a high-pitched humming sound he made as the carriage raced the bell. He swore well and profusely over typing errors,'<sup>29</sup> and with that background music, he wrote some of his best poetry, *The Pisan Cantos*:

<sup>28</sup> *The Pisan Cantos* LXXXIV, 540.

<sup>29</sup> Robert L. Allen, 'The Cage' (reprinted from *Esquire*, February 1958), in *A Casebook on Ezra Pound*, eds. William Van O'Connor and Edward Stone (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1959), 36.

Nor can who has passed a month in the death cells  
 believe in capital punishment  
 No man who has passed a month in the death cells  
 believes in cages for beasts<sup>30</sup>



*The poet, in captivity*

Five month later, on October 3, Pound finally saw Dorothy again, and a couple of weeks later Olga and Mary, but he missed his son Omar's visit by one day.<sup>31</sup> Arrangements were made by James Laughlin to find a good lawyer in America. Julien Cornell was chosen and started working on the case. In Washington D. C., the State Department and the Department of War were planning for Pound's trial (despite the lack of witnesses and other details) and for his return to the United States. On November 16, Pound was finally flown back to Washington, where he arrived two days later after a fifty-hour trip (and his first one by air). 'Just off the side as the plane approached could be seen the lights of sprawling

<sup>30</sup> *Pisan Cantos LXXXIII*, 530.

<sup>31</sup> That day, Mary understood who Omar was, but Omar was not told who she was. Omar, then in the U.S. Army, had not seen his father since 1938.

St. Elizabeths Hospital, the federal mental hospital located up the hill from the airfield.<sup>32</sup> Although nobody knew it yet, St. Elizabeths would soon be Pound's new prison.



*St. Elizabeths Hospital*

Two days after Pound arrived in Washington, Attorney General Francis Biddle, the principal American judge at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who had drafted the proposal that led to the establishment of the Tribunal, left to attend the Nuremberg Trials. Given that Biddle and Stimson held such high positions in the U.S. government and in the Tribunal, their decisions in regard to Pound and other American citizens who had been broadcasting for the Axis powers was under extreme scrutiny from all sides. Francis Biddle indicted Pound for treason, but Pound was spared a trial, and perhaps even death, after his attorney filed a motion stating that he considered Pound 'who had suffered a complete mental collapse' to be 'still insane' and therefore, 'unable to stand trial.'<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Torrey, 177.

<sup>33</sup> Cornell, 16.

When the ensuing medical evaluations arrived at the same conclusion, there was no choice (by Federal Statute) but to transfer Pound to St. Elizabeths Hospital where he was to be confined until his condition improved. He was first placed in Howard Hall, for the criminally insane, and later moved to Chestnut Ward where he could have visitors. A sanity hearing on February 13, 1946, found Pound still to be 'of unsound mind' and therefore 'unfit for trial,' as stated in one of the official F.B.I. documents regarding the Ezra Loomis Pound Treason case.<sup>34</sup> But for the F.B.I., the case was not closed. The same was true for the lawyers, psychiatrists, family, friends, disciples, and followers, who were soon involved. A detailed account of the first few years of Pound's captivity can be found in the letters Ezra and Dorothy exchanged, which were later edited by Omar Pound himself and Robert Spoo (with extensive references to F.B.I. documents).<sup>35</sup>

In 1949, more battles arose when the newly-established Bollingen Prize<sup>36</sup> was awarded to Pound for *The Pisan Cantos*, written before and during his incarceration in Pisa. The jury composed of the Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress included T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Allen Tate, Conrad Aiken, Robert Lowell, and Karl Shapiro. Most of them were also adherents of the school of New Criticism. The poet and critic Katherine Garrison Chapin (wife of Attorney General Francis Biddle), who was also a Fellow, did not vote for Pound because she could not separate his poetry from his political beliefs. Francis Biddle, who felt the same, wrote to Librarian, Luther H. Evans, that he 'recommended strongly against the decision' to award the Bollingen to Pound.<sup>37</sup> Archibald MacLeish also shared with Evans his mixed feelings regarding Pound and *The Pisan Cantos*. MacLeish later wrote to his friend the French poet Alexis Leger (Saint-John Perse), who was visiting Katherine and Francis Biddle, 'tell K, I understand she is the one real authentic vote against the Pisan Fiasco.'<sup>38</sup> Robert Frost and Louis

34 See transcript of the hearing in Cornell, 154-215.

35 Omar Pound and Robert Spoo, eds., *Ezra and Dorothy Pound: Letters in Captivity 1945-1946* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

36 In 1945, Paul Mellon provided funding for the Bollingen Foundation, which established the Bollingen Prize in 1948 (to be conferred by the Library of Congress).

37 Carpenter, 788. The only member of the Biddle family to visit Pound at St. Elizabeths was the Attorney General's brother, the artist George Biddle (who was also a friend of Alexis Leger).

38 Winnick, 348. The Biddles and the MacLeishes had also belonged to the Lost Generation in the Paris of the Twenties. Katherine Biddle had introduced Alexis Leger to her husband, the Attorney General, and to MacLeish, her friend and colleague at the Library of Congress (which led to Leger being offered a consultant's position at the Library of Congress in 1941).

Untermeyer took part in the opposition, but it was primarily Robert Hillyer's attacks in the *Saturday Review of Literature* that sparked the Bollingen controversy. Hillyer even accused T. S. Eliot and others members of the jury of being part of a 'Fascist conspiracy.' As for Pound, he referred to the Bollingen Foundation as 'Bubble-gum' and to the Prize as 'Bollingen's bid for immortality.'<sup>39</sup>

Some of the same friends who tried to spare Pound the rigors of a trial, had hoped the Bollingen Prize would help liberate him. On the contrary, the award delayed it even more and prolonged the controversy over Pound's politics, often distracting attention from the poetry itself. The Prize rekindled the turmoil that Pound's family, friends, and enemies experienced after his arrest and his incarceration. Once again, poetry and politics could not be separated. The award that was intended to honor the poet, penalized him instead, and even hindered his chances for the most prestigious of all literary awards – the Nobel Prize. As a result, one can consider the events that followed to be due in great part to the repercussions, in Sweden, of the Bollingen Prize controversy.

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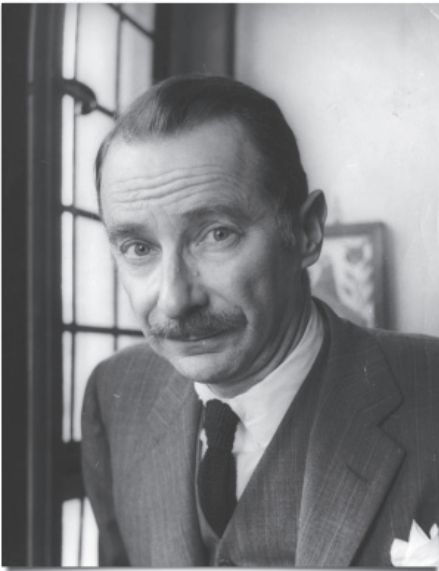
39 Carpenter, 793.

# Chapter III

## Northern Lights

(1953)

‘Why don’t you go down there and ask him yourself – you, from the Nobel Prize country – it wouldn’t hurt, would it?’ Yale University professor Norman Holmes Pearson, his eyes glittering with mischief and good humor, moved his glasses up and down over his nose as he responded to a request from a Swedish student, Bengt Nirje, for help with some difficult passages in Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*.<sup>1</sup> Tom Wolfe, one of Nirje’s classmates in Pearson’s well-attended seminar in American Literature, recalled – almost a quarter of a century later – Pearson’s smile as ‘a second voice,’ and his talents as those of a magician:



*Norman Holmes Pearson*

‘In any event, by the time he assigned us the most rigorous and bewildering exercise of the year – the deciphering of Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* – his magic was working so well that we no longer felt like cryptographers approaching, from the outside, one of the most esoterically coded messages of our literature. We felt like we were instead on the inside, inventing the code as we went along, in one of the grandest literary games of the century.’<sup>2</sup>

Wolfe and Nirje were unaware that their professor had also been an expert in deciphering German codes during World

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1 Bengt Nirje had started writing down some of his recollections (unpublished).  
2 Tom Wolfe, ‘In Tribute To Norman Holmes Pearson’ (Dwight Chapel, November 11, 1975), published in *Pembroke Magazine*, no. 8, 29 (MacLeish Collection, Greenfield C.C.). Well-known American author Tom Wolfe graduated from Yale in 1957.

War II, and that he had been the legendary head of the X-2 counter-espionage section of the Office of Strategic Services, in London. Would they have believed him if he had told them that?<sup>3</sup> When Pearson, with an intriguing smile and an offhand manner, described himself ‘parachuting into Denmark during the war,’ his students giggled. How could he have jumped – he with one leg slightly dragging behind the other, with his permanent forward-bend from the hip? But when Pearson referred to Lawrence Durrell and Graham Green as the ‘boys’ with whom he had worked during the war, his students were mystified. And one evening at a dinner in Pearson’s home, Nirje noticed the Norwegian cross of the Order of St. Olaf in a special frame. ‘I was the first American to step ashore in Norway when the war ended,’ was their professor’s only comment.

Nirje’s life was in fact connected with Pearson’s in ways that neither of them fully understood at the time. A couple of weeks before the end of the War, Nirje – who was doing his military service in the Swedish army – was stationed at the Norwegian border east of Oslo. The railroad line from Oslo to Göteborg had already been interrupted by the largest sabotage operation in the history of the resistance movement. The operation had been planned with the support of the O.S.S. Special Operations Branch in Stockholm, under the command of Norman Holmes Pearson.

When Bengt Nirje, some forty years later, read the chapter devoted to ‘The Professor: N.H.P.’ in Robin Winks’s *Cloak & Gown: Scholars in the Secret War*,<sup>4</sup> he finally understood why his professor had bragged about being parachuted into Denmark. He also discovered that Pearson had visited Stockholm and had sneaked into Norway during the occupation. When the Germans surrendered in 1945, Norman Holmes Pearson was, indeed, the first American to enter Oslo. Immediately after the war, Pearson was invited to Copenhagen and Oslo, for due thanks and celebration, and in later years, he enjoyed returning to Norway to visit friends from the war and the resistance movement. His fondness for Scandinavia was perhaps another reason for him to encourage his student Bengt Nirje, ‘from the Nobel Prize country,’ to visit Ezra Pound, although there are no indications that Pearson had even been campaigning for Pound to get the Nobel Prize.

3 Nor would they have known that, when back at Yale after the war, Pearson was recruiting students for the C.I.A.

4 New York: William Morrow, 1987.

In Norman Holmes Pearson's correspondence with Hilda Doolittle, there are also details about his seminar at Yale University and about his students, such as Nirje, who visited Pound. 'Some of my graduate students want to visit him: he always receives them, then writes me about them, sometimes offers to enroll them as correspondents. Somehow he has added a chapter to the legend, which is not at all an anti-climax,' Pearson wrote to H. D. on December 22, 1952. After a visit of his own, he described the 'alcove' where Pound wrote and received guests, and also those in his entourage who were perhaps less fortunate:

There are many men in the ward; I should think perhaps fifty, of whom none are bedridden but who use the hallway as a clubroom. Some constantly pace back and forth along its length, looking straight ahead with eyes which see nothing, and dragging their feet as though these were loaded with chains. Chairs line the walls between the entrances to the bedrooms, and in them are more vacant stares, and the ends of cigarettes which smoke as though placed in an inhaling-exhaling machine.<sup>5</sup>

Accounts by other visitors who described Pound's living quarters and his routine at St. Elizabeths through the years, corroborate Pearson's description, but despite the grim conditions, Pound somehow managed to work and communicate with the outside world, thanks to his visitors and to his many correspondents. What is more alarming is the number of years the confinement lasted and the toll it must also have taken on Pound's wife, Dorothy. Some of these conditions made an impression on Nirje, when he visited Pound for the first time that Easter in 1953. Nirje, who later became an expert on mental disability and wrote the 'Normalization Principle'<sup>6</sup> (to treat disabled persons as normal human beings), still remembered, over half a century later, his two-hour visit and the ward's rather somber atmosphere, the gray army blankets, rough furniture, and somewhat dirty quarters. During that visit, Nirje also met Pound's daughter, Mary, and promised her that he would do everything he could to help liberate her father. Nirje did keep what he liked to call 'the promise to Mary.' He wrote to his friend Lars Forssell in Sweden, to alert him about the sad situation, hoping something could be done.

5 Donna Krolik Hollenberg, ed., *Between History and Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), 135, 133. Pearson became H.D.'s friend in 1943 in London and promoted her work.

6 Bengt Nirje, 'The normalization principle and its human management implications,' in *Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded*, eds. R-B.Kugel & W. Wolfensberger (Washington, D.C.: President's Committee on Mental Retardation, 1969), 179-195.

Forssell had been the first one to mention Ezra Pound's poetry to his circle of Swedish friends, which included Bengt Nirje and Erik Lindegren. Nirje had met Forssell after the war and had introduced him to his friend Lindegren, who was already a published poet. The three of them became inseparable, and in 1949-50, when Nirje was the editor for the culture section of *Arbetaren* [*The Worker*], a progressive newspaper in Stockholm, they often wrote articles together.<sup>7</sup>

### Present Augie's Foreign Students



Left to right above are Oli With, Lars Forssell, Ingrid Bulow and

Lars Forssell at Augustana  
(upper left)

Where did Forssell first read Pound's poems? At Augustana College in Illinois? The young Swede had arrived in the small, Midwestern town of Rock Island, Illinois, in May of 1947 to study English literature. He was there for only a year but had a chance to work on English translations of a few Swedish poems, which were included in a bilingual edition published in 1948, with a cover vignette by Forssell himself.<sup>8</sup> That spring, Forssell returned home to Sweden with a B.A. degree in hand and a new taste for the art of translation. His first book of poems, which came out the following year, included a translation of a Pound poem.<sup>9</sup> It would be neither his last book, nor his last Pound translation.

Forssell's real tour de force that year, at age twenty-one, was his long article on Ezra Pound in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*.<sup>10</sup> He had a remarkable ability to grasp Pound's difficult poems (which, as Forssell later admitted were difficult in the extreme), Pound's fascination with Confucius and the French troubadours, and the complex relationships between Pound and his entourage – notably, Hemingway and T. S. Eliot. Forssell had, of course, done his homework and read Robert Hillyer's attacks in the *Saturday Review*, as well as the essays by Karl

7 They signed their pieces 'Bjell,' mixing some of their initials and also alluding to Lasse's poem 'Bjällror' ['Bells'].

8 *Modern Swedish Poems* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1948).

9 *Ryttaren* [*The Rider*] (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1949).

10 'Ezra Pound,' *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* 18, no. 8 (1949): 608-619.

Shapiro and John Berryman in the *Partisan Review*, among others, and most of the newspaper articles about the Bollingen controversy in the United States and in Sweden. Forssell wrote that he did not want 'to shade the picture of Pound, the Fascist pig' nor did he want to excuse Pound's anti-Semitism. However, on the very first page of his essay, he bravely stated that one could not separate poetry and politics, and that if one condemned Pound's Fascism – which was also a major theme in his poems – one must recognize his other major theme, pacifism, and his considerable talents as a poet. This was, of course, perhaps easier said than done. And some of the heated arguments regarding the Pound case may very well have been rekindled in the summer of 1952, when Forssell participated in the famous Salzburg Seminar in American Studies in Austria, with Karl Shapiro, Saul Bellow, and others.<sup>11</sup>



Lars Forssell (1952)

In 1953, Bonniers published Lars Forssell's first translations of Pound's poems, *25 Dikter*. The small book of poems, which met with success, was followed by a second edition that same year, and a third in 1954. By trans-

<sup>11</sup> Bengt Nirje had participated in the 1951 seminar, directed then by Richard B. Lewis, which earned him a scholarship to Yale University the following year.

lating Pound's poems into Swedish, Forssell introduced the American poet to Swedish readers, especially those in literary circles. The well-known writer and academician Per Wästberg, for example, mentioned those Pound poems in several entries in his journal. Having a chance to read the poems when he visited Forssell that summer in 1953, was a wonderful experience for Wästberg, 'a joy that almost brought tears.'<sup>12</sup> Later on in October, so was listening (most probably over the radio) to Auden reading the *Cantos* in his clear and musical voice.<sup>13</sup>

That fall, encouraged by Bengt Nirje,<sup>14</sup> Forssell sent his 25 *Dikter* to their author, at St. Elizabeths. Pound replied on November 14, sending his 'Thanks' and also his 'Congratulations.' The two poets started writing to each other, mostly about literature and translation.<sup>15</sup> In his next letter, a 'strictly anonymous communication to L.F.' on December 5, 1953, Pound gave a definition of 'usury,' a term he said that 'should have been defined 20 years ago' and that now belonged in *Canto* footnotes: 'a charge for the use of purchasing power, levied without regard to production; often without regard even to the possibilities of production.' He also gave a long list of people to whom Forssell should send his 25 *Dikter*, a list that included his daughter Mary in Tirolo, Olivia Rossetti in Rome, Eva Hesse in Munich, Wyndham Lewis in London, and even Jean Cocteau in Paris. Pound did not forget Norman Holmes Pearson who, he thought, would then mention Forssell's translation 'in his seminar (Ezrology)'. That same day, December 5, Pearson was writing to Pound with some good news:

Incidentally, a message from Nirje, the young Swede I sent you last [academic] year said that there was a new Swedish translation of your work out. But do not know whether of *Cantos* or other poems. At any rate, it immediately sold out, and is an immense critical success I gather. Real excitement. Nirje has also been asked by *Bonniers* mag for an article on your work. I hope he will do a good job. Please me, naturally, as an antenna from seminar.

12 *En Ung Författares Dagbook [Journal of a Young Writer]* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1997), 281.

13 Wästberg, 295-296.

14 In his November 22 letter, Nirje had also encouraged him to send the book to the 'the guys in the [Swedish] Academy.' (This letter will be added to the Forssell papers at Kungliga.)

15 The Pound to Forssell letters are at Kungliga Biblioteket, the Royal Library in Stockholm, Sweden. The Forssell to Pound letters are at Beneicke. The Pound to Forssell letters were transcribed and annotated by Claes Wahlin, 'Some sweedes reads' (master's thesis, Stockholm University, 1990), 1-55.

And Pearson concluded toward the end of his long letter, 'I always believe there are many doors into cantos; let them choose the one they want so long as they go in.'<sup>16</sup>

Neither Pound nor Pearson knew at the time that the young Forssell was really a troubadour at heart. It is not a coincidence that the first four poems in his book *25 Dikter* are labeled *Provençaliska motiv* [*Motifs from Provence*] and include his favorite poem, "Till Ysolt."<sup>17</sup> The second section, *Epigram*, which regroups various poems, is followed by excerpts from *Sextus Propertius*, and finally, a good selection of six *Cantos*. His second book of Pound translations, *Cantos I-XVII*, came out in 1959.

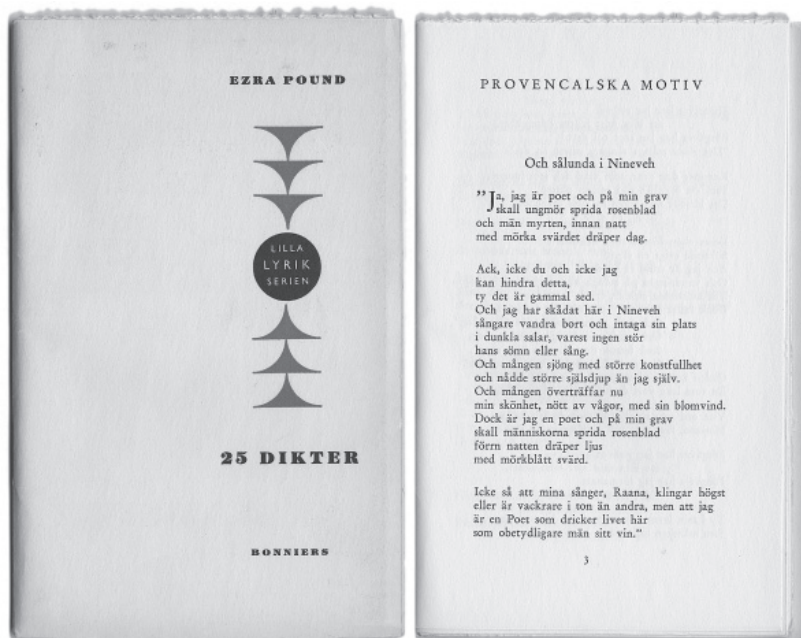
In his 1991 published memoir (mostly about his friends), Lars Forssell, a distinguished member of the Swedish Academy since 1971, reminisced about these early years and realized that his best schooling had, indeed, been the art of translation, and especially the translation of Ezra Pound's first seventeen *Cantos*.<sup>18</sup> He still remembered the influence Pound's poems and essays had upon his own work, particularly the ones with a lyrical vein, because Forssell had always liked the poetry one could 'sing.' Among Forssell's best-loved troubadours was Arnaut Daniel, the French troubadour who had been a favorite of Pound and T. S. Eliot. A disciple of Boris Vian, Forssell had started singing French style political ballads in cafés and cabarets in the 1950s, and he soon became involved in theatre, as well. By the late 1970s, Forssell was one of Sweden's most popular writers of songs and ballads. He had perhaps always been a troubadour himself, and a brave one, indeed.

In December of 1953, Forssell took it upon himself to write to – none other than – the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, to alert him about Ezra Pound's difficult situation. He carefully crafted his three-and-a-half-page, typed letter because he was, of course, addressing the Secretary-General; even more importantly, he was writing about the fate of a great poet, and one who had certainly influenced Forssell himself. As proof, he sent along a copy of his Pound translations, *25 Dikter*, inscribed for the Secretary-General.

<sup>16</sup> Unpublished letter (Beinecke).

<sup>17</sup> Forssell had also included 'Till Ysolt' in his 1949 *BLM* article (but in a translation by Johannes Edfelt).

<sup>18</sup> *Vänner [Friends]* (Stockholm: Wiken, 1991), 289, 297.



Lars Forssell's Pound translations

The following is an English translation of the letter the twenty-five-year-old Forssell wrote from Sweden (just before Christmas) to his elder and compatriot in New York, Dag Hammarskjöld – the Swede who at the time held the highest international post.

[December 1953]

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

At the time of your nomination as Secretary-General of the United Nations, statements appeared in the press regarding your interest in poetry – and especially the poetry of T. S. Eliot and his generation. Therefore I am taking the liberty – although I am aware of your time constraints and numerous requests – to draw your attention to matters that indeed concern poetry and a great poet. It is about Ezra Pound, the most important voice in English Imagism and the poet to whom Eliot dedicated *The Waste Land*.

I do not know if you are familiar with his fate – as someone else may have already written to you about it. I have personally always been interested in him as a poet – and I have translated some of his poems in a small book just published by Bonniers publishing house, which – as strange as it may sound – came out in a second printing just now before Christmas. I know that Eliot has long campaigned for Pound to receive the Nobel Prize – acknowledging all he learned from him in the 1910s and all of Pound's efforts so that Eliot could totally live off his poetry. But Eliot's campaign may have few chances to succeed.

As you most probably know, Pound had been living in Italy since 1920 on. He has always been interested in Fascism as an economic theory, which he elaborates on specifically in his 'ABC of economics' – but it was really as World War II broke out that Pound's insanity also broke out. He put himself at the service of Fascist propaganda; gave literary speeches over Italian radio, sprinkled with horrible attacks on America and all sorts of anti-Semitic and reactionary statements. There may be some psychological and financial explanations for his position – he is an old, confirmed New Englander with a contempt for American culture; it was in Italy that his poetry first found a publisher and met with the most interest, etc. – but his position itself was, of course, irresponsible! In any case, he was taken into custody and placed in an American concentration camp where he was watched over day and night with strobe lights; the Americans thought the Fascists wanted to free their poet-spokesman. It was in that environment that he wrote the *Pisan Cantos*, which were later rewarded with a major literary prize – once again thanks to Eliot's intervention.

He was – apparently on very shaky grounds – declared insane; thus avoiding going to trial for treason. He did suffer a breakdown after a couple of years but recovered from it. In his letters to me and in letters from friends of mine who have visited him, he seems to still be a very lively and strong person. He holds daily audiences on American poetry, his translations of Confucius are published in the major literary journals, publishers pull out of the past even his more meaningless and obscure literary works and publish them anew; but he himself cannot get out. In today's America it appears that any move in that direction would be impossible, I mean any attempt to free him, because of the prevailing political climate of suspicion. Many

countries in Europe – not the least France – have slowly started to restore freedom to collaborators; that is really a natural and needed step toward reconciliation. As far as Pound, the poet, is concerned, future generations will no longer be bothered by his political ideas; rather they will admit that he wrote good poetry, better than most of his contemporaries, just as we are no longer interested in knowing to which party Dante belonged, in his time. The poet will survive; right now the issue is about the man himself and reconciliation attempts in which, in any case, the United Nations should be involved. I do not know at all what you want, or have time, to do concerning this matter. I thought you could draw attention in some way to the American opinion – or perhaps, rather to the opinion of influential individuals – that one of their greatest poets has already been sitting in some kind of prison for the last nine years now, and that his person and his personal situation are being forgotten while his reputation as a poet continues to grow.

I have received most of this information from various sources and they all concur. It may be worth adding that Pound resides at St. Elizabeths mental hospital in Washington – an institution of lower standards, with over 13,000 inmates – locked up and living in some kind of cubby holes with sackcloth curtains. His wife and his friends may visit him; but apparently one is not allowed to interview him or talk in any way about his situation. He will soon be seventy; he wants to return to his Rapallo. Couldn't nine years in 'Hell's chambers' be punishment enough for what he has done – when so many others and greater scoundrels go free or are liberated here in Europe and elsewhere?

Can you do something? I apologize for having taken up your time with this, but for me – and I am convinced, also for poetry – this is a question of utmost importance.

With the hope that in spite of my insufficient exposure of this case, its emotional character will be obvious.

Yours truthfully,

Lars Forssell

PS. I enclose a copy of my Pound translations. DS

If it were not for this letter, Hammarskjöld would never have been involved in the Pound case; and if it were not for the research I had done for *The Knight and the Troubadour*, I might never have translated that letter.<sup>19</sup> The four years of Hammarskjöld's involvement in the Pound case were equally important, but 1953 was definitely the crucial one. It marked a turn of events, gave new life to various attempts to liberate Pound, and inaugurated a striking new beginning in Hammarskjöld's own career. Those 'northern lights' (Bengt Nirje, Lars Forssell, Dag Hammarskjöld, and others from Sweden) were perhaps the most intense in April of 1953 when the newly elected Secretary-General arrived on American soil.

April was also the time of Hammarskjöld's Waldorf Astoria interview (prior to his induction into the U.N.), which revealed the Secretary-General's strong interest in literature – especially in T. S. Eliot and *The Waste Land*. Hammarskjöld was 'highly flattered' when one of the journalists called him 'Sweden's Adlai Stevenson.' The interview, which was later published in *The New Yorker*,<sup>20</sup> described Hammarskjöld as a 'slight, pink-cheeked bachelor of forty-seven, with bristly blond eyebrows,' despite the fact that he had the endurance of a mountaineer and mentioned mountain climbing several times during the interview. A shorter piece followed in the *New York Times Book Review*, poking fun at the 'mountain-climbing Dag Hammarskjöld' and his 'literary amours,' although noting his 'flair for Nobel Prize winners.'<sup>21</sup> Half a century later, Per Lind sent me copies of those articles, which he was about to quote in a chapter in *The Adventure of Peace*.<sup>22</sup> Hammarskjöld's adventure, that is.<sup>23</sup>

When they search for clues to explain why Hammarskjöld's star is still the one shining with the most intensity in the U.N. sky, scholars cite 'Old Creeds in a New World,' a speech written in December of 1953 for Edward R. Murrow's CBS radio program "This I Believe."<sup>24</sup>

19 The Forssell-Hammarskjöld correspondence is part of the DH Collection, Kungliga.

20 'Like a Mirror,' *New Yorker*, April 18, 1953, 26.

21 Harvey Breit, 'In and Out of Books,' *New York Times Book Review*, April 26, 1953, 8.

22 Per Lind and Bengt Thelin, 'Nature and Culture: Two necessities of Life,' in *The Adventure of Peace: Dag Hammarskjöld and the Future of the UN*, eds. Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 96.

23 Per Lind pointed out to me that Hammarskjöld often referred to his work as an 'adventure' (cf. 'The Great Adventure' quoted by Lind in his *Foreword to The Knight and the Troubadour*).

24 Dag Hammarskjöld, 'Old Creeds in a New World,' (audio recording of his voice). <http://thisibelieve.org/essay/16608/>

Hammar skjöld was the first person to be surprised to have been chosen for the post of Secretary-General, which may explain why, in that radio speech, he highlighted his family legacy and some strong values from the Old Country as his best credentials. They truly were his strength. (One could also say that he risked his life and died for some of these same values.) This is how he started his speech:

The world in which I grew up was dominated by principles and ideals of a time far from ours and, as it may seem, far removed from the problems facing a man of the middle of the twentieth century. However, my way has not meant a departure from those ideals. On the contrary, I have been led to an understanding of their validity also for our world of today. Thus, a never abandoned effort to frankly and squarely build up a personal belief in the light of experience and honest thinking has led me in a circle; I now recognize and endorse, unreservedly, those very beliefs which were once handed down to me.<sup>25</sup>

Another of Hammar skjöld's qualities was his sharp and quick mind, which helped him deal with several requests or issues at the same time, no matter how serious or trivial they first appeared to be. After reading Forssell's letter, he immediately asked his Personal Assistant, Per Lind, to contact his colleague Sven Backlund at the Swedish Embassy in Washington. Backlund's reply, dated December 23, confirmed that Pound was indeed at St. Elizabeths mental hospital, but that there was no way to find out if he was mentally ill or not, although most people who were involved with Pound thought that he was of sound mind. Hammar skjöld was disappointed by the meager reply, even though Backlund was going to investigate the situation further and could not help pointing out that it was 'really surprising that the many Americans who do visit Pound had not themselves found ways to address the situation.' Backlund's recommendation was for Hammar skjöld to respond as soon as possible to Forssell's letter – which he did, when the holidays were over, with the following letter.<sup>26</sup>

25 Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote, eds., *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, vol. II, Dag Hammar skjöld 1953-1956 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 195.

26 Translated by M.-N. Little.

Dear Mr. Forssell,

Thank you for your letter regarding Ezra Pound and for kindly sending me the booklet of your fine translations of his poems. I was aware that Pound's situation was difficult, but I had not fully realized the extent of his tragic fate until I read your letter, and I understand more than ever that you feel a strong need to shift your interest from Ezra Pound, the poet, to Ezra Pound, the human being. Unfortunately it is not easy to find the proper way to intervene in this complicated and in many ways somber case. The preliminary inquiries I have had a chance to make up to now have, in fact, only led to a confirmation of your information that Pound resides at St. Elizabeths mental hospital in Washington and that many Americans visit him. That these people have not found ways to address his situation, is quite surprising, especially as there seems to be a common understanding – among those who have some knowledge of the case – that Pound is of sound mind.

I will, of course, welcome any opportunities that would present themselves for me to find out more about this situation and what we can come up with to help him. This letter is just meant to assure you that I share your concern for this tragic human destiny and that I will not let it out of my sight.

[Dag Hammarskjöld]<sup>27</sup>

This is perhaps the only letter Dag Hammarskjöld wrote to Lars Forssell, but not the last one he would write regarding Ezra Pound's situation. Standing by his words, as always, Hammarskjöld never did 'let it out of [his] sight.'

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<sup>27</sup> Brackets in a quoted letter will indicate that it is a carbon copy, not signed.

# Chapter IV

## 'Noble Dag'

(1954)

Many people wrote in their letters about their visits to St. Elizabeths, and a few people published essays, poems, and articles about the experience of seeing Ezra Pound in captivity (even though it was against hospital rules to do so). Some of Pound's guests, moved by his confinement, became his disciples and championed his cause; others, such as Dan Pinck, formed very different impressions. In the four-page, detailed account of his 'Visit with Ezra Pound' in *The Reporter*, Pinck starts by describing the bucolic setting of the Hospital, far from the noise and traffic of the city, with 'one of the best views of Washington.'<sup>1</sup> The lawns are 'wide and gently sloping, and the grass is well cared for;' the 'thickly shaded paths circle out to softball fields and tennis courts.' When Pinck sees 'on a clothesline a garment that looks very much like a strait jacket drying in the sun,' he expects the worst, but he soon realizes that Pound's 'regular streams of pious disciples' are as 'untalented' and 'humorless' as the inmates themselves.

Strangely enough, and unlike so many others who wrote about their visits, Pinck did not indicate his reason for visiting Pound. Who, anyway, among those 'disgruntled civil-service aesthetes' and 'political housewives' would have guessed that Dan Pinck was a special agent of the Office of Strategic Services?<sup>2</sup> He had joined the Special Intelligence section of the O.S.S. in 1942 at age nineteen, and China was his first mission. The account of his China experience took the form, some sixty years later, of a book, *Journey to Peking: A Secret Agent in Wartime China*.<sup>3</sup> In a 2001 *Boston Globe* interview, Pinck describes the scenery of China in phrases that evoke his depiction of the setting of St. Elizabeths. Pinck is quoted as saying that 'he was sent behind enemy lines, working with Chinese guerrillas in the vicinity of Hong Kong. Out in the countryside, surrounded by gentle hills, rice paddies, and grazing water buffalo. Pretty country.'<sup>4</sup> Those are, most probably,

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1 Unless otherwise indicated all quotes are from *The Reporter* 10, no. 3 (February 2, 1954): 40-43.

2 His son, Charles Pinck, a private investigator, is the President of the O.S.S. Society of McLean, VA.

3 Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003. See also Dan C. Pinck, Geoffrey M.T. Jones, and Charles T. Pinck, eds., *Stalking the History of the Office of Strategic Services: An OSS Bibliography* (Boston, MA: The OSS/Donovan Press, 2000).

4 Mark Fritz, 'Right place, right time for spy career,' *Boston Globe*, April 15, 2001. A25.

68 | Pinck's own choice of words, and he sounds like a poet at heart, as were so many other WWII secret agents. One wonders if Dan Pinck knew James Angleton, the famous O.S.S. spy. If so, did he know that Angleton was in Italy when Pound was arrested in 1945? And who or what had led Pinck to visit Pound?

Even if no one, back in 1954, could yet comment on Dan Pinck's secret mission to China, many, at the time, did read and comment on his *Reporter* article. The probability that Dag Hammarskjöld himself read the article, is significant. A handwritten note added later at the bottom of the Secretary-General's carbon copy of his January 8 letter seems to indicate that he had sent a copy of *The Reporter* to Lars Forssell, as soon as it came out. The same is true of Norman Holmes Pearson, who mentioned *The Reporter* interview in a letter to Hilda Doolittle (February 4): 'Really it was quite disgraceful, poking fun at the people who go and see him.' 'What worries me a little more,' Pearson added, 'is that no interviews are supposed to be printed, and it is barely possible that if much of this sort happened they would tighten up on his visitors. That would be the death.'<sup>5</sup> It is surprising that Pearson did not know that Dan Pinck, like himself, was a former O.S.S. agent.

Pinck's lack of respect did not seem to affect Pound who was more active than ever, thanks to his abundant correspondence and the latest Harvard University Press publication of his *Confucius*. One of those correspondents was, of course, Lars Forssell himself. Dan Pinck's 'disrespectful journalistic portrait' in *The Reporter* was also the focus of an article he wrote for the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* that summer.<sup>6</sup> Writing about *The Pound Newsletter*, a new journal in California, he noted that the *Newsletter's* contributors all seemed to agree (as he did himself), that one could not separate the political aspects from the *Cantos*. Seeing Pound as 'the Don Quixote of modern poetry,' Forssell added that he should be respected for his 'fearless persevering,' a quality that accurately describes not only Pound but also Hammarskjöld.

If there was a pivotal time when the lives of Ezra Pound and Dag Hammarskjöld were most connected, it was during this period in mid-1954. Outwardly, their circumstances were extremely different, but Hammarskjöld caught a glimpse of something essential in Pound that spoke to his own sense of purpose. It was the image of the dreamer, the visionary, the explorer. Hammarskjöld had been reading the *Cantos*

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5 Hollenberg, 153.

6 'Sidor av Pound' ['Pages by Pound'], *Dagens Nyheter* [*The Day's News*], August 9, 1954.

in the summer and fall of 1954, and one can assume that he had read Forssell's description of Pound as the fearless Don Quixote (*Dagens Nyheter* being one of Sweden's major newspapers). Don Quixote was also one of Hammarskjöld's favorite mythical characters.<sup>7</sup>



Dag Hammarskjöld at the United Nations  
(Fernand Léger painting)

Literature was very much a part of the Secretary-General's life. His large personal library reflected his wide-ranging interests, and it was not unusual for him to quote from his readings, in his speeches. He was also very interested in art, and soon after his election, he went in person to the Museum of Modern Art to choose paintings for his office and dining-room on the 38th floor at the United Nations. His apartment was likewise decorated with paintings and sculptures. It should be no surprise then, that the Museum of Modern Art, in preparation for its 25th anniversary, asked Hammarskjöld to deliver an address at the celebration.

The MoMA anniversary on October 19, 1954 was an important event, attended by over 2,500 people.<sup>8</sup> The opening ceremonies started with a recorded message from President Eisenhower declaring that 'freedom of the arts is a basic freedom, one of the pillars of liberty in our land.'<sup>9</sup> Freedom was also the theme of a speech by *New Yorker Herald Tribune* editor, August Heckscher, who described the work of the Museum as a 'struggle of freedom against tyranny.' He added that 'where tyranny takes over, whether under Fascism or Communism, modern art is destroyed or exiled.' The main address was delivered by Hammarskjöld, who ex-

7 Once asked which book he would most like to have if he were stranded on a desert island, Hammarskjöld replied: 'Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and preferably in an old French edition.'

8 'President Links Art and Freedom' was a *New York Times* headline October 20, 1954.

9 All quotes are from the Press Release 1954, in the MoMA archives.

pressed his belief ‘that the courage and perseverance of modern artists in their unprejudiced search for the basic elements of experience are a lesson for those working to create a better world through the medium of international politics.’<sup>10</sup> In furthering his theme about the interconnection between art and politics, he quoted the French novelist, art historian, and politician André Malraux: ‘The victory of an artist over his servitude joins the victory of art itself over the fate of man.’ Then in a very pointed way, Hammarskjöld spoke about Pound:

Modern art teaches us to see by forcing us to use our senses, our intellect, and our sensibility to follow it [modern art itself] on its road of exploration. It makes us seers – seers like Ezra Pound when, in the first of his *Pisan Cantos*, he senses ‘the enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant’s bent shoulders.’ Seers – and explorers – these we must be if we are to prevail.<sup>11</sup>

Very few comments, if any, were made in the press about the *Pisan Cantos* reference in the MoMA speech, and it is not often mentioned in Pound biographies.<sup>12</sup> However, it would not be the last time for Hammarskjöld to quote the *Cantos*. On the other hand, his decision to quote Malraux, at least twice in his speech, may have been influenced by rumors regarding Malraux’s possible candidacy for the Nobel Prize.<sup>13</sup>

Future Nobel candidates were also a frequent topic of discussion in Lars Forssell’s correspondence with Pound. Forssell had sent Pound a copy of the October issue of *All Världens Berättare 1954* [*All the World’s Storytellers 1954*].<sup>14</sup> As a marketing tool to help launch Forssell’s new edition of *25 Dikter*, that issue included a contest asking readers to choose future Nobel Prize winners, from among seven possible candidates: Niko Kazantzakis, Halldör Laxness, Paul Claudel, Albert Camus, Michael Sjölochov, Ezra Pound, and Ernest Hemingway. ‘Some of the company is good, and several of the names are distinguished,’ replied Pound on October 21. Indeed, Hemingway did get the Prize in 1954, Laxness in 1955, Camus in 1957, and Sjölochov in 1965.

10 As summarized in the Press Release.

11 Cordier, vol. II, 374.

12 See Eustace Mullins, *This Difficult Individual, Ezra Pound* (New York: Fleet Publishing Corporation, 1961), 340–41. Also, Heymann, 243.

13 Hemingway wrote Pound (November 6, 1954): ‘the hot poop as I have it from a Frenchman in Stockholm is that the fix is in for Malraux’ (Beinecke).

14 Pound in his letter refers to *All Världens Berättare* [1954:10] as *AvB*.



Dag Hammarskjöld speaking at the Opening Ceremonies of the 25th Anniversary of the Museum of Modern Art. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY

wAlthough the Nobel Prize in literature is the highest honor for a writer, Hemingway, who was awarded the Prize ‘for his powerful, style-forming mastery of the art of modern narration,’ did not seem very enthusiastic when he heard that he ‘got that thing,’ ‘that Swedish thing.’<sup>15</sup> He wrote to Pound from Cuba (in an almost Poundian style), that ‘receiving Swedish prize was a shock but since they give it to characters I could write the ass off of before I was 30 and have been learning hard [ever] since[,] it seemed alright to take it.’<sup>16</sup> The ‘characters’ who were considered that year, according to the *The New York Times* front page, ‘included Paul Claudel and Albert Camus of France and Ezra Pound,

15 As he said to Buck [Charles] Lanham. See Carlos Baker, *Enerst Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 527. According to Per Lind, Hammarskjöld was not very enthusiastic himself, and would have preferred that it be Carl Sandburg. Hemingway thought likewise, had he not received the Prize (Baker, 527).

16 Hemingway to Pound, November 6, 1954 (Beinecke).

American poet, whom the Academy regards as one of the world's distinctive lyricists.<sup>17</sup>

Downplaying the choice of the Academy, Forssell wrote to Pound on November 11:

Hemingway got the prize; there was nothing else to expect. The Academy being mostly a bunch of old, deaf men listening to rumors of whom they are going to choose . . . .

Yet I know (from rumors i.e.) that you were actually proposed IN the Academy, by one particularly good poet; and he was seconded by a few. Which means that you are not 'disqualified by political reasons' and they may take the risk some time.

The 'political reasons,' the allegation of treason, were what had prompted Pound to defend his own reputation, when he wrote to Forssell October 21: 'One: I have not betrayed any one, or any thing, least of all European Civilization. Two: Hemingway stated flatly in N.York that Ez couldn't betray anyone.'<sup>18</sup> Pound, therefore, was very pleased that Hammarskjöld was willing to take the risk of quoting *The Pisan Cantos*. On November 18, Pound wrote to Lars Forssell that 'the Noble Dag/ made purr-light ref/ to Pisan Cantos, at speech at Modern Art Museum.'

Forssell followed up on December 6, with a shorter letter to Pound to mention that he had sent a copy of his 25 *Dikter* to 'Noble Dag.'

He answered me at length,<sup>19</sup> it seems his interest in literature goes beyond interviews. He is now in the Swedish Academy and will, I think be of help. He told me in his letter he would investigate your case and interview some big-shots. This is, of course, private information.

Afterwards he has kept sending me material on you, cuttings from various newspapers, etc.

17 *New York Times*, October 29, 1954.

18 October 21, 1954. Pound was making 'two points' against the newspaper *El Secolo* in Genoa (October 10, 1954).

19 In fact, the letter was rather short, compared to Forssell's (see chapter III).

Hemingway made the cover of the December 13 issue of *Time* magazine, which included a long article about him in Cuba, with his often quoted remarks about Pound (included in the following passage):

The matter of style reminds Hemingway of many things, including his Nobel Prize. He knows just what he would like to say if he went to Stockholm for the acceptance ceremony. He would like to talk about a half-forgotten poet and great stylist – Ezra Pound. Poet Pound used to look over Hemingway's early manuscripts in Paris, and returned them, mercilessly blue-penciled, the adjectives gone...

'Ezra Pound is a great poet,' says Hemingway fiercely, 'and whatever he did he has been punished greatly and I believe should be freed to go and write poems in Italy where he is loved and understood. He was the master of T. S. Eliot. Eliot is a winner of the Nobel Prize. I believe it might have well gone to Pound ... I believe this would be a good year to release both.'<sup>20</sup>

In his December 20 letter to Forssell, Pound briefly commented upon the Swedish press which had mostly been quoting the *Time* magazine article on Hemingway, but he did not mention anything about 'Hem's' remarks regarding his long over-due Nobel Prize, as he had done earlier.<sup>21</sup> Pound was certainly anxious to know more about his reputation in Sweden, even though he never seemed to include himself among possible candidates, at least openly. Actually, his entourage was more anxious for him to get the Nobel than he was.<sup>22</sup>

Having not fully recovered from an airplane accident, Hemingway had not been able to travel to Stockholm to attend the Nobel Prize ceremony. The other empty chair that December at the Swedish Academy was the seat of Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, Dag's father. A fine scholar of classical and German literature, he had been a member of the Academy and of the Nobel Prize Committee until his death in 1953, six months

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20 (A good year to release *both* Pound and his Prize.) Robert Manning, 'An American Storyteller,' *Time*, December 13, 1954, 72.

21 In his October 21 letter to Forssell, Pound had mentioned that Hemingway's Nobel acceptance remarks 'were CUT DOWN to suit what the N.Y. Slimes considered suitable for him to have said.'

22 Later on, when back in Italy, at Brunennburg, Pound jokingly said that should he get the Nobel, he would get a cook. This use of the funds would not be shocking, because French poet Saint-John Perse's Nobel Prize helped him pay for his summer home expenses, and Marie Curie installed 'a modern bathroom' with the money from one of her two Nobel Prizes.

after his son became Secretary-General. On December 20, 1954, when Dag Hammarskjöld took his father's seat at an official ceremony, it was the first time in the history of the Academy that a son had been elected to succeed his father. As was the custom, the new member had to give an inaugural address on the life and work of his predecessor, so Hammarskjöld spoke about his own father, but without realizing that his remarks could very well be applied to himself. The parallel is especially evident in his comment that his father was 'one of those who are firm in their roots and firm in their faith, those whose changing fates may well deepen the convictions and directions of their early years, but not change them. They may be transported far from their original setting, but their roots are never cut off.'<sup>23</sup> Hjalmar Hammarskjöld had had a brilliant political career and had been Sweden's Prime Minister during WWI, from 1914 to 1917, when he had to resign because he was suspected of being pro-German. Referring to that crisis in his address, the son, again, described the same qualities that he had himself inherited from his courageous father:

In the end, his only form of support is being faithful to his own convictions. The advice of others may be welcome and valuable, but it does not free him from responsibility. Therefore, he may become very lonely. Therefore too, he must run, with open eyes, the risk of being accused of obdurate self-sufficiency. As the war went on and difficulties increased, this was the fate of Hjalmar Hammarskjöld.<sup>24</sup>

Loneliness would also become a leitmotif in Hammarskjöld's journal entries, and his own fate would soon resemble his father's. Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, who 'was to learn that the judgments of the moment may remain alive even decades later,'<sup>25</sup> reminds us of Ezra Pound, whose reputation is still not free of controversy. Equally important, the Secretary-General's willingness to address Pound's situation must have come in part from his sympathetic understanding of his father's plight.

Hammarskjöld's December visit to Sweden was significant for other reasons as well. While in Stockholm, arrangements were made with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to plan for Hammarskjöld's upcoming trip to Peking. The United Nations General

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<sup>23</sup> Cordier, vol. II, 402.

<sup>24</sup> Cordier, vol. II, 412.

<sup>25</sup> Cordier, vol. II, 412.

Assembly had agreed to send the Secretary-General to China to negotiate with Foreign Affairs minister Chou En-lai on the fate of fifteen United States Air Force personnel who had been shot down and taken prisoner in 1952 and 1953 in Korea. In his confidential message to Chou En-lai, Hammarskjöld mentioned the 'extraordinary nature of the initiative, this being the first time that the Secretary-General of the United Nations personally visits a capital for negotiations.'<sup>26</sup>



*Dag Hammarskjöld and Chou En-lai in Peking*

After three days of direct talks between Hammarskjöld and Chou En-lai, negotiations went on for several months and eventually led to the liberation of the prisoners. The official announcement was made on August 1, three days after Hammarskjöld's fiftieth birthday. Chou En-lai's personal message to Hammarskjöld, via the Swedish Ambassador in Peking, included birthday wishes.<sup>27</sup> The success of this, his first such mission, was very important for Hammarskjöld and for the United Nations, because it strengthened the role of the U.N. as a mediator, and from then on the term 'Peking formula' was used to describe the

<sup>26</sup> Brian Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), 101.

<sup>27</sup> According to Brian Urquhart, the Chinese did this deliberately because they wanted a pretext not to appear submissive to the United States (Urquhart, 105).

76 | Secretary-General's personal interventions.<sup>28</sup> The success of the China mission would also be significant in a very different arena: the Pound case.

Right in the middle of the China mission, as Hammarskjöld was about to leave on his long trip to Peking, he received a letter from a Douglas Hammond, an admirer of Pound, from the University of Alabama. Hammond had just received a letter from Pound asking for a copy of the MoMA speech, which he seemed anxious to read. Pound had already mentioned that speech to Lars Forssell, of course, but also to Olivia Rossetti Agresti: 'Rumour that Dag Hamerskold [sic] quoted Pisans at some Mod/Museum of Art beano two weeks ago, data not yet to hand.'<sup>29</sup> In his letter, Hammond was not only asking about the speech, but also alerting Hammarskjöld to Pound's situation and to the plans to liberate him:

For quite some time now, a group of English majors, faculty members in English Literature and classical languages, and romance languages, have been thinking of forming an organization which would ask the Federal Government to drop its treason indictment against Mr. Pound, and to permit him freedom to travel here in the United States or grant him permission to travel.<sup>30</sup>

Hammond had just received a letter from the American poet Marianne Moore 'who, as so many, [thought] that Ezra Pound should be released.' Hammarskjöld replied right away, enclosing a copy of his MoMA speech and assuring Hammond that as soon as he was back from China, he would give the problem 'serious consideration as a matter of personal interest.' Hammond quoted that same passage in his January 3 letter to Pound, in turn assuring him that there was a solution, or even several: 'You can see that we are deeply engaged in 'our' problem which, to say the least, is immensely diverse in its possibilities.' That same day, Hammond wrote again to Hammarskjöld that 'we can all be

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28 One cannot help but mention Urquhart's surprise when noticing that Eisenhower in his memoirs, *Mandate for Change*, never even acknowledged Hammarskjöld's involvement in the release of the prisoners (Urquhart, 126).

29 Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos and Leon Surette, eds., *'I Cease Not to Yowl' Ezra Pound's Letters to Olivia Rossetti Agresti* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 173; (from now on referred to as *ORA Letters*). Olivia, who knew Pound since 1937, corresponded with him for years and was actively campaigning for Pound to regain his freedom.

30 December 12, 1954. The Hammond-Hammarskjöld letters are in the DH Collection, Kungliga.

impelled to do something about something we should be expected to do something about.' Although Hammarskjöld had not yet returned from China, Hammond followed up on January 7 with another letter detailing Pound's indictment and some of the many possible courses of action – and warning him that 'certainly this affair will be controversial.' He added that 'important names are needed to raise the large sum of money required by either course of action' (through 'a nationwide organization' or a 'behind-the-scenes' effort). 'With a sentiment of some trepidation,' Hammond asked Hammarskjöld to 'lend his name in an official capacity' to such an endeavor.

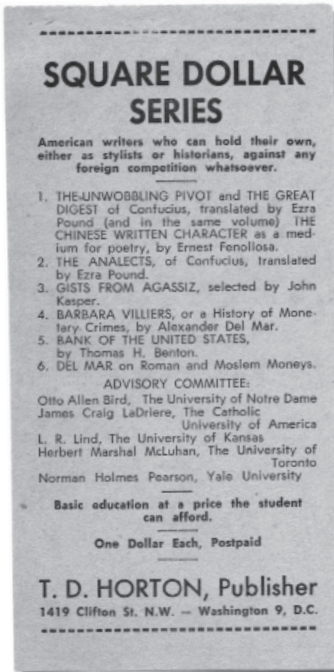
Pound had written to Olivia R. Agresti: 'Did a buzzard named Hammond appeal to you? Now letters recd/by the said Alabama intellectual are being offered to Jas/ [James Laughlin] for \$200 by a jew in Tokyo.'<sup>31</sup> The 'buzzard' was indeed pressuring Hammarskjöld, reminding him that it was Pound himself who had suggested that Hammond write to the Secretary-General, to get a copy of the speech and to help orchestrate his liberation. In his fourth letter to Hammarskjöld (January 23, 1955), Hammond went on and on about Pound's insanity and ended the letter by mentioning Hemingway's remarks about Pound, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1954. Hammond added that he knew from 'a reliable source' that 'Hemingway ran into a great deal of difficulty about those remarks both prior to and after their publication.' Hammarskjöld's handwritten notes on Hammond's letters indicate that he had asked his Personal Assistant Per Lind and others to take over the correspondence, because his own priorities were with the ongoing China talks.

Things were much calmer on the literary front, in Pound's correspondence with both Norman Holmes Pearson and Lars Forssell. In December, 1954, Pearson described Bonnier's edition of *25 Dikter* that he had just received as 'a fine job,' and he concluded that all was well on 'the Swedish front' and also on the Italian one, with *Canti Pisani*, the new Italian translation. And Pearson added: 'Told Agresti-Rachewiltz front that one thing to do was to keep 'em moving, keep planting the seeds... .' Unlike Hammond's forceful attempts to liberate Pound, Pearson's approach was more scholarly, and his primary concerns were to spread the good word about the *Cantos*.

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31 ORA Letters, 219.

Pound seemed quite involved in the Swedish literary world, as well. He even wrote to Forssell on January 22, 1955, that he was tempted to learn 'Sweedish' [sic] and asked Forssell to send him a dictionary. He suggested the names of people who should receive Swedish publications and urged Forssell to write more letters. Pound wrote again on January 23 and sent a long list of material and authors, as publication ideas for Carlson's, the Swedish publisher. Pound said that he believed in 'group action,' and mentioned the good old days of the *Little Review* (1915-17), with Joyce, Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis (as well as Yeats and Ford in the background). He suggested that Forssell along 'with 2 or 3 pals' get involved with translations of the *Square Dollar Series*.<sup>32</sup> Pound had declared in an earlier letter<sup>33</sup> that 'Forssell [should be] permitted to translate whatsodam he chooses.' He had also given the young Swedish poet some information about upcoming Italian and Spanish translations of his *Pisan Cantos*.



*Square Dollar Series*

‘What the HELL is E.P. doing in THAT gallere [sic]?’ Pound wrote (about himself) in his January 23 letter, referring to a comment about Carlson having created a ‘horrible situation’ by limiting the number of poets to be included in a small anthology.<sup>34</sup> Not knowing Swedish, Pound did not understand that what was horrible was the necessity of excluding him, Baudelaire, Rilke, and other poets. Pound’s allusion to Molière’s famous ‘Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?’ would also have been a good way for the old poet to show his

32 The Square Dollar publishing house was started by John Kasper and T. David Horton (a Hamilton alumnus) and was targeted at students. It printed historical and economic texts, among which were Pound’s translations of Confucius.

33 July 12, 1954.

34 Bengt Holmqvist in *Dikt och mening [Poetry and Meaning]*, ed. Stig Carlsson (Stockholm: FIB:s Lyrikklubb, 1954), 8. See Wahlin, 31 (note 15).

frustration at not being able to re-enter his literary circles and to see his family and friends again. Letters were often the only way to stay in touch, when visiting was impossible, difficult, or awkward. On June 20, 1955, Hemingway wrote to his 'old Inmate and Brother' a long letter from 'the St. Elizabeth's of the Antilles' (San Francisco de Paula, Cuba). He mentioned visitors sent by Pound, and all the good things Hemingway told them about his great friend the poet (or his friend the great poet?). Half joking, half encouraging, Hemingway said, 'you're doing fine and brave as a goat.' He added, 'I wish they had published all the things I said about you when I got that Swedish prize and had a chance to talk,' alluding to his remarks in 1954. Hemingway then went on in great detail about his misfortunes in Africa, and (as if he could read Pound's mind) he ended his letter with:

Hope such a long letter hasn't bored you. Don't be rough and single tracked and say friendship is all very well but why don't you do something logical and positive to get me out of this Bedlam. I do, really, but today I just wanted to write to you and talk and joke the way we did in the old days.

Hemingway also sent his 'best love to Dorothy.' He had always liked Dorothy (better than Olga), and did not mind saying so to Olga herself when she wrote to him in March 1950, trying to campaign for Pound's release: 'I know you are allowing your 1923 article to be published in the English tribute for E's 65th birthday – but – forgive my bluntness – what else have you done for E?'<sup>35</sup> Hemingway replied, at the time, that 'if Ezra is released at this moment as of sound of mind, to be tried, he would receive a sentence of from ten to fifteen years . . . . He made the rather serious mistake of being a traitor to his country, and temporarily he must lie in the bed he made.'<sup>36</sup> However, by June of 1955, Hemingway was already in touch with Archibald MacLeish regarding new efforts to help Pound.

After receiving Pound's August 4, 1955 letter, it was, in fact, MacLeish's turn to write from Conway, Massachusetts. MacLeish, who had not seen Pound in ten years, hoped to visit him the 'next time' he was 'down' in Washington, but in the meantime there were some serious matters to discuss.

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<sup>35</sup> Carpenter, 481.

<sup>36</sup> Connover, 193.

I have been told by personal friends of yours that nothing is to be done – that no solution would be acceptable to you which did not involve vilification of President Roosevelt and those who serve the Republic under him. If that is so, it's so – but I'd like to know it.

MacLeish wrote again on August 18, in response to 'a friendly and highly informative letter' from Pound.<sup>37</sup> He wanted to make sure that Pound would agree 'to what would be called a medical disposition based on medical opinion, as distinguished from a legal or political (whatever that would be) disposition.' In other words, if Pound's mental condition could be evaluated, or re-evaluated, perhaps some action could be taken. MacLeish urged that any action would have to be an 'individual action in individual terms,' and he was very cautious as to its success. In other words, he wanted nothing public; Pound was to be an unofficial client. MacLeish, a lawyer and politician, wanted to protect his own professional reputation, but he decided to take the risk of helping Pound because he admired the daring and free life of the poet and regretted his own 'life of virtuous compromise . . . [as] half-lawyer, half-poet.'<sup>38</sup>

Pound's family had tried various approaches to help him. Olga was hoping that he would ask for Presidential pardon, but Mary knew her father would not agree to sign any papers admitting his guilt. Finally, Dorothy asked everybody (including Hammond) to just leave her husband alone, because he was busy writing. Many attempts to find a solution, including legal and diplomatic ones (through the Civil Liberties Union, the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, and the American Embassy in Rome) failed when requests, letters, and petitions landed on Dr. Overholser's desk at St. Elizabeths. Although by August of 1955, Ezra Pound was finally allowed to sit outside in the evening on the hospital lawn with his guests, Overholser was more protective than ever. Pound would face potentially more serious consequences if he were to be released, as a diagnosis of sanity would lead to a trial, so Overholser made sure he was still officially labelled as 'psychotic.' Therefore, Pound was, and would remain, a prisoner of both the legal and the mental health systems.

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<sup>37</sup> Winnick, 377-78.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *How Lawyers Lose Their Way: A Profession Fails Its Creative Minds* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2005), 27.

# Chapter V

## Ezra's Choice

(1955)

Among the many articles, newspaper clippings and newsletters gathered by Pound at St. Elizabeths,<sup>1</sup> the September/October, 1955 issue of *Women's Voice* entitled **FREE EZRA POUND: The Strange Case of the Unknown Prisoner** is especially fascinating. Evidently, many women – and not just those ‘political housewives’ Dan Pinck ridiculed – campaigned to free Pound. In the *Women's Voice* article, these women are described as ‘patriots,’ an outspoken and political group who were inspired by ‘the incredible story of The Unknown Prisoner,’ told by another political prisoner, Lucille Miller, during the short time she was held at St. Elizabeths. Like Pound who was ‘dragged away by the Communists from his home in Italy in 1945,’ Miller had been arrested and ‘dragged away from her home’ in Bethel, Vermont, because of her ‘fearless exposures of Communists,’ and then ‘flown to a squalid dungeon in the Government Asylum for Political Prisoners.’ When Lucille Miller regained her freedom, she joined controversial columnist Westbrook Pregler and other patriots in their ‘valiant’ campaign to ‘free Ezra Pound.’ ‘Only wide-spread public indignation,’ they said, ‘can free him as it freed Lucille Miller from the same hell, for the same political offense.’ Ezra Pound’s crime, according to *Women's Voice*, ‘was that he had dared to criticize the Communist regime of Franklin D. Roosevelt.’ Even if the tone of this newsletter and some of its anti-Communist, anti-Jewish, and even anti-U.N. ads may still shock readers half a century later, one cannot help but applaud the brave call to arms to free the seventy-year-old poet. The best endorsement however, was the reference to Hemingway’s support of Pound, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1954.

In the pamphlet celebrating his seventieth birthday, the most vocal of Pound’s old friends was, in fact, Ernest Hemingway, who was also the only one to seize the opportunity to raise his voice and say: ‘Will gladly pay tribute to Ezra, but what I would like to do is get him the hell out of St. Elizabeths; have him given a passport and allow him to return to

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1 They are now in the EP Collection at Burke Library.

Italy where he is justly valued as a poet.<sup>2</sup> Hemingway's remarks were first included in a letter to Harvey Breit, asking him to forward them to Laughlin and to Pound. In a confidential postscript, he added: 'I have always pitied his political views and his stupid conduct in support of them and have respected him as a poet and critic and loved him as a generous friend and fine companion.'<sup>3</sup>



*Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeths*

Bengt Nirje, who had not forgotten Pound either, wrote to him on October 13, 1955 that he had just arrived from Sweden and was eager to 'bring over greetings.'<sup>4</sup> He was looking forward to a pleasant visit, not knowing that he would be in the company of one of Pound's disciples, pro-segregationist John Kasper. Nirje felt quite uncomfortable, to the point of moving his chair away from that controversial visitor. He apparently brought greetings from some of Pound's 'Swedish colleagues,' but he did not want to mention Hammarskjöld while Kasper was still in the room. He must have been quite disappointed that he could not have a longer and more serious conversation with Pound, whom he had not seen for two years. Pound was quick to notice the

2 *Ezra Pound at Seventy* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1955), 4. Laughlin used the small pamphlet to promote Pound's works (Carpenter, 819).

3 Baker, *Letters*, 849.

4 Bengt Nirje gave me copies of his correspondence with Pound (most probably from Beinecke).

tension between Kasper and Nirje, and reported it in his October 16 letter to Lars Forssell, stating that he had 'no idea really what yr/friend B/ represents?' This was neither the first nor the last time Pound was surprised by the friction between members of his literary and extended family circles. Nevertheless, he asked Forssell to forward his greetings to the Swedish poets Bertil Malmberg, Harry Martinson, and Erik Lindegren; and asked for their addresses. The first two were at the Swedish Academy; Lindegren was one of Nirje's best friends, a promising academician<sup>5</sup> who had written a ten-page document about Pound's work for the Swedish Academy's Nobel Committee (in May of 1955).

The important outcome of Nirje's visit was that Pound expressed his pleasure that the Secretary-General of the United Nations had cited him in the MoMA speech, a comment that Nirje later passed on to Hammarskjöld at a United Nations reception. Nirje, who worked at the time as a commentator for the Swedish Radio, was among several people in line to greet the Secretary-General, and when his turn came, he quickly mentioned that 'Mr. Pound' was so happy to have been quoted in the MoMA speech. 'You know Pound?' asked Hammarskjöld, and he immediately added: 'We must talk! Call my secretary!' Sensing Hammarskjöld's urgent tone, Nirje called the next day. After several short meetings at the United Nations, Hammarskjöld sent Nirje to St. Elizabeths to discuss the situation with Pound.

Bengt Nirje had always told me that Dag Hammarskjöld was asking Ezra Pound to choose between the Nobel Prize and his freedom, when in fact, this was more Nirje's way of seeing the dilemma. What the young Swede and his elder really discussed was finding the best way to help Pound regain his freedom. Hammarskjöld could not have considered giving Pound a choice, and he had already shared his reservations with the Swedish Academy regarding the Nobel Prize. For Hammarskjöld to vote for Pound was already out of the question as early as March 1955, as is evident in his October 15, 1955 correspondence with academician Sten Selander:

As to Ezra Pound I endorse all you say. Whatever his significance as a pioneer, his whole attitude seems to me to be one which puts him

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<sup>5</sup> Lindegren became a member of the Swedish Academy in 1962, after Hammarskjöld's death.

outside the range of possible candidates. I could not vote for him in the present situation.<sup>6</sup>

Nirje and Pound, of course, did not know anything about Hammar-skjöld's interactions with the Academy, but did know about the support and efforts of some of their 'Swedish colleagues' regarding a possible Nobel Prize. Pound must have known that he had been nominated in Sweden in 1955, and also that Lindegren had written that long document on Pound for the Swedish Academy. After having spent two weeks reading Pound and writing about his literary legacy, Lindegren stated that although he was not done reading, he was personally convinced that the American poet had the caliber of a Nobel candidate. His supplementary material included some information about the Pound case, given by Nirje, along with Nirje's notes on the *Cantos*, from the course he took at Yale from Professor Norman Holmes Pearson. Lindegren also mentioned Nirje's plans to write a book about Pound (a project that he only started working on, some thirty-five years later).

Others in Pound's entourage, including Pearson, were thinking about a possible Nobel Prize, a thought that must have appealed to Pound, too, even if he seemed rather uninterested. Bengt Nirje's perception of the situation may explain why he first thought that *Ezra's Choice* was the perfect title for the story he was telling me. Nirje did ask Pound to make that very choice, but this was Nirje's idea, not Hammar-skjöld's. Nirje told me that when he asked Pound if he wanted 'freedom or the Nobel Prize,' Pound shouted loud and clear, 'I want OUT!' The emphatic tone echoes what Pound wrote in his letter to Forssell (January 1955): 'What the HELL is E. P. doing in THAT galère?'

It had been ten years since Pound had been admitted to what he called the 'bughouse.' Ten years is also the length of time it took the first person Pound had asked to see, right after his arrest in 1945, to visit him. Archibald MacLeish had arrived, at last! Asylums were not among his favorite places to visit, but that December day 1955, MacLeish seemed more disturbed by seeing that Pound had so few books than by seeing him 'surrounded by the insane – not dangerous people but horrifyingly abnormal people,' as he later described them to a friend.<sup>7</sup>

6 All the Hammar-skjöld letters (and documents) to and from the Swedish Academy are in the DH Collection (Kungliga).

7 Lawrence Quincy Mumford, Librarian of Congress. See Carpenter, 818; Winnick, 397.

Yes, ten years is a long time, but Pound and MacLeish were not really friends, although they had friends in common, such as Hemingway and T. S. Eliot. They had met only once – not in the carefree Paris of the Twenties, but in more critical times – in Massachusetts in 1939, when Pound was trying ‘to stop the war.’ The battle, this time around, was a legal one, but it was in good hands, as MacLeish was both a poet and a lawyer. He was also a Harvard man like Overholser, with whom he had a chance to discuss Pound’s situation and even his ‘insanity.’ Overholser told MacLeish that ‘he would let Ez out in eighteen minutes if the Dept of Justice would nol pros the indictment,’ adding that ‘he had never thought Ez’s “treason” amounted to much anyway.’<sup>8</sup> Easier said than done.



*Bo Setterlind*

MacLeish didn’t give Pound any detail about his discussion with Overholser, and Pound at the time did not seem to realize that MacLeish’s visit was a crucial event. In fact, Pound never even mentioned MacLeish’s visit to Bengt Nirje, who was also trying to orchestrate his release. Maybe Pound was simply getting used to many of his visitors wanting to help him regain his freedom, even if the main purpose of their visits was to discuss poetry. Among those correspondents and visitors, one seldom mentioned is Swedish poet Bo Setterlind, who saw Pound on November 27, 1955.

He had written to Pound from

New York a few days earlier, introducing himself as a friend of Lars Forssell and of Bengt Nirje (who had encouraged him to visit Pound). He had written to Dr. Overholser at St. Elizabeths, asking permission to see Pound, and adding: ‘I understand that I am not allowed to write or publish anything about my visit.’ Luckily, he did both.

<sup>8</sup> Winnick, 397.

86 | Indeed, after his visit, Bo Setterlind wrote a 'Klagosång' ['Song of Lament'] about Pound, by hand, on four small sheets of blue stationery from Hotel Wellington in Washington, D. C. The poem was later published in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, as 'a letter just received from the poet, who is visiting America.'

**Klagosång**  
**Song of Lament<sup>9</sup>**

*After meeting Ezra Pound in the madhouse*

Today I have seen something  
that frightens me:  
America's greatest poet  
imprisoned  
in a madhouse  
    among wrecks,  
as if he were an undesirable.  
He is allowed to live in captivity  
in a free country.  
He is allowed to pursue his ideas  
in a stinking ward  
    equipped with paragraphs.  
...  
...

I shall never forget  
the sense of powerlessness  
that seized me  
    at our farewell,  
when the door opened to the starry vault.  
Your hand, Mr. Pound.  
Your cry to humanity.  
An echo among fools.

*Washington D.C., November 27, 1955*

While Bo Setterlind was in Washington, Bengt Nirje wrote a long letter to Pound from New York on November 30, in which he mentioned Bo Setterlind, 'the dominating figure in our very latest generation, the romantics of the 50s.' The main purpose of his letter was to report on his progress and on some developments:

9 Translation by M.-N. Little.

I have met with vital Dag and we had a long and most pleasant talk. He sends you and Mrs. Pound his warmest regards, and asked me as intermediary to tell you explicitly that he wants to know if there is anything in any respect he can do to assist you and Mrs. Pound, and to assure you that he would very much appreciate to do his very best. He hopes to hear from your first point of views [sic] soon. He complains bitterly that the fact that he can't move without being followed by guard [sic] and journalists has made it difficult for him to make a personal visit. He was very satisfied to get this channel for communication. He also was very glad to hear that you appreciated his quoting you, and he surely intends to go on doing it.

Nirje also wrote about his visit to Cambridge and his meeting with Professor Fred Packard, who was in charge of Harvard Vocarium Discs. He had listened to recordings of Pound reading his poems (during his 1939 visit to Harvard)<sup>10</sup> and had made copies for the Swedish Radio and the Swedish Academy. Nirje added:

I have told Mr. Dag about these recordings, and he is very eager to listen to them, and eventually he can bring one copy when he is leaving for Stockholm December 17 to sit down at [attend] the yearly meeting of the Academy the 20th. I think he will appreciate to be able to bring some friends over there together to listen to your readings.

Nirje mentioned that Fred Packard, whose passion was poetry (and who quoted Pound's poems at length by heart), was also interested in helping Pound publish those recordings, which he thought were important. Packard said that 'there undoubtedly would be a demand for them.'

Bengt Nirje's letter triggered three short replies from Pound on December 3, 4, and 5. Those were among the few Pound letters that I read in 1985 while doing some research (on Saint-John Perse) in the Hammarskjöld Collection at the Royal Library in Stockholm. My first impression when reading them was that Pound had much more humor than many of the Secretary-General's other correspondents. I also concluded that simply because of his position as Secretary-General,

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<sup>10</sup> Recordings (some in digital format) of Pound reading his poems on May 27, 1939, can be found at Woodberry Poetry Room, Houghton Library, Harvard University. [http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/collections/poetry\\_room.cfm](http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/collections/poetry_room.cfm)

Hammarskjöld, of course, could not have intervened in the Pound case. At the time I did not understand that these three letters were only glimpses of a very complex affair and that they would in fact hurt Pound's chances even more, not so much because of their content but because of their unusual style, which may have been more surprising than shocking. Nevertheless, the letters indicated Pound's eagerness to be free and included the names of a few influential people, two of whom eventually played a role in Pound's release.

In his first short letter to Nirje, which begins with 'Saluti to Herr D. H.,' Pound writes that 'what can be done is to insist on FACTS/ to define words.' And he offers the example of Morht in *Arts Spectacles*,<sup>11</sup> who 'does not get the definition of USURA, which he confuses with interest.' Pound is also asking Nirje if D. H. can 'get the Square \$/ series and/or IDEA into Sweedish [sic] schools.'

The second, longer letter starts with: 'Continuing to reflect on yr/ letter. I don't know how often you see D. H. Of course, if he is on friendly terms with Lodge,<sup>12</sup> it could be useful.' At the end of the letter, Pound adds that Charleen Swansea, a poetry teacher from North Carolina, wanted a copy of Bo Setterlind's poem.

In his last short letter, Pound mentions Mrs. Luce<sup>13</sup> (although 'several people dislike her'), Alfalfa Bill (who 'has low opinion of several public characters'), and the President's brother: 'As straws in the wind Milton Eisenhower arouses strong distrust. He is reported hostile, but may be merely a mouthpiece.' And Pound adds another key person: 'Nelson Rockefeller?'<sup>14</sup> What does D. H. have to say about him [?] I should not suggest direct action at this time, I doubt if Nelson is ready for enlightenment, but sounding might be taken.'

A few days later, Bengt Nirje received an important call from the United Nations. 'The Secretary-General is free between 10:50 and 11:00. Can he see you?' By then, Nirje was used to the short notice and the timing of such calls, and he often had to rush from his small hotel on 46th Street

11 Michel Morht, 'Libérez Ezra Pound,' *Arts Spectacles*, 543 (November 1955): 23-29. Morht, who wanted Pound to be released, included a summary of his works and a translation of sections of *Canto 81*.

12 Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., U.N. ambassador.

13 Clare Booth, ambassador to Italy.

14 Rockefeller was serving as undersecretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1953-1955).

near Times Square to the U.N. building to arrive on time. Fifty years later, Nirje still had vivid and colorful memories of those visits, and in 1990, he had started to write them down.

At the most memorable of those calls I sat alone in the antichambre of the office on the 38th floor when – sharp at 10:50 – the door opened and Krishna Menon, the temperamental and impressive Indian representative on the Security Council, stood before me, his piercing dark eyes expressing surprise and disbelief, as he must have wondered ‘How could Hammarskjöld possibly find it more interesting to talk to this young nobody, than carry on our important conversation!?’ With some gracious words the Secretary-General always knew how to ease any tension and also to remain on schedule; and when ten minutes later, I was followed to the door; there stood Prince Rainier of Monaco!<sup>15</sup>

During that short December 9 visit, Nirje shared the three letters he had just received with Dag Hammarskjöld. Pound’s letters, as irrational as they seemed to be, provided important information that would eventually lead to his release (as Nirje later discovered).

Two years had passed since Dag Hammarskjöld had assured Lars Forssell that he shared his concern for Pound’s ‘tragic human destiny’ and had promised to do anything in his power to help. One year had passed since Hammarskjöld had become a member of the Swedish Academy and had taken part in discussions regarding Nobel Prize candidates. Most of the time, these discussions (including voting) had to take place in writing, because the Secretary-General had not been able to travel to Sweden as often as he had hoped. Although Hammarskjöld’s own decision regarding Pound and the Nobel Prize had already been made, he shared his reservations with only a few people, and mostly within the Academy.

Hammarskjöld’s position was clear and firm when he wrote to Anders Österling, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, a six-page letter (December 23, 1955) to explain in great detail the complexity of the Pound case. The length of the letter could be due to the fact that Hammarskjöld, who had not been able to attend the Academy’s December 20 meeting, wanted to clarify his position. To make sure the

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<sup>15</sup> Bengt Nirje’s unpublished notes.

members of the Academy understood the situation, he wrote the letter in Swedish, whereas many of his letters were dictated in English, and often hastily. Pound's situation was, indeed, an important matter, and Hammarskjöld was also asking his fellow academicians a favor, which required some thoughtful diplomatic skills.

The letter starts with the detail that prompted Hammarskjöld's involvement in the effort to arrange for Pound's release: the MoMA quotation. If such a well-known poet attached so much importance to the fact that the U.N. Secretary-General had quoted his poem, then he must be a very lonely man, concluded the Secretary-General. He added that one of Pound's friends, Bengt Nirje, 'a pleasant, well informed and sensible young man,' became a valuable intermediary between him and Pound. Hammarskjöld enclosed copies of the three letters Nirje had received from Pound, and described them as 'a cry for help from a very lonely man.' In the same way he had responded to Lars Forssell, Hammarskjöld told Österling that it was Pound, the human being, who should be saved.

The first part of his long letter is about planning Pound's release; the second part is about Pound's candidacy for the Nobel Prize. As far as Hammarskjöld was concerned, these were two separate – and incompatible – issues. He was well aware that his influential position as Secretary-General of the United Nations and as member of the Swedish Academy prevented him from officially interfering in the Pound case. However, Hammarskjöld asked Österling to talk to the other members of the Academy with the hope that they would agree to 'unofficially' ask Hammarskjöld to 'evaluate the situation' regarding Pound. From the outside, one might think that the Secretary-General's involvement had something to do with the Nobel Prize – which in the end became the more official (and more convenient) version. More importantly, this issue of the Nobel Prize would allow Hammarskjöld to 'discuss the case with his friends at the State Department,' in his role as a member of the Swedish Academy, rather than as the U.N. Secretary-General.

Hammarskjöld mentioned that he had discussed the situation with a personal friend, W. H. Auden, whose judgment he trusted. They had agreed that they should be ready to protect Pound, if he admitted that he was guilty, and then help him relocate to Southern Europe. In other words, Pound's freedom was the first priority; not awarding him a Nobel



Anders Österling

Prize was a means of protecting not only the Academy, but also Pound himself. A Prize would not open any doors for Pound; on the contrary, it might trigger the wrong kind of publicity, as well as bizarre, compromising comments from Pound.

There was an even more important reason for Hammarskjöld's choice, one which is not well-known among Pound scholars – namely his critical opinion of some of Pound's more recent work. Hammarskjöld compared the just published *Cantos* 85-95 to 'a locked room,' a text that one cannot access or understand. He also thought that one of the three letters Pound had written to Nirje (December 3) was 'a sinister parody of some *Canto* passages.' Hammarskjöld had already written to Sten Selander, in March 1955, that the recent *Cantos* were impossible to understand, and 'most Chinese.' Then, on October 15, he wrote that the Nobel Prize 'would also be a bit ridiculous in view of the fact that his later production in no way measures up to his earlier contributions and to a large extent [is] definitely ununderstandable.'

Hammarskjöld's harsh criticism of the latest *Cantos* was not included in 'Ezra Pound och Nobel Priset,' a 1989 article by Görgen Antonsson and Archie Henderson in the Swedish literary journal *Lyriskvänner*<sup>16</sup> [*The Poetry Advocate*]. Antonsson and Henderson quoted the same few lines of the March letter to Selander (about the last *Cantos* being 'Chinese'), but not Hammarskjöld's pointed comments about the Nobel. The article, however, gives a good, step-by-step account of Pound's candidacy.<sup>17</sup> So does Henderson's paper on 'Pound, Sweden, and the Nobel Prize, An Introduction,' delivered at the 1990 Brunnenburg Conference and later

16 *Lyriskvänner* [the Poetry Advocate] 36, no. 4 (1989): 198-206.

17 It includes excerpts from Hammarskjöld's letters to the Academy, and the full text of Pound's 1943 letter to Österling.

published;<sup>18</sup> but again, Henderson does not mention Hammarskjöld's reservations regarding some of Pound's latest works. The basis for both articles is, in fact, a much longer document, 'Pound, Sverige och Nobelpriset,' written earlier by Görgen Antonsson and Archie Henderson;<sup>19</sup> with longer excerpts of letters showing some of the criticism of Pound's 'later production.'

What was not mentioned in any of these articles, or elsewhere, was that Hammarskjöld felt very strongly about supporting another poet and Nobel candidate, whom he mentioned in the very last page of his long letter to Österling:

I recently had a chance to meet Alexis Leger and have seen him since then on several occasions, he is an extraordinary man, simple and warm, of great knowledge and vast experience, with such a talent as a storyteller as I have never seen before.

French diplomat Alexis Leger, also known as Saint-John Perse, was famous for writing difficult, almost hermetic poetry, which did not trouble Hammarskjöld who often read, and even translated, difficult texts. One would then wonder why he thought of the *Cantos* as a 'locked room'? Perhaps in part as a symbol of Pound's incarceration.

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Taylor and Claus Melchior, eds., *Ezra Pound and Europe* (Amsterdam, Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1993), 155-164.

<sup>19</sup> Recently published: Görgen Antonsson, *Ezra Pound, Sverige och Nobelpriset* (Stockholm, Amalgam, 2010).

## Chapter VI

# 'In the Dark Shade of Courage'

(1956)

As Christmas was approaching, Bengt Nirje sent his greetings to Dag Hammarskjöld along with the Harvard Pound recordings. Hammarskjöld responded on December 22, 1955, with a 'Season's Greetings' card, and mentioned that he was about to write to Anders Österling. He was also hoping to see Nirje before leaving on his six-week world tour. Shortly thereafter, he invited him to a Christmas Eve luncheon at the United Nations. Nirje was the only guest, which was quite a privilege for him, and certainly a pleasure for Hammarskjöld who must have missed the traditional Swedish *Julafton* [Christmas Eve]. They set aside their titles and spent three hours discussing various subjects in a relaxed and informal atmosphere, celebrating the season with a few glasses of *snaps*. Listening to Nirje reminisce about that luncheon on the 38th floor, I could almost hear their conversation and many a joyful '*skåll!*'



Bengt Nirje

However, some of what they discussed was serious business. They talked about Ezra Pound, of course, but also literature and even China. Literature was one of Hammarskjöld's great interests, and the same was true for the young Nirje, who remained an extraordinary *érudit* all his life. They discussed Erik Lindegren, not in regard to Pound and the Nobel, but in regard to Saint-John Perse's candidacy for the Prize. Hammarskjöld, who had received some of Lindegren's translations of Perse (which were going to be published), was anxious to meet Nirje's friend, so he asked him

to arrange for them to meet in Stockholm. Although Hammarskjöld and Nirje also talked about Saint-John Perse, they did not discuss the French poet's chances for the Nobel, which had to remain confidential. Their main concern was to work on Pound's release.

In Nirje's recollections, however, the most interesting topic that day was Hammarskjöld's China mission, which had been an amazing diplomatic success for the Secretary-General, and a personal triumph, too. Hammarskjöld told Nirje in great detail about that first mission, and his negotiations with Chou En-lai leading to the release of fifteen American prisoners. He summed it up as 'Swedish Mandarinism met Chinese Mandarinism,' stating that the next move in that sophisticated political chess game had to come from the U.S. Then, referring to his successful mission in aiding the U.S., Hammarskjöld added: 'They owe me one! I want Pound!' That exclamation, in Nirje's memory, seemed as loud and clear as Pound's 'I want OUT!' Hammarskjöld's sense that his diplomatic effort could be repaid by the release of Pound, underscored his belief that there were no boundaries between politics and literature. The key to success, however, would be diplomacy. Hammarskjöld's carefully crafted December 23, 1955 letter to Anders Österling had been the first important step. Others were soon to follow.



*Dag Hammarskjöld in Peking*

After that memorable Christmas Eve, Hammarskjöld borrowed Nirje's copies of Pound's books and a 1949 issue of the *Quarterly Review of Literature* (with articles on Pound). He sent Nirje a book by Swedish writer and poet Bertil Malmberg and Pound's *Rock-Drill*, and told him about a Saint-John Perse interview for the Swedish Radio. Nirje wrote back, thanking Hammarskjöld for the books, and saying that he had a hard time, at first, getting into 'Grandpa's monologues from the

bughouse,' although they were 'saved' by some of the lyrical passages on Paradise, and the moving sections about love. He also asked if he could keep *Rock-Drill* while Hammarskjöld was traveling.

Anders Österling, in his New Year's Eve letter to Hammarskjöld, wrote disparagingly about *Rock-Drill*:

I have just read – or tried to read – *Section Rock-Drill* in the new Italian edition.

From the very beginning, it is, quite sadly, formless: galimatias [gobbledygook] with isolated bursts of poetry. The photocopied letters you sent, they too, may as well be called *Cantos*! Therefore, I share your opinion that P's Nobel-candidacy is an issue in itself and should not be discussed at this time.<sup>1</sup>

The object of his letter was mostly to thank Hammarskjöld for his very interesting letter regarding Pound and to assure him that he would forward Hammarskjöld's request to free Pound to the members of the Swedish Academy. Österling, citing a similar case when the Academy had intervened to assist Norwegian poet and painter Arnulf Överland, (a member of the Norwegian resistance, imprisoned in Germany), believed that the Academy could intervene on Pound's behalf as well.

When they met on January 19, the members of the Swedish Academy also found Hammarskjöld's account of the Pound case 'very interesting,' and asked him to look into appropriate ways of improving Pound's situation, including the possibility of a change in his living conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Österling forwarded that resolution when he wrote to Hammarskjöld (January 23, 1956), adding:

The Academy expressed the wish that publicity be avoided in any way possible in order for the Academy not to be eventually involved in political discussions regarding this matter. Even though I have no misgivings in this respect, I would like to forward, at the Academy's special request, their wish.

<sup>1</sup> Translated by M.-N. Little

<sup>2</sup> As stated in the January 19, 1956 minutes sent to Hammarskjöld (Kungliga);  
Translated by M.-N. Little.

Others, especially Pound's friends in Italy, were not afraid of such publicity. If Hammar skjöld 'wanted Pound,' so did an Italian deputy, who was quoted in a *Life Magazine* editorial as saying that 'after all, if the U.S. can send us back such characters as Luciano without asking for them, can't the U.S. also send us Ezra Pound upon our request?'<sup>3</sup> Charles 'Lucky' Luciano was the famous Italian-American mobster with a thirty-year prison sentence who, after cooperating with U.S. military and intelligence forces, was paroled in 1946, and in exchange, deported to Italy.<sup>4</sup> The other 'released' war criminals mentioned in the *Life* editorial were Nazi General 'Sep' Dietrich and Tokyo Rose (Iva D'Aquino). One can find references to Tokyo Rose in most Pound biographies, because of her own broadcasts during the war, but rarely does one find references to Luciano, whose crimes were, of course, not of a political nature.

The author of the *Life* editorial also included the often quoted description of Pound's room at St. Elizabeths as 'a closet which contains a national skeleton.' *Life* magazine was owned by Henry Luce, whose wife, Clare Booth Luce, was the American ambassador in Rome – the 'Mrs. Luce' mentioned in Pound's letter to Bengt Nirje (December 5, 1955). Nirje 'immediately arranged' for a copy of the editorial to be sent to Hammar skjöld, their 'traveling friend,' as he wrote to Pound from New York, on February 20. He told Pound that Hammar skjöld 'was immensely pleased with the recordings he got for Christmas' and that 'a copy was also sent to the old men at home' [the Academy]. Nirje added:

I saw our friend a couple of times before he left, and I was very happy to see his very active interest and learn about the plans he made. A couple of preliminary steps were apparently taken before he left, and I know he will catch on as soon as he returns, I will see him this Saturday and learn more.

Nirje was hoping to get Pound's comments on the *Life* editorial, in writing, before his upcoming meeting at the U.N., so he could share them with Hammar skjöld. In the meantime, Nirje enclosed his own translation of 'Klagosång,' Bo Setterlind's poem that had just been

3 'An Artist Confined' (unsigned, February 6, 1956).

4 'In 1962, Luciano was planning to help produce a movie about his life. A Hollywood producer flew to meet the aging gangster in Naples, Italy on January 26. As Luciano was walking across the runway to shake the producer's hand, he dropped dead suddenly of a heart attack.'

published in Sweden,<sup>5</sup> and also announced that during his upcoming visit to Washington he would be looking forward to 'some private talk' with Pound. 'Some private talk' first took place at the United Nations, where Dag Hammarskjöld asked Bengt Nirje to write a detailed background account of the Ezra Pound case. Nirje spent hours in the New York public library, doing research for his report, unaware that it would become an important document for the case.

Some even more important conversation took place in Washington on February 29, 1956 during a meeting between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. They discussed the Middle East crisis and 'the role the United Nations might usefully play in helping resolve some of the problems which face the world.'<sup>6</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld also talked with Assistant Secretary of State Francis O. Wilcox about the Middle East and about another complex issue: the Pound case. A few days later, on March 13, Wilcox wrote to Hammarskjöld, asking for a copy of the picture of him and Dulles, taken at the Washington meeting. What Wilcox referred to, in his letter, as a 'chat,' would in fact be the spark that would set things in motion. It allowed Hammarskjöld to promptly follow up with a serious request for cooperation and a viable solution – not for the Middle East situation, but for the Pound case – and to write the following letter<sup>7</sup> to the Assistant Secretary of State:

15 March 1956

Dear Mr. Wilcox,

At our recent meeting in Washington I brought up with you the case of Ezra Pound, indicating my strong interest in a solution to this humanitarian problem, not, of course, in my present professional capacity but in view of Pound's significance in the Western world of letters which among European intellectuals had attracted considerable attention to his present situation. I mentioned in particular the interest of the Swedish Academy of which I have the honour to be a member. Enclosed I send you the main data in the case.

5 *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* 1, no.14 (1956): 14-15.

6 Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote, eds., *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, vol. III, Dag Hammarskjöld 1956-1957 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 49.

7 DH Collection, Kungliga.

There might be reason to assume that the case has not been handled in the best way from the side of Mr. Pound. One can also assume that the fact that Mr. Pound for so long was an expatriate and in his writings so often criticized the works and activities of his literary contemporaries in the US, led to an estrangement to the world of American letters, and left him with few friends in the US.

Irrespective of the unlawfulness of his radio activities in Italy Mr. Pound had, in the judgment of the Western world of letters, alienated himself already in the 1930's because of some of his literary themes, his idea that Mussolini represented a reincarnation of the views of Thomas Jefferson and his according sympathies. These ideas became assimilated into his poetry and formed an integrated and disturbing part thereof. On the other hand, the artistic achievement and the pioneering originality of Ezra Pound guarantee, it is safe to say, his works a most prominent place not only in American letters but in the world literature of this century. The oddities of Ezra Pound's ideas represent only a part of his work, the rest forms a substantial contribution worth more than silence.

In May 1956 Ezra Pound will have spent 11 years in various forms of confinement. He is now 70 years old, and apparently not dangerous for anything else than his reputation.

Considering various international decisions on war criminals from far worse categories than the one Mr. Pound represents, and considering also his positive contributions to American letters, there seems to be, with regards to his old age and the circumstances of his present legal status, forceful humanitarian reasons for a reconsideration of the case of Ezra Pound.

Hoping to have your advice how to best to assist in furthering a solution,

Encl.

[Dag Hammarskjöld]

The enclosure was a single spaced, three-and-a-half page document, put together almost verbatim from information Bengt Nirje had provided. The document gave background information on Pound, the radio broad-

casts, the indictments, Pound's arrest, and his arraignment. Also included were the examining board's medical statements (from December 1945) which concluded with the following recommendation:

In our opinion, with advancing years his personality, for many years abnormal, has undergone further distortion to the extent that he is now suffering from a paranoid state which renders him mentally unfit to advise properly with counsel or to participate intelligently and reasonably in his own defense. He is, in other words, insane and mentally unfit to stand trial, and is in need of care in a mental hospital.

The last section was about decisions that led to Pound's incarceration at St. Elizabeths, and a few other judicial statements related to his case. Hammarskjöld added one last paragraph at the end the document:

Public reaction: An editorial from 'Life', dated 6 February 1956 is annexed, as illustrating a reaction of significance within a group that normally could not be assumed to be favourably disposed in a case of this type.

The background information on Pound was accurate and did not make him appear to be a martyr to help his case. The fact that Hammarskjöld relied heavily on Bengt Nirje's original memo in writing his appeal is not surprising. What is puzzling is that Hammarskjöld wrote only the first paragraph and closing statement of his March 15 letter to Wilcox. The rest of the letter, which is quite different from his usual style, was in fact written by Nirje as part of his long memo (which may have included outside sources, as well). Several factors explain the Wilcox letter 'collage.' The more obvious one is that these were extremely difficult times for the Secretary-General because of the Middle East situation. The other reasons were that he wanted to send the letter to the State Department as soon as possible, and to share copies of his letter to Wilcox (along with cover letters that include revealing details) with a few chosen people the following day.

Hammarskjöld's short but warm letter to Bengt Nirje begins: 'Enclosed you will find the texts on Pound as given by hand to Mr. Wilcox. Please keep the action to yourself and do not to anybody refer to the name of the addressee.' One should note that Hammarskjöld refers to the letter as 'texts,' which confirms that most of that letter to Wilcox consisted

of Nirje's 'text.' The fact that the letter was 'given by hand' is another indication that it had to remain secret.

A somewhat longer letter addressed to W. H. Auden ended with:

I enclose a copy of a letter on the Pound case which may interest you. I have every reason to believe that I shall be able to follow it up. Please treat as secret the fact and the name of the addressee. In strictest confidence I can also tell you that I have the formal mandate of the Swedish Academy to try to find out what can be done.

Auden wrote to Hammarskjöld on March 21 that he thought the letter to Wilcox was 'excellent and in exactly the right tone.' But Auden, who knew Pound well, also seemed a little skeptical: 'Our chief headache, I fear, may be E. P. himself: I am so afraid of his making some statement to the Press about USURY or one of his hobbyhorses,' a concern Hammarskjöld had already expressed in his December letter to Anders Österling.

Hammarskjöld's longest cover letter, which was for Anders Österling, included the following :

I have now taken up the case, on a totally personal level, with Mr. Francis Wilcox, who, besides his position at the State Department, has the advantage of a broad academic background and a great influence within [circles of] the Congress. He understood perfectly well the reason for my involvement and was clearly aware of the delicate situation it implied for the Academy. He promised to look into what could be done, but because he did not have access to all the details of the case, he wished to have some background information in writing. This explains my letter to him, and of which I enclose a copy. I thought this may interest you, and I also thought that, because of the Academy's decision, the letter may also belong in the archives of the Academy. In reference to my mentioning the Academy in my letter, be assured that there is no risk for mishandling or indiscretion.<sup>8</sup>

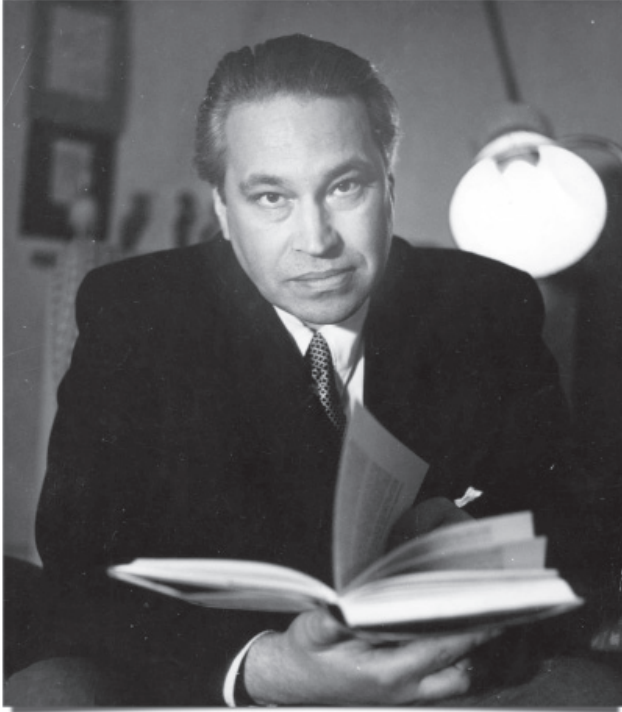
Hammarskjöld also told Österling that he was hoping to come to Stockholm in early May and was looking forward to participating in the Academy meeting to be held at that time of year. This comment led to a discussion regarding Nobel candidates, and once again, Hammarskjöld said that he was planning to 'vote for P.' Not for Pound, of course, but for Perse.

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8 Translated by M.-N. Little

In the spring of 1956, Hammarskjöld did not have a chance to return to Stockholm for a visit, because of major political crises, but he exchanged several letters with Erik Lindegren regarding translations of Saint-John Perse's poems. Those letters, years ago, led me to discover the Hammarskjöld-Perse correspondence, which I then edited and translated. The Hammarskjöld-Lindgren letters<sup>9</sup> show Hammarskjöld's keen interest for translation of literary works, and not only French texts. In an interview he later declared:

The problem of translating, of transposing, of expressing things in different languages, never leaves us. Translating, transposing – this is what we do every day, all the time.<sup>10</sup>



*Erik Lindegren*

<sup>9</sup> Maria Hammarén, ed., *Hammarskjöld/Lindgren, Dialoger* 57 (2001): 1-62.

<sup>10</sup> See Manuel Frölich, 'A Fully Integrated Vision: Politics and the Arts in the Dag Hammarskjöld-Barbara Hepworth Correspondence,' in *Development Dialogue* 1 (2001): 22.

Hammar skjöld did some of his translation work during his official trips, as he always found time for reading and literary endeavors, in spite of the demanding complexities of the political arena. He tried to reply to his many correspondents as well, even briefly, and treated them with elegant courtesy. On May 16, for example, Hammar skjöld wrote to Ezra Pound to thank him for a booklet he had just sent. In return, Hammar skjöld sent him a copy of his latest speech, adding 'not because it is any good or is likely in itself to interest you, but because of the debt of gratitude that you will find that I acknowledge on the last page.' In his address, 'The International Significance of the Bill of Rights,' given in Williamsburg, Virginia, on May 15 (at the Celebration of the 180th Anniversary of the Virginia Declaration of Rights 1776-1956) Hammar skjöld had concluded:

This is not a question of abstract ethical principles. I state conclusions from some very concrete recent experiences. It is when we all play safe that we create a world of the utmost insecurity.<sup>11</sup> It is when we all play safe that fatality will lead us to our doom. It is 'in the dark shade of courage' alone that the spell can be broken.<sup>12</sup>

'In the dark shade of courage' is a line from *Canto XC*, which celebrates hope with an image: 'Trees die & the dream remains.' These lines from Pound's *Cantos*, like those Hammar skjöld quoted in the MoMA speech, represent moments when Pound's poetic discourse rises to the level of statement and speaks in some more direct way to and for the reader. Hammar skjöld often included similar short lines from Saint-John Perse and others, in his letters and especially in his diary.

At the end of the Williamsburg address, words such as *insecurity*, *fatality*, *doom*, *dark shade*, and *spell*, reveal the inner workings of Hammar skjöld's thought process and reflect his 'very concrete recent experiences' during the Middle East crisis. The more hopeful passages about 'the dignity of man' and 'the respect for human beings' are the leitmotifs of his speech. For Hammar skjöld, courage was synonymous with action of the kind that acknowledges that while the wrongs and losses are serious, 'the dream remains.'

11 'It is when we all play safe that we create a world of the utmost insecurity' is now included in the Dag Hammar skjöld Foundation's email signature.

12 Cordier, vol. III, 142.

# Chapter VII

## 'In Praise of Dissent'

(1956-57)

The dream that remained in the spring of 1956, was for Hammarskjöld to find a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, thanks to his efforts and the support of the Security Council. He compared the process of resolving the difficult crisis to building an arch, stone by stone, and getting to know both the Egyptian and the Israeli sides was the keystone of the Secretary-General's diplomacy. Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had promised to enforce a ceasefire along the Gaza strip and the Negev Desert. Soon enough, the Security Council, even though it was divided on the issue, asked the Secretary-General to continue his efforts.

Hammarskjöld's numerous Middle Eastern visits and talks finally paid off. At a press conference on May 11, he said of the conflict: 'For the first time in my life, I believe that I understand it.' In his efforts to find solutions, he tried to take into account the human factor and understand the complex temperaments of Ben-Gurion and Nasser. Both men strongly believed they were right, but Hammarskjöld had the courage to remind them that 'when everybody is playing safe in the way you do, the result is a state of utmost insecurity,'<sup>1</sup> a sentiment he repeated shortly thereafter in his Williamsburg address. The human factor was also at the heart of Hammarskjöld's effort to liberate Ezra Pound, whose temperament and situation were certainly complex, as well.

The dream of peace, however, was suddenly shattered on June 19 when Ben-Gurion stated in a speech to the Knesset [Israeli Parliament] that 'the armistice agreements are not an ideal solution and cannot last forever.' This would not be the last time that the Secretary-General would be caught in the impossible situation of rescuing or protecting smaller nations when greater ones were hovering, hawk-like, over the field of operations. Despite his efforts and courage in the political arena, Hammarskjöld, in his personal correspondence, could not help but show his real feelings. He admitted in a letter to his friend the Swedish painter Bo Beskow, that 'this whole business is an unbelievable, partly shocking experience.'<sup>2</sup>

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1 Unpublished statement (Urquhart, 151).

2 June 2, 1956 (DH Collection, Kungliga).

If writing to his friends back in Sweden had become a safe refuge, the same was true of reading poetry. On June 19, as the Middle East crisis was taking a turn for the worse, Hammarskjöld wrote to Erik Lindegren regarding Saint-John Perse's poems. Hammarskjöld, who knew French well, had become the ideal intermediary between the two poets. He had already had a chance, when Perse visited him in New York that June, to discuss several translation questions raised by Lindegren, and could in turn suggest how to best translate particular words. He had not yet met Lindegren, and was looking forward to discussing the translations with him in person during his summer visit to Sweden.

That same day, Hammarskjöld also wrote to Assistant Secretary of State Francis Wilcox, following up on his March letter about Ezra Pound: 'In view of the significance which, as you know, I attach to the case, I would like to ask you if you have been able to give the question any thought.' His upcoming trip to Sweden was a good excuse to ask for a prompt reply: 'I am certain to be asked by my colleagues in the Swedish Academy about how matters stand, and I would therefore appreciate it if you could let me hear something from you before I leave.' Wilcox, who must have thought that he did not have enough time to reply in writing, presumably telephoned Hammarskjöld so he could hear what he had to say about the Pound case. His advice was simply... to wait! The reason for the delay was complex, as one can gather in the following passage from Hammarskjöld's letter to W. H. Auden, on June 25:

From the reliable sources, of which you know, I have learned that action in 1956 is considered unwise. The right time for an operation will be early in 1957. It is felt that at that time, an effort to get [Pound] out might well prove successful.

I am told that the right way to tackle the problem would be to inspire some U.S. institution or organization of the highest prestige (American Academy?) to address an appeal either to the White House or to the Attorney General. This appeal should be supported by simultaneous approaches from some leading European institutions and top intellectuals with weight in American opinion. One such institution might of course be the Swedish Academy, but I fail to see how the Academy could act in anything but the most informal and non-public way, and I fear that the same would be true of other institutions of similar traditions and standing. However, such infor-

mal support may have its great value if tied in, in the right way, with a public appeal from an American institution.

According to Hammarskjöld, the Assistant Secretary of State's suggestion to wait one year was the best advice they would ever get, so he asked Auden to help 'build up a background for action in 1957' by talking with T. S. Eliot, Archibald MacLeish, 'and others.' Unofficially, Auden was in charge, and Hammarskjöld promised that he would not 'take any further step' except for informing his friends at the Swedish Academy about Auden's involvement in the case.

The reason to wait until early 1957, was in part the hope that Adlai Stevenson would win the presidential elections. According to Bengt Nirje's recollections, Stevenson had told Hammarskjöld, confidentially, that should he be elected, he would liberate Pound.<sup>3</sup> Stevenson and Hammarskjöld also had a friend in common: Archibald MacLeish. Hammarskjöld did not yet know about MacLeish's campaign to liberate Pound. But he would, soon.

On June 25, Hammarskjöld sent a copy of his letter to Auden, along with a short note, to Bengt Nirje, and stressed that the possible new window of opportunity required careful planning, which could best be initiated by Auden. On the same day, Hammarskjöld also sent the Auden letter, accompanied by a longer letter, to Anders Österling insisting that the advice from Washington was reliable. He informed Österling he had not told Auden that Wilcox 'considered the Swedish Academy's involvement to be highly significant,' thus downplaying the role of the Swedish Academy, perhaps to encourage Auden to seek some support from his friends and from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Hammarskjöld, who had not yet left for Sweden, added that he was still hoping to meet with Österling at the end of June to discuss all of this in more detail.

In July, Hemingway wrote (out of the blue, it seems) to his 'old tennis opponent,' offering to send him his Nobel Prize medal, 'because you are our greatest living poet.'<sup>4</sup> He remembered all that Pound had done for him earlier, but added: 'To you what you did [during the war] was no sin since you believed in it. To me it was a grave sin. But you have paid

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3 Eisenhower was re-elected on December 17.

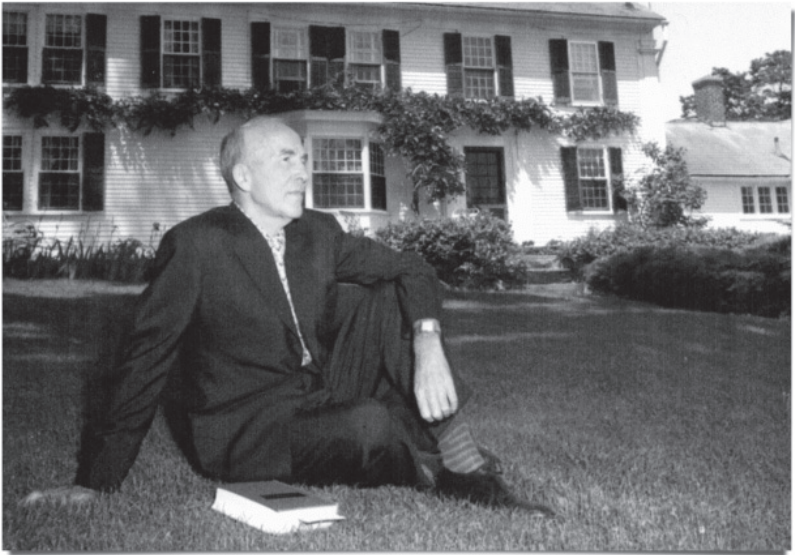
4 Baker, *Letters*, 864-65. Hemingway ended up giving the medal to a Shrine in Cuba.

for it many thousand times.' Hemingway also sent him a \$1,000 check, 'the end of the Nobel money,' and in closing the letter, he wrote, 'If you win the Swedish prize, as you should, keep mine and dispose of yours as you see fit.'

In the meantime, the campaign to free Ezra Pound was a source of discouragement for MacLeish, as he confided in Alexis Leger (Saint-John Perse) earlier in June:

Pound. I am fighting feathers and losing my way. Ever since I went to see him at St. Elizabeths last fall I have been determined to do something to get him out of that horror.... One cannot leave him there to rot. But whoever offers him a hand will have his fingers broken.<sup>5</sup>

When MacLeish asked Leger what he thought of Pound and of French poet René Char, Leger replied that he preferred to discuss the quality of their poetry when visiting MacLeish in Conway.<sup>6</sup>



*Archibald MacLeish in Conway*

<sup>5</sup> Winnick, 383.

<sup>6</sup> Carol Rigolot, ed., *Courrier d'Exil: Saint-John Perse et ses amis américains, Cahiers Saint-John Perse* 15 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 236.

The other long, although more rewarding campaign in which MacLeish was soon to be involved was the effort to nominate Leger for the Nobel Prize. The campaign, led by Katherine Biddle, with the support of T.S. Eliot and others, was on a parallel course with Hammarskjöld's own efforts despite the demands of the Suez crisis.

When Hammarskjöld was finally able to fly to Sweden, Bengt Nirje had arranged for him to meet his friend Erik Lindegren. They had a chance to discuss translations of Leger's poems, and most probably, his chances for the Nobel, as well. Leger, on his part, kept Hammarskjöld up to date, sending him a fragment of his new poem *Amers*, inscribed 'for Dag Hammarskjöld, poet.'<sup>7</sup> When he wrote to thank him, Hammarskjöld added:

There is one UN problem – surprisingly enough in the field of poetry – which, on occasion, I would be happy to bring up with you. The others I hope to approach in this case are Robert Frost and Gabriella Mistral – three languages but also three worlds.<sup>8</sup>



*Francis and Katherine Biddle*

The problem was most likely the Pound case, as Hammarskjöld was hoping for the support of Frost and Mistral in that matter.

When Erik Lindegren sent a copy of his *Jord Vindar Hav* [*Earth Wind Sea*] to Hammarskjöld on December 2, 1956, he thanked him for his help and for inspiring him to translate Saint-John Perse's poems. *Jord Vindar Hav* was very well received, and soon followed by the premiere of Karl-Birger Blomdhal's oratorio, which was inspired by Perse's poem *Anabase*.

<sup>7</sup> Little, *Poet and Diplomat*, 55.

<sup>8</sup> Little, *Poet and Diplomat*, 57.

Around the same time, Hammarskjöld and MacLeish were using their diplomatic and legal skills, in conjunction with their interest in poetry, to foster Leger's chances for the Nobel and to find a solution for Pound's ordeal.

'In Praise of Dissent,' MacLeish's review of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* 85-95, appeared in *The New York Times Book Review* on December 16, 1956. Those *Cantos* 'dissent and move,' wrote MacLeish. It was neither the dissent 'for its own case,' nor Pound's 'historical context' that moved MacLeish; rather the *Cantos* moved him because he was still haunted by his visit to St. Elizabeths. He did not blame anyone at St. Elizabeths, not even Dr. Overholser, for Pound's condition, which he described in the summary of his visit to the hospital:

The authorities of the hospital have been considerate: as considerate as it is possible to be under the impossible circumstances. When a conscious mind capable of the most complete human awareness is incarcerated among minds which are not conscious and cannot be aware, the enforced association produces a horror which is not relieved either by the intelligence of doctors or by the tact of administrators or even by the patience and kindness of the man who suffers it. You carry the horror away with you like the smell of the ward in your clothes, and whenever afterwards you think of Pound or read his lines a stale sorrow afflicts you.

MacLeish, the poet, concluded his review by comparing the *Cantos* to 'a coral reef [rising] out of shattering water;' MacLeish, the lawyer, pleaded that the purpose of the dissent in *The Cantos* was for the sake of 'the ideal of order in men's lives.'

MacLeish's views struck a chord with Hammarskjöld, who wrote to him on the same day the review was published. Having noticed that MacLeish 'shared [his] personal views,' he informed him of his own interest in the Pound case and declared: 'after discussing it on a high level I have reached the conclusion that in the beginning of next year something might well be done about it.' He also informed MacLeish of his personal involvement and – confidentially – of the mandate from the Swedish Academy which was 'keenly interested in the matter.' Hammarskjöld believed that, if necessary, he could even 'get their official endorsement of an American initiative.' He was, therefore, eager

to meet with MacLeish, and for other reasons too: 'I don't know of any more appropriate contact for me with the American Academy in the light also of our shared admiration for and interest in Saint-John Perse.' Hammarskjöld mentioned the 'first rate' Swedish translation of Perse's works, just published, and its 'truly overwhelming reception by the critics.' As had often been the case, he was anxious for his involvement not to be publicized, so he closed his letter with: 'I am sure you fully appreciate that this initiative for the time being should remain a matter between us.'

MacLeish replied on December 24, from Antigua, in the British West Indies, where he was spending 'the most unChristmas of Christmasses one could well imagine.' He gave details about the last six months which included preparing to approach the Attorney General ('suggesting to him that the time has now come to Noli Prosequi the indictment against Pound'); corresponding with Pound (who at first 'wanted a presidential pardon'); talking and corresponding with Dr. Overholser (who was first in favor of helping to release Pound, then 'urging that the question of Pound's release should not be raised, on the ground apparently, that he is not medically qualified at the moment'); and drafting a letter for the Attorney General (to be signed by T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost and Ernest Hemingway) 'suggesting that the charges be dropped.'

MacLeish was also looking forward to meeting with the Secretary-General in January, as he was interested in knowing more about Hammarskjöld's discussion at 'a high level.' He closed his letter with: 'Will you permit me to add that I in common with every American I know feel a debt of gratitude toward you which it would be most difficult to express in words.'

Although Hammarskjöld did not mention having discussed the Pound case in Washington (or at all), MacLeish assumed that it would be the more logical place for a discussion at 'a high level' (even if it could also have taken place at the United Nations headquarters). Would MacLeish have known about that Washington conversation through his friend at the State Department, Under-Secretary Christian Herter, or through his friend Alexis Leger, who had discussed the Pound case with MacLeish in Conway? Would Hammarskjöld then have discussed the case in detail with Leger? Probably not. Because we do not have all of the letters, memos, and other documents from that time and because

of the need for secrecy, we will never entirely know what was discussed in person, over the phone, or behind closed doors.

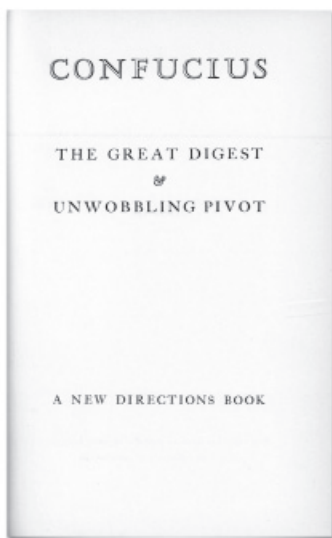
While MacLeish was spending Christmas in Antigua, Hemingway was in Cuba, and Pound was, of course, still at St. Elizabeths, but apparently not the least bit miserable. Pound even wrote to Hammarskjöld on December 29 that 'this has been in many way a very pleasant and exhill-erating [sic] Xmas.' Pound was delighted that the 1956 Nobel Prize had been awarded to Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez 'and not to some phoney m'as-tu-vu.' He was also pleased with the many new editions of his works, in English and German, and with the fact that 'some freedom of the press seems to be returning to Europe.' His main reason to 'intrude' on Hammarskjöld's time was to share the 'complete surprise' of Ryozo Iwasaki's bilingual Japanese edition of *Mauberley*; 'after the surprise of the volume, Ryozo sent me a poem in English by Junzaburo which has given me more pleasure than any poem by a living writer I have come on for years.' Given that Junzaburo's writing in English was so good, Pound suggested that someone ought to 'look at his Japanese writings,' with a possible Nobel Prize in mind – which Pound noted would be a first for Japan.

Mentioning the Nobel Prize, of course, encouraged Hammarskjöld to write to Anders Österling on January 3, sending him a copy of MacLeish's letter indicating 'that things are moving.' He added that unless he heard something from Österling, he would 'use the mandate from the Academy some time later in January, as suggested by MacLeish.' Hammarskjöld also included a copy of part of Pound's Christmas letter (most probably the passage about the two Japanese poets), and added that the letter had 'only a curiosity value.' One wonders why Hammarskjöld referred to Pound's letter in an offhand manner, when that letter had interested Hammarskjöld and had triggered such a warm and friendly response on his part.

The fact that Pound had addressed his letter to 'My Dear Dag Hammarskjöld' would not necessarily imply that his correspondent needed to reply with 'My Dear Ezra Pound,' but Hammarskjöld used that salutation in a letter written on January 4, and he closed his letter with:

It is somewhat trite at this time of the year to send good wishes, but I will not let the convention bar me from expressing such good wishes, now that I write to you, as they really come from my heart.

Hammar skjöld 'was most happy' to hear from Pound, and the tone of his letter is optimistic and sincere, because he had noticed 'the various things' that Pound had wished 'to register on the positive side' of life. He was genuinely interested in Pound's 'Japanese find,' of course, and eager to read some of Junzaburo's works. Hammar skjöld seemed suddenly more at ease in discussing literature and even 'political philosophy' with Pound, as he would be with a fellow academician or a writer whose works inspired him in his political ventures:



*Confucius: The Great Digest & Unwobbling Pivot*

'It may amuse you to hear that your Confucius, especially 'The Unwobbling Pivot' is one of the books to which I have most often returned during the past year when most policymaking has been of a kind somewhat different, indeed, from the one our Chinese friends recommended. Anyway, you have in me a follower in your admiration for the political philosophy to which you, through your translations, have given us such splendid access.'

Hammar skjöld had, in fact, quoted from the *Unwobbling Pivot* in his diary in the summer of 1956: 'Who has this great power to see clearly into himself without tergiversation, *and act thence*, will come to his destiny.'<sup>9</sup>

Pound replied to Hammar skjöld's January 4 letter the next day with more information on the two Japanese poets: 'both of them seem to have

9 Markings (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 133; *Confucius: The Great Digest & Unwobbling Pivot* (New York: New Directions, 1951), 135. This was the first of five citations in *Markings*, from Pound's *Confucius*. See Bernard Erling, *A Reader's Guide to Dag Hammar skjöld's Waymarks* (St. Peter, MN: Gustavus. Adolphus College, Translation and Guide combined, 2002), 154, 156-157, 159. Also, <http://www.dag-hammar skjold.com/2010/03/unwobbling-pivot.html>

graduated from Kit Kat<sup>10</sup> engouement [fascination] with surrealism and Paris 1920.' He assumed 'there would be some Japanese kultur-wallah at the U.N. who could produce bibliographic data re/Nishiwaki's Japanese product.' The best U.N. kultur-wallah was Hammarskjöld, who wrote to Iwasaki regarding Nishiwaki's works, and soon thereafter, sent Pound a copy of Iwasaki's reply.

Pound replied right away, on February 25, thanking Hammarskjöld for his letter and adding:

There is a friend of mine now in New York, whom – if ever, in press of business, you have ten minutes to spare – I should like you to meet. With no specific scope save that even on the summit of things one may sometime have use for a person whose fidelity can be counted on absolutely.

It was most unusual for Pound not to name that trustworthy friend. The friend could have been Clare Boothe Luce or even Henry Luce. The Luces, who had already left Rome, had several other residences in the 1950s, one of them being New York, as Henry Luce was still director of *Time*. In fact, shortly after MacLeish's December, 1956 *New York Times* review, his name appeared on the *PEOPLE* page of *Time* magazine in the company, among others, of the Dutchess of Kent, the dancer Serge Lifar, and Pope Pius XII, who also made the news. The piece on MacLeish was the longest one:

Writing 'In Praise of Dissent' in the *New York Times Book Review*, ex-Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish, now a Harvard professor of literature, tipped his mortarboard – with reservations – to Fascist-embracing Poet Ezra Pound and his eleven latest Cantos, composed in the Washington hospital where Pound has spent eleven years as a mental patient, adjudged unfit to be tried for treason in 1945. MacLeish freely admits: 'Some of his dissents have been merely strident: his raging at Roosevelt throughout the *Cantos* sounds as though it had been composed by Fulton Lewis Jr., and his attacks on Churchill and Léon Blum are in the vocabulary of the Nazi radio.' To Poet MacLeish, however, the redeeming grace of Poet Pound is: 'Not the fact that these cantos came out of imprisonment and misery....

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<sup>10</sup> Pound's nickname for Japanese poet Kitasono Katue.

but the fact that the poetry is hale and whole and speaks in a man's voice of a man's things.<sup>11</sup>

One wonders if this was written by a friend of Clare Boothe Luce, as she would soon be the subject of MacLeish's letter to Norman Holmes Pearson on January 11:

Why not stir up Mrs. Luce? Frost, Eliot and Hemingway are writing the Attorney General in the next week or two suggesting that the time has come to nol pros the charges against Pound and let the medics make the decision. If Mrs. Luce would support that move at or about the time it was made it might help a lot. She understands, if the President does not, that the good name of the Republic is an issue.<sup>12</sup>

On January 11, Archibald MacLeish also wrote to his friend Milton Eisenhower, the President's brother, mentioning the upcoming letter to the Attorney General and reminding Milton:

You wrote me, as you may recall, that it makes no difference whatever that Pound is a poet. In terms of logic this may be true but in terms of history and of civilization it is not. As you know better than I, nations are judged in the perspective of history by the way they treat their poets, philosophers, artists and teachers.<sup>13</sup>

In the next paragraph, MacLeish gave his main reason for writing: 'I have the very best reason to believe that Pound is shortly to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature,' and added, 'I can think of nothing which would make this country look more ridiculous than to hold in an insane asylum, under criminal indictment, a recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature.'<sup>14</sup>

When Hammarskjöld (in his December 16 letter) had mentioned that the Swedish Academy was 'keenly interested in the matter,' MacLeish had apparently concluded that Pound was a possible candidate for the 1957 Nobel Prize. Although Hammarskjöld had asked that his mention

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11 *Time*, December 24, 1956. 27.

12 Beinecke.

13 Harry H. Meacham, *The Caged Panther: Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeths* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), 117.

14 Which is also one of the reasons why, earlier, Hammarskjöld did not want to even consider Pound's candidacy.

of the mandate from the Swedish Academy remain confidential, MacLeish passed the information on to Milton with an admonishment: 'I need not add that what I have told you about the Nobel Prize situation should be treated as confidential, except in so far as its repetition in confidence might help to bring about the desired action.'<sup>15</sup>

When Harry Meacham published MacLeish's letter to Milton Eisenhower in *The Caged Panther*, he concluded that 'while it cannot be confirmed, it is reliably reported that Pound had been nominated for the Nobel prize [sic], and since he had a powerful advocate in Dag Hammarskjöld, Mr. MacLeish had every reason to believe Pound would get it.'<sup>16</sup> If it is true that Pound had been nominated, it was not by Hammarskjöld, who was advocating for him to be released, not for him to receive the Nobel Prize. MacLeish may have simply jumped to the wrong conclusion when reading Hammarskjöld's December 16 letter. One should also keep in mind that when he wrote to Milton Eisenhower, MacLeish had not yet met Hammarskjöld and had not had a chance to discuss the Pound case with the Secretary-General. Years later when Meacham wrote to the Secretary-General's brother regarding a possible candidacy, Bo Hammarskjöld replied that the Swedish Academy recommendations were to remain secret and that there was 'nothing in the public records about a nomination for Mr. Pound.'<sup>17</sup>

In any event, Hammarskjöld was certainly eager to meet with MacLeish. As he was spending the holidays in New York, he may even have come across the 'men in the news' section in *Time* magazine about MacLeish's review. Soon after the New Year, and on the same day that he wrote to Pound (January 4), Hammarskjöld also sent a short note to MacLeish to ask him to make an appointment with him 'in order to get a proper background for what [he] might do for Pound,' and added: 'I will always find some time for you.' He was even hoping to have lunch with 'Professor MacLeish,' but MacLeish was not free. Their first meeting took place at 5 p.m. on January 25, according to the Secretary-General's desk calendar, following a meeting with Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

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<sup>15</sup> Meacham, 118.

<sup>16</sup> Meacham, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Meacham, 208 (note 30). In 1957, Pound had only been nominated by the Swedish Pen Club.

Their conversation, however, remained private, as there is no mention of this meeting in MacLeish's biography or other documents. In the MacLeish Collection (at Greenfield) there is only an autographed copy of Hammarskjöld's Linné speech from December 1957, which he may have sent to him later on. I do not think the two men discussed Pound's chances for the Nobel Prize, even if it would have been a natural follow-up to MacLeish's letter to Milton Eisenhower in which MacLeish mentions the Nobel. However, I cannot help wondering if they discussed the chances of the friend they had in common: Saint-John Perse.

A few days later in his letter to Francis Wilcox, Hammarskjöld (without mentioning his meeting with MacLeish) echoes what he and MacLeish had discussed in detail:

29 January 1957

PERSONAL

Dear Mr. Wilcox,

You will remember that last spring I expressed to you the great interest I, like my colleagues in the Swedish Academy, took in the humanitarian aspects of the case of Ezra Pound.

I learn now that some days ago Mr. Robert Frost, Mr. Ernest Hemingway and Mr. T. S. Eliot jointly addressed a letter to the Attorney General concerning this matter.<sup>18</sup> The position taken was, according to my information, that time was ripe for a nol pros action in the case of Mr. Pound, indicated by his state.

The action suggested by Mr. Frost and the others would open the door to a final arrangement for Mr. Pound based solely on medical and humanitarian considerations. In the light of the discussion within, and with the Swedish Academy, I feel entitled to express on its behalf strong support for the initiative of Mr. Frost and his colleagues. I am fully aware of the fact that this is a purely internal U.S. matter and of the impossibility for the Academy, officially,

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<sup>18</sup> The letter was dated January 14, 1957.

to take a stand on an issue of this kind. However, the situation is unique. Mr. Pound is one of the giants of the modern world of letters whose fate, whatever his political mistakes, is a matter of weight for all. I therefore feel that it is appropriate to communicate the attitude of the Swedish Academy with its particular position, and I, likewise, find it justified that this support for an American initiative from a European institution of world scope be brought to the notice of those who have to decide in the issue.

I have no direct access to the Attorney General. In the light of the foregoing I would appreciate it if you would transmit to him the views to which I have given expression, not as Secretary-General of course but as a member of the Swedish Academy and speaking unofficially for the Academy.

I would appreciate it if you could let me know what you may see fit to do concerning this approach.

Sincerely yours,  
[Dag Hammarskjöld]

The Honorable Francis O. Wilcox,  
Assistant Secretary of State,  
Department of State,  
Washington, D. C.

Francis Wilcox replied on February 13, that the mission was accomplished:

February 13, 1957

PERSONAL

Dear Mr. Hammarskjöld:

I am writing in reply to your letter of January 29, 1957, concerning humanitarian aspects of the case of Ezra Pound.

I am glad to say that it was possible to arrange on an informal basis for your personal views in the case, as well as those of the Swedish Academy, to be made known to the Attorney General. In that respect, we had the benefit of your letters of last spring and have

suggested that a copy of your most recent letter be incorporated in the file containing the appeal by Mr. Frost and others.

There is no present indication as to the status of consideration of the matter by the Attorney General.

Cordially yours,  
Francis Wilcox

His Excellency  
Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld,  
Secretary General of the United Nations,  
New York, New York

At the end of that letter Wilcox added by hand: 'Keep up the good work!' An encouragement and a compliment that Hammarskjöld certainly deserved for his involvement in the Pound case as well as his efforts to bring peace in the Middle East.

A few weeks later while Hammarskjöld was in Cairo to meet with President Nasser, he received a letter from Prince Boris de Rachewiltz, Pound's son-in-law, who was in Cairo for his research in archeology. Hoping to see the Secretary-General, even briefly, he added: 'If that would be impossible, please accept my wife's and [my hearty] thanks for your attitude toward Pound's case and my best wishes for your successful mission.'

# Chapter VIII

## To the White House

### (1957)

The letter Dag Hammarskjöld wrote to Francis Wilcox on January 29, 1957 regarding Pound's release, was an important document, as was of course the Assistant Secretary of State's reply, so Hammarskjöld made sure he forwarded that correspondence to the Swedish Academy. In his February 15 cover letter to Anders Österling, he added:

I obviously have no idea how things will develop, but they seem to be on the right track, considering the circumstances. If the outcome is what I hope it to be, then the Academy can say with a good conscience that they contributed within the limited framework that their position allowed.<sup>1</sup>

Hammarskjöld was, in his own way, reminding Österling of the Academy's earlier hesitations and worries regarding its guarded involvement in the Pound case, which Hammarskjöld had found very limiting. In reality, the Academy *did* support him, but simply could not interfere.

Three days later, Andrew Cordier, Hammarskjöld's Executive Assistant, forwarded a copy of Hammarskjöld's letter to Francis Wilcox to the President's brother, Milton Eisenhower, newly appointed President of John Hopkins University. Knowing of Cordier's acquaintance with Milton Eisenhower, Hammarskjöld was perhaps attempting to reach not only the Attorney General but also the President of the United States. Wyndham Lewis and T. S. Eliot had already thought of addressing a petition to the President in the fall of 1953, but a lawyer had discouraged them from doing so.

Although Cordier, in his personal cover letter to Milton Eisenhower, pointed out that the letter to Wilcox 'reveals a deep and sustained interest on the part of leading figures in the literary world to modify the current status of Ezra Pound,' he was very careful to specify that the Swedish Academy 'cannot in any way formally support [their]

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by M.-N. Little.

initiative.<sup>2</sup> In his letter to Wilcox, Hammarskjöld had indeed expressed, on the Academy's behalf, 'strong support for the initiative of Mr. Frost and his colleagues' in spite of 'the impossibility for the Academy, officially, to take a stand on an issue of this kind.' The important word in Hammarskjöld's letter is 'officially,' which explains his reaching out to Milton Eisenhower and others, as his own hands were tied.

Cordier closed his letter with a vague and equivocal sentence: 'Anything you might feel that you could do in this matter would be highly appreciated,' as if he were hoping that something could be done to speed up the process. Milton Eisenhower, who was very cautious, replied that the 'proper thing' to do had already been done by Mr. Frost and his colleagues, and that he himself 'would never intrude or even run the risk of appearing to intrude, upon the regular conduct of federal affairs.' Neither the Swedish Academy nor the President's brother could wield sufficient power. The Academy, being a foreign institution, had obvious reasons for caution; and Milton Eisenhower, in his role as advisor to the President, had to act with restraint.

The tone of hesitation and caution expressed in Milton Eisenhower's letter is similar to the reserve he had already shown in his earlier correspondence with Archibald MacLeish, who (in his January letter) had reminded his friend that, like him, he cared 'deeply about the repute of this republic' and that he [Milton] was 'in a position to do something' about the Pound situation. Did Milton Eisenhower do something? He may not have wanted to, for the simple reason that he still considered Pound a traitor and had already told MacLeish that charges should be pressed even if Pound were released.<sup>3</sup> He was not the only one thinking along those lines, and not the last one either. To this day, people have similar strong reactions to Ezra Pound.

It is important to notice that no matter what the risks were and whose reputations were at stake, at least by mid-February of 1957, the United States Attorney General, the Assistant Secretary of State, and President Eisenhower's brother were all informed of the 'good work' of a few good

2 Andrew Cordier Papers, Secretary-General's Files-Series 4 (United Nations Archives), February 1, 1957.

3 Milton Eisenhower's strong sense of patriotism (reinforced by his role in the War Relocation Authority and his work in the Office of War Information during WWII) may explain his caution regarding the Pound case; although he later failed to take a strong stand for academic freedom or against Senator McCarthy's campaign.

men: Robert Frost, Ernest Hemingway, T. S. Eliot, and in the background, Archibald MacLeish and Dag Hammarskjöld. Nevertheless, these men must all have wondered how to 'keep up the good work' in view of Pound's association with the controversial character John Kasper, a situation that was becoming more and more alarming.

John Kasper had been in the picture already in the early 1950s when he was a young student at Columbia University. Like so many others, he had first written to Pound and then to the superintendent of the hospital before becoming a regular visitor at St. Elizabeths and, more importantly, an avid correspondent with Pound. There were many other strange disciples in the poet's entourage, including some of his fellow inmates at St. Elizabeths. Later, as Kasper's racist ideas began to surface, family and friends tried to warn Pound, but to no avail. As we already know, when Bengt Nirje met Kasper in 1955 at St. Elizabeths – and moved his chair away from him – Pound was surprised. A year or so later, Kasper, calling himself 'Segregation Chief,' participated in racist gatherings in the South to 'Save the Whites' and took part in riots opposing the desegregation of schools, actions for which he was arrested and then released. Kasper's behavior explains why Norman Holmes Pearson wrote to Pound in September of 1956, 'What the hell is he [Kasper] doing down there?' Although he always remained a true supporter of Pound, Pearson never hesitated to bluntly question some of the poet's ideas and associations. Pearson, who had been associated with Kasper's publishing of the *Square Dollar Series* (which had included some of Pound's translations of Confucius), may also have been worried for his own sake.

On January 30, 1957, just one day after Dag Hammarskjöld's letter to Wilcox, the *New York Herald Tribune's* headline 'Segregationist Kasper Is Ezra Pound Disciple' was followed by the subtitle 'Goes to Asylum Often to Visit Fascist Poet.' This was the first of four articles on this topic written by the Washington journalist Robert Bird. According to the newspaper account, Pound, 'the poet with racist ideas,' was to blame for having influenced Kasper. Most of the article consisted of information about Pound, which the Washington journalist had gathered when he interviewed Dr. Overholser at St. Elizabeths. There were also some remarkable contradictions in the Pound case: despite his alleged insanity, Pound continued to write and publish; he welcomed controversial disciples, but disliked journalists and reporters. Even though Pound

was never treated for insanity, Dr. Overholser confirmed that Pound was ‘certainly mentally ill,’ and Robert Bird quoted the poet’s official status, ‘A *Mentally Deranged, Accused Criminal*’ in one of his article’s subheadings. Needless to say, Pound’s chances of being released were more than ever in jeopardy.

When the *Herald Tribune* article reached Sweden, it sparked a heated debate in the Swedish press and undoubtedly cost Pound his chances for a Nobel Prize, at least for the time being. *Dagens Nyheter’s* Washington correspondent was the first to write about Pound and Kasper, but the debate really started a couple of weeks later when two other leading newspapers’ culture editors argued back and forth, bringing up the question of the Nobel Prize, while alluding to Pound’s own shocking background and ‘published statements,’ as well as to the fact that he was still locked up in a mental institution. Birger Christofferson of *Stockholms-Tidningen* questioned Bo Setterlind’s judgment, because of the poem he had written about Pound, ‘Klagosång,’ which was published in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* in 1956 and included in his 1957 book of poems, *Jag har två själar* [*I Have Two Souls*]. Setterlind defended himself by saying that he admired Pound, the poet, but not his alleged racist ideas.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, shortly thereafter, Bo Setterlind wrote a very direct but pressing letter to Pound:

Dear Ezra Pound,

Concerning an article with quotations from New York H.T.

Is it true that you hate negroes and jews?

Have you ever written in your poetry that you do hate the human races mentioned?

Please answer quickly.

Bo Setterlind

Pound replied on February 26 with a letter titled ‘colour’: ‘NO, naturally I do not dislike africans, or afro-americans ... neither to the best of my knowledge does Kasper.’ Pound reminded Setterlind that ‘the Guide to Kultur is dedicated to a jew and a quaker, which might be

<sup>4</sup> One can follow some of this debate in Archie Henderson’s previously mentioned article in *Ezra Pound and Europe*, 162-163; and Antonsson, *Ezra Pound*, 54-55.

taken as a sign of impartiality.' He also wrote that the local psychiatrist, 'after serious study,' was 'very puzzled' that he could not find any anti-Semitism in the *Cantos*.

Setterlind immediately translated Pound's letter into Swedish for *Stockholms-Tidningen* which published it.<sup>5</sup> Relieved, he wrote to Pound on March 5: 'I knew you were no Gau. Swedish newspapers fight piccolo guerilla about your political ideas in order to frighten the Swedish Academy not to give you the Nobel Prize.'



*Folke Isaksson*

The Swedish connection to Pound was strengthened by the involvement of yet another writer. Bengt Nirje had encouraged the Swedish poet, Folke Isaksson, to visit Pound. Isaksson first wrote to Dr. Overholser and was quickly granted permission to visit Pound, who was, of course, willing to see him. His first visit took place under a 'sad sky' on March 7, 1957, a gloomy day in the capital city, swept by cold winds around every street corner, Isaksson wrote. The visit, which was more uplifting

<sup>5</sup> Antonsson, *Ezra Pound*, 57.

than the weather, encouraged the young Swede to return a few days later. Like many other Pound visitors, he described his impressions of St. Elizabeths, first in his journal, and later in a long article, 'Diktaren I Dårhuset' ['The Poet in the Madhouse'] for *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, which appeared in the summer of 1958, a few months after Pound's release.<sup>6</sup>

When reading Isaksson's detailed account, one is struck by his perspicacity and his understanding of both Pound's situation and his poetry. One can compare this *BLM* article to Lars Forssell's 1949 piece in the same literary journal, as they both were written after quite a heated debate – Forssell's, after the Bollingen Prize controversy, and Isaksson's, during the Kasper dispute. How could one give the Bollingen to a traitor; and almost ten years later, how could one consider Pound for the Nobel Prize, if he was still flaunting his racism through his association with Kasper? As Forssell had done earlier, Isaksson raised the more humanitarian question: how could one keep such a great poet in a madhouse, and for so many years?

Echoing Setterlind and Forsell, Isaksson saw Ezra Pound as 'America's greatest poet,' and he was dismayed by Pound's living conditions and entourage, as were the other Swedes and many visitors. What was most striking to him, however, was the old poet's vitality. Amazingly alert, with eyes that seemed to laugh and a lively repartee like marbles ricocheting around the room, Pound was 'a great joker, a frivolous comedian.' His conversation was like a game. He was electrifying. His laugh was like a cough, and when he shouted to get Isaksson's attention in the hospital's courtyard, it sounded like a call to arms. But Pound also showed some gentleness and civility, in offering tea (in a jar) and stuffed olives to his guests.

Isaksson, who was very observant, was surprised that Pound never made a single comment about his difficult situation. Pound was dressed 'for the beach' and did not act like a prisoner but like a free man (as, in a way, he always had acted). Now and then, however, his hands seemed to reveal that he was aware of his fate. But the real prisoner – and painfully so – was Pound's wife, Dorothy, who rented a small apartment in Washington, where she lived as if in exile, far from England which she missed dearly. Prisoner and guardian at the same time, she protected

6 *Bonniers Litterära Magasin [BLM]* 27, no.6 (1958): 465-70.

and – when necessary – apologized for her belligerent companion. ‘He has always loved fighting,’ she proudly told Isaksson when Pound was making sarcastic remarks, recalling anecdotes about William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot and others, or reminiscing about James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis in Paris during the Twenties.

Pound and Isaksson discussed Imagism and Swedish poetry. Pound mentioned Bo Setterlind and Gunnar Ekelöf. He wished that Swedish poets in general were not so isolated, and suggested that they include a few bilingual pages in their works. Then Pound joked about his bad reputation in the press and the ‘lies about Kasper,’ but his tone became more serious when he mentioned the Secretary-General of the United Nations. ‘He is the only person in an official position, who had the guts of taking my name in his mouth,’ Pound declared, alluding to other less courageous individuals.

When Pound was talking, the flow of his thoughts was broken, thus hard to catch, understand, and describe. The old poet seemed like a puppet with half its strings, as if he himself were wandering about in his latest *Cantos*. Isaksson wondered if Pound only appeared disconnected and if his inner reality was whole. Was he suffering from a form of ‘deafness,’ simply lost in his thoughts, or living in some ‘inner music’ at day’s end; as Pound, himself, once told Robert Fitzgerald? The dilemma for Folke Isaksson, when describing the contradictions in Pound’s situation and in his world, was not knowing how to explain why this intelligent individual, with all his charm, warmth, and simplicity, his culture and knowledge, could make such tasteless mistakes in the political arena (alluding to the Kasper affair, among others).

In the beginning of the *BLM* article, Isaksson describes ‘the madhouse’ and the gloom of St. Elizabeths’ dirty corridors and poker-faced inmates; but at the end of the article, as if by magic, he brings us back in time, to Italy. When Pound waved goodbye, Isaksson could not help but notice ‘the same balance, the same independence, the same joyful happiness in his eyes as if he had been standing on the altar of freedom, in plain sunshine, with a glittering South European city around and a Ligurian sea beyond the roof tops.’ Although it is possible that the allusion to the Italian landscape was a last minute addition, Isaksson was clearly very surprised by Pound’s positive outlook and stamina. In his journal entry, however, his last few lines were mostly about saying

goodbye, not to Pound but to Dorothy, on a scruffy American street, and watching almost with tears in his eyes 'a little woman in a thin, grayish-green coat struggling up shabby blue stairs to her small apartment, far from Rapallo.'<sup>7</sup>



*Dorothy Pound*

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7 In unpublished pages of Isaksson's journal (sent to M.-N. Little).

Soon after his visit to St. Elizabeths, Isaksson mentioned his concerns about Pound in a letter to Dag Hammarskjöld. Isaksson had already met Hammarskjöld in October of 1956, when Bengt Nirje (who had been one of the first to review Isaksson's works in Sweden) recommended him to the Secretary-General, who was always attentive to the latest literary publications at home. They had talked also about Saint-John Perse, W. H. Auden, and about Pound's difficult situation. Hammarskjöld had said that 'something could be done' and that 'something really ought to be done.' When Isaksson published his journal in the late 1960s, he wrote that Hammarskjöld eventually 'did do something, and so skillfully that nobody even noticed who had done it.'<sup>8</sup>

Pound was still at St. Elizabeths on March 18, 1957, when Isaksson wrote to Hammarskjöld:

I would like to talk to you about Ezra Pound, whom I met on two occasions in Washington. I was troubled by his situation. What shocked me the most was not so much the obvious appearance of degradation, the surroundings and the situation, as much as the very strength and dignity, and the health shown forth by Pound the human being, in that predicament. Simplicity, alertness and warmth – which felt like a gift.<sup>9</sup>

'Ezra Pound' was underlined, but most probably by Hammarskjöld when he read the letter. He replied on April 8 that he was 'very interested in hearing about the visit with Pound,' and added, 'Things are moving, but I don't dare say anything about the outcome, yet.' Later, when Isaksson sent Hammarskjöld his *BLM* piece about his visit to Pound, he confessed that the article had been terribly difficult to write because of some of the controversial issues involved. He had hoped for a much more 'visual' portrait, which he did achieve, in a way, as the reader has the feeling of being in the room, eating stuffed olives with Pound.

Hammarskjöld and Isaksson continued to exchange a few letters, mostly about American literature and the many poets Isaksson had met and written about during his American tour. The one who impressed him the most besides Pound, was Yvor Winters, whom Hammarskjöld was

8 Folke Isaksson, *Dubbelliv* [Double Life] (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1968), 75.

9 Translated by M.-N. Little.

to discover later. They discussed Isaksson's publications and translations. Isaksson's description of Pound's 'simplicity, alertness and warmth' could describe Hammarskjöld as well. During their meeting, the Secretary-General strode around the large room like someone hiking in the mountains and talked from the depths of a noble and generous spirit, 'as if opening new paths in the discussion while making his guests believe they had discovered them themselves.' Isaksson very accurately compared the Swedish diplomat, who was a poet at heart, with Saint-John Perse, his alter ego, alluding to the French poet and diplomat's great love for vast expanses and ever unfolding destinies, in his life as well as in his long poems. Isaksson was also successful in getting to the very core of Hammarskjöld's elusive and mysterious personality, and seeing him as 'a statesman with the vision of a poet.'<sup>10</sup>

While Hammarskjöld was always much more reserved in his correspondence than in his conversation, the vagueness of allusions in his letters did not necessarily imply that matters and issues had not, or would not be discussed in more detail, in person. He most probably talked with Folke Isaksson, and other Swedish writers, about Ezra Pound and even the Kasper controversy. On the other hand, the Secretary-General would not have mentioned the January 14, 1957 letter to the Attorney General regarding the Pound case, or even his own letter to Wilcox.

The famous letter to the Attorney General<sup>11</sup> is often referred to as the 'Eliot' or 'Robert Frost letter' or, more correctly, as the 'Frost-Eliot-Hemingway letter.' It was first signed by Eliot in London, then Hemingway in Cuba, and last but not least, Frost in Massachusetts (unlike the order of the actual signatures). Some biographers refer to it as a letter 'drafted by Eliot' and 'edited by MacLeish,' although it was drafted by MacLeish (the lawyer), polished by Eliot (the poet), and typed on the 'American Academy of Arts and Letters' letterhead, of which MacLeish was a member and former president. The latter detail indicates that the real force was Archibald MacLeish, and that we should perhaps simply refer to it as the 'MacLeish letter.'

<sup>10</sup> Isaksson, *Dubbelliv*, 76.

<sup>11</sup> See letter in Heymann, 245-46; Carpenter, 325-26.

January 14, 1957

The Attorney General of the United States,  
Washington D.C.

Dear Sir,

We are writing to you about Ezra Pound who has been confined at St. Elizabeths Hospital for eleven years under indictment for treason.

Our interest in this matter is founded in part on our concern for Mr. Pound who is one of the most distinguished American writers of his generation, and in part on our concern for the country of our birth. As writers ourselves we cannot but be aware of the effect on writers and lovers of literature throughout the world of Pound's continued incarceration at a time when certain Nazis tried and convicted of the most heinous crimes, have been released and in many cases rehabilitated.

It is our understanding, based on inquiries directed to the medical personnel at St. Elizabeths Hospital, that Pound is now unfit for trial, and in the opinion of the doctors treating him, will continue to be unfit for trial. This opinion, we believe, has already been communicated to the Department of Justice. Under these circumstances the perpetuation of the charges against him seem to be unfortunate and, indeed, indefensible. It provides occasion for criticism of American justice not only at home but abroad and it seems to us, in and of itself, unworthy of the traditions of the Republic. Concerned, as we must be, with the judgments of posterity on this unhappy affair, we cannot but regret the failure of the Department thus far to take steps to *nol pros* the indictment and remit the case to the medical authorities for disposition on medical grounds.

May we add that this is a personal letter to you and that we have no intention at this time of making a public statement on this matter.

Could we be of service to you, a letter addressed to us in care of the American Academy of Letters at 633 West 155th Street, New York City, will have our immediate attention.

Faithfully yours,  
Robert Frost  
T. S. Eliot  
Ernest Hemingway

Their main point was to request that charges against Pound be dropped, MacLeish having very wisely postponed making any official recommendation regarding Pound's release.

MacLeish echoed the same concern for the reputation of the United States that he had expressed when he wrote to his friend Milton Eisenhower that 'nations are judged in the perspective of history by the way they treat their poets.'

Attorney General Herbert Brownell acknowledged the letter six weeks later, having asked 'that a review of the matter be made.' (One would assume that MacLeish informed Hammarskjöld, regarding the needed review.) However, when Deputy Attorney General William Rogers finally replied on April 10 (almost three months later), asking to see any or all of the three writers, Frost had already departed for England, which in turn had prompted MacLeish to leave for England. Thus, London, where Pound had launched his poetic career and had helped to launch Frost's career, became – fifty years later – the headquarters for the planning of his redemption (or of his 'salvation,' as Frost later wrote). MacLeish, Frost, and Eliot met several times during the spring of 1957 to discuss the best strategy for assuring Pound's release. MacLeish, as usual, was the one really in charge. Eliot was the one who best knew Pound, and Frost was the one who liked him the least. Although Frost had been the first to sign the letter to the Attorney General stating that Pound was indeed 'one of the most distinguished American writers of his generation,' when he returned to Vermont in June, Frost wrote to MacLeish that 'neither you nor I would want to take him into our family or even into our neighborhood.'<sup>12</sup>

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12 Lawrence Thompson, ed., *Selected Letters of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 569.

# Chapter IX

## 'A Sensible Plan'

(1957-58)

When one untangles the complexities surrounding the Pound issue with all its political, literary, legal, and personal ramifications, one finds that the strands are interconnected in such a way that an event in one area sets off a chain reaction throughout the web. The connection between the poets MacLeish and Frost had links to other literary circles, and more importantly to the State Department, the Department of Justice, and the Superintendent of St. Elizabeths hospital. Pound's family, his lawyer, and even his publisher were part of the network. Dag Hammarskjöld had diplomatic, literary, and personal ties with many of the constituents in the U.S. and Europe, and he provided a strong bridge to the Swedish Academy as well. All of the efforts to release Pound were compromised by the Kasper controversy and delayed by the long wait in hearing from the Attorney General.

Three months had passed before Robert Frost heard from the Attorney General's office and another three months before a meeting took place. The delay was partially caused by Robert Frost's tour of England, but primarily by Archibald MacLeish's careful planning, which included the many letters he exchanged with Frost, Hemingway, Eliot, and others. While he was in Europe, MacLeish had even traveled to Italy to meet Pound's daughter, Mary, in Sirmione, on Lake Garda. The visit left a lasting impression on both of them, it seems, as Mary later wrote about her father's old friend, the man 'with a golden key in his head,'<sup>1</sup> and MacLeish mentioned 'that lovely Mary' in a letter to Pound.<sup>2</sup> The fact that MacLeish was a lawyer reassured her, while the fact that Mary had started planning for her father to make Brunnenburg Castle his home, was in turn reassuring for MacLeish. Officially, Italy was not yet an option, as the immediate plans were essentially to find a place for Pound in the United States, if he were to be released.

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1 He had the key to her father's release. Mary de Rachewiltz, *Discretions* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 301.

2 22 July, 1957 (Winnick, 402).



*Brunnenburg Castle*

Pound's supporters had not given up, in spite of the Kasper controversy, which was still greatly disturbing to some of them. Norman Holmes Pearson shared his concern in his correspondence with Hilda Doolittle who, although more ambivalent than Pearson about Pound, was upset because of his troublesome associations with Kasper. Ezra Pound's name appeared not only in press headlines related to the controversy, but also in the name of Kasper's Washington bookstore, *The Ezra Pound Bookshop*. Most everybody in Pound's entourage recognized that having Pound's name connected to Kasper's would delay any hopes for his release. Pearson's fear, shared by others, was that if Pound were released, he might continue to support Kasper and make anti-Semitic or other controversial statements in public.

This concern regarding possible out-of-control public utterances must have been on Archibald MacLeish's mind, as well, while he was making final arrangements in anticipation of the meeting at the Department of Justice. The long awaited meeting with Deputy Attorney General William Rogers finally took place on July 19, 1957. That day, MacLeish and Robert Frost were the only ones present, but Frost had brought letters of support from Ernest Hemingway and T. S. Eliot who could not attend. (It had been MacLeish's idea to ask them to write those letters to Frost.) Some of the details of their discussion can be found in MacLeish's July 22 letter to Pound, warning him that 'the boys at the Department of Justice' had decided that 'for the immediate future and so long as the Kasper mess is boiling and stewing the Department will not move.' The good news was that they would not 'close the door' provided there was 'a sensible plan' for Pound's future; but the bad news was that his future would have to be in the United States.<sup>3</sup> In that regard, MacLeish asked Pound to confirm that he really wanted to leave St. Elizabeths, as there had been mixed signals regarding the Pound's preferences in a letter Dorothy had written earlier to Julien Cornell, their lawyer.

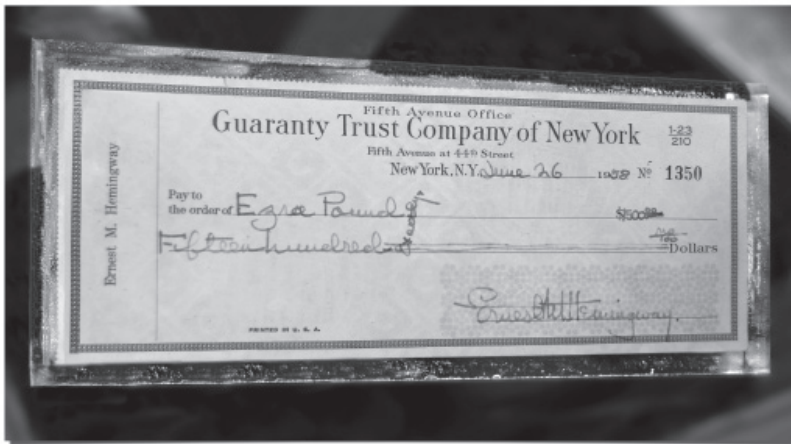
Finding a sensible plan was not easy, as nothing seemed to make sense when trying to find a safe haven for Pound. Hemingway was afraid that Pound might continue to support Kasper on some TV talk-show, while Eliot was concerned about his moving 'South' (to Kasper territory), where he would be all alone with Dorothy and perhaps without proper medical care. Frost, who seemed less worried, was amused that Frank Lloyd Wright offered to welcome Pound to his newly designed house in

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3 Winnick, 401-402.

Arizona, while Dorothy – by far the most reasonable and practical one – feared that her husband might never get his passport back. Pound, of course, had no intention of remaining in the ‘bughouse.’

Discussions took place around that time regarding possible arrangements with Pound’s publisher, James Laughlin, to guarantee an advance on royalties to supplement Dorothy’s income. There were also hopeful signs regarding the legal aspects of Pound’s release, thanks to the American Civil Liberties Union. Some newspaper articles reflected an eagerness on the part of the public to see the case settled once and for all. Jack Lazebnick, in an April 1 issue of *The New Republic* on ‘The Case of Ezra Pound,’ mentioned MacLeish’s campaign and Hemingway’s earlier plea to free Pound because he had ‘paid in full’ for his ‘bad mistakes.’<sup>4</sup> Hemingway had planned to send a \$1,500 check to Pound,<sup>5</sup> and Hilda Doolittle had offered to help if needed, although almost anonymously. William Carlos Williams had told Isaksson, who visited him in New Jersey, that Pound ‘had paid for his mistakes’ and that other people were also able to forgive Pound. Several literary figures, including Jean Cocteau and Graham Greene, sent a signed petition on Pound’s behalf to the Attorney General.



Ernest Hemingway \$1,500 check

<sup>4</sup> O’Connor, *Casebook*, 118.

<sup>5</sup> See Baker, *Letters*, 879, 883. The check, never cashed, was made into a paperweight, now at Brunnenburg. (Biographers often confuse this check with the earlier one in 1956, see Baker, *Letters*, 865.)

One literary figure who became quite involved in the efforts to liberate Ezra Pound, was Harry Meacham, President of the Poetry Society of Virginia. Like efforts launched by many other Pound supporters, Meacham's step-by-step campaign, which he later described in *The Caged Panther: Ezra Pound at Saint Elizabeths*, had started with a visit to the hospital (in April of 1957). Meacham asked Pound for a list of names and addresses of influential people and Pound supporters before embarking on 'a letter-writing drive aimed at the office of the Attorney General and members of Congress.' Pound asked Meacham, while he was at it, to write to Hemingway regarding Pound's statement in a September 9 issue of *Time* magazine that 'Papa Hemingway knows how to write, but he's dishonest.'<sup>6</sup> Meacham did not think that Hemingway would reply, because of his reputation for not being aggressive enough in playing his part in the various campaigns to free Pound. So Meacham was surprised by Hemingway's prompt reply, reassuring him that he was 'in touch with some serious people about Pound's release,' but also telling Meacham that things would move faster if Pound would cease his association with the controversial friend, John Kasper. As he had already written in a letter to MacLeish, Hemingway considered the Kasper affair a real 'embarrassment.' In any case, Meacham tried his best to encourage the Pounds to be more selective with their visitors – especially with reporters. He wrote to Dorothy, urging her to persuade Pound to be more cautious, and added one last request:

Perhaps it *is* asking too much, but if Mr. Pound should write MacLeish, Cummings, Dr. Williams or Eliot, pointing out (as he did to me) that he does not support Kasper, and, having learned of his activities, renounces him, and then suggesting that the letter be leaked to a friendly newspaper (if we could find one) much ground would be covered.<sup>7</sup>

No ground was covered. Pound would not give up Kasper. However, he recognized his own stubbornness when he mentioned 'the naïve but benevolent Meacham' in a letter to MacLeish.<sup>8</sup> Instead, Pound tried to get Meacham and MacLeish on the same wave length, hoping they could collaborate. Meacham wrote to MacLeish about his plans to help Pound, and he also mentioned the efforts of John Cook Wyllie, Librarian at the

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6 Meacham, 55.

7 Meacham, 59.

8 Meacham, 58.

University of Virginia, who had written to the Attorney General and was hoping there would finally be a trial (but no conviction).

Not wishing to discourage Meacham from helping, MacLeish wrote him a skillfully worded, confidential letter (October 17, 1957), confirming that 'the Department of Justice is well aware that Pound cannot and should not be held longer' but that the 'principal obstacle' was, again, Kasper. MacLeish wished that Pound would 'dissociate himself from Kasper' but could not force him to do so.<sup>9</sup> Another obstacle was that the doctors had determined that Pound was unfit to stand trial.



Dr. Winfred Overholser

As Superintendent of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Dr. Winfred Overholser was very protective of his famous (or infamous) inmate, and very cautious in regard to rules, regulations, and the reputation of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.<sup>10</sup> He had the medical authority to decide Pound's fate and was not willing to let him go until everything was settled (his way, perhaps), yet he wrote to Pound's daughter, who had hoped to see her father back in Italy for Christmas ('on parole!'), that the matter was 'entirely out of his hands.'<sup>11</sup> This was not the first time Overholser had sent mixed signals. To better understand the many

facets of the Pound affair, one would need to draw a detailed portrait of Superintendent Overholser (who was himself a complex person involved in a turbulent and complicated situation), along with a detailed account of the tactics used by MacLeish, Frost, and others to influence Overholser, the Attorney General, and others in power.<sup>12</sup>

9 Meacham, 60.

10 Overholser was also in charge of testing drugs for the O.S.S. See John Marks, *The Search for 'the Manchurian Candidate': The CIA and Mind-Control* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); and Douglas Valentine, *The Strength of the Wolf: The Secret History of America's War on Drugs* (New York: Verso, 2004).

11 Carpenter, 833.

12 See also Meacham, 114-115.

When Robert Frost had his second meeting – this time, alone – with William Rogers on October 24, 1957, Frost informed him of Pound's intention to return to Italy and live with his daughter at Brunnenburg. Although they both agreed that Italy would be a 'safer' place for the old poet, the 'Kasper mess,' once again, made it impossible for Rogers to commit himself. Years later, after interviewing Rogers, Meacham wrote, 'Rogers gave the impression that nobody persuaded him to do anything, and that he had been the one to make the decision to release Pound.' Rogers also admitted to Meacham that, in the end, knowing that Pound had agreed to leave the country and return to Italy was an important factor in his decision.<sup>13</sup>

Although Pound was not involved in the final decision, returning to Italy appeared to be the best solution, but neither Dr. Overholser nor William Rogers seemed willing to take the first step. Pound, who was well aware of the situation, had apparently reached the same conclusion about Italy, but not without a fight. He had written to Harry Meacham (September 24), 'I don't see that it is anyone's damn business WHAT I wd/ do IF I got out.' And in the same letter, he added that 'it wd/ be a joke of jokes to get OUT ON CONDITION that I return to Italy,' although he ended his letter with, 'I would naturally prefer to go live with my daughter to staying in the bughouse.'<sup>14</sup> And later, on November 22, he finally told Meacham, tongue in cheek, 'I should think that some people wd PREFER to have me safe in the Tirolo.'<sup>15</sup>

Around that time, Harry Meacham also received an important letter from one of the individuals on Pound's list of addresses – the Secretary-General of the U.N. – who was replying to Meacham's October 18 letter. Dag Hammarskjöld, concerned about the correspondence and publicity surrounding the Pound case, was vague and reserved in his November 23, 1957 letter as to his own role and the current state of the campaign. Hammarskjöld told Meacham:

I am indeed most interested in securing Mr. Pound's release. I have done what I could in order to further a possible solution. However, I am insufficiently informed about the results of my efforts so far as to say anything about them.

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<sup>13</sup> Meacham, 90-91.

<sup>14</sup> Meacham, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Meacham, 73.

His letter was labeled 'PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL,' and Hammarskjöld was not vague at all about the absolute need for confidentiality. Agreeing that 'any publicity at this time would be ruinous,' he told his correspondent, 'our exchange of views will be kept on a strictly confidential basis by me as I trust by you.'<sup>16</sup> With this said, he left the door open for Meacham to feel free to contact him again with new information, and he also encouraged him to remain in contact with 'Professor Archibald MacLeish,' which Meacham did.

'The Pound business looks cloudy from this angle,' MacLeish wrote to Meacham on December 22, somewhat discouraged, because neither Frost nor he had yet heard from the Department of Justice, even though Frost had returned from his October meeting with (supposedly) 'a firm promise from Rogers to Nol Pros if St. Elizabeths would release Pound to a private sanitarium,' although nothing was in writing.<sup>17</sup> MacLeish wondered if Meacham could write to 'that bird of a senator,' Senator Harry F. Byrd, which he later did, but with no success. As part of his own campaign, Meacham had also asked several of his journalist friends to write editorials about the Pound case. He even sent one of the editorials, 'Ezra Pound: Set Him Free!' by James J. Kilpatrick of the *Richmond News-Leader*, to MacLeish, who 'sent it along to a certain spot in Washington.'<sup>18</sup> The last lines of the editorial expressed the feelings of many:

No possible useful purpose is served by keeping Pound locked up at St. Elizabeths. To all intents and purposes, he remains a political prisoner – in a nation that prides itself on political freedom. What does it take to get him free?

In the meantime, MacLeish, who was giving up on the Department of Justice, turned to the State Department and contacted his old friend and former colleague ('in that dreadful Roosevelt Administration')<sup>19</sup> Under Secretary of State Christian Herter. MacLeish asked him to intervene and take up the matter with the Attorney General, for Pound's sake, but also for the sake of the American reputation abroad, which remained in jeopardy as long as Pound was still incarcerated. MacLeish

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<sup>16</sup> Meacham, 107.

<sup>17</sup> Meacham, 64; Carpenter, 834.

<sup>18</sup> Meacham, 68.

<sup>19</sup> In MacLeish's February 18, 1958 letter to Pound (Winnick, 405).

then wrote to Pound about his latest move and admitted that he was not entirely confident that Herter would follow through, but he did. On January 2, Herter first wrote to Dr. Overholser (whom he knew from his Harvard years), asking him to drop by to discuss the situation regarding 'this difficult individual Ezra Pound.'<sup>20</sup> The meeting took place and was followed by another one with Attorney General Rogers,<sup>21</sup> after which Herter proudly shared details of the 'new deal' (on March 5) with MacLeish and with one other key person – Sherman Adams, the White House Chief of Staff.

On a parallel course to the letters exchanged between MacLeish and Herter, and MacLeish and Pound, there were two other important exchanges of correspondence, the first one between MacLeish and Hammarskjöld, and the second one between Hammarskjöld and Herter; as well as a third one, on a side track, between Hammarskjöld and the Swedish Academy.

Coincidentally, on January 2, 1958, Hammarskjöld had written to MacLeish to express his reservations about Meacham, whose campaign concerned him, but moreover to inquire about the status of the Pound case. MacLeish replied on January 8 with the latest dénouement, while specifying not without irony that the Department of Justice 'would like somehow to get the problem solved without solving it,' and that 'the suggestion has been made that Pound might be moved to a private sanitarium and then quietly released!'<sup>22</sup> But MacLeish's tone was more serious when asking Hammarskjöld for two important favors:

What I was going to ask you is this: (1) would you be willing to indicate your interest to Herter?; (2) can you think of any way in which Italian representatives might suggest to the Department of State that Pound would be welcome in Italy?

I am more and more persuaded that this is the real solution – to nol pros the indictment on the ground that the medical opinion holds Pound cannot be tried – to let St. Elizabeths then discharge him (which they will do once the indictment is nol prossed) – to let him go back to his daughter Mary in Italy. It will be hard to arrange

<sup>20</sup> Tyrell, 325. Pound had met Herter during his 1939 visit to the U.S.

<sup>21</sup> He became Attorney General on November 8, 1957, succeeding Herbert Brownell.

<sup>22</sup> MacLeish's letter is dated January 8, 1957 (but should be 1958).

because Justice wants neither to act nor to let him return to Italy. But a word from the Italians and a little pressure from Chris [Christian Herter] might do it.

What nobody in Washington realizes and what a word from you can effectively establish is the fact that serious and responsible people abroad are interested in the outcome of this matter.

Hammar skjöld replied on January 10 that he would 'act along the lines [MacLeish] indicates, using also whatever authority the Swedish Academy may have.' On the same day, Hammar skjöld sent a letter, including a copy of MacLeish's letter, to Anders Österling, informing the Academy of his intervention:

It is my intention to take the matter up with Herter – who, as you know, is Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs and thus Mr. Dulles' alternate – as soon as I find an occasion to do so. I shall also try to provoke an Italian reaction, perhaps from the Foreign Affairs minister himself. In this context I should feel free to mention the interest of the Academy.

The Swedish Academy's January 16 minutes showed support for Hammar skjöld, while at same time not wanting to be directly involved. In other words, the Academy was interested but not committed. A month later, a letter from Herter gave Hammar skjöld an opportunity to follow up on his initial plan to write to the Under Secretary of State.

18 February 1958

Mr. Christian Herter  
Under Secretary of State  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Herter,

Warm thanks for your kind letter of yesterday concerning the Cleveland meeting of the YMCA. I am most gratified, if in any way, I helped the Organization to get its new efforts off to a good start, but certainly I do not deserve the praise they so generously bestow on me.

When writing to you I may perhaps use the opportunity for raising another matter which to me is of real concern. I know that you have heard about the efforts to find a solution to the pathetic problem of Mr. Ezra Pound. I have myself been in touch with it for a few years and I follow the discrete and responsible efforts of Archibald MacLeish with sympathy and interest. On a couple of occasions I have been in touch with Francis Wilcox to whom I have tried to set out in a letter how I look at the question; if you are interested you may care to ask him to show you the letter.

The reason why I now mention the question to you is that I would like to tell you that this is a question to which serious and thoughtful people in the intellectual world in Europe attach considerable attention. I can speak from personal experience as I have, as a member of the Swedish Academy although not officially speaking in its behalf, had rich opportunities to register feelings within the groups to which I refer. Nobody certainly wishes to defend Mr. Pound's war-activities and everybody fully appreciates the dilemma of the U.S. authorities, but it is felt that he is now a very sick man, suffering unnecessarily by the way in which his life is arranged and in surroundings that must be a suffering to his highly perceptive mind. For that reason it is felt that it would be a tribute to his great importance in Western letters and a noble humanitarian gesture if a formula could be found which put the matter entirely in the hands of his doctors and enable him, when they find it advisable, to take up a new life with his daughter in Italy. I mention this because it may not be fully appreciated here [in the U.S.] that the matter remains alive in the minds of very many to whose opinion I know you would attach great importance. Knowing the spirit in which you work, I am convinced that you yourself share the humanitarian concern which, coupled with admiration for what Pound has once done as an author, prompts those to whom I refer.

If Washington were to see its way through present difficulties in the Pound case, I would gladly myself see what I could do in order to prepare the ground on the Italian side if such assistance would prove necessary.

Mr. Pound's problem certainly is not of the significance of most of the things with which we have to deal, but my approach to it is very

much in line with unpublished efforts of a similar kind which have become the daily feature in my life as Secretary-General.

[Dag Hammarskjöld]

In showing his 'real concern,' Hammarskjöld pointed out that he himself had been involved – and for a few years, already – in efforts to solve this pathetic problem, not only for humanitarian reasons, but also because of Pound's literary reputation – which, of course, implied that the reputation of America was also at stake, especially among Europeans, those 'serious and responsible people abroad,' MacLeish mentioned in his letter. Even though he knew that Pound was 'a very sick man,' Hammarskjöld was also well aware of 'his highly perceptive mind.' The old poet's 'suffering' (also twice mentioned) simply could and should not be ignored. What is even more interesting and significant in this letter is Hammarskjöld's mention of other such efforts in his role as Secretary-General, which had also required his quiet diplomacy, and on a daily basis.<sup>23</sup>

Coincidentally, again, on the same day when Hammarskjöld had written to Herter, MacLeish had written a long letter to Pound – or rather, 'a report of a conversation between a man and an empty well.'<sup>24</sup> After the two meetings with the Attorney General, followed by a period of high hopes and a letter from MacLeish asking Rogers for 'specific confirmation of Frost's understanding of his conversation with Rogers,' two months elapsed before Rogers wrote back<sup>25</sup> asking MacLeish 'to drop in' when in Washington. In the meantime, MacLeish had contacted Herter because Pound's 'continuing incarceration was hurting [America's] prestige abroad,' and Herter had said that he would 'make inquiries' (which, as MacLeish had correctly guessed, meant inquiries at St. Elizabeths and at the Department of Justice).<sup>26</sup> MacLeish told Pound that he had asked Hemingway and Eliot to support his 'appeal to Herter,' but he never mentioned having also asked Hammarskjöld for his input. In spite of a 'wholly impotent and timid [Eisenhower] administration,' MacLeish also told Pound that he was, nevertheless, determined to 'go on pushing.'<sup>27</sup>

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23 Those efforts were most probably outside of the political arena.

24 Winnick, 405.

25 On January 2, the same day Herter was writing to Overholser, and Hammarskjöld to MacLeish.

26 This was confirmed in Herter's February 22 letter to Hammarskjöld.

27 Winnick, 406.

Herter wrote to MacLeish (with a copy to Hammarskjöld) on March 5, to report on the progress of what MacLeish called 'l'affaire Pound,' but concluded that unfortunately 'the idea of getting Pound to Italy [was] definitely impracticable.' This was certainly a set-back, even if a compromise was possible – 'in a legal way.' The new plan was to find 'some inconspicuous place where [Pound] could be visited from time to time by a recognized physician.' It should be a place 'with a maximum degree of freedom,' provided, of course, that Pound's friends and publisher would help raise the necessary funds for such a transfer. When MacLeish wrote to Pound on March 16 and explained in more detail the decisions of the powers-to-be, he was hoping that Pound would be willing to 'accept such an arrangement.'

For Pound this new idea was in fact an 'illegal arrangement,' which prompted another long letter from MacLeish (on March 30) to show, step by step, how this plan was a legal solution and the best arrangement for allowing Pound to be as free as possible, to receive the medical attention he needed from a physician (not a quack), and to maintain control of his earnings.<sup>28</sup> MacLeish was adamant in reminding Pound that if he shared any of these plans with anybody, it would be the end of the 'conversation' with the State Department, and if Pound did not accept the arrangement, it would also be 'the end of it.'<sup>29</sup>

Dag Hammarskjöld wrote to Christian Herter on March 12, thanking him for 'having found time to look into this matter,' and concluding that 'the way indicated may be the best, or indeed the only one open.' He then forwarded Herter's letter and his reply to Anders Österling and his colleagues at the Swedish Academy, assuring them that this was indeed the best solution, but at the same time asking for their discretion regarding this highly confidential final arrangement. However, this was not to be the final arrangement.

There were even more confidential documents to be filed, some of which, unfortunately, were later censored. The F.B.I., that had been so instrumental in helping to arrest Ezra Pound, was about to play an important role in his release – a joke of jokes, as Pound would say. One should remember that Deputy Attorney General William Rogers had finally

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28 Although sadly, Pound did not regain control of his finances, as he had to be placed under Dorothy's trust.

29 Winnick, 407-408.

replied to the Frost-Eliot-Hemingway letter on April 10. Around that time, the Attorney General had also requested a review of the Pound case by the F.B.I.'s Internal Security Division. The F.B.I. had sent the review on May 20, 1957, but 'no decision had been made whether further action was warranted.' This information was part of a January 28, 1957 internal three-page F.B.I. memo, which specified that 'the indictment against Pound on the charge of treason is still standing,' but also indicated that it contained 'no derogatory information concerning Robert Frost' (although half a page was censored when the document was declassified).

The January 28 memo was followed by another internal memo from F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover, after Hoover's January 28 meeting with the Attorney General, during which the case of Ezra Pound was discussed. Hoover reported that 'in view of the controversial character of Pound, he being both anti-Semitic and pro-Fascist, the Attorney General designated a committee consisting of Assistant Attorney General Tompkins, Acting Assistant Attorney General McLean and Executive Assistant to the Attorney General Healy to review all aspects of this matter and to report to the Attorney General what their recommendations were in the case.' Bengt Nirje, who had read many documents in the F.B.I. archives (including those two memos), had always been intrigued by them, and long continued to search for the report written by 'Hoover's three men.' When I had a chance to read the complete collection of F.B.I. declassified documents (patiently collected by Pound's son, Omar, and now part of the Hamilton College Pound Collection), I never came across the report, which may still be classified.

It would be interesting to have more information about Hoover's role and his influence, if any, as he was known to have 'a direct line' to the President of the United States.

# Chapter X

## ‘This is the End!’

(1958-61)

In January of 1958, Sherman Adams, the White House Chief of Staff, arranged for Robert Frost to come to the White House. Adams, who was also in charge of cultural events, had previously invited Frost to a luncheon in 1953 to read some of his poems to the staff. This time around, it was Frost who asked to be invited to meet with Eisenhower ‘at a meal or something’ to thank the President for his telegram of January 16, 1958 congratulating Frost for his Gold Medal, awarded by the Poetry Society of America. Frost made it clear to Adams that the Medal was just an excuse, and added, ‘it is not just for myself that I am speaking.’<sup>1</sup> He was alluding to the case of ‘the eccentric poet,’ whom the two New Englanders – Frost and Adams – had, of course, already discussed during one of Frost’s earlier visits.<sup>2</sup>

Frost’s letter to Adams was soon followed by a telegram from the President, inviting him to a ‘stag dinner’ on February 27. Adams, who had promised to talk with Frost privately on that same day, invited him and Attorney General Rogers (whom Frost had asked to see) to a luncheon. Interestingly enough, in his memoirs, Adams mentions both the luncheon and the stag dinner. The luncheon had a distinguished guest list: Gabriel Hauge, Attorney General Rogers, Ann Whitman, Fred Morrow, Arthur Larson, Robert Merriam, and Robert Rogers.<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Hauge, the President’s Economic Adviser, who was James Laughlin’s brother-in-law and a strong supporter of Pound, had already intervened in Pound’s favor by asking Adams to talk to the President.<sup>4</sup>

With these two events, Dag Hammarskjöld’s wishes regarding Pound were materializing. In addition to the Swedish Academy, the American Academy, and the Attorney General’s office, the White House would now be involved, at last! One could add to that list the Department of

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1 Carpenter, 838.

2 Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 425.

3 Adams, 428.

4 Carpenter, 838.

Health, Education and Welfare, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Hammarskjöld might not have known about J. Edgar Hoover's involvement,<sup>5</sup> but he knew of Dr. Overholser's important role, and even mentioned the doctor's 'evaluation of the situation' in a letter to Bengt Nirje on April 28. Although Nirje was concerned about Kasper hindering Pound's release, Hammarskjöld reassured him that he was following the case very closely and was optimistic regarding Pound's chances, in spite of the medical and legal imbroglio. Needless to say, neither Hammarskjöld nor Nirje knew anything about the dinner at the White House.

Pound biographers usually mention the date of the stag dinner but refer to it as a rather informal affair, while Sherman Adams seems to be the only one to provide a detailed list of the guests that day, and more importantly, to explain the President's idea behind these stag dinners. Eisenhower wanted such occasions to be 'small and exclusively male dinner parties at the White House for groups of fifteen to twenty men from all walks of life, just for the purpose of having a pleasant and informal conversation about anything that happened to come to their minds,' what he liked to call 'a general chat.'<sup>6</sup> The occasion may have been less formal than usual, but it was still a five-course dinner with two or three fine wines, served in the state dining room, with the President usually wearing a dinner jacket and guests wearing business suits. The President himself oversaw the seating arrangement and made sure to place a small, black-handled jack-knife (and a penny) as a souvenir near each guest's dinner plate.

According to Adams, the stag dinner that Frost attended was 'more of a family party,' as the President's son John and his brother Milton were at the table. Also on the guest list were Charlie Coolidge (former Assistant Secretary of Defense), Richard Amberg (publisher of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*), Douglas Black (president of Doubleday and Company), two Army generals, Secretary of Defense Neil H. McElroy, and other key figures from banking, industry, and academe. All were important guests, indeed, but Sherman Adams thought the presence of Robert Frost made the evening even more memorable. One would assume, though, that the 'general chat' did not include much about the

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5 Hoover, on the other hand, had a file on Hammarskjöld (which was in great part censored, according to Manuel Frölich).

6 Adams, 427.

Pound case, except perhaps in one of the small conversational groups before dinner. Did Frost then at least mention, as he had already said over lunch, that it would be a disgrace for the U.S. if Pound died in captivity?<sup>7</sup> Wasn't that what MacLeish had always said and even written to Milton Eisenhower? The message must, somehow, have gotten across to Attorney General Rogers, who was also 'aware of growing world opinion that the poet should be released.'<sup>8</sup>

The Attorney General was, in fact, the first one to officially announce, when asked about Pound during a New York press conference on April 1, that there was hope for his release. The question was prompted by the H. D. Seiber report on 'The Medical, Legal, Literary and Political Status of Ezra (Loomis) Pound,' that had just come out. It was a document that finally spurred the Department of Justice to consider dropping the charges against the old poet, as his mental health prevented him – once again – from standing trial. The announcement by Rogers was no April Fool's Day joke, and his statements were echoed in *The New York Times* on April 2, with the headline 'Ezra Pound may escape trial and be allowed to go to Italy.' Suddenly, as if by magic, Italy seemed to be the solution.<sup>9</sup> And Rogers, who asked, 'Is there any point in keeping him there if he never can be tried?'<sup>10</sup> had an excuse for the case to be dismissed. To release Pound on the basis of a medical statement was exactly what Archibald MacLeish had hoped and even planned for. And it was MacLeish, again, who encouraged Frost to return to Washington to meet with the Attorney General, which he did on April 14. 'I've dropped by to see what your mood is in regard to Ezra Pound,' said Frost. The often quoted response, 'Our mood is your mood, Mr. Frost,' suggests that Frost's visit was the decisive factor.<sup>11</sup> However, a decision had already been made, after things were settled behind the scenes, by Sherman Adams. The Chief of Staff had 'approached President Eisenhower with a memo from the Department of Justice,' and the memo 'was duly initialed.' At least this is how Adams summarized the end of the Pound affair.<sup>12</sup>

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7 Carpenter, 839.

8 Meacham, 121.

9 According to Harry Meacham, Frost's telling Rogers about Pound's wishes to return to Italy (and perhaps even agreeing to leave the country) certainly affected this decision. The Defense Department also preferred that Pound not remain in the U.S.A.

10 Carpenter, 839.

11 Meacham, 124; Carpenter, 840.

12 Heymann, 250. See also Carpenter, 844.

One would assume that the DDE-initialed memo was the document needed to finally allow for the dismissal of the Pound case, and that it was the result of a final discussion between the Attorney General and the director of the F.B.I. An April 8 memo (from F.B.I. agent L. V. Boardman to A. H. Belmont), which recapitulated steps taken and reviews made regarding Pound, stated that ‘the decision regarding what action to take in the Pound case is one for the Department to make.’ This time, the F.B.I. report was no doubt the result of some even more thorough investigations, including a rather lengthy one at the law office of Julien Cornell, who had been Pound’s attorney in 1945.<sup>13</sup> Cornell later wrote a book that follows the case from the time of the radio broadcast to the dismissal of the indictment and Pound’s return to Italy. Although there was no courtroom trial, Cornell’s book is entitled *The Trial of Ezra Pound: A Documented Account of the Treason Case by the Defendant’s Lawyer*.<sup>14</sup>

Coincidentally, Robert Frost asked Thurman Arnold to take the case, unaware of the connection the well-known Washington lawyer had with Pound.<sup>15</sup> The date for the hearing was set for April 18, and ‘apparently it was planned to happen while Congress was having its Easter holiday, in order to keep the publicity down.’<sup>16</sup> The court papers included a motion, signed by Thurman Arnold and William Rogers, to dismiss the indictment against Pound; an affidavit by Dr. Overholser in support of the motion; and a statement by Robert Frost with appended statements by famous writers such as MacLeish, T. S. Eliot, and Hemingway, followed by the Pound quote in Hammarskjöld’s MoMA speech and a very long passage from Richard H. Rovere’s 1957 *Esquire* article about Pound’s reputation as a poet. The appended statements were not necessarily written for the case, but they offered strong support for Ezra Pound and his works.

From a medical standpoint, Pound was clearly unfit to stand trial for the same reason he had been in 1945, when he was declared of ‘unsound mind.’ In his motion, Thurman Arnold stated that Pound was ‘insane and mentally unfit for trial,’ while Dr. Overholser in his affidavit went

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<sup>13</sup> Cornell, 124.

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.* (chapter II).

<sup>15</sup> This was confirmed by Arnold himself, although others say that it was MacLeish who contacted him. Arnold was a student at Wabash College where Pound taught 1907-08, and later became Julien Cornell’s Law Professor.

<sup>16</sup> Hollenberg, 218.

one step further, declaring that because of his 'permanent and incurable condition of insanity,' Pound would 'die insane' at St. Elizabeths, if not released. Robert Frost, in his own statement, concluded: 'I rest the case on Dr. Overholser's pronouncement that Ezra Pound is not too dangerous to go free in his wife's care, and too insane ever to be tried – a very nice discrimination.'<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Overholser's affidavit seemed to contradict Norman Holmes Pearson's impressions regarding Pound's mental and physical health. On April 2, Pearson, who had just been to St. Elizabeths, wrote to his friend Hilda Doolittle about seeing Pound amid the usual crowd of patients with bandages on their heads or walking in slow motion: 'But there was Ezra, a monument of sanity.' Later in his cell, Pound was 'half running, half skipping, like a twenty-year-old, full of vigor and good humor,' and he looked 'exceptionally well, his beard jaunty, his skin as fresh as a baby.'<sup>18</sup>

The men of law saw it differently from the men of letters. Later on when Thurman Arnold wrote a detailed account of the Pound case, it was also to give an example of 'the criminal trial as a symbol of public morality,' but not without listing the various contradictions of the case.<sup>19</sup>

As we already know, Pound could not be tried in 1945 because he was insane, but had he been tried he would not have been confined to a mental hospital for so many years. On the other hand, in 1958, he could not be released solely because he was mentally ill, which 'had nothing to do with whether he was insane at the time of the offense.'<sup>20</sup> And, of course, 'he could not be pardoned because he was not convicted of any offense and there was nothing to pardon him for.'<sup>21</sup> Pound could not be released either, simply on the basis of being a great poet! Nor could the Attorney General simply forget about Pound's radio broadcasts against the United States and his anti-Semitism, dismiss the indictment, and thus go against 'the policy of former attorneys general who had insisted

17 Cornell, 126, 129, 131.

18 Hollenberg, 214-15.

19 'The criminal trial as a symbol of public morality' is also the title of the chapter in question in Thurman Arnold, *Fair Fights and Foul: A Dissenting Lawyer's Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), 236-242.

20 Arnold, 237.

21 Arnold, 237.

on keeping Pound in confinement.<sup>22</sup> Despite the complex objections to Pound's release, the Attorney General informed Thurman Arnold (via Robert Frost) that 'he would not *oppose* a motion to dismiss' the indictment.<sup>23</sup>

On the day of the hearing, as the Attorney General did not *oppose* but, indeed, *consented* to the motion, Chief Judge Bolitha J. Laws finally ordered the indictment to be dismissed, stating again that the defendant was 'incompetent to stand trial,' and adding that there was 'a strong probability that the commission of the crimes charged was the result of insanity.'<sup>24</sup> In a twist of fate, Bolitha Laws was the same judge who had committed Pound to St. Elizabeths in 1945.<sup>25</sup>

For once, Pound's appearance and clothing style, so often criticized, may have worked to his advantage that day, when he 'sat in the back of the courtroom, dressed in a shabby blue jacket, a tan sport shirt with the tails not tucked in and blue slacks. His pockets were full of folded envelopes and other scraps of paper.'<sup>26</sup> Pound did not even react to hearing that he was 'incurably insane,' to the great relief of his lawyer, who then assumed that the old poet was pleased with the laudatory statements by his fellow writers and poets. When the court finally granted the motion to dismiss the charges against him, Pound left the courtroom 'happy in the belief that he was being released on the sole ground that he was a great poet.'<sup>27</sup> At least, that was what Thurman Arnold thought, or wanted to believe. Was the reason for Pound's calm composure really that simple? Or was it for the sake of appearances and dignity, as Arnold concluded: 'From a realistic point of view a trial cannot be a product of exact logical analysis, but the dignity of the law requires that it appear to be.'<sup>28</sup> Pound's *appearance* of insanity had saved him in 1945, and did so again in 1958.

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22 Arnold, 238.

23 My italics. Arnold, 239.

24 Arnold, 241.

25 In another twist of fate, St. Elizabeths is now the site of 'the largest public building project since construction of the Pentagon during World War II: consolidating the Department of Homeland Security on the historic site of a former mental hospital.' Eugene L. Meyer, 'Homeland Security on a Landmark Site,' *New York Times*, April 8, 2009.

26 Anthony Lewis, 'Courts Drops Charge Against Ezra Pound,' *New York Times*, April 19, 1958. See also Cornell, 135.

27 Arnold, 241.

28 Arnold, 242.

According to *The New York Times*, ‘the person most responsible for [the] dénouement’ that day (even though he did not attend the hearings) was Robert Frost, who had ‘waged a persistent public and private campaign during the last two years for Mr. Pound’s release.’<sup>29</sup> Thurman Arnold considered that Frost was ‘probably the only American poet who could have accomplished what he did,’ and he concluded that ‘his espousal of Pound’s cause gave it dignity sufficient to protect the government if it permitted him to be freed.’<sup>30</sup> However, when the *The New York Times* announced that Pound was a free man, it was to Archibald MacLeish, and not Robert Frost, that Dag Hammarskjöld sent a telegram on April 19 saying, ‘Congratulations to you, common sense and poetry.’

One wonders if MacLeish ever showed that telegram to anyone and how much Pound himself knew of the Secretary-General’s efforts. The letter Pound wrote to Hammarskjöld on April 13 was, as usual, about more literary matters (George Crabbe’s 1810 poem ‘The Borough’) and about Linnaeus, whose work Pound had been ‘plowing through’ after reading the Hammarskjöld essay on the Swedish naturalist, which had also inspired him to get back into Latin.<sup>31</sup> Pound’s letter followed, by a few days, another important moment for Hammarskjöld. On April 10, he was inducted for a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Thurman Arnold strongly disapproved of Dag Hammarskjöld’s intervention, which ‘did not make it any easier for the State Department,’ and he even declared: ‘What right had a foreigner to interfere with our own domestic affairs? But with Robert Frost it was different. Frost instinctively knew the right political action to take.’<sup>32</sup> Frost did get all the credit; however, when he was congratulated for his efforts, Frost should have mentioned MacLeish, at least. On the other hand, MacLeish never mentioned Hammarskjöld’s involvement either, not even in his memoirs, *Reflections*, many years later.<sup>33</sup> Of course, neither did Robert Frost.

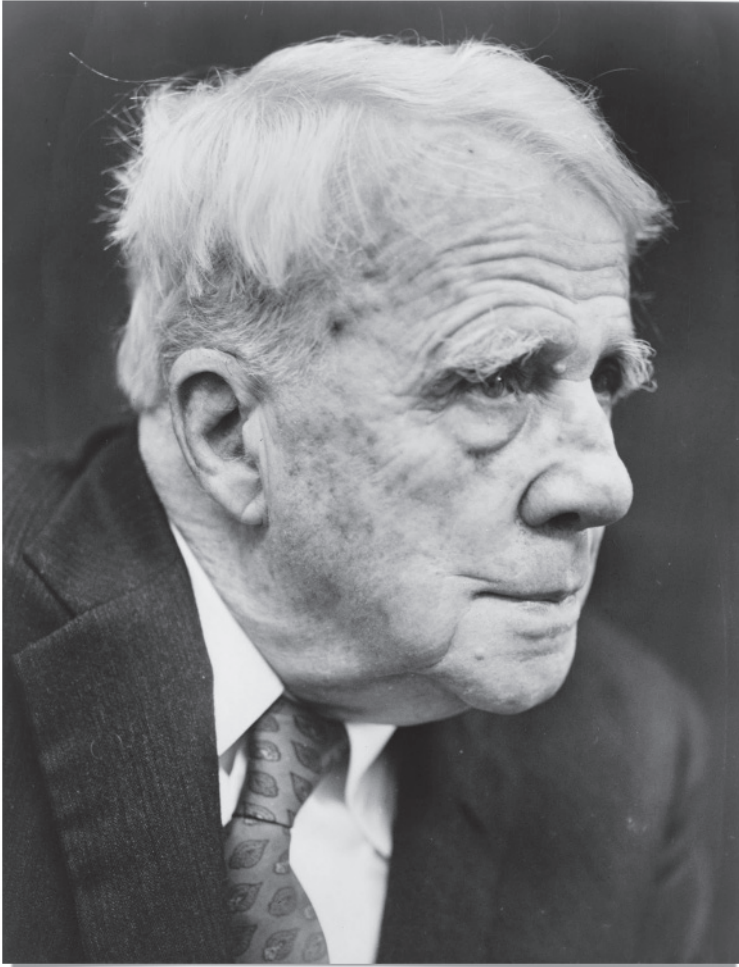
29 *The New York Times*, April 19, 1958. *The Washington Post* was closer to the truth when, on December 30, 1958, columnist Jack Anderson wrote ‘Adams, Herter, Hammarskjöld Pulled Wires For “Mad” Pound.’ Anderson is considered ‘one of the fathers of modern investigative journalism’ (Wikipedia).

30 Arnold, 238.

31 Hammarskjöld gave a copy of that 250th anniversary address to MacLeish, as well.

32 Arnold, 238-39.

33 Bernard A. Drabek and Helen E. Ellis, eds., *Archibald MacLeish: Reflections* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).



*Robert Frost*

So, all was well then? The dignity of the law was saved, Robert Frost was a hero, and Ezra Pound would leave the country. That April day, Frost boasted: 'This morning's paper said it took two years to get Ezra Pound out of jail but the truth is I did it in one week.' And on May 22, Frost told *The Los Angeles Times* that 'magnanimity was the thing about getting Ezra out of jail'<sup>34</sup> – Frost's magnanimity, that is. In any case, Pound

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<sup>34</sup> Meacham, 91.

was free, and his friends were happy. Most of them had heard the good news over the radio. When Hilda Doolittle heard it, she shared her happiness for Ezra and Dorothy Pound with Norman Holmes Pearson, and concluded: 'How wonderful the world will look to them – to us too, through their eyes.'<sup>35</sup> Sadly, she may not have fully realized that Pound was free only in appearance, as in reality and in legal terms, he was now in the custody of his wife, Dorothy. The only person to understand this tragic situation was Pound's daughter, Mary. When she heard the news, she thought, 'They are giving him just enough rope to hang himself!'<sup>36</sup> As she seemed to be the only one to think that way, and as her father 'seemed in control of the situation,' she did not say anything, and just kept busy, preparing for his return home to Brunnenburg Castle.

Back in Washington, Pound was busy as well and could not leave the hospital right away. He first had to take care of a few things, such as dental work, packing, and obtaining a passport. Free to come and go, he visited Thurman Arnold to thank him for his efforts, and also Congressman Usher Burdick who had been instrumental in the Seiber report.<sup>37</sup> Harry Meacham even organized a trip to Richmond, Virginia, where Pound met Meacham's colleagues from the Poetry Society – a visit which was reported in various press articles, including *The National Review*, as 'A Conversation with Ezra Pound.'<sup>38</sup> During his two-hour conversation with James Jackson Kilpatrick, mostly about education, ideas, writing, and reading (but not politics), the old poet apologized for needing to pause occasionally, saying: 'I don't have a one-track mind.' And jokingly, he later added: 'When I talk it is like an explosion in an art museum, you have to hunt around for the pieces.'<sup>39</sup>

Pound, in a more private conversation with Meacham, 'mentioned casually that he understood details of the final hearing were worked out at a Cabinet meeting.'<sup>40</sup> When Meacham later asked Sherman Adams about it, Adams brought up only the meeting he had arranged between Robert Frost and William Rogers. This did not satisfy Meacham, so he

35 Hollenberg, 222.

36 *Discretions*, 303.

37 Burdick may also have been instrumental in Pound's release, via a 'young Poundian' (John Kasper!). See William McNaughton, 'The Secret History of St. Elizabeths,' in *Paideuma* 30, no.1 & 2 (2000): 91-94.

38 *The National Review*, May 24, 1958 (reprinted in Meacham, 137-142).

39 Meacham, 140. This last quote is on the cover of Claes Wahlin's unpublished edition of the Pound-Forsell letters (*op. cit.*).

40 Meacham, 125.

wrote to President Eisenhower and asked: 'Did you personally give the nod to the Department of Justice that resulted in a pre-hearing agreement to dismiss the indictments against Ezra Pound?' The President's son, John Eisenhower, replied that after inquiring, he found no evidence of such White House involvement, referred Meacham to the account of the stag dinner in Sherman Adam's memoirs, and declared that 'Robert Frost was successful in negotiating this release by himself.'<sup>41</sup> By himself? Among the 'thank you' letters that followed Pound's release, there was an April 29 letter from Frost to Adams, implying that 'negotiations' may have also included President Eisenhower:

Since it is all your doing from the start I naturally ask you to see it through the rest of the way. My obligation is first to you and by way of you to the ruler of the greatest nation in the world. I wish you would take a look of indulgence at my words to him and make sure they will do.<sup>42</sup>

At the end of the letter, Frost wrote, 'The Pound affair came off with dignity.' On the same day, there was also a letter from Christian Herter at the State Department thanking William Rogers for 'the consideration and time [he] gave to this matter.'

During those stressful months in the spring of 1958, Harry Meacham had kept in touch with Pound's friends, and perhaps even, friends-to-be. 'He thinks so highly of you, and mentions you every time I see him,' Meacham wrote to Hammarskjöld in February of 1958, and again in May: 'He speaks of you in the very highest terms and I know he would like to shake your hand.' A week later, Hammarskjöld replied: 'I would be very happy if an opportunity for us to meet could be found before his [Pound's] departure.' The meeting never happened, as this was a hectic time for both of them.

Pound was officially discharged from St. Elizabeths on May 7, 1958, thirteen years, almost to the day, after being arrested on a hillside in Rapallo and brought to the 92nd division headquarters.

Before returning to Italy, Pound had a chance to go further back in time and visit his childhood home in Wyncotte, Pennsylvania, where he

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<sup>41</sup> Meacham, 125.

<sup>42</sup> Frost was writing a letter to President Eisenhower (Thompson, 578).

stayed for a couple of days, before going on to Rutherford, New Jersey to visit his old friend Williams Carlos Williams. One of the photos Richard Avedon took of Pound during that visit seemed to capture, all at once, what was perhaps the most poignant trait of Pound – half genius, half child – who was to some, the greatest mentor; to others, the shameful traitor. Forty years later, when the portrait was part of a New York Metropolitan Museum of Art retrospective, Pound still looked as if he had just been released. Or perhaps just been arrested.

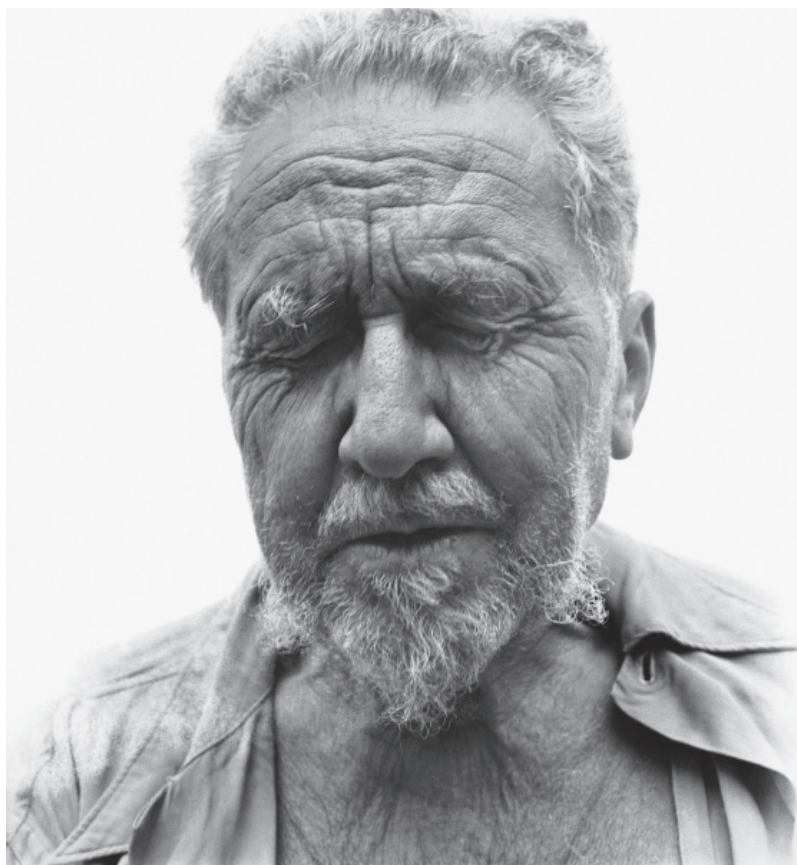
There is so much going on here before you even rise to the face: the skin like rock or elephant hide in the hollow of his throat, the shirt pulled aside as if to greet a firing squad. Is Pound blinking at the novel glare of freedom? Or is this simply the tight-eyed grimace that we remember from childhood – the screwed-up flesh believing that if it clenches hard enough, the trouble in the spirit will go away?<sup>43</sup>

After leaving Rutherford, Pound and his crew went on to New York to catch their boat. Ironically, Pound, who had wanted to return to America for good in 1939 and was brought there by force in 1945, was now being forced, it seemed, to return to Italy, the country of his first exile. About to sail off aboard the *Cristoforo Colombo*, Pound may not have noticed that he was also following the Columbus voyage in reverse. His sense of history may have been stronger than his sense of adventure, for when he arrived in Naples on July 9, Pound's biting sense of humor took over, as he declared to the journalists, 'All America is an insane asylum,' and raised his arm to give a Fascist salute. Was it his intent to shock the world by violating a taboo, or to catch the public off guard and to get even, in a childlike way? The salute could have been interpreted as a political statement or another gesture of the old joker, but the grimace Richard Avedon captured in his photo is even more striking, because it reveals the old joker, himself, caught off guard.

As in a fairy tale, the aging troubadour finally returned to Italy to live in a castle with a princess (his daughter Mary), her husband Prince Boris de Rachewiltz, and their two children, Walter and Patrizia. But after 'the great welcoming party to which the villagers had brought flowers and music and torches and drums,'<sup>44</sup> a gloom seemed to descend and linger on, like low clouds or fog that would not taper off. The three

43 Anthony Lane, 'Head On: A Richard Avedon Retrospective,' *New Yorker* (Sept. 23, 2002): 83.

44 *Discretions*, 304.



*Ezra Pound, poet, at the home of William Carlos Williams, Rutherford, New Jersey, June 30, 1958.  
Photograph by Richard Avedon. © The Richard Avedon Foundation*

women in the castle did not get along as well as the disciples at St. Elizabeths. Pound was now caught between his daughter, Mary; his wife, Dorothy; and his secretary, Marcella. Mary described Dorothy and Marcella as her father's 'Committee<sup>45</sup> and Bodyguard.' Mary's mother, Olga, was also anxious to be part of Pound's life again. Had the old poet left one prison, Chestnut Ward with its brick tower, for another one, Brunnenburg Castle with its stone dungeon?<sup>46</sup>

Pound had good times too: being with his grandchildren, working on his last *Cantos*, and writing to his many correspondents, Hammarskjöld among others. Bengt Nirje, who had also kept in touch with the Secretary-General, wrote to him in the summer of 1958: 'It is nice that E. P. is where he should be – in spite of the incurable little fuss he so often creates.'<sup>47</sup> Hammarskjöld wrote back that he was happy the Pound case was solved, and he really thought that Pound 'would now calm down.' He added, 'At some point, if I have a chance, I would love to give you details about the last stage of the very intricate discussions that took place.'<sup>48</sup> For Bengt Nirje, who never had a chance to see Hammarskjöld again, those details remained a mystery.

Ezra Pound wrote a short letter to Hammarskjöld on September 15, recommending a collection of 16th century maxims, *Ricordi*, by Guicciardini, 'probably nothing not basicly [sic] in Confucius, but an occasional turn of phrase that [he] might find interesting or even useful.' Because of his 'current duties,' Hammarskjöld did not reply until November 8, that Guicciardini was unknown to him, and he added:

The other day I ran across an interview with you published in the Swedish paper Dagens Nyheter. The interviewer recorded some very generous words about me. I thank you for them. I envy the reporter his chance of a long talk with you. However I do not despair about the possibility to see you myself one day in Italy.

In the meanwhile, I am looking hopefully towards a continued contact in this form and, expectantly, towards new works from your hand.

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45 Pound was in the custody of Dorothy, named 'committee for Ezra Pound.'

46 The tower and the dungeon even look alike.

47 Translated by M.-N. Little.

48 Translated by M.-N. Little.

Giacomo Oreglia's long article based on his interview of Pound, that had appeared in *Dagens Nyheter* on November 5, was soon translated so Pound could also read it.<sup>49</sup> When Oreglia visited Pound, they talked about the past, of course, but also about Sweden, its culture and language (which Pound wished he could have learned), about his friends, Bo Setterlind and Lars Forssell, and 'with warm sympathy' about Dag Hammarskjöld. Pound, who was 'very grateful for all H. has done for him,' suddenly added, 'Many think I am still a soul gone astray. I have spoken well of the Secretary-General of the U.N., but I don't want to tie a tin can round his leg.'<sup>50</sup> Pound had already written to Harry Meacham in April, 'Hammarskjöld is busy with more IMMEDIATE crises, pretty much every day or so. I don't think I should abuse his good will.'<sup>51</sup>

When responding to Hammarskjöld's last letter, Pound remembered having said, 'I did not want to be a tin can tied to your tail, in the midst of more important and delicate operations.' In another letter dated January 4, 1959, Pound mentioned the article again: 'The Dagens Nyheter did pretty well in displaying the motto: EVERY MAN HAS THE RIGHT TO HAVE HIS IDEAS EXAMINED ONE AT A TIME,' which Pound had even asked to write down in Oreglia's notebook when they were discussing the accusations of Fascism leveled against him. On June 23, Pound wrote a second time to Hammarskjöld with the intent of clearing himself of these accusations and of clarifying the nature of his association with Mussolini:

I had hoped for a line from you re/ the declaration. Every man has the right to have his ideas examined one at a time.

I suppose I am moved to bother you again by having come on a letter from Mezzasoma [Minister of Popular Culture under Mussolini] saying that M. [Mussolini] could not at that moment see me.

I, in fact saw him only once. And one of the honest men in his office groaned: If he only could see you or see someone like you! He sees all the wrong people!<sup>52</sup>

49 Reprinted in Meacham, 34-39.

50 Meacham, 35.

51 Meacham, 82.

52 Pound dated his letter 23 June 1958 (instead of 1959), and his shorthand reference to events and people from a previous decade confused Hammarskjöld. Thinking that 'M.' was a contemporary friend of Pound's, Hammarskjöld, out of pure generosity of spirit, agreed to meet 'M.'

Hammarskjöld replied from Geneva on July 10, apologizing for the delay and explaining that his silence was due to being overtaken by ‘the stream of events’ that prevented him from writing ‘a personal and considered reply.’ He did not comment on the motto, but in responding to Pound’s question, ‘Shouldn’t the Four Books of Kung Tsu and Mang Tzu be required in education of U.N. personnel above the janitor level?’ he answered, ‘I don’t see why you should exclude the janitors from their wisdom.’

Pound followed up with yet another letter, which somewhat confused Hammarskjöld, who wrote back several months later, on November 4, with the excuse that he was ‘very uncertain about how to reply.’ He tried at least to comment on one of Pound’s statements by saying, ‘It may be true that ‘a policy based on ignorance might not be right,’ as you say, and that one ‘trying to take count of too many uncorrelated facts’ leads merely to muddle.’ Hammarskjöld added, ‘It might help me if you would explain to me more fully what you are aiming at,’ and closed his letter with, ‘Rumors have it that we may soon have something by your hand again.’ *Thrones* was about to be published.<sup>53</sup>



*Dag Hammarskjöld in Katanga*

<sup>53</sup> Hammarskjöld wrote to Mary de Rachewiltz (March 10, 1960) to thank her for sending him *Thrones*.

That seems to have been Hammarskjöld's last letter to Pound, as these were very difficult times for him at the U.N. The same was true for Pound who, by then, had left Brunnenburg and moved to Rapallo with Dorothy and Marcella. One would have thought that his last two letters written on Hotel 'Albergo Grande Italia & Lido' stationary would have been more serene, but they exhibit some impatience, and a complaint that he was still 'a suppressed author, with outlets being blocked all the time.'

What about the Nobel Prize? Pound, of course, never brought up the subject with Dag Hammarskjöld, and seldom mentioned it with other correspondents, except perhaps with Norman Holmes Pearson, who wrote to Pound that he was disappointed when Pasternak was awarded the Prize in 1958:

My own guess is now that E. P. is in Italy and no longer at St Lizzie's (god be thanked) that the award will wait until the cantos are finished. Which I suppose is understandable but still regrettable. The whole Pasternak affair was too political from start to finish to be of any 'literary' significance.<sup>54</sup>

Pound replied on December 5, 'Considering yr/ feelings, in fact, it WOULD be timely for you to ask Hammarskjöld whether there is any chance of publishing Mensdorf's letter on causes of war, sent to that w.c. flush Nic Butler in 1927.' Then he went on with comments regarding more peaceful and 'idealist tendencies' of past Nobel Prizes and asked Pearson if he has 'ethnologyzed the whole list of awards.' One shouldn't forget that some of the writers Pound had known (and often mentored) in London and Paris were given the highest literary consecration. The Nobel Prize was awarded to Tagore in 1913, to Yeats in 1923, to Eliot in 1948, and to Hemingway in 1954.

Within the Swedish Academy, discussions about Pound's chances for the Nobel took place in private. The fact that Pound was now free did not change either Hammarskjöld's or Pär Lagerkvist's stand, as they were still opposed to nominating him. The September 21, 1959 review of *A Casebook on Ezra Pound* by Anders Österling did not change things either, even if Österling compared Pound to other 'problematic geniuses'

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54 See recent findings regarding the possible involvement of the C.I.A., in [http://www.rferl.org/content/Was\\_Pasternaks\\_Path\\_To\\_The\\_Nobel\\_Paved\\_By\\_The\\_CIA/1496794.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Was_Pasternaks_Path_To_The_Nobel_Paved_By_The_CIA/1496794.html)

such as Baudelaire, Dostoyevsky, and Strindberg. Pound's 'propaganda' was hurting him, and Österling considered it a real 'drawback and a dead weight.' Pär Lagerkvist, in a letter to academician Henry Olson in July of 1959, described Pound as a good 'counter-part' to Pasternak; however, Olson had mixed feelings regarding Pound's works and did not want to commit himself to agreeing with Lagerkvist. He preferred to bring up again the point of view of Hammarskjöld who, in spite of his admiration and compassion for Pound, had some serious reservations, as far as the Nobel was concerned.<sup>55</sup>

In his own review of the *Casebook*, Folke Isaksson characterized it as a favorable proof of Pound's literary legacy in spite of the controversy surrounding his life. Isaksson brought up the controversy again during a 1960 radio program about politically engaged writers and possible Nobel Prize candidates such as Jean-Paul Sartre, whom the Swedish Academy preferred to keep at bay. Isaksson concluded that, in his opinion, Pound would never get the Nobel Prize, for fear that doing so would discredit the Academy.

Student groups felt differently about the American poet and even invited him to Sweden! A month-long lecture tour was scheduled to begin on October 13, 1960 in Lund, then proceed to Uppsala and Copenhagen.<sup>56</sup> Pound chose the topic of 'The Technique and Language of Poetry' for his lecture. Questions were raised again over the airwaves and in the press regarding the political implications of such a visit. Some people swore that Pound came only to talk about poetry; others argued that it was difficult to separate his poetry from his political propaganda. In the end, Pound's poor health prevented him from embarking on the tour. Pound wrote to the student representative that he could not 'rush around to a lot of talks,' and that they overlooked his 'horrible physical weakness, and need to sleep and rest cures.' Mary de Rachewiltz finally had to decline the invitation. She wrote to Pound's Swedish publisher, Caverfors, 'One day he feels very well, and one day he feels so depressed that he won't even leave his room or talk. Under these conditions it is too difficult to make any arrangement.'<sup>57</sup> Many were very disappointed, of course, including Bo Setterlind (who was still hoping Pound would be awarded the Nobel Prize).

55 See Antonsson & Hendersson, in *Lyrkvännern*, 228-29.

56 See details of this planned visit in Antonsson, *Ezra Pound*, 65-68.

57 Antonsson, *Ezra Pound*, 68.

That autumn, the Nobel Prize went to a friend of Dag Hammarskjöld (and of Archibald MacLeish), Saint-John Perse, who had always made sure to separate his diplomatic career from his poetic discourse. Pound, for whom poetry and politics were inseparable, seemed to have lost his chances for good when, in the May 29, 1961 *Stockholms-Tidningen*, culture editor Birger Christofferson, with his 'Farväl till Ezra Pound' editorial, wished Pound 'farewell.' As the Pen Club had persisted in nominating Pound several years in a row for the Nobel, the Academy had also persisted in turning away the proposal, 'and rightly so,' concluded the editor.<sup>58</sup>

The summer of 1961 was particularly difficult for Ezra Pound whose world seemed slowly to close in on him. Silence had become his safe haven and also his last cage, with the difference that he could open it and talk, on the rare occasions when he felt like doing so. For Dag Hammarskjöld, it was the whole world order that was becoming impossible for one man or one organization to manage. The Bizerte crisis in July and the Congo crisis had taken a toll on the Secretary-General, whose sole escapes were his abiding pleasure in reading and in savoring the peace and quiet at his retreat near Brewster, New York, or earlier on at his small farm house in southern Sweden. He had always thought that like Linnaeus after traveling and having known fame abroad, he would return some day to Sweden and devote his time to literature, as his father had.

Dag Hammarskjöld died on his way to the Congo the night of September 17-18, 1961, when his plane crashed near Ndola. He was en route to a meeting with Moïse Tschombe, the governor of Katanga, a rebel province of the Congo. The post-mortem report indicated that he lived for a certain time after the crash. He was the only one not burned, 'his face extraordinarily peaceful, a hand clutching a tuft of grass.'<sup>59</sup>

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Mary de Rachewiltz still remembered vividly, some forty years later,<sup>60</sup> that when the terrible news of Hammarskjöld's death reached Brunnenburg, her father, who was in the dining room, pounded with his fist on the wooden wall panels, saying over and over again in despair, 'This is the end!'

58 Antonsson & Hendersson, *Lyriskvänner*, 230.

59 The quoted line is from Brian Urquhart, in *Hammarskjöld*, 589.

60 Conversation with me when I first met her in the summer of 2003.

'THE UNBELIEVABLE HAS HAPPENED and the world will never be the same,' Bo Beskow wrote to Alexis Leger.<sup>61</sup> The Swedish knight had died. Leger set the flag at half mast at his home on the presqu'île of Giens in southern France, and wrote to King Adolf of Sweden: 'For those who have known the man and shared his friendship, Dag Hammarskjöld remains one of the most chivalrous figures because he represented nobility itself, courage and honor.'<sup>62</sup> For many, from then on, he would be remembered with respect and awe; others remembered him as a true friend. John Steinbeck wrote: 'Have been reading the appraisals of his character in the paper and I guess I knew a different man than they did. He was neither cold, cool, dispassionate nor neutral. He was a man passionate about what he was doing.'<sup>63</sup>

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61 Little, *Poet and Diplomat*, 135.

62 Translated by M.-N. Little (*Poet and Diplomat*, 136). Attorney General Francis and Katherine Biddle sent a telegram of condolences to Leger (Rigolot, 280).

63 Little, *Poet and Diplomat*, 136.

# Epilogue

## Into Great Silence

*'Who is more to be pitied, a writer bound and gagged by policemen or one living in perfect freedom who has nothing more to say?'*

Kurt Vonnegut

Will we ever know what happened that night? The captain had maintained radio silence until reaching the Rhodesian border, and then notified the control tower that the U.N. plane would land at Ndola airport shortly after midnight. It never did. The wreckage was found the next day in a rough area several miles from the airport. To this day, what caused the crash remains a mystery, but it seems difficult simply to accept that it was an accident caused by pilot error.<sup>1</sup> Will new discoveries someday help us rewrite that painful piece of history?

When the news reached the United Nations in New York on September 18, 1961, all the flags were taken down except for the U.N. flag, which flew at half mast. When President John F. Kennedy addressed the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, his tone was solemn: 'A noble servant of peace is gone, but the quest for peace lies before us.'<sup>2</sup> A few days later, after the service in the Uppsala Cathedral, students lined the streets leading to the old cemetery, where Dag Hammarskjöld was finally put to rest. Among those present, but standing at a distance, was a man wearing folk dress. 'He was a guide from northern Lapland who had been with Dag in many northern journeys,' and 'had made his own way south for the funeral,' wrote George Ivan Smith to Martin Buber.<sup>3</sup> And he added: 'The sorrow expressed on that man's face is something else I shall never forget.' A final homage came from Norway on October 23, when the parliament announced that Dag Hammarskjöld had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, posthumously.

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1 For the various investigations and theories through the years regarding the Ndola crash, see Manuel Frölich, 'The Unknown Assignment': Dag Hammarskjöld in the Papers of George Ivan Smith,' in *Critical Currents* 2 (op. cit.), 27-33.

2 <http://www.kennedylibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/DOPIN64xJUGRKGdHJ9NfgQ.aspx>

3 Quoted in Frölich, CC 2, 34.

When Hammarskjöld's diary *Vägmärken* was published, and translated as *Markings*,<sup>4</sup> many were surprised to discover that it was the only 'true profile' he wished to leave. In the letter enclosed with the manuscript, Hammarskjöld described his diary as 'a sort of white book concerning my negotiations with myself – and with God.' The entries, running from 1925 to 1961, include poetic and mystical passages, short poems, and quotes from the Bible, from poets, philosophers, and mystics. They are like waymarks and glimpses from a longer journey.

One wonders if Ezra Pound read *Markings*, which quickly became a best seller and was translated into many languages. These were difficult times for the old poet, even though he traveled, and continued go to concerts and to write. He was living with Olga in Sant' Ambrogio, near Rapallo and in Venice. Dorothy had returned to England when taking care of her husband became too difficult. Many of Pound's old friends had passed away: Ernest Hemingway in July of 1961, Hilda Doolittle in September, E. E. Cummings in 1962, and William Carlos Williams in 1963. The last visitor at Robert Frost's bedside before he died in January of 1963 was Pound's daughter, Mary. 'I have come to thank you,' said the princess, 'I thought it was high time some member of the family did.' 'This is a happy occasion for me,' replied Frost.<sup>5</sup> When Mary de Rachewiltz mentioned that her father had been somewhat silent, Frost concluded: 'Politics make too much difference to both of us . . . I'd like to see Ezra again.' 'Come to Venice. That would be a grand occasion,' said Mary. Then, they both 'praised MacLeish,' and Frost also mentioned the nice Christmas card he had received from Pound.

Years later, it was MacLeish's turn to mention a special letter he had received from Pound, one of apology; but the letter disturbed him, because 'Ezra Pound was the kind of man who should never apologize!'<sup>6</sup> Instead, it seems that MacLeish was the one to apologize (indirectly, and too late), assuming that Pound's 'indictment of the Department was an error of law and his attorney's plea for insanity an error in tactics and his incarceration in St. Elizabeths a miscarriage of justice.'<sup>7</sup> MacLeish, who had had mixed feelings regarding the Pound case (and his own role as a lawyer/statesman/poet), could not help but admit that

4 *Vägmärken* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1963); *Markings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964, 1981).

5 Lawrence Thomspon and R. H. Winnick, *Robert Frost: The Later Years 1938-1963* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 343.

6 MacLeish, *Reflections*, 66.

7 MacLeish, 'The Venetian Grave,' in *Riders on the Earth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1978), 117.



*Ezra Pound in Venice (by Horst Tappe)*

'Pound was one of the inventors of modern poetry: in retrospect, one must say, the principal inventor.'<sup>8</sup> MacLeish later confided in Norman Holmes Pearson that he 'owed' Pound too much to complain, and that Pound and Eliot 'freed' him 'as they did so many others, from the Edwardians.'<sup>9</sup>

Pound never saw MacLeish and Hemingway again, even though he had invited them, and especially Hemingway, to visit him in Italy. In 1965, Pound traveled to England to attend the funeral of his old friend T. S. Eliot – one of the first ones to visit him at St. Elizabeths in 1946, and one of the first ones to recommend him for the Nobel Prize in 1948. Pound also went to Paris in the fall of 1965, celebrating his eightieth birthday and a special issue about his poetry in *Les Cahiers de L'Herne*. Several of his works were about to be published in French, as well. When asked the pressing question, Pound told Publisher Dominique de Roux: 'I did not enter into silence, silence captured me.'<sup>10</sup> Almost every Pound volume has a last chapter on 'silence' or 'the silent years,' as if it were as much of an issue as talking too much. Was silence the price to be paid for too much freedom, after being incarcerated for so many years? Or was it mostly a combination of old age, medical problems, and regrets; remorse, even? Was it simply time to 'let the wind speak,' as Pound wrote in *Canto CXVII*.<sup>11</sup>

Paris had changed in forty years, and so had Pound, but he and Olga enjoyed seeing old friends again at Nathalie Barney's. Samuel Beckett (who had been James Joyce's secretary) was also in Paris; but with him, economy of words was not a problem. The Pounds attended his play *Fin de partie* [*Endgame*], a title that evoked the end of Pound's own struggles and dreams.

Looking at the photograph taken when Pound visited Joyce's gravesite in Zurich in 1967, one wonders what words they might have exchanged, if any, in a real conversation. Standing at a distance, Pound is staring at Joyce's life-size bronze statue, about to repeat what Joyce (a hand by his ear) doesn't seem to have heard.<sup>12</sup> During this last period of his life, Pound often expressed regret, calling himself a 'moron,' and

8 MacLeish, *Riders*, 121.

9 MacLeish to Pearson, May 13, 1963 (Beinecke).

10 See Henry Kamm, 'Pound, in Silence, Returns to Paris,' *New York Times*, October 30, 1965. 38.

11 *The Cantos*, 802.

12 Ackroyd, 112-113.

telling Allen Ginsberg, who visited him in Venice around that time: 'my worst mistake was the stupid suburban anti-Semitic prejudice, all along that spoiled everything.'<sup>13</sup> In *Drafts and Fragments of Cantos*, published in 1969, Pound confessed, 'I lost my center/ fighting the world./ The dreams clash/ and are shattered.'<sup>14</sup> Two of Pound's contemporaries who had also been accused of treason during the war years, Ferdinand Céline and Knut Hamsun, expressed a similar sense of disillusionment and acceptance. Céline wrote in his *Cahiers de Prison* [*Prison Notebooks*]: 'I wanted to prevent the war, that's all. I risked everything. I lost everything.'<sup>15</sup> Hamsun, at the time of his trial, declared:

Because I sat there and wrote as best I knew how . . . it is said now that I was betraying my own country. I was a traitor, it is said. Never mind. But I did not feel it to be so at the time, did not seem to be so, nor do I deem it to be so today. I am at peace with myself. My conscience is completely clear.

Hamsun added, 'In a hundred years it will all be forgotten.'<sup>16</sup> If one would hesitate to say that Ezra Pound's silence meant that he was at peace with himself, one could at least imagine that in a hundred years it would all be forgiven.

The old troubadour made one last visit to Hamilton College in 1969 for James Laughlin's honorary degree, but most of the time remained silent. And when Pound finally died in 1972, his alma mater made no comment, either. His picture, bordered in black, appeared in the campus newspaper with no obituary. Back in Italy, Pound was to take his last voyage on a Venetian gondola, and be buried on the small island cemetery of San Michele.<sup>17</sup>

Let us hope that in the end, 'What thou lovest well' does 'remain,'<sup>18</sup> and that the 'Troubadour at Hamilton' will mostly be remembered for his

13 Tytell, 337.

14 *The Cantos*, 802.

15 'J'ai voulu empêcher la guerre, c'est tout. J'ai tout risqué. J'ai tout perdu.' Philippe Sollers, 'Céline en enfer' ['Céline in Hell'], *Le Nouvel Observateur*, October 16-22. 2008. 53.

16 Knut Hamsun, *On Overgrown Paths*, trans. Carl L. Anderson (New York: Paul Eriksson, Inc, 1967), 145-46.

17 When I visited the cemetery and took a picture, there was a small lizard on Pound's gravestone. Then another one crawled onto Olga's grave, nearby.

18 *Canto LXXXI*, 521.

168 | *Chansons de gestes*, the *Cantos*. When Kung, near that other 'Sacred Grove'<sup>19</sup> or 'cedar grove' says:

And even I can remember  
A day when the historians left blanks in their writings,  
I mean for things they didn't know,  
But that time seems to be passing.<sup>20</sup>

One cannot help think about the story of *The Knight and the Troubadour* and the things Pound historians and biographers do not know. The Knight and the Troubadour never met, but off-stage, Hammarskjöld, playing the role of the diplomat, embodied the complexity of poetry and politics intertwined, in brokering Pound's release from St. Elizabeths, truly a feat of 'quiet diplomacy.'

Historians and biographers do know that on September 17, 1961, when the Secretary-General and his staff had already boarded the plane to Ndola, Hammarskjöld turned to his adviser, Sture Linnér and asked him to remain in Leopoldville, should his presence be needed there. Linnér stepped down from the plane. He was one of the last ones to see Hammarskjöld alive. Six months later, when he was back in Washington, Linnér was asked to meet with President John F. Kennedy in the Oval Office at the White House on March 14. Kennedy had finally recognized how unjustified it had been for him to oppose Hammarskjöld's Congo policy, and that it was time for an apology. Then, President Kennedy said: 'I realize now that in comparison to him, I am a small man. He was the greatest statesman of our century.'<sup>21</sup>

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19 The 'Sacred Grove' being Hamilton College (cf. Prologue).

20 *Canto XIII*, 60.

21 See Sture Linnér and Sverker Åström, 'The 2007 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture,' *UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld, Reflections and personal experiences* (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2008), 28.

When I met Bengt Nirje in 2001, he was already fighting several medical ailments and, therefore, anxious to put into writing a few significant projects of his. The story of Dag Hammarskjöld and Ezra Pound was one of them. When I chose the title of *The Knight and the Troubadour*, I did not realize that Bengt also deserved that title as he was, in many ways, both a knight and a troubadour.

When Hammarskjöld described Bengt as ‘a pleasant, well informed and sensible young man’ (in a 1955 letter to the Swedish Academy), the young Swede was about to embark on a crusade to save the world. He worked for the Red Cross in Austria and at the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) in 1957, mainly in connection with the crisis in Hungary. He was soon linked to the Folke Bernadotte movement for children with cerebral palsy (1958–59), which led to the post of ombudsman for the movement for retarded children (1961–71). He worked in the Ministries of Health and Community and Social Services in Canada (1971–78), but returned to Uppsala in 1978 to take a leadership position in the provincial health services.

Bengt won international recognition in the 1960s for his formulation of ‘The Normalization Principle.’ He founded the Swedish Sports Association for Handicapped People in 1969, and later became a member of the Board and Vice President of its international chapter (1988–95). He was awarded the King’s Medal for leadership in sports for the disabled, in 1985, and he was the recipient of the AAMR (American Association for Mental Retardation) International Award in Chicago in 2003. Bengt collected many other honors and medals, and was awarded Doctor Honoris Causa by the universities of Fribourg (Switzerland) and Meiji-Gakuin (Japan). After his retirement, Bengt was active as a consultant for the Centre for Disability Research at Uppsala University. In his honor, the Centre each year arranged a ‘Bengt Nirje Lecture’ that featured presentations by prominent researchers from all over the world.

Bengt, who had studied literature at Uppsala, Yale, the Sorbonne, and Stockholm University, served as a cultural editor and a reviewer for several journals and newspapers in the 1940s and 50s. He was a close friend of many Swedish writers and poets, among them Erik Lindgren

and Lars Forssell, who became members of the Swedish Academy. Like Ezra Pound, Bengt was fascinated by the ties between history and poetry. Like Dag Hammarskjöld, he managed to keep his passion for literature alive throughout his life.

Bengt Nirje was a troubadour at heart, with the talents of a *raconteur*. He would keep us entertained for hours, telling us about the people he had met and the books he had read, and those he still wanted to write. Bengt used his sense of humor, his repertoire of comic faces, and frequent bursts of laughter to play, at times, the part of the great buffoon. His generosity and affection were worth a thousand medals and awards. Measuring up to him was impossible, and so was trying to include in this book, all the people and events he wanted mentioned. I trust that he would have liked this version of the story of 'the Knight and the Troubadour,' and I know that he would have discovered a few new details, including his own portrait sketched between the lines. And he would have laughed.

*Marie-Noëlle Little*  
Clinton, NY, February 2011



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When I started to write this book, the strongest support came from Bengt Nirje, Per Lind, and Bengt Thelin. The same is true of Olle Nordberg, former director of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, who invited me back to Uppsala several years in a row, as a scholar-in-residence. His successor, Henning Melber, generously offered to help with the last steps leading to publication. Some of my work would not have been possible either, without the support of the Bank of Sweden's Tercentenary Fund, Dean John Johnsen at Utica College, and my Summer Fellowships and grants.

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Bengt Nirje's sister, Britta Holmberg, and his friend Mårten Söder took over after Bengt was gone, and helped with last minute questions and requests. Claes Wahlin at *Aftonbladet* managed to find a letter I had been searching for ten years. In his prompt attention to detail and his kindness, Claes reminded me of Halvar Sehlin, director of Svenska Turist Föreningen (Swedish Touring Club), who opened many doors for me when I started my doctoral research in Sweden over a quarter of a century ago. What a fantastic voyage this has been.

May this book be a token of my parents' gratitude to the country that welcomed them in 1945 and provided them with a safe haven.

# Illustrations

## Cover

*Dag Hammarskjöld* (United Nations, 1955). United Nations Photo.

*Ezra Pound* (1910-1912). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

## Foreword

*Per Lind* (Uppsala, 2006), by M.-N. Little.

## Preface

*Alexis Leger and Marlene Hammarskjöld* (Stockholm, 1960), by G. Drapier.

*Mary de Rachewiltz* (Venice, 2007), by M.-N. Little.

## Prologue

*Ezra Pound* (*Hamiltonian* 1905). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*Hamilton College "Chapel under Arch,"* by Timothy D. Sofranko.

*Uppsala Castle* (Uppsala, 2006), by M.-N. Little.

Book cover: Bengt Thelin, *Dag Hammarskjöld* (Carlssons, 2001).

*Castle Hill* (Uppsala, 2006), by M.-N. Little.

## Chapter I

*Hilda Doolittle*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

*Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear* (1910-1912). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*Ezra Pound* (London, 1918) by E.O. Hoppé. © E.O. Hoppé Estate Collection/Curatorial Assistance, Inc.

*Olga Rudge*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

*Rapallo* (2005), by M.-N. Little.

*Ezra and Dorothy Pound* (Rome, late 1930s-early 1940s). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*James Angleton* (*History of the class of 1941*). Yale University Manuscripts & Archives, Yale University Library, Yale University.

*Ezra Pound* (Hamilton College, 1939). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

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*Ezra Pound* (Pisa, 1945), by Morris Lucree. Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*DTC Cages* (Pisa, 1945). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*DTC Prisoners* (Pisa, 1945), by Gwen Steele. Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*Ezra Pound* (Genoa, May 16, 1945), by Joan Arrizabalaga. Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*St. Elizabeths Hospital* (Washington, D. C.).

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*Norman Holmes Pearson* (Yale University). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

*Lars Forssell* (*Augustana Observer*, December 11, 1947). Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

*Lars Forssell* (1952). Bonniers Archives, Stockholm.

*25 Dikter* (book cover by Herbert Lindgren). Bonniers Archives, Stockholm.

## Chapter IV

*Dag Hammarskjöld* (United Nations, 1954).  
United Nations Photo.

*Dag Hammarskjöld speaking at the Opening Ceremonies of the 25th Anniversary of the Museum of Modern Art* (October 19, 1954), by Barry Kramer. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

*Dag Hammarskjöld and Chou En-lai* (Peking, 1955). United Nations Photo.

*Square Dollar Series*. Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

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*Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeths* (1954). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

*Bo Setterlind* (1953). Bonniers Archives, Stockholm.

*Anders Österling* (1952), by Harald Borgström. Bonniers Archives, Stockholm.

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*Bengt Nirje (Special International Edition of Yale Daily News 1953)*. Courtesy of Karl Birnbaum.

*Dag Hammarskjöld* (Peking, 1955), by Peder Hammarskjöld.

*Erik Lindegren* (1952). Bonniers Archives, Stockholm.

## Chapter VII

*Archibald MacLeish* (Conway, ca 1956), by Al Daigle (*The Recorder*). Archibald MacLeish Collection, Greenfield Community College.

*Francis and Katherine Biddle* (ca 1950). Courtesy of Mrs. E. R. Biddle.

*Confucius: The Great Digest & Unwobbling Pivot* (New Directions, 1951). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

## Chapter VIII

*Folke Isaksson* (1960). Umeå University Archives, Umeå, Sweden.

*Dorothy Pound* (Washington, D.C., 1950). Ezra Pound Collection, Hamilton College Burke Library.

## Chapter IX

*Brunnenburg Castle* (2007), by M.-N. Little.

*Ernest Hemingway \$1,500 check* (Brunnenburg, 2007), by M.-N. Little.

*Dr. Winfred Overholser*. St. Elizabeths Hospital.

## Chapter X

*Robert Frost* by Walter Albertin (*World-Telegram*, 1959). Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

*Ezra Pound* (at the home of *William Carlos Williams*, Rutherford, New Jersey, June 30, 1958), photograph by Richard Avedon. ©The Richard Avedon Foundation.

*Dag Hammarskjöld* (Katanga, 1960). United Nations Photo.

## Epilogue

*Ezra Pound* (Venice, 1963), by Horst Tappe. Getty images (TIME & LIFE images).

*Bengt Nirje* (Uppsala, 2003) by M.-N. Little.

Dublin Photographer Dominique Davoust optimized several photos for publication. Christian Goodwillie, Curator of the Hamilton College Pound Collection, provided several photos in digital format.

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Fifty years ago, on 18 September 1961, Dag Hammarskjöld died in the plane crash near Ndola in Northern Rhodesia (today's Zambia). The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation commemorates the event in many different ways, one of which is the publication of this remarkable story of a poet and a diplomat that will interest and intrigue many readers.

*The Knight and the Troubadour*, which reveals a previously unexplored facet of Hammarskjöld's life and documents the extent of Ezra Pound's influence among Swedish poets and writers, marks a breakthrough in literary history and even re-writes history to some extent. For Dag Hammarskjöld, the diplomat, there were no boundaries between poetry and politics, and, with tragic consequences, the same was true for Ezra Pound, the poet.

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