

KAY BOYLE:

Oh, he was a dreadful man—and after all, the whole business of being in the hospital was a trick. He either pretended to be insane or got people to tell people he was. It was pacifism, that would have been something else, but it wasn't that. He wasn't telling the American troops to desert. He wanted American troops to lose the war.

I get absolutely furious when I think of him. I never liked his work. I never liked him as a person. I met him for the first time in Paris, in 1927. Well, he was so vain, and he wanted power so much. I mean that was his one thing. That's the only reason I think he admired Hitler and Mussolini, because they gave him the power.

You felt that he was subjugating everybody else, and also, he was a womanizer---and there was a good number of women who were in love with him, of course. I don't like womanizers. We would eat together quite often—a number of people, four or five—and there might be an attractive young woman there, and if she went to the ladies' room, he would go and wait outside until she came out, and then he'd grab her and try to have her say she would have an affair with him.

And he didn't get the kind of acknowledgement for his work he wanted in America, and so he went overseas. My husband, Laurence Vall, and I went to see him in Rapallo—the last time in 1938. Jonathan Cape, the English publisher, drove down with us from France, and Ezra, as usual, was out playing tennis. I don't know any of the people who played tennis with him, but people told me that he always jumped the net at the end and so every time he came in from playing he was covered with dirt, because he'd fall down when he jumped the net. And so he arrived on the terrace where we were having drinks before dinner and he said to Jonathan Cape, "I won't sit down at this table if you are sitting there. You have to sit at another table." So Jonathan Cape, a very mild kind of man, said, "Well, I don't understand." Ezra said, "Twenty years ago you had me thrown out of your offices in London." So poor Jonathan Cape had to sit at another table during the whole weekend we were there.

Ezra wasn't broadcasting when we saw him in 1938; he hadn't started yet. He had two Japanese students staying with him, and he was saying to them that the Chinese had stolen all their culture from the Japanese, which is exactly the contrary, of course. Ezra had been criticized by Chinese scholars for his translation that he lost interest in the Chinese. My husband, who was very well educated---he had a PhD from Cambridge—said, "Oh, Ezra, you're wrong. The Chinese were the great cultural country and the Japanese stole whatever they had from *them*." Oh, Ezra was *furious*.

It was just one agony after another because he would say, "Of course, you know what is happening is that the Jewish international conspiracy that's going to bring about the war," and I said, "Ezra, don't be so silly, don't be ridiculous." "No," he said, "I'll send you the material when you get back to France." So I was deluged for weeks with all this anti-Semitic material, especially against the banks. And in one of his letters, he said, "I'm not sending any to Laurence because I have a feeling his name Vail may be remotely Jewish."

He talked about nothing but Hitler and Mussolini. Every conversation he said they were the two greatest men in history, and they were going to save civilization.

If he had only been able to get some satisfaction over here. My father was at the University of Pennsylvania when Ezra was there—Ezra must have been very young at the time—and my father said Ezra would walk down with one foot in the gutter and the other foot

on the curb, and he'd be wearing two different colored socks. My father said Ezra did this to prove that the students would talk about nothing else but him instead of more important subjects.

When I was at a Bread Loaf Writer's Conference in Vermont one summer, in the fifties, Ezra was still in Saint Elizabeth's. And I became very attached to Robert Frost. People found Frost difficult, but I didn't at all. And he said to me, "Oh, that Goddamned bastard"—speaking of Pound---"They've made me chairman of the committee to get him back to Italy. I'd like to throw him in the sea and drown him before he goes."

When I saw Ezra in 1938 I had no idea it would go so far. It just seemed impossible.

From Alien Ink: The FBI's War on Freedom of Expression by Natalie Robins