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Autobiography & Memoir

Ezra and Dorothy Pound: Letters in Captivity, 1945-46
Omar Pound
Robert Spoo
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When Ezra Pound was led from his home in Rapallo, Italy, by two Italian partisans on the morning of May 3, 1945, it was the beginning of a journey that didn't end until his release from a federal mental institution in Washington, D.C. some 13 years later.

The Idaho-born poet and critic (1885-1972) was one of the most influential and controversial literary figures of his time. Pound was indicted for treason by the U.S. government for radio broadcasts he made during the War from Italy, where he?d lived since the 1920s with his English wife, Dorothy, whom he married in 1914.

Letters in Captivity represent the more than 150 previously unpublished letters between the couple from the time of Pound's incarceration at U.S. Army detention camps in Italy that May until the couple was together again in July, 1946 in the United States.

Pound is probably known best for his series of poems, Cantos, the last of which he wrote during his imprisonment. He continually passes pieces of this work to Dorothy in their communications. In letter 23 from October 13, 1945, Dorothy makes a realization: "I am getting stupider as I get older. Of course all these last, apparently, scraps, of cantos, are your self, the memories that make up your person. Is one then only a bunch of memories? i.e. A bunch of remains of contacts with other people? Gawd—but it might be a reason for making the other people's memories contain something pleasant, from oneself."

Readers follow Dorothy in her attempts to reach the U.S. and Ezra during the unpredictable time of post-war Italy. We also read of the stresses on a more personal level of dealing with an elderly mother-in-law and her husband's mistress. Real-life characters as diverse as e. e. cummings and J. Edgar Hoover pop up in the well-organized book. The letters are on the right hand side of the page; well-researched and detailed notes and explanations are on the left.

The book is edited by Omar Pound, the couple's son (b. 1926), a translator of Persian

and Arabic poetry living in Princeton, New Jersey, and Robert Spoo, an English professor at the University of Tulsa. Spoo is also editor of the James Joyce Quarterly.

Robin Farrell Edmunds