

III
POETS ON/FOR POUND

... The cross
of roses
stands out on the slopes as you return
to the womb where the slow
river speaks of the dear poet...

... La croce
di rose
spicca sui pendii e ritomi nel grembo
dove un fiume
lento parla del caro poeta...

Patrizia de Rachewiltz, *My Taishan*

DRAFT 61: PYX

Rachel Blau DuPlessis

the enigma of the plural impasse

Barrett Watten

where there is a “fatherland”
where there is “homeland”
one leaves for an “unknown land”

INTRO DUCE

Go with the old man,
tour his office, enter
each of the numerous ochre
rooms with artful carpet.

He tapped his cane, surrounded
by other men
showing the faculty or facility
a faculty for what?
Dogging his footsteps,
lone, loup, louche and
range-y,
still I was,
opposed.

Dunque I wrote not a word.

So then it was DAWN,
Dawn over the PMLA
bibliography

articles, books, festshriften
shrive me! father!

≥

Go, little lines,
singing in my sullen ear;
go, half-baked work
noting, and by the notes begin
a process of greeting.
Of gritting.
Without illusion.
Darkly, I listen.

BEG IN

“The melodic germ is marked ‘icy’ in the score.”
What is the finding? is it loss or gain?

Smelling “the stench of stale oranges”
 gray-green spoil outlined in white
growing on their soft unpeeled bodies,
a touching quotidian
 a domestic sensitivity
amid influx of beetles,
broken cloacas,
and meeds of merde.
Was it hell rot or “he’ll rot”?

Secret words were present under
 the scintillations
 of concealment
 and when the page turned back
 an underneath came up.
 The hand shakes over the page,
 turning it, turning it.

IN-SO-MUCH AS

**My mind stretched to the bursting point
 with this enormity
 with the continuity of the gun-sales**

who live inside a slow rumbling pre-
 apocalypse
 incorporative clutter evidence
 pilings, findings
 phonemes of findings
 selvages of findings
 savage oscura clippings
 the avant garden
 inflame inflamed
 inflaming images
 and then moon afloat,
 silvery eclipses cool down
 in luminous cloud-shadow.
 How to resist a world-system?
 ≥

Was there a before?
 An inquiry before insinuation?
 an interval before infamy?
 an indication before interdiction?

Scumbling and “intaglio,”
 inattention and incantation,
 strict inflections inside blurred insinuations,
 incandescent inundation:
 Was this all of one piece?
 And / or was it inconsequent?

≥

Perhaps it was like fireworks,
 a scintillating power showered
 from the sky.
 The rocket explodes with a hit.
 Colors emerge, splash space
 with their mimesis of stars
 red glare, blue flare
 delightful disasters of light shooting up to them,
 spraying sparks and glitter constellated,
 round designs and extended arcs,
 while everyone watching
 diverted and entranced
 goes ahhhhh,
 for wonder.

IN RE

As for R, like a revenant, I wandered
 far and wide
 reversing, and revering
 the streets and cemeteries
 of the dead
 and I saw the Monuments
 to the Deported
 stark inside me
 as in a City

just at the tip
 of my
 circumscribed
 Island.

≥

The imagined sounds
 shake your veins
 with dirty rumbled tune;
 the movement
 doubled cataclysmic dreams
 bled over the four margins
 of the round earth's
 imaginary consciousness.

How to get a handle on it
 How to keep the rage complex

IN CUSE

**ledt hoo vill rhun de harmies,
 if I can gontroll th gredit**

...thereupon ...

greasy flame of dead gas flare

...

**a thick air
 and a stifled silence.**

uncanny
 cunning
 incarnate
 instrument

prefiguring

an echo chamber
sinus out of schnozzle
caught in the hiss

a birth of enigma
to which
one owes
and owns
one's own
enigma.

≥

I had packed
I had saved
I had pretended
something else amid the dust.
But
there was no I, finally, and it
was neither here nor there.
The nowhere of in-----
prefixes all of this,
hinging, half-hung
half-off broken doors.

≤

Mud swirls left from a flooded room,
room bright, seemingly crystal, yet
deeply streaked,
a dream of death
in which one feels one's own.

Whole songs condensed
in single words
whose letters sear the page.

The fingers split the pomegranate's crust.
 Blood intensity
 and seeds of ruby jewels fall out.

FAR FALLE

Say to the "lyrical diary" – lyrical! as if
 this were innocence through which the burdens
 of time might be redeemed –
 Say
 that the Azure
 is Politically invested.

And then Write – so that words fail.
 In order precisely that
 they fail.

≧

IN-AND-IN

**Some narrow rat
 hunting the ark
 on Mt. Arrarat**

The extra "r"
 rises to speak,
 to squeak
 its little song
 or songe
 into the dear dead dark:

Bonjour messieurs/ dames
 signori/ signore

Herrn/ Damen,
 ladies etc.: Hallow.
 It bows and twists.
 Do you hear it?
 See it? those
 the peals
 that queered its tries.

Look at the letter
 just as it was sent,
 posted in fact
 during the Post-War.
 What war?
 You think you thought you know.
 One in which you were born
 or borne or bored
 or bode
 embodied.

Chasing this little r and others
 into a concrete labyrinth
 sealing them into the Them
 that they were doomed to be....

and never halting? never faltering?

≥

In short, it was a day, and you are,
 you stupid nothing r,
 like others in this space,
 somewhat on my mind,
 being the little tiny Jew
 poking a nose somewhere
 to find something.

There is a rat behind the arras

he says. And may I cordially
introduce or interject or introject
that ratty little r – it’s me.

A rat in arrears
scrabbling up Ararat
dragging its dogged bit of flesh
through all that –

IN VEIGH IN VEIGH.

How is it? I said: that the ghosts are so gathered?

Because they are palpable and present
buried wounds
the names that cannot rise and so they turn
and come as darkness thickened without sound

These Shadows make antiphonal claims
as words that fail.

ombra sono e ombra fui

Which are the words and which are the shadows?
there are no words, are only shadows
These spectra of tongues inside the very stones

and yet if one listens – there is no sound
in anything

it is the silence
of the “impetuous, impotent dead”
held back,

but sending letters, signs, signals, traces and
 little gests
 though one cannot read them very much.
 It is too hard.

Facing an intersection
 a knot of matted possible

the page a cavernous echo chamber
 of that

– it lists, it tilts – The it of all of it
 became a shadow
 something dark and indistinct except
 in edges, something
 changing with the light,

but can be intuited and half articulated

in traces on the other side of inference.

IN STILL

Sovegna vos,
 rem-Ember
 and thereupon open
 today's
 newspaper

A rush of people across a bridge:
 grift, happenstance, war, drought, need

mortal life washes us up on its shores
somber and singing
cracked hordes, cracked lips,
the quiver of sound, a planet
(under a sky dusted with lily pollen)
desiccated, decimated.
with what? empires? profiteering?
sheer misuse?

Not is as good a mark as now.
This shows the limits of the mark.
The harder meanings are social.

“For all intensive purposes”
“she’s beckoning the question.”

What is this the other side of?
What is this a margin of?
Forget “other.”
Forget “marginal.”
It is this very site.
It says “Sit down in it.
It’s time now.”
Now it's time.

July-September 2003, January 2004

Notes to Draft 61: Pyx

Ezra Pound has been an essential modernist for Anglo-American poetry, and among the practitioners haunted by his work and his career, I would count myself. The bold-face citations from Ezra Pound come from *Canti postumi*, a significant selection of outtakes and draft versions of Pound's *Cantos*, edited by Massimo Bacigalupo (Milan: Mondadori, 2002), a facing page edition of the English with Italian translations, along with some canto materials written in Italian. These citations are, respectively "My mind stretched to the bursting point... the gun-sales," 204, from 1945. "Ledt hoo vill rhun de harmies... gredit," 102, from 1928-37. "Greasy flame of dead gas flare" and "a thick air," 104, also from 1928-37. "Some narrow rat... on Mt. Arrarat" [sic], 232, from 1949-60. "How is it? I said: that the ghosts are so gathered?" 160, from 1940-45, and "ombra sono e ombra fui" [shadow I am and shadow I was], 175, from 1944-45. Other citations are as follows: Epigraph by Barrett Watten, *Total Syntax* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP), 1985, 102. "The melodic germ is marked 'icy' in the score" from program notes by John Corigliano for his *Etude Fantasy*, 1976. The material about the deported is my riff on Jerome Rothenberg's words in conversation. "The stench of stale oranges" is from Pound, canto 14, one of the "Hell Cantos." "I sat to keep off the impetuous, impotent dead" is from Pound, canto 1. I am grateful to the poet Anne Blonstein for email discussions of a provisional, unused title to this poem. Donor Drafts along the "line of four": In, Findings, and Epistle, Studios.

Temple University

THE POET UNMASKED IN *THE PISAN CANTOS*

Kevin Kiely

The Pisan Cantos come after the relentless history of the preceding Chinese/Adams Cantos (Randall Jarrell called them “the dullest and prosiest poetry that he has ever written”) (Homberger 348-49). In these new cantos, the tone changes perceptibly, becoming markedly confessional as the poet is unmasked. They are infused with personal reference as well as mystical vision, and the language of self-revelation and self-transcendence becomes dominant.

Composed in the aftermath of World War II, the Pisan cantos portray adversity and mental breakdown as Pound hears and sees ghostly voices, “apparitions against Mt Taishan.” There is a stream of memories from persons and places, and great affection is shown for fellow writers and artists, not overlooking their faults: “and for all that old Ford’s conversation was better, / consisting in *res non verba*, / despite William’s anecdotes, in that Fordie / never dented an idea for a phrase’s sake / and had more humanitas (82/545). (Compare: “But the lot of ’em, Yeats, Possum, Old Wyndham / had no ground to stand on” – 102/748.) He quotes significant comments on the war:

the guard did not think that the Führer had started it
 Sergeant XL thought that excess population
 Demanded slaughter at intervals. (76/477)

...
 “Why war?” sd/ the sergeant rum-runner
 “too many people! When there git to be too many
 you got to kill some of ’em off. (80/519)

There are, regrettably, several anti-semitic remarks, though Wendy Flory notes that in these cantos of “over 3,800 lines, there are three anti-semitic passages, totalling thirteen lines” (291). She admits that even thirteen lines are too much, since they show an ugly inhumanity in Pound. But he had melted greatly, and in preparing his defence to the American Department of Justice by letter (5 October 1945) Pound mentions his son on leave from the U.S. Army, “good news of Omar” (Heymann 168). The human paternal instinct could outweigh his concern for himself, the imprisoned poet who knows he will soon be on trial.

Pound’s concern with language is omnipresent in the Pisan sequence, as it was throughout his career. As he was to write later on: “And as Ford said: get a dictionary / and learn the meaning of words” (98/709). He defines the highly original poetic technique which distinguished his practice when he says: “To break the pentameter that was the first heave.” He also confesses the difficulty of producing poetry at all when he quotes Beardsley’s reply to Yeats, “beauty is difficult.” And he warns in his poetry, as he often did in life, against the poetasters, “those who deform thought with iambs” (98/707) while regretting that it was “a pity that poets have used symbol and metaphor / And no man learned anything from them / for their speaking in figures” (“Addendum for Canto 100”).

Language is always the imperative: “Of such perceptions rise the ancient myths of the origin of demi-gods. Even as the

ancient myths of metamorphosis rise out of flashes of cosmic consciousness” (*Personae* 322). He includes Mussolini in his personal pantheon of heroes because he spoke well of poetry: “The Duce and Kung fu Tseu equally perceive that their people need poetry; that prose is NOT education but the outer courts of the same. Beyond its doors are the mysteries. Eleusis. Things not to be spoken save in secret (*Kulchur* 144).

There is mystical vision to be found in these cantos, hinted at in “States of mind are inexplicable to us” (76/480), while in the next canto it becomes more explicit: “bricks thought into being ex nihil” with the mention of the spheres of heaven derived from Emanuel Swedenborg’s *Arcana Coelestia*. The rain image in canto 80 is both mystical and pantheistic:

this is from heaven
the warp
and the woof
with a sky wet as ocean
flowing with liquid slate (80/514)

Pound was prompted to write some of his best lines by reading the Bible at Pisa, taking a major theme from the book of Ecclesiastes: “Pull down thy vanity” (“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the Preacher”), and a memorable image from the book of Proverbs: “The ant’s a centaur in his dragon world,” (“Go to the ant, thou sluggard, and learn from him”), and borrowing a line from Chaucer’s “Balade de Bon Conseyll”: “Reule wel thyself, that other folk canst rede,” (“Master thyself, then others shall thee beare”). But this most famous of Pound’s lyrics is preceded by what must have been a personal vision:

there came new subtlety of eyes into my tent,
whether of spirit or hypostasis,
but what the blindfold hides

He has said, again quoting Chaucer, in lines that precede this vision:

Your eyen two wol sleye me sodenly
I may the beauté of hem nat susteyne

(that is to say, “your eyes will suddenly slay me and I may not be able to withstand their beauty”). Pound’s vision cannot be dismissed as an hallucinatory experience, because it is borne out in the “Pull down thy vanity” section that follows. The unmasking of this visionary figure is an emblem of what Pound achieves in unmasking himself in the Pisan cantos. It is the moment of *volte face* for him, a refinement of personality through pain and suffering that leads toward a new humanity.

Pound’s mystical references and moments of transcendence are part of the unmasking. There is in the Pisan cantos little of the bombast and cant that is frequent in some of the preceding sections, and there is more of the humanity: “the loneliness of death came upon me / (at 3 P.M., for an instant)” (82/547), and “When the mind swings by a grass-blade/an ant’s forefoot shall save you” (83/553). Beyond his personal agony and pain in the prison camp at Pisa, Pound manages a personal transcendence, as in the apostrophe to Pomona, the Goddess of fruit-trees and her lynx (canto 79).

The Lynx image is linked to the image of birds in visual harmony: “three solemn half notes / their white downy chests black-rimmed / on the middle wire” (82/547), which is a musical notation that would be playable on an instrument. Canto 75 is all birdsong music, Janequin’s composition “made new” by Gerhart Münch.

Profundity emerges from the Pisan cantos with “Wisdom lies next thee, / simply, past metaphor” (82/546) and transcendence abides in “This fruit has a fire within it, / Pomona, Pomona / no glass is clearer than are the globes of this flame / what sea is clearer than the pomegranate body / holding the flame?” (79/510).

And Pomona leads naturally to Pound's love-goddess, Aphrodite:

This Goddess was born of sea-foam
 She is lighter than air under Hesperus (79/512)

Thus, after all the many masks Pound wore in his long career are dropped, what is revealed is a more humane poet behind the mask. He was able to praise unstintingly a fellow poet like Eliot, "His was the true Dantescan voice, not honoured enough, and deserving more than I ever gave him" (*Selected Prose* 464). And there is a softening of the harsh anti-semitism that marred so much of his writing, when, in 1972, just short of his death, Pound in the foreword to Cookson's selection of his prose writings clarifies some of his obsessions, "In sentences referring to groups or races 'they' should be used with great care. Re USURY: I was out of focus, taking a symptom for a cause. The cause is AVARICE." His later frankness about himself is exemplified especially in what he told Robert Lowell, as Lowell reported in a poem: "I began with a swelled head and end with swelled feet." And appealingly, in the final cantos, he brings himself to admit "That I lost my center/fighting the world." What Pound seems to have learned for himself, painfully, during the months of confinement in Pisa and later in St. Elizabeths, makes up for his many errors: "When I talked that nonsense about Jews on the Rome / wireless, Olga knew it was shit, and still loved me" (Lowell 537).

The Pisan cantos change the tone of Pound's poetry, that much is clear. Abandoning the jingoistic pugnacity of the pro-fascist cantos (72-73), they contain a personal as well as a visionary experience which unmasked the poet, changing his attitude toward himself and others. Their closing note is hardly triumphant; it is full of humanity and a new humility. Indeed, the final couplet might well be from a hymnal.

Without a hint of melodrama, it forms a prayerlike conclusion:

If the hoar frost grip thy tent
 Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent. (84/560)

Massimo Bacigalupo's literary detection illuminates this conclusion, by revealing it as lacking two additional lines which Pound excised, and which followed the above couplet:

Italy, my Italy, my God, my Italy
 Ti abbraccio la terra santa

It is no surprise to discover these lines, when one bears in mind Bacigalupo's suggestion that the Pisan cantos are "particularly significant insofar as they present an adversarial view, that will not espouse the accepted dogma of righteousness of the winners" (99-100). Think of how his detractors might have taken the lines about embracing the blessed land of Italy. Of course, as an expostulation from a poet it is magnificent, and in Pound's case a fitting declaration to his beloved adopted country. This is a valuable paratextual gloss relating to the inherent politics of Pound's position. There is the added paradox that cantos 74-84 were merely to be subtitled *The Pisan Cantos*, according to Pound in a letter to James Laughlin. Their publication was a success de scandale due to the Bollingen Prize controversy and, not least, Pound's detainment by the U.S. authorities. Bacigalupo ultimately finds in the apocryphally entitled Pisan Cantos "the elusiveness of the best poetry" (106).

The contention continues in its infinite variety when it comes to this American poet who leads us (in Bunting's phrase) towards "the Alps" of *The Cantos*. In my own case, Pound's provocation has fruitfully, if I may presume to say so, visited the two poems that follow. The rendering of the visitation is my responsibility, as are the results; and that one of the

poems includes Mary Pound is all the more felicitous in my humble opinion. I first saw Pound's name in the epigraph to *The Waste Land* as a schoolboy in Blackrock College, Dublin, which had a good library that gave me my first encounter with EP's poems. It was even a lesson in itself, seeing Eliot exalt and exult in his confrere; somehow puncturing his own long poem, as I thought at the time. James Joyce in a fit of drunkenness once declared that the reader should spend a lifetime perusing his works. Pound never made any such declaration drunk or sober to my knowledge, but he has also gained such ideal readers as Joyce wished for.

The two poems which follow first appeared in journals, and when it came to including them in my collection *Breakfast with Sylvia* I did not hesitate in deference to an early mentor.

MARY POUND DE RACHEWILTZ

Fresh and unfussed you came from Brunnenberg
 in the Alps, to lecture at Maynooth
 for the Gerard Manley Hopkins Summer School
 your father never owned a book of his poems
 finding the metrical labours "unduly touted."

The theatre seated less than fifty and afterwards
 you showed your translation of the Cantos
 into Italian in a boxed edition.

A crowd huddled around, you smiled
 and tucked up your head proudly
 "And do they cohere?"

What about his years of incarceration?
 "Ezra was, (you admitted)

a bad boy and had to pay
his debt to society.”

But the head shifted, the jaw turned on line
with your shoulder, as you signed
the bulky tome below your name
adding “daughter-translator”

Then a lecturer said
“there was only one Ezra Pound”
and someone mumbled
“One was enough.”

WHO’S AFRAID OF EZRA POUND?

Hang it all? They locked you in a cage at Pisa
then twelve years in St. Elizabeths for treason
never madder than Dante or Cavalcanti
hunting usury through twenty centuries
with chunks of rhetoric in the Cantos
and a few more cant than canto
Shark’s teeth of your form lit in sylvan igneousness
from *inluminatio coitu* to Browning trochees
victim of some unfaithful establishment brochures
Surgeon-critic castigating hackneyed drivel
amongst the printing glut and printmania
leading your *paideuma* towards kulchurality
Your rancour was not always creative
Or did the rancour consume you?

Dublin, Ireland

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THE DARK AGES

Robert Rehder

THE DARK AGES

The Greek dark age is obscure,
Because we don't understand what we know.

The Mycenaean palaces are destroyed,
But not at the same time,

Therefore, no invasion.
Fire, earthquake, war – against whom?

They were not rebuilt.
Fortified places increase,

Villages disappear,
The southern Peloponnesus empties,

Laconia, deserted,
Messenia, almost.

Again, no sign of strangers
Or invaders.

Writing disappears for four hundred years.
The troubles begin early,

Inner difficulties,
A long breakdown, collapse

And reorganization –
Instead of decadence,

Redefinition,
Major changes are prepared.

Myceneans appear on the margins
Of their world,

Corfu, Epirus, Chios,
The Dodecanese, Cyprus.

We find their weapons and their jewelry,
Swords and amber beads.

There is no evidence
That they are the “Sea Peoples”

Who overthrew the kingdom of Cyprus,
Raided the Syrian coast

And whom Ramses III fought.
The vase painters are more inventive

After the destruction of the palaces.
The Greeks who survived made up stories,

Poems of war and its aftermath,
Return journeys, homecomings.

AND WHAT SHOULD I DO IN ILLYRIA?

Fading splendour –
On the Grand Canal I forgot

Who plays Olivia –
an unknown,

Increasingly anonymous
world

That does not quite cohere
And nearly didn't remember Viola,

mossy stairs
Going down into the water.

Abruptly, the play which I know as well
As I know...

anything –
Sir Toby, Feste –

Disappears in the penumbra –
Disorder "is not an absolute,

But has meaning only in context" –
Vanishes,

Lost in the margins,
off stage,

And in the water-shine,
The restless, many-folded surface.

New anger remembers the old – and love,
The same.
The door of the gate between the old walls

And the new disappeared long ago.
The iron hinges
Are still embedded in the weathered stone.

PENULTIMATE

The last leaves on the trees beside the Seine,
Châtelet,

Ile de la Cité,
scattered

at the branch ends,
almost

gold
in the slowly-moving twilight,

suddenly there –
total clarity,

definition
and verification

before the light turns.
The wave slides up the beach,

spreads,
thins,

reaches its utmost limit –
fluid quicksilver edge,

and
holds,

for an instant
that is like a moment of self-knowledge.

FIRST GREEN

First green,
The orchestra is tuning up,

Annunciation,
Premonition,

Prompter's whisper,
Gesture,

Marginal note,
An end to uncertainty.

Minute leaves gloss the raspberry's arc,
Touch

And go,
Spray when the wave breaks,

Benchmark,
Passing fancy – new truth.

A PRESTO?

Stephen Romer

A PRESTO?

It seems we were both waylaid
in the Vasari Gallery en route
for the Pitti
by the little chapel of Santa Felicita
where Pontormo's
elongated stary-eyed angels
in their pastel bodystockings
of pink and green
most elaborately
depose the Crucified.

It seems we both sat down
in the Piazza Santo Spirito
and then walked on
in the warm evening
to where the Duomo
shepherds her houses
and Africans fold and unfold
their cloths of merchandise
in a game of cat-and-mouse
with the languid police.

It seems we both deplored
 Botero's squat Roman
 showing his buttocks
 at Verocchio's angel
 but smiled inwardly
 at the affront.

It seems, on the face of it,
 with all this in common,
 we might even meet.
 What say you, Benedetta?

ASCENSION DAY

One entire Ascension Day
 riveted to the earth
 hunched against a radiator

reading *La fugitive*
 like a fugue, where death
 is the theme, *elle ne revint jamais*

as if time could be halted
 in the heart of a paragraph, with the entire
 giving over of the self

to mourning and desire,
 to stasis, to the abolition
 of time, her time and mine,

as long as I went on reading, re-reading,
 no harm could come
 to anyone, nothing could be transformed

and nothing could move on,
 or be forgotten,
 destroyed, or built upon.

CORNFLOWER

(after Apollinaire, "Bleuet" from *Il y a*)

Young man
 Twenty years old
 You have seen such horrors
 What do you think
 Of your childhood mentors now

You know
 the gallantry and the guile

You
 Have
 Seen
 Death
 Up
 Close
 More
 Than
 One
 Hundred
 Times
 You
 Do
 Not
 Know
 What
 Life
 Is

Pass your braveness on
 To those who come
 After

Young man
 You are joyful your memory is bloodied
 Red too your soul
 With joy
 You have absorbed the life of those who died around you
 You are decisive
 It is seventeen hundred hours and you will know
 How to die
 If not better than your elders
 More piously without a doubt
 Since you know of death more than life
 O sweetness of a different age
 Agelessly drawn out

LOVE AND THE NAME

Like rays from a nucleus, the existence of
 the loved one proceeds from her name,
 and even the works created by the lover
 proceed from the same source.

Walter Benjamin

When I speak the names
 they compose a mantra
 I have sobbed or murmured
 in my pillow.

The lullaby of their names

neither shortened nor sweetened
 is suddenly solemn
 like the Aleph or the Om:

the fount of clear water
 the saint of music
 the golden stone

– names you wear so lightly,
 my lost ones, when each
 rhymes ecstasy with pain.

METAMORPHOSIS

(Albert Mérat, one of the *Vilains Bonshommes*, the circle to which Verlaine and, briefly, Rimbaud belonged, requested that Fantin-Latour paint him out of the group portrait *Un Coin de Table*, fearing his reputation would be tarnished.)

Poor Albert Mérat,
le grand Albert,
 the elegant, the choleric,
 the neurasthenic,
 known to his friends as
 “the scornful cigar”
 met his nemesis
 in a baby-faced terror
 stalking in from the countryside
 with huge hands and huge feet
 burning up the foothills
 of Young Parnassus.
 Genius came at poor Albert

with a sneer and a sword-stick.

He too had his sensitive *Chimères*
 praised by *l'oncle Hugo*,
 he too had his ode to the cul
 censured by Lemerre –
 he too his promising beginnings.
 He too wore his pen down
 and then walked out
 of a dreary sinecure.
 Wit, wag, *Zutiste à ses heures*,
 ladies man, gossip, poet, poseur.
 Yet of Albert Mérat
 who took fright
 nothing is left
 but a pot of flowers.

THE PROFESSOR OF IDEAS

“Nature is sublime” – A student

“Wordsworth in the Alps,
 Frankenstein on the *mer de glace*,
 Shelley scribbling his graffiti
atheos, demokratikos, philanthropos,
 somewhere below Mont Blanc,

that massive abstract breast –
 all this talk! They stretch and yawn
 and challenge with turquoise eyes,
 a row of plunging *décolletées*,
 the seven Ravines of the Arve!

I speak more and more of “gender,”
of penetrative science
and incestuous necrophilia,
of the repressed and weeping
silent Eve,

of climactic evolution,
the vigorous coupling of mammals
as crucial to health,
I recall the Eternal Feminine
– by now I’m nearly pleading.

I summon the female monster
from the workshop of dirty creation,
Frankenstein’s Daughter
rising with gigantic organs
to beget upon men,

I’m thumping the desk,
an evangelical homunculus
among the fleshpots,
a monster, an angel with horns,
issuing smoke and imprecation

as they file out cool as you please
leaving their ravages behind,
the male hypercephalus
consumed in a self-made fire
dying out at last among his books.”