

On reviewing a book about Pound

for Massimo Bacigalupo

I am thinking of old Ezra in his attic
 in Via Marsala
watching the Rothschilds
 drop an anchor
 in his heart
he thought he could foresee
but Ben and Clara by the heels at Milan
came as a bad surprise

him and his *meigeal**
il pizzetto è un po' fascista
as someone said to me
making his eager way
 to Sant'Ambrogio
halfway up the mountain
 climbing for Olga
I have lived in an attic
it's nothing to write home about

what did the old fascist think
in those days when the truth
 came from Treblinka
Mauthausen and beyond
a fury of self-justification
 is bad for poetry
it falls like a fog
on the luminous images
 a verdigris on
 wordsmith's silver
there is no room in Poitiers
where one can cast no shadow

and you my friend
who knew him in his regrets
did he have a plain sense of things
 as they were
in Sant'Ambrogio in the half light
in every word I sense you

willing him to recant
wishing you could absolve him
 for his poetry's sake
 of that one great sin
from which there is no redemption

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* The Irish word *meigeal* and the Italian word *pizzetto* both refer to a goatee beard. *Meigeal* unlike *pizzetto* is closer to the original meaning of 'goatee' and has negative connotations.