

DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER OCCASIONAL PAPERS • 2

## IMAGE AND TEXT

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ROBERT PINSKY

MICHAEL MAZUR



# **Image and Text**

**A Dialogue**

**with**

**Robert Pinsky**

**and**

**Michael Mazur**



THE DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES was established at the University of California at Berkeley in 1987 in order to promote interdisciplinary studies in the humanities. Endowed by Doreen B. Townsend, the Center awards fellowships to advanced graduate students and untenured faculty on the Berkeley campus, supports interdisciplinary working groups, discussion groups, and team-taught graduate seminars. It also sponsors symposia and conferences that strengthen research and teaching in the humanities and related social science fields. The Center is directed by Thomas W. Laqueur, Professor of History. Christina M. Gillis has been Associate Director of the Townsend Center since 1988.

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY THOMAS LAQUEUR

DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

This conversation is actually sponsored not only by the Art Museum and the Townsend Center, but also by the University Library. This is our first three-way joint venture. It began when I saw some very tiny reproductions of Michael's monotypes and a part of Robert's translation in the *Threepenny Review* a couple of years ago. I was completely smitten by both, and I thought, "Book! *Inferno*. Maybe the library would be willing to bring some of these prints here and show them in the Morrison Room in connection with an Arts and Humanities conversation here." The former University Librarian Dorothy Gregor and Mary Jane Perna, who is the library's Director of Development, thought this was such a good idea that they wanted to make this book the eight millionth representative volume in the library's collection. It seemed the perfect book for that. It's terribly beautiful and it reinvents once again one of the great works of our literary tradition. The prints were too big to display in the Morrison Room, so we approached the Art Museum and one of the curators negotiated getting the prints here before they are shown at the originating gallery at the University of Iowa.

Michael Mazur and Robert Pinsky are here because they generously responded to our invitation to present their book to the library as the eight millionth volume, and to talk in public about their collaboration, and generally about the relationship between Language, Text and Images in the making of a new work of art: the illustrated book.

You all know Robert Pinsky as a wonderful poet—his most recent collection is *The Want Bone*—and as a superb reader of poetry. Michael Mazur has taught at Harvard on occasion, but the most salient part of his biography that you should know is that he studied for a year as an undergraduate in Florence, where he learned Italian and first read the *Inferno*. Michael has had many one-person shows. His work is in the collections of all the big galleries: the Metropolitan, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the L.A. County Art Institute, and so forth.

This afternoon, Michael and Robert will talk and show slides for about forty-five minutes or an hour, and then we will have the opportunity to engage them in discussion. Before they begin, though, let me just announce that at 5:30, there will be a showing here of a film, *Machiste in Hell*, which seems to be a 1926 Italian re-working of Dante.

Thank you very much. Now I turn the floor over to Robert and Michael.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY  
MICHAEL MAZUR AND ROBERT PINSKY

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** Before we begin, I'd like to say that I know Robert joins me in thanking everyone connected with this collaboration for helping us show this work here. I think we're both very proud to have this be among those books chosen to celebrate the eight-millionth book. I don't know about Robert, but I have, I'm afraid, a confession: I haven't actually read many of the other 7,999,999. But they tell me there's a lot of good stuff in there. (Laughter)

Now just a brief history of my involvement with the Dante

translation. As Tom told you, I studied in Florence in 1958. I lived on the Via della Terme; around the corner was the Casa di Dante. Every time I walked to the Accademia I would pass many buildings, as you still do in Florence, with plaques that represent different books of the *Divine Comedy*—even little sections: “Casagrande lived here,” “Beatrice was supposed to have lived here,” “This was so-and-so’s home,” and so forth. Even the Ponte Vecchio, as it is briefly mentioned in the *Comedy*, has a plaque, that you can read as you cross, bearing a passage taken from the *Divine Comedy*.

So, Florence is Dante’s town. It still is Dante’s town, and there’s a way in which, if you really are involved there, you become part of that. If you’re aware of it, you simply do sense this history all around you. I wanted very badly to do something as a thesis connected with the *Inferno*, to illustrate it at that time, but I was really unprepared—it’s much, much too complex. So I ended up doing something else far more immature.

But the ideas kept with me. In 1968 I tried it again, briefly, related to an anti-war effort that I had made. It was also unsuccessful, and I gave up on the idea for a while. I didn’t know if this was ever going to happen. And then, when I was living in Provincetown during the summer a few years ago, Robert came down to read. I was totally unprepared for the fact that he had written two translations already; one of Canto XXVIII and one, I believe, of Canto I. It was such a remarkable surprise to me because I’d known Robert for twenty years and suddenly he was writing the translation that I’d hoped someone I knew would write so that I could illustrate it. I was very, very taken by this incredibly moving, contemporary and fast-paced, exciting translation. At that point I couldn’t wait to go up to Robert and simply say, “Look, I’m gonna do this now. I’m gonna do the illustrations. Whether we use them together or not, that’s fine. What do you think? Do you think this will go?” So we talked about

it. I went ahead and did a good many of them on spec and showed them to Robert as we were going along. He introduced them to Jonathan Galassi at Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. And that's how this collaboration came to be.

But the collaboration was much deeper as time went on. And I think here I'll introduce Robert to tell you a little bit about that, and then continue with a reading of the cantos.

**ROBERT PINSKY:** It's a pleasure to be here and to be in a place of which I have so many fond memories. This really was a collaboration. When Michael showed me those first studies, I knew that I wanted Farrar, Strauss and Giroux to use them. I don't think I anticipated how much courage and useful advice I would get from the artist in the course of finishing the translation, which I started, I guess, about four years ago.

We were sometimes working on the same canto at the same time. Sometime in the course of the collaboration we acquired fax machines. I would fax a draft to Michael and we would discuss which passages might serve as captions. Almost immediately he devised a scheme of having a monotype on the left-hand page, or verso, that would then face a roman numeral with a caption, as in the old tradition of illustrated books. He thought of that right away and we started discussing which lines would serve as captions. When I visited Michael's studio, he would have lines of my translation cut out of a photocopy or fax, lines which I had in some cases already revised. He had those on the wall next to studies for the images. My wife and I and other friends would look at the studies and express opinions about them, just as I was very eagerly seeking opinions from others about the work I was doing. So, the act of "translating" or "carrying across" images of one of the greatest works ever accomplished into a series of monotypes, encouraged me in embarking on the project of translation into English—a process that I've described as a light-hearted project... because you know you'll fail.

Translation is always a compromise. It's never complete. It's an activity in which you know you're going to fail and then can approach it almost merrily in some ways because the issue is: "How much can you get?" "How close can you come?" And you know that someday someone else is going to do it a different way and will get things that you missed.

Though I describe it as light-hearted, of course there's also something terrifying about attempting to contribute to, to add anything to a work that is so monumental not only in itself but in the excellent previous translations and in, probably, a ton of commentary that it has attracted. So that process of collaborating I think in some spiritual way helped me in my effort, and maybe in some ways that I won't go on about helped me understand the work, helped me understand why an American born in 1940 into a nominally Orthodox Jewish family was translating this work that consisted mostly of physical visions of the torments that Christian souls devise for themselves.

I think that somewhere in the word "soul" was an understanding of what the "spirit" was of a work that could survive so many hundreds of years and that could have my friend and me both thinking about it constantly. I think that the fact that we were both partly possessed by the spirit of Dante helped me understand somewhat what I was doing.





# DIALOGUE

*Frontispiece*  
*Charon*



**MICHAEL MAZUR:** The slide that you have been viewing all along is the frontispiece, and it comes from Canto III. The next slide is for Canto I.

**ROBERT PINSKY:** These are accompanied by captions. I'm going to read the caption in this case. I mostly won't say much, about how I accomplished this translation. In my mind it's almost less a work of art by me than a work of metrical engineering, the metrical engineering that allowed me to do a kind of *terza rima*. I sometimes call it *terza doggerella*.

I did not proceed line-for-line. English is often more terse and curt than Italian, so I allowed myself a lot of running of the sentence across the line ending and I defined "rhyme" as like consonants, not necessarily with the vowels the same. The first tercet of the poem in Italian actually comes out to a line and two-thirds in English. I won't comment on the monotype, though I'm tempted to, I love it so well.

I'll read the first fifteen lines or so of this version of the *Inferno*.

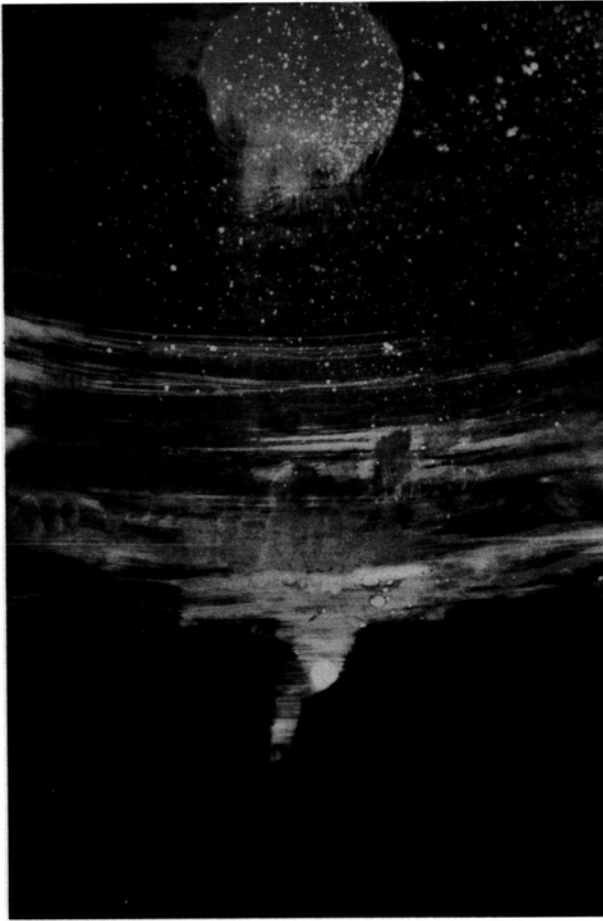
*Canto I*  
*The Forest*



Midway on our life's journey, I found myself  
In dark woods, the right road lost. To tell  
About those woods is hard—so tangled and rough  
And savage that thinking of it now, I feel  
The old fear stirring: death is hardly more bitter.  
And yet, to treat the good I found there as well  
I'll tell what I saw, though how I came to enter  
I cannot well say, being so full of sleep  
Whatever moment it was I began to blunder  
Off the true path. But when I came to stop  
Below a hill that marked one end of the valley  
That had pierced my heart with terror, I looked up  
Toward the crest and saw its shoulders already  
Mantled in rays of that bright planet that shows  
The road to everyone, whatever our journey.

CANTO I, 1-15

Canto II  
The Entrance



**MICHAEL MAZUR:** This was a particularly hard canto. In fact it was perhaps in some ways the hardest canto to illustrate. Having worked a lot with landscape, it would have been quite possible for me simply to show a forest, which is really how you enter. And in many illustrations, that forest and the tangle and the three demons that guard the hill—the so-called hill—are enough to get you into the visual aspect of the book. But as I thought about it I pondered the issue of what this hill really was. It doesn't quite fit geographically. It can't be Purgatory because Purgatory is on the other side of the world. So this hill is a kind of metaphorical hill and my intention at this point was not to show the

complexity of the jungle part, or the forest, but the anomaly of the hill, the hill that attracts him, that he thinks would be an easy climb to Paradise, and that is also an illusion; illusion just as the illustration is an illusion—of a possible hill, or a pit, or a road disappearing ahead of him. So the image became a metaphor for the quandary that he finds himself in. “What. . . Where am I?” as well as “Who am I?” These images are, separately, three elements that characterize the three books of the *Commedia*: the pit for the *Inferno*, the mountain for the *Purgatorio*, and the starry sky for the *Paradiso*.

**ROBERT PINSKY:** This is the opening of Canto II, where Dante faces his own discouragement at the prospect, I think, not only of going through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, but also of writing the poem that goes through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise—his sense of fear at what he has undertaken.

Day was departing and the darkening air  
    Called all Earth's creatures to their evening quiet  
    While I alone was preparing as though for war  
  
To struggle with my journey, and with the spirit  
    Of pity, which flawless memory will redraw:  
    O Muses, O genius of art, O memory, whose merit  
  
Has inscribed inwardly those things I saw—  
    Help me fulfill the perfection of your nature.  
    I commenced: "Poet, take my measure now:  
  
Appraise my powers before you trust me to venture  
    Through that deep passage where you would be my guide. . . ."

CANTO II, 1-11



“You,” of course, indicates the Roman poet Virgil who was Dante’s guide through the first two *cantiche*.

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** I’ll make one comment. Again, each canto presented a dilemma. Most of the second canto deals with the mechanics of communication. My brother-in-law is a microbiologist and much of his work involves how genes get messages through the membranes of a cell. That is one way of understanding of the second canto, because Virgil has to describe the almost impossible manner of communication that brought him out of the place he was—at the instruction of Beatrice, who is also with Saint Lucy and others up in Paradise—and how he learned to get to the place where Dante was and take him through the trip.

How do you draw that? After many attempts I saw, quite coincidentally, a picture in the *New York Times*, one of the first photographs of a black hole in which a lip of light, or a finger of light, dips down and disappears into the black hole. It seemed a very apt metaphor for this disappearance of all light, which of course is explicitly described in the *Inferno*. And I left in the top section this kind of complex, moving sky, suggesting the many celestial communications in the *Commedia*.

Could we have the next slide please?

**ROBERT PINSKY:** This process of collaboration did involve a lot of frank criticism of one-another. Mike's Italian is better than mine, and he would often *kvetch* quite emphatically to drafts. Sometimes he wanted things to be more colloquial when I was making them elevated. Although at first I was overawed by the idea of telling an artist which study I liked better, Mike encouraged it very much. After a while, this got quite heady and I'd say "Ach! That's terrible!" or "I like that one better."

One aspect of Dante's genius is his way of figuring out how to represent physically the idea that in the classic Christian system a sin is its own punishment—in Italian, *contrapasso*—that the punishment does not only fit the crime, it somehow *is* the crime. You abolish part of your soul; you put a vacuum or absolute zero in your soul. This absence takes the shape of the sin, and that absence is the hurt.

Quite early on, not too far down in Hell, are the souls who have sinned through incontinent sexual passion. They are driven about in a constant wind buffeting them around. That seems to me remarkably appropriate and insightful and touching about what that excess, when it gets out of control, is like. It's like being punished in a violent storm.

This will be a bit longer passage than most of the ones I'll read.

*Canto V*  
*The Lustful*



As winter starlings riding on their wings  
Form crowded flocks, so spirits dip and veer  
Foundering in the wind's rough buffetings,

Upward or downward, driven here and there  
With never ease from pain nor hope of rest.  
As chanting cranes will form a line in air,

So I saw souls come, uttering cries—wind-tossed,  
And lofted by the storm. . . .

. . . .

“Poet,” I told him, “I would willingly  
Speak with those two who move along together  
And seem so light upon the wind.” And he:

“When they drift closer—then entreat them hither,  
In the name of love that leads them: they will respond.”  
Soon their course shifted, and the merciless weather

Battered them toward us. I called again against the wind,  
“O, wearied souls! If Another does not forbid,  
Come speak with us.” As doves whom desire has summoned,

With raised wings steady against the current, glide  
Guided by will to the sweetness of their nest,  
So leaving the flock where Dido was, the two sped

Through the malignant air till they had crossed  
To where we stood—so strong was the compulsion  
Of my loving call. They spoke across the blast:

“O living soul who with courtesy and compassion  
Voyage through black air visiting us who stained  
The world with blood: if heaven's King bore affection

For such as we are, suffering in this wind,  
Then we would pray to Him to grant you peace  
For pitying us in this, our evil end.

Now we will speak and hear as you may please  
To speak and hear, while the wind, for our discourse,  
Is still. My birthplace is a city that lies

Where the Po finds peace with all its followers.  
Love, which in gentle hearts is quickly born,  
Seized him from my fair body—which, in a fierce

Manner that still torments my soul, was torn  
Untimely away from me. Love, which absolves  
None who are loved from loving, made my heart burn

With joy so strong that as you see it cleaves  
Still to him even here. Love gave us both one death.  
Caina awaits the one who took our lives.”

These words were borne across from them to us.  
When I had heard those afflicted souls, I lowered  
My head, held it till I heard the voice

Of the poet ask, “What are you thinking?” I answered,  
“Alas—that sweet conceptions and passion so deep  
Should bring them here!” Then, looking up toward

The lovers, “Francesca, your suffering makes me weep  
For sorrow and pity—but tell me, in the hours  
Of sweetest sighing, how and in what shape

Or manner did Love first show you those desires  
So hemmed by doubt?” And she to me: “No sadness  
Is greater than in misery to rehearse

Memories of joy, as your teacher well can witness.

But if you have so great a craving to measure  
Our love's first root, I'll tell it, with the fitness

Of one who weeps and tells. One day, for pleasure,  
We read of Launcelot, by love constrained:  
Alone, suspecting nothing, at our leisure.

Sometimes at what we read our glances joined,  
Looking from the book each to each other's eyes,  
And then the color in our faces drained.

But one particular moment alone it was  
Defeated us: *the longed-for smile*, it said,  
*Was kissed by that most noble lover*: at this,

This one, who now will never leave my side,  
Kissed my mouth, trembling. A Galleoto, that book!  
And so was he who wrote it; that day, we read

No further . . . .”

#### CANTO V, 37-44, 64-124

**ROBERT PINSKY:** I want to talk about this monotype for a moment. It's one of my favorites. It is, I think, the most abstract one, or at least one of the least figurative, most abstract ones in the book. I love the way souls generally are represented by Michael, almost as blurs. You can imagine anatomy in these creatures—flying or blown upward, the crowd of them forming this large question mark or ear shape. I really like it very much.

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** Yes, that was one of the biggest problems: how do you draw a soul? It's almost an oxymoron.

As you know, the great tradition of illustrations of Dante are very clear about showing Dante and Virgil in every scene. This started almost from the first and goes right through most of the illustrations. I chose after a while absolutely not to put Dante and Virgil in these images. I wanted to show the things they saw, not to show them seeing—so that there would be no distance between you and the image. Also,

*Study for Canto V*  
*The Lips*



in the drawing of souls it became clear that they had to feel human, but feel fragile—almost like fingerprints, the way one tends to make just a little dot and finish it with a thumb.

In the monotype process, which is very fluid, you move into black ink and pull the whites out of black ink, so, consequently, you're picking images out of blackness, which itself is apt in talking about the *Inferno*.

These are the stinkers. (Polite laughter) At least one is. The one on your right [facing page] is from somewhere in the middle point of the collaboration when I was still trying to deal with that kiss. That kiss is a big part of this canto. As a leftover from my 1968 ideas I thought of it as if it were on a movie screen, where that big kiss is always there. It's almost a cinematic cliché. So I played with that for a while because, in a way, the canto is very sentimental. I was trying to capture the sentimentality of seeing two people kiss on a movie screen. But before that, the lips—the lips that Robert objected to—there was a time when I thought quite cleverly, but wrongly, that those lips would fly. Of course they didn't, but I also thought that they had this strange relationship to the birds. The lips repeated the birds' wings and the image of the birds that fly around in the wind. The lips are on the left. You can see the open mouth in the corner. And Dante and Virgil are also in the bottom on the cliff side.



Canto VIII  
The Tower  
(Detail)

This was perhaps the second or third illustration that I made of this canto. When I showed these illustrations to Robert I said, “It would be so interesting to have these lips disembodied.” And you heard what Robert said, “The lips—they suck.”

These next slides show another aspect of illustration. I live in Provincetown, and I lived in Florence. They share, uniquely, a tower between them. In Florence it was the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio that I saw from my balcony on Via della



*Canto XIII*  
*Tree of the*  
*Suicides*





Terme every day. In Provincetown, it is the tower that is called The Pilgrims' Memorial Tower—of course, Dante is called “the pilgrim”—that I see from my balcony. So there was a pun in using these two towers. Of course the Provincetown tower is based on the Siennese Tower, but I made a mix of the two.

*Canto XX  
The Soothsayers  
(Detail)*

We had a big hurricane in Provincetown, Hurricane Bob—Robert (sideways glance)—that came through and lashed the Pilgrim Tower and left the trees dead for most of August. The following fall we had a false spring. In the false spring, the new leaves that were growing up clung to the bases of the tree limbs. By the following spring they had clumped into these figural images. In fact, the tree in this illustration, which is the Tree of the Suicides in Canto XIII,

was based on the tree across the street from me which had this strange construction of leaves and figures. So there is a way one borrows from one's own experience just as Dante borrowed from his own experience in his travels to make metaphors—what rivers look like for example. In the Tree of the Suicides, the bush that yields the thorn that bleeds could possibly have been a thorn that might have pricked Dante himself on one of his travels.

The illustration for Canto XX is one of my favorites. The Soothsayers are punished in the way that Robert described. Their punishment is forever to look backwards and downwards instead of forwards and upwards. Someone said that there was a peculiar similarity between the most realized head and Lenin—not something I intended!

**ROBERT PINSKY:** In Canto XXV, the thieves, who have broken across the barrier between “mine” and “thine,” go through processes of transformation for eternity. One is turned into a reptile, another one is human; then they have a kind of grotesque clinch: the human one becomes reptile, the reptile becomes human. This is midway in Canto XXV, which is a series of amazing transformations.

*Canto XXV*  
*The Thieves*



A serpent darted forward that had six feet,  
And facing one of the three it fastened on him  
All over—with the middle feet it got  
A grip upon the belly, with each fore-limb  
It clasped an arm; its fangs gripped both his cheeks;  
It spread its hind feet out to do the same  
To both his thighs, extending its tail to flex  
Between them, upward through the loins behind.  
No ivy growing in a tree's bark sticks  
As firmly as the horrid beast entwined  
Its limbs around the other. Then, as if made  
Out of hot wax, they clung, and made a bond  
And mixed their colors; and neither could be construed  
As what it was at first—so, as the track  
Of flame moves over paper, there is a shade  
That moves before it that is not yet black,  
And the white dies away. The other two  
Were looking on and cried, "Ah, me, now look  
At how you change, Agnello!— already you  
Are neither two nor one." Now the two heads  
Had become one; we watched the two shapes grow  
Into one face, where both were lost. The sides  
Grew two arms, fused from lengths that had been four;  
Thighs, legs, chest, belly merged; and in their steads  
Grew members that were never seen before.  
All of the former features were blotted out.  
A perverse shape, with both not what they were,  
Yet neither—such, its pace deliberate,  
It moved away. . . .

CANTO XXV, 49-77

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** Robert has often talked about the fact that this particular canto might have been the invention of the horror movie—that this was the moment at which Dante seized on the possibility of challenging his competition in the past, especially Ovid, and simply said, in his own way, “I can do it even better. I can make this metamorphosis happen in an even weirder way.” It brought to mind Robert’s talking about this notion that we who venture into the area of the *Inferno* are like a club of athletes who all do one kind of thing—high jump or something like that. We know what has been done before. We watch it. We see how other people have done it. There’s a certain kind of chutzpah involved in adding one’s name and one’s talent to this list. As Robert has and will again talk about his relationship to former translators, I had my former illustrators.

The horror of war that was depicted in Goya’s *Disasters of War* ends with an image of a dog that simply begins devouring the world. This dog represents ultimate evil that would devour the good of the world. There is a real and very conscious relationship in my choice of Cerberus to be the head or extension of this Goyaesque dog. Of course in the canto, Cerberus has three mouths, three throats, one set of eyes, and is thrown three gobbets of dirt to keep him busy so that he doesn’t think of devouring Dante and Virgil. Behind him is the body, the group, the great mass of people he is acting on.

Canto X  
Farinata  
(Detail)

I lived a long time with Rouault’s *Miserere*. I’ve owned that print for many, many years—probably since I was in Italy. Some of the qualities of the Rouault got into the work, especially in Canto X when Farinata sits up straight. Farinata is a general, a dictator who curses Dante. The arm reaches out much like a Fascist salute and there is a way in which the black line around the figure replicates the quality of the Rouault. In this case, I didn’t set out to do that, but immediately I was struck by the resemblance after I’d made the image.





*Canto VI*  
*Cerberus*

I studied with Rico Lebrun, an Italian artist who settled in Santa Barbara and worked with Disney for a long time. He had to learn to draw with his left hand because of the Disney experience. A great draftsman, he died in 1962, a year after I studied with him at Yale. He was the most influential teacher I had in some ways. He himself did a set of drawings for the *Inferno* around the time I was at Yale, mostly of the Schismatics. What you see here is a drawn image which is reproduced with a group of drawings about the *Inferno*. You can see some of the light-dark relationship, some of the drawing quality come out. When I did the Schismatics, the part in which one of the characters is pulling aside his ribcage in order to show the great hollow there, I thought of Lebrun, and I did it as a sort of homage to my memory of Rico.

Finally, you can't really get around Gustave Doré. Doré was the big impresario of illustrated books—the great lion tamer of the *Inferno*, and *Paradise Lost*, and many other illustrated books. Sometimes very cornball, but very interesting to look at. I own also his illustrated *Inferno*, and I think my favorite Doré is this one of Canto XXXII, the Ice Field, where the engraving is quite spectacular and gives you

this sense of coldness. Throughout one thinks of Frost's "Fire and Ice." For Dante, the world of the *Inferno* ends in ice. Robert will read the Ugolino text, and I'll go through the slides as he progresses from XXXII to XXXIII.

**ROBERT PINSKY:** One is struck by the difference in the use of ink by the writer and by the artist. I don't know if Mike has completely explained how he makes these works. He paints all over a smooth copper plate with ink, removes the ink to make an image, and then makes one print. He has a press that squeezes it onto paper, and then there's this very dramatic and rather sensual moment of peeling the paper off the bed of the press. It's fluid being squeezed into absorbent paper. To hear him talk about the Doré suggests to me the

Rico Lebrun  
Study for  
*The Schismatics*  
(Detail)





*Canto XXII  
The Ice Field  
(Detail)*

way I'm always amazed that Michael can make it look like ice, or fur, or flame. It's black and white—just ink and paper—and there's such a variation in texture he can produce with this method. What looks like souls being blown around in a wind is just these little bubbles and squirts and smears of ink—this substance that in writing we think of as being either “yes” or “no,” this binary system of representing characters.

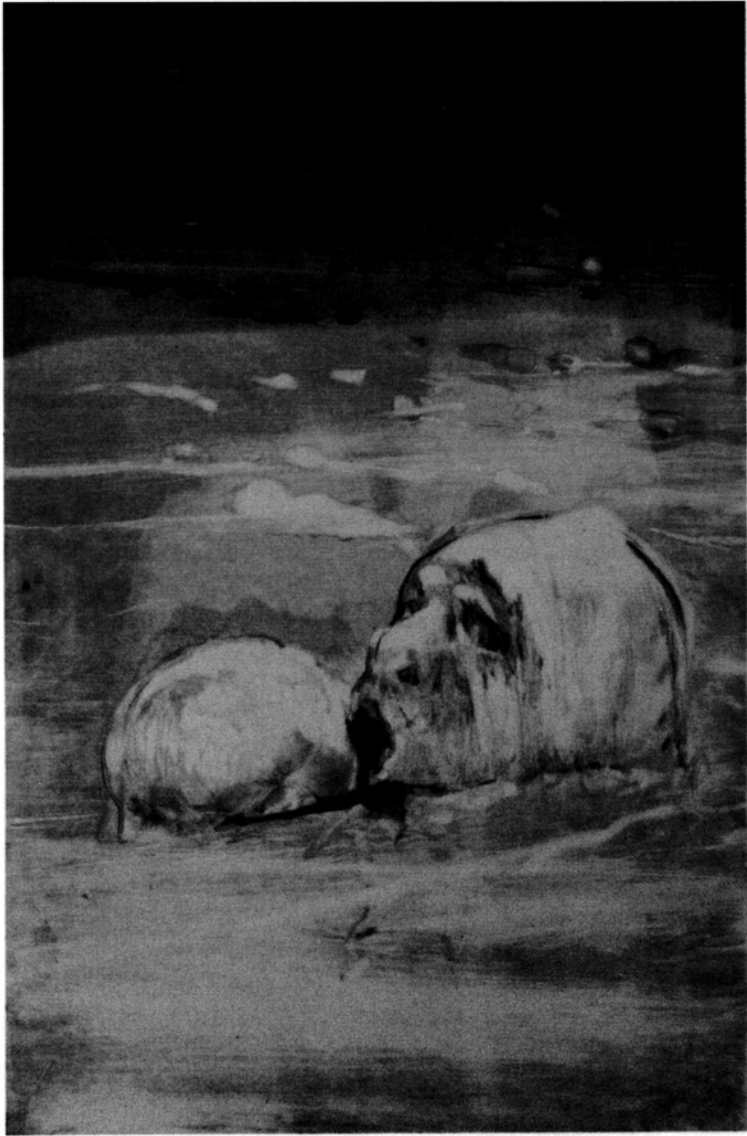
These are the last lines, where Dante is walking across the field of ice.



*Canto XXVIII  
The Schismatics  
(Detail)*



*Canto XXXIII*  
*Ugolino*



. . . We had left him, moving on,  
When I saw two shades frozen in a single hole—  
Packed so close, one head hooded the other one;  
  
The way the starving devour their bread, the soul  
Above had clenched the other with his teeth  
Where the brain meets the nape. And at the skull  
  
And other parts, as Tydeus berserk with wrath  
Gnawed the head of Menalippus, he chewed.  
“You, showing such bestial hatred for him beneath,  
  
Whom you devour: tell me your reason,” I cried,  
“And on condition that your grievance is right,  
Knowing both who you are and what wrong deed  
  
This one committed against you, I may yet  
Repay you for whatever you may say,  
Up in the world above—by telling it,  
  
If that with which I speak does not go dry.”

CANTO XXXII, 124-39

**ROBERT PINSKY:** That was the end of Canto XXXII. This is the only time that a story continues in this way from one canto to the next and it's in some ways the culminating story of lost souls.

Pausing in his savage meal, the sinner raised  
His mouth and wiped it clean along the hair  
Left on the head whose back he had laid waste.

Then he began: "You ask me to endure  
Reliving a grief so desperate, the thought  
Torments my heart even as I prepare

To tell it. But if my words are seeds, with fruit  
Of infamy for this traitor that I gnaw,  
I will both speak and weep within your sight.

I don't know who you are that come here, or how,  
But you are surely Florentine to my ear.  
I was Count Ugolino, you must know:

This is Archbishop Ruggieri. You will hear  
Why I am such a neighbor to him as this:  
How, through my trust and his devices, I bore

First being taken, then killed, no need to trace;  
But things which you cannot have heard about—  
The manner of my death, how cruel it was—

I shall describe, and you can tell from that  
If he has wronged me. A slit in the Tower Mew  
(Called Hunger's Tower after me, where yet

Others will be closed up) had let me view  
Several moons already when my bad dream  
Came to me, piercing the future's veil right through:

This man appeared as lord of the hunt; he came  
Chasing a wolf and whelps, on that high slope  
That blocks the Pisans' view of Lucca. With him

His lean hounds ran, well trained and eager; his troop—  
Gualandi, Sismondi—Lanfranchi, had been sent  
To ride in front of him. With no escape,

After a short run, father and sons seemed spent;  
I saw their flanks, that sharp fangs seemed to tear.  
I woke before dawn, hearing the complaint

Of my own children, who were with me there,  
Whimpering in their sleep and asking for bread.  
You grieve already, or truly cruel you are,

As you think of what my heart began to dread—  
And if not now, then when do you shed a tear?  
They were awake now, with the hour when food

Was usually brought us drawing near,  
And each one apprehensive from his dream.  
And then I heard them nailing shut the door  
Into that fearful tower—a pounding that came  
From far below. Hearing that noise, I stared  
Into my children's faces, not speaking to them.  
Inside me I was turned to stone, so hard  
I could not weep; the children wept. And my  
Little Anselmo, peering at me, inquired:  
'Father, what ails you?' And still I did not cry,  
Nor did I answer, all that day and night  
Until the next sun dawned. When one small ray  
Found its way into our prison, and I made out  
In their four faces the image of my own,  
I bit my hands for grief; when they saw that,  
They thought I did it for my hunger's pain,  
And suddenly rose. 'Father: our pain,' they said,  
'Will lessen if you eat us—you are the one

Who clothed us in this wretched flesh: we plead  
For you to be the one who strips it away.'  
I calmed myself to grieve them less. We stayed  
Silent through that and then the following day.  
O you hard earth, why didn't you open then?  
When we had reached the fourth day, Gaddo lay  
Stretched at my feet where he had fallen down:  
'Father, why don't you help me?' he said, and died.  
And surely as you see me, so one by one  
I watched the others fall till all were dead,  
Between the fifth day and the sixth. And I,  
Already going blind, groped over my brood—  
Calling to them, though I had watched them die,  
For two long days. And then, the hunger had more  
Power than even sorrow had over me."  
When he had finished, with a sideways stare  
He gripped the skull again in his teeth, which ground  
Strong as a dog's against the bone he tore.

Ah, Pisa! You shamed the peoples of that fair land  
Where *sì* is spoken: slow as your neighbors are  
To punish you, may Gorgona shift its ground,  
And Capraia, till those islands make a bar  
To dam the Arno, and drown your populace—  
Every soul in you! Though Ugolino bore  
The fame of having betrayed your fortresses,  
Still it was wrong in you to so torment  
His helpless children. You Thebes of later days,  
Their youthful ages made them innocent!—  
Ugucione, Brigata, and the two  
My song has named already. . . .

CANTO XXXIII, 1-87

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** It always moves me, that canto. I think that the most overriding element of the whole *Inferno* is not the horror of the *Inferno*. It is, in fact, the sadness of the *Inferno*. That is why the *Inferno* has its legs. It is not simply a gothic piece of writing, but a very modern piece of writing in how it acknowledges that horror is less of a problem to us than sadness. There is this strange rhythmic movement of water through the whole *Inferno* down to the ice field at the end. Sometimes it's blood; sometimes it's water; sometimes it's sewage. And in each case, it comes supposedly from one mysterious source, some old man who is shedding his tears in a faraway land, supposedly Crete. Those tears then turn into rivers and the rivers turn into large areas of ice.

This was, of course, the final moment before the end of the *Inferno*. Interestingly enough, Dante himself chooses to give very little space to the description of Lucifer. We've been waiting for this description of Lucifer for thirty-three cantos, and finally when it comes, it's rather paltry. Even a bit funny. And possibly that's what makes it a little modern as well. But, I'll leave Robert to talk a little bit about this canto. The illustration is a double page in the book and it does not have a caption, but in fact it is the piece we used for the broadsheet, which does have a much more extended part of the text next to it.

**ROBERT PINSKY:** I can't resist pointing out that the first version of this illustration was slightly different. These three figures are Brutus, Cassius and Judas Iscariot—Judas in the center. They are betrayers. At the bottom—the worst sin is betrayal. They betray, respectively, king, *civitas*, and benefactor. And Dante is quite precise about saying that Cassius and Brutus are in feet first with their heads hanging out, and Iscariot has his face in the head of Lucifer and is being clawed while being bitten. This slide, interestingly enough, is not the image that's in the book in one detail. On the left we see Brutus' feet still coming out. If you look in the book or on the broadsheet, which have the revised version, you'll see the head coming out. What amazed me is that it took Mike about two or three strokes to change the feet coming out to a head. You'll see when you look at it that it looks exactly like a head and an arm coming out. It's also amusing to me that when I first detected this, I said, "Mike, you have it wrong. It's a head, not feet." He said "Oh, doesn't matter." (Amused laughter) And I discussed this with our mutual poet friend Frank Bidart who said very seriously "Oh, Robert! It does matter." And Frank, a tremendous diplomat, called Mike up and said, "You know, Mike, Robert told me about the head. . ." The next time I saw it, it was a revised version. Interestingly enough, he does have a slide of the old version up here.

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** It does matter.

**ROBERT PINSKY:** Good boy!



*Canto XXXIV*  
*Lucifer*  
*(Detail)*



The emperor of the realm of grief protruded  
From mid-breast up above the surrounding ice.  
A giant's height, and mine, would have provided

Closer comparison than would the size  
Of his arm and a giant. Envision the whole  
That is proportionate to parts like these.

If he was truly once as beautiful  
As he is ugly now, and raised his brows  
Against his Maker—then all sorrow may well

Come out of him. How great a marvel it was  
For me to see three faces on his head:

....

....

Two wings spread forth from under each face's chin,  
Strong, and befitting such a bird, immense—  
I've never seen at sea so broad a sail—  
Unfeathered, batlike, and issuing three winds

That went forth as he beat them to freeze the whole  
Realm of Cocytus that surrounded him.  
He wept with all six eyes and the tears fell

Over his three chins, mingled with bloody foam.  
The teeth of each mouth held a sinner, kept  
As by a flax rake: thus he held three of them

In agony. . . .

CANTO XXXIV, 31-41, 48-58

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** This is an image which to me reflects the opening image of the frontispiece. It ends it with a kind of funnel image, which is clear in the text, and finally reveals the true mountain, the Mountain of Purgatory, that is alluded to at the very beginning of the *Inferno*. It's actually also an intimation of the circular forms that Dante writes about in the *Paradiso*, which become, in Blake's great *Paradiso* illustrations, those abstract, circular orbs that contain the figures. So there's an allusion there. But also, the spiral movement of *Purgatorio*, which is this movement up and around the mountain, up and around the mountain, which Blake has a harder time with because it gets rather geographically boring. You're either on one side of the hill or the other side of the hill, there are always steps, and so forth. So it repeats the beginning in a certain way and then gives an inference of what is yet to come.

**Robert Pinsky:** This is a passage from the last canto, and then the last ten or eleven lines of the whole *Inferno*. And then we'll have time for questions. Virgil climbs up the body of Beelzebub—that's how they get out of Hell—and Dante clings to Virgil.

. . . I put my arms round him,  
And waiting until the wings were opened full  
He took advantage of the time and place  
And grasped the shaggy flank, and gripping still,  
From tuft to tuft descended through the mass  
Of matted hair and crusts of ice. And then,  
When we had reached the pivot of the thighs,  
Just where the haunch is at its thickest, with strain  
And effort my master brought around his head  
To where he'd had his legs: and from there on  
He grappled the hair, as someone climbing would—  
So I supposed we were climbing back to Hell.  
"Cling tight, for it is stairs like these," he sighed  
Like one who is exhausted, "which we must scale  
To part from so much evil." Then he came up  
Through a split stone and placed me on its sill  
And climbed up toward me with his cautious step.  
. . . .



*Canto XXXIV*  
*Exit from Hell*

. . .There is below,  
As far from Beelzebub as one can be  
Within his tomb, a place one cannot know  
By sight, but by the sound a little runnel  
Makes as it wends the hollow rock its flow  
Has worn, descending through its winding channel:  
To get back up to the shining world from there  
My guide and I went into that hidden tunnel;  
And following its path we took no care  
To rest, but climbed: he first, then I—so far,  
Through a round aperture I saw appear  
Some of the beautiful things that Heaven bears,  
Where we came forth, and once more saw the stars.

CANTO XXXIV, 69-85, 128-40

ROBERT PINSKY: Thank you. Thank you all very much.

**OPEN  
DISCUSSION**

*Canto IV*  
*Limbo*



# OPEN DISCUSSION

*Question #1: How did making several versions of various illustrations help your creation of the images?*

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** There are virtually no small drawings or sketches. There is only one, and that is on display in the library. All of these images were made in the same process, as if any one of them could be chosen for the book. They were all monotypes, all the same scale. In order to get the one I wanted, I would have to go through this process of repeating it over and over and over again until I got it right. They only went through the press once, so each image is unique. There was no overprinting or second printing. If I got it right, that was it. What was right, of course, was also open to question.

You mentioned ghosts, so you obviously know a little bit about the material. Once the plate goes through the press, it leaves ink remaining on the plate. So you have the option of adding more ink to the plate and using the remaining luminous greys, and then going on from there, which I would do quite often. The Pilgrim Tower, for example, is itself a ghost with a little addition. It went from a black tower, to an upside-down black tower, and many other versions. There were tremendous problems, too. For example, the Gates of Hell, which you didn't see, began in my mind as the Auschwitz gate. It took quite a few weeks of thinking about this and lots of conversation with Robert to realize that there could not be any reference to the Auschwitz gate in the *Inferno* for obvious reasons. We were dealing with sinners in the *Inferno*, and the connection between sin and the camps would have been horribly inappropriate, even though it seemed clever at one point to transform one horrible gate into another horrible gate.

**ROBERT PINSKY:** Yes, I felt that way very strongly. Let me add that there were many studies, and they're very beautiful. There's a group of studies as you go up the stairs to the main gallery space. In some cases the studies are spectacular, and the values



that made Michael choose one for the book aren't always the values that say a work of art is the most wonderful. I think some of the studies are just spectacular. When we came here yesterday and saw the show hung for the first time I said "God, this Geryon is great. I like it better than the one in the book." As I say, I've been trained to be very high-handed about this. And Mike said "Yeah, it's good, but every time I looked at it, it looked like a urinal to me. It just looks too much like a toilet bowl or a urinal."

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** The Geryon image is the image of the snake- or eel-like creature with the head of a man, a smiling man and the arms of a rodent, who takes Dante and Virgil down to the second great ring, Malebolge. I did very much like the study in the exhibition, but I realized I couldn't use it because the two small figures clutching the top of Geryon are Dante and Virgil. I had made a very firm rule for myself that I would not include them in the illustrations. Robert said, when we looked at it together, "I would have left it in, just to break my own rule." And no one would have noticed it. That would have been even nicer, because someone would have looked very closely and would have written me a letter, or even . . . a master's thesis.



Canto XVII  
Geryon  
(Detail)

**Question #2:** *What drew you personally to do this translation, and what do you think is particularly distinct about what you have done?*

**ROBERT PINSKY:** The answer is perhaps an ignoble answer. First, I was assigned to do two cantos for a book put together by the Ecco Press. It's true that prior to this assignment I had had a lot of involvement with the poem. I wrote a piece of software entertainment called *Mindwheel* in the early 80s. The character who sets you on your journey is called Dr. Virgil. I can remember one of the programmers who worked with me on that product reading reviews of *Mindwheel* and saying, "You know, I gotta read this Dante's *Inferno*. Everybody keeps comparing it to *Mindwheel*."

So, I've had a history of engagement with the poem. I became drawn in and hypnotized by the problem in what I've already called "metrical engineering." Solving the *terza rima* drew me on like a child with a new puzzle. It's the only writing I've done in bed the way one reads oneself to sleep at night, I would work on one more tercet. We have pillow cases stained with felt pen ink where my wife would take the pen out of my hand and close the book. I worked on it obsessively.

If I think of my engagement with the poem on a somewhat deeper level, I'd say that civilization is a kind of haunted ruin for each generation that inherits it. Each person is a kind of haunted ruin. I'm a haunted ruin of the English language, of Judaism, Christianity, of all the things that went into making me. I left my religious training at a very early age, not with the kind of crisis of faith that one reads about in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but with what seems to me a much more characteristic Jewish experience, which you could call, irreverently, the crisis of the cookie jar. You just see all the sweets of the majority culture: the music, language, baseball—the whole world. One of the things that affected me that way was the language and imagery of Christianity. Since I'd had a rather low-class Jewish education, I hadn't encountered the grandeur of Jewish thought. So the first thought that had spiritual grandeur that I encountered was the Christian thought of English poetry, in which the concept of the soul and the concept of evil and many other concepts were the first religious *ideas* I encountered, though I'd performed many, many rituals in my life. So to some degree it was an act of homage and possession—I don't know what abstract nouns to give the act—to translate what is either one very great Christian epic or one *very* great hermetic and Gnostic epic (as some view it).

So there was the initial assignment from Ecco Press. There was also a very powerful technical lure; translating the *Inferno* was an opportunity to show what "chops" I thought I had as a performer in this exacting metrical and stylistic area. If I had thought about the deeper, spiritual meaning of the poem (whether Christian or Gnostic), it might have impeded me in my intense love affair with the technical problems, even though I knew that the other problem of "meaning" was there like some kind of engine. I didn't look at it. I thought of the translation process as a series of locked-room puzzles. You know, there's a dead body in a room locked from the inside. How did the murder happen? That puzzle is impossible to solve. Likewise in the *terza rima*, you have to say *this*, a certain thing, and it needs to rhyme three times, interlocking with another three rhymes. How do you do it?

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** If I can break in for a moment, I also wonder if the appeal of the *Inferno* is strongest to a middle-aged person. There is a way in which middle age

itself reaches questions not just of mortality, but of self-worth, achievement, and location and direction that I think do not have the same intensity of confrontation for a younger person. It seems to me that it's impossible not to talk a little bit about the first lines of the poem, which really indicate a middle-age dilemma that sets the tone for the whole poem.

ROBERT PINSKY: And in Mike I did have a middle-aged friend. (Laughter)

*Question #3: To what degree did the images and the text of the translation affect or influence one another?*

ROBERT PINSKY: I couldn't give you a specific example where a vision or conception was affected by the images. I can, however, assure you that the images affected the process of translation very much, especially as concerns the spirit of the poem as I perceived it through Mike's images. Mike isn't just a good artist who happened to have been commissioned to do the illustrations for a translation of Dante. The *Inferno* has been part of his life since the beginning of his life as an artist. He went to Italy to find out if he was going to be an artist, and began reading Dante in Italian right from the start. So there was a tremendous authority for me in his images, a sense of immediacy, of interiority, of the fact that this poem is part cosmology and part one human scoring points concerning deeply bitter personal grudges against his enemies. The varying scale and texture and degree of abstraction in the images served as a guide in some cases. I will never think of this book without the images, without the etching for the cover.

MICHAEL MAZUR: I want to add that it's very difficult to say how words influence images and images influence words. One very important clue was that quite unlike many contemporary or near-contemporary, illustrated versions, I chose not to have any ironic response to the poem. Some people have chosen to include a modern sense of irony. I felt that had I brought that sense into the book, it might have disturbed the non-ironic translation, the very sense and structure of belief we both chose to build into our images, whether textual or visual. My feeling is that in both the text and in the images, distance between the reader/viewer and the book has to be broken down. If distance is built up with irony, then the piece becomes irrelevant.

*Question #4: Do you plan also to translate and illustrate the Purgatorio and Paradiso?*

ROBERT PINSKY: As Newt Gingrich said on Meet the Press this morning, I have no plan to. (Laughter)

*Questioner: (Jokingly) But how can you tell the whole story?*

ROBERT PINSKY: There is an interesting problem that perhaps prevents me from working on the *Paradiso*. The language of the *Paradiso* is very lofty and abstract. Parts of it are practically in Greek or Latin. The language of the *Inferno* is very low. Dante says *merde*, shit. “He was so covered with shit, I couldn’t tell if he was a layman or a cleric.” When you use the word “shit,” when you give the fig to God, when people are behaving in a very low manner and their language is low, then you can afford a certain degree of elevation and archaism. You can make a convincing idiom if you have this other ballast of lowness. In a way, it’s like making a stage set, to create an idiom that sounds contemporary enough to be readable but has enough dignity or remove to remind us that it was written six hundred years ago. To achieve that idiom seems far more possible in the *Inferno* than as you go up higher. So there is that stylistic problem that I think may be insoluble.

*Questioner: But you still don’t get the whole story.*

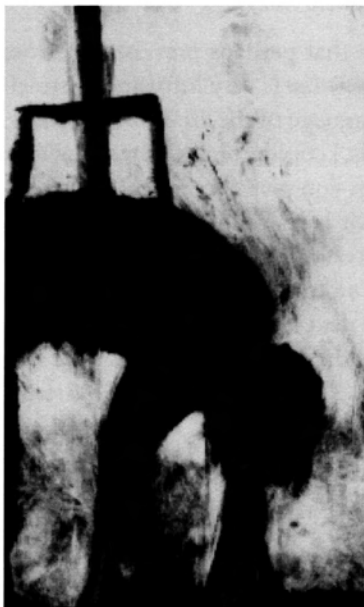
ROBERT PINSKY: This is why God made Singleton.

*Question #5: I’m wondering if you could talk more about the design of the book, the physical scale of the final product and how that affected the size of the images, the choice of typeface, and that whole art of the book itself.*

MICHAEL MAZUR: The designer was Cynthia Krupat who designs for Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. She is a wonderful designer, but in some respects the book was designed before it got to her. Once we made the decision to have the illustration facing the title page of each canto with a caption, which is a very old-fashioned way of designing a book, it immediately set up a certain kind of rhythm. We had *en-face* design for the Italian and English texts. Probably the hardest part was this business of doing word counts and placing page-breaks because in some cases Robert’s translation moved ahead of the Italian. As to the size—of course I wanted it three times as big. Farrar Strauss wanted it to fit on a bookshelf, and they want the paperback to go in a hip pocket. Consequently, it reduced in size. I had also done the illustrations for Richard Howard’s translation of Baudelaire in 1984. That was very similarly treated. In that book, all the illustrations bled off the page.

I thought, on the other hand, that Doré had really gone wrong in his illustration of the *Inferno* in that every image was the same size and repeated the landscape issues. I wanted some jumping and changing. I even wanted, but never got it right, a smaller detail. I didn’t want you to get bored with the format.

Canto XXI  
The  
Barrators  
(Detail)



So these were things we talked about before the actual design of the book. The cover was actually designed by the publisher, in a very curious way. He suggested right out: “I like that pitchfork guy. I want that pitchfork guy to stick in people’s minds.” So I made a print which combined the pitchfork guy—the only time a pitchfork is, in fact, imaged in the book—with a more recent abstract image, and I made that as the cover. That image exists as a color etching.

I’ll also point out one wonderful thing, and this is the subtlety of someone like Cynthia Krupat. You’ll notice the pitchfork guy has three tines. If you turn the book sideways, the lettering also produces an image of three tines. In such ways, book design can be very subtle.

I like the shape of it. I like the text. She chose the typeface. The *New England Review* was also part of the answer because they did some of the first *en-face* illustrations, which came out very similarly.

So there is a way in which these things get put together in conversation and collaboration. It’s not a one-person operation. Many, many people’s ideas and suggestions go into this process.

**Question #6: How long did this collaboration take?**

**ROBERT PINSKY:** We’re both very daffy about keeping track of things, so we always have to look at computer files or ask our wives about what happened when. We’re pretty sure that, to today, from when I first gave the reading that Mike went to, it has been about four years.

**Question #7: How long would it take to decide on whether or not to use an image?**

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** I turned my studio into a sort of book. Every time an image was completed, I added it to the wall in order. I was surrounded with three-tiers of images, sixty feet in all. I sat in them, looking at them all because they couldn’t just be chosen for themselves. They had to move on to the next image. You’ll notice in the book that every time you move from one canto to the next there’s some formal relation between an image and the image that precedes it. So there is a fluidity, much

like the fluidity in the *terza rima* itself, between the images. During the process, I kept replacing them. I had a big chart where I crossed off each canto as I decided which image would go with it. And I looked at all the blank spaces and at all the images for a very long time before making any decisions.

Ironically, when we were making a presentation similar to this in a translation class at Boston University, we were discussing Canto XXII where Dante sees a great mass of people lying down. I displayed two illustrations, one of which was a study, for that canto and I asked the students at the translation seminar to vote on which one we should use. The study, which is in the exhibition but not in the book, was inspired by the movie *Gone with the Wind*—at the railroad station when you get the long shot of the station with all of the bodies spread below. When I made the study I said, “That’s what I want to see. That’s what he saw: these bodies, stretched so far into the distance.” So I asked the students, “What do you think? Maybe we should just change it.” We had a vote, and the students all agreed. So I decided to change it at the very last moment. But I forgot to make the substitution when we sent the materials to the publisher, and they used the first illustration instead. So that decision was made for me.

(Pause) It’s all right.

I think that if I were to look at all these images again in my studio, I would probably choose a slightly different book. It just happens that way.

*Question #8: Robert, when you were speaking you mentioned the difference between the ink the writer uses and the ink the artist uses. Could you say some more about that?*

ROBERT PINSKY: It’s almost a pun. There’s a joke



Study for  
Canto XXIX  
(Detail)

between Michael and me when we have to produce any writing. There were times when he would type up a caption and I'd say, "Mike you put a semicolon. . . *here!*?" And he'd say, "Aw, I never pay any attention to the punctuation." He uses punctuation visually. This is the way punctuation tends to be on a page, so he puts it in like that. And sort of the same way with spelling and words. If it looks like the passage, that's good enough. (Laughter)

Oddly enough, I don't think it's just a joke to say that one learns a little from that. Not that I have any interest in concrete poetry or the graphics of the poem as making the poem, but realizing this disrupts something about the character-oriented attitude toward form. Ink is also something squishy and thick and sensuously smudgy. It is a bemusing way of thinking about writing.

*Question #9: This is a question for both of you. Did you work chronologically through the text?*

**ROBERT PINSKY:** I did Canto XXVIII first because Ecco Press assigned it to me. Then I did Canto XX because they assigned me Canto XX. Then, thinking I was doing it for my own amusement, I did I and II. Then, about that time, just before I gave the reading that Michael attended, I began to realize that I might be working straight through. I completed a draft, working sequentially, in about fourteen months; but then there were extensive revisions, in which I earned my share of the royalty cut.

**MICHAEL MAZUR:** Do you remember the moment when you decided to do the full translation?

**ROBERT PINSKY:** I was kidding myself, saying that I wouldn't do it *all*, but might publish selections. As I gradually started showing more and more to friends of mine they started saying "I'll bet you're going to do it all." So in a way, I had decided to do it before I admitted that I'd decided to do it. I would say that it was somewhere around the Paolo and Francesca passage that I realized I'd started thinking mathematically and saying "Well, 5 is about one seventh of 34. Once I realized I was doing that, I realized that this was liable to happen.

Thank you all, very much.

ROBERT PINSKY holds an eminent position in American poetry. He is the author of a number of volumes of poetry including *An Explanation of America* and, more recently, *The Want Bone*. He currently teaches at Boston University. He has also taught at the University of California at Berkeley.

MICHAEL MAZUR has taught art at Harvard University. His works are in many of the major US collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Los Angeles County Art Institute. Mr. Mazur studied in Florence in 1958 where he first experienced the cultural impact of Dante and read *The Divine Comedy* in Italian. He currently resides in Provincetown, Massachusetts.





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