

**FAKERY, SERIOUS FUN AND CULTURAL CHANGE:  
SOME MOTIVES OF THE PSEUDO-TRANSLATOR****Glyn PURSGLOVE**  
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Works of pseudo-translation – by which term I intend, for the purposes of this essay, to refer to literary texts explicitly presented to the reader as translations from a text or texts in another language (by named or unnamed authors) but actually original compositions in the language in which they now appear, by an author who may (or may not) choose to reveal his or her name as supposed translator – may be undertaken for a range of motives (and in any specific instance may involve several simultaneous motives). The motive may be quintessentially economic, the false identification of the nature of the text serving, for instance, as part of a marketing strategy designed to increase sales. One striking example has been discussed by Anikó Sohár (1996), who explains and illustrates the phenomenon whereby a series of science-fiction novels, which became best-sellers in Hungary, while actually written by a team of Hungarian authors, were packaged and sold as translations from a non-existent American author Wayne Mark Chapman, for whom supposed biographical information was provided, along with spurious bibliographical details of the publication of the supposed English-language originals. The ‘glamour’ of the books’ imaginary American source made them more attractive to their intended purchasers. A not dissimilar case is discussed by Sehnaz Tahir-Gürca lar (2008). Sometimes the motives of the pseudo-translator may involve a desire for personal fame; in at least one well-known case that personal desire was bound up with a kind of nationalistic ambition to see a particular literature recognised and applauded. The poems which James Macpherson (1736-1796) published between 1760 and 1765 as translations from the Gaelic of Ossian were certainly not simply translations in any normal sense of the word, although they may have drawn on some Irish or Gaelic originals, mixed with work of Macpherson’s own invention, synthesised by Macpherson and presented as *Fragments of ancient poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language* (see, for example, Stafford, 1988, Gaskill, 1991, Gaskill and Stafford, 1998 and Groom, 2002). The Ossianic texts were widely read and translated into other European languages, influencing such figures as Goethe, Herder, Diderot, Chateaubriand and James Fennimore Cooper, as well as those nearer home, such as Blake and Sir Walter Scott. Though the genuineness, or otherwise, of Macpherson’s ‘translations’ was immediately (and long) the subject of controversy, the Scots and their literature had a prominence on the European stage that they had never had before.

Elsewhere, motives may be mixed, and the outcomes of an act of pseudo-translation can be entertainingly unexpected. In the early 1820s the German writer G.W.H. Haering, working under the pseudonym Willibald Alexis, published a translation of Sir Walter Scott’s poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*; in 1823, under his own name, Haering published what was described as the first volume (second and third volumes followed in 1824) of another ‘translation’: *Walladmor, Frei nach dem Englischen des Walter Scott*. No such novel by Scott existed. Although some German readers certainly

took the title-page at face value, others immediately identified the claim as fraudulent. Scott's Europe-wide popularity was at its height, and the author and publisher no doubt intended that the claim should encourage good sales. Haering / Alexis proceeded to write a review of his 'translation' in the *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt* in 1824 (Thomas 1951: 219). Thomas De Quincey was spurred to an intriguing reaction (see De Quincey, 1890). He translated this German 'translation' into English, abridging and adapting Haering's German text, describing his version as "the final *Walladmor*" (De Quincey, 1890:141), and mockingly dedicated the result to him! Versions – either of the 'original' German or De Quincey's English version – appeared in Dutch, Swedish, Polish and French – fuller details of the whole episode can be found in Thomas (1951). Some pseudo-translations are created so as to give a greater appearance of authority than the views of the supposed translator might carry if presented simply as his own. Demmy Verbeke (2010) offers an amusing account of one such use of pseudo-translation, as seventeenth-century English authors, wanting to blame habits of excessive drinking on the Dutch and the Germans, claimed to be publishing, not their own thoughts, but translations of texts in 'High' or 'Low' Dutch. In other times and places acts of pseudo-translation have functioned as a means to circumvent censorship, as demonstrated by Merino and Rabadán (2002).

As Gideon Toury has interestingly suggested, the pseudotranslation, may be intended to promote cultural change, since it may serve as a means

to put the cultural gate-keepers to sleep, by presenting a text as if it were translated, thus lowering the threshold of resistance to the novelties it may hold in store and enhancing their acceptability, along with that of the text incorporating them as a whole. In its extreme forms, pseudo-translating amounts to no less than an act of cultural planning [...] (2005: 4).

To take a relatively modest example: Horace Walpole told readers of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), in his Preface, that

The following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of *England*. It was printed at *Naples*, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism. The stile is the purest *Italian* [...] It is natural for a translator to be prejudiced in favour of his adopted work. More impartial readers may not be so much struck with the beauties of this piece as I was. Yet I am not blind to my author's defects (Walpole 1764: [iii]-vi).

In presenting his work as a translation of an old and foreign text – by the nonexistent Onuphrio Muralto (and by attributing the translation itself to one William Marshall) Walpole was inviting his readers to make allowance for what was unusual, what was, paradoxically, new in his novel, a novel which marked, and to a degree initiated, a major shift of direction in the development of English fiction. Walpole was, essentially, doing no more than following the example of a far greater (and far more influential) novelist – Cervantes. *El Ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha*, after all, appeared before the world as a translation from the Arabic of Cide Hamete Benengeli. The fiction of translation offers Cervantes the possibility of the kind of cultural and generic distances he requires, given the nature of his literary purpose; it is also central to what John Rutherford calls "the wit, the sparkle, the exhilarating adventurousness" (2006: 71) of Cervantes' novel. In ways much too complex to discuss here – see, for example, Soons (1959), Mancing (1981), Flores (1982), Martín Morán (1990), Parr (1992), Lopez Baralt (2000) and Johnson (2007) – Cervantes' deployment of the device of pseudotranslation is fundamental to the work's richly palimpsestic texture of fictions and to its questioning of the nature of any human knowledge of 'reality'.

What follows is an examination of the methods and motives of three acts of pseudo-translation by English authors – Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864), Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890) and Peter Russell (1921-2003). All three were rebels, being unconventional figures who did not fit with ease into the literary society of their native country. All three were – literally or metaphorically – exiles from Britain, spending much of their adult lives elsewhere. For all three, the pseudo-translation was, amongst other things, a means for criticism of the parochialism of British thought and writing. For all three, too, the pseudo-translation was a kind of literary game, albeit a game which did not preclude full seriousness of intention. All three were attracted by the use of personae and, when it came to pseudo-translation, all three exhibited a fascinated delight in the creative possibilities of paratexts.

Famously headstrong and independent – and possessed of a fierce temper – Landor was expelled from Rugby School and, as an undergraduate, was later sent down from Trinity College, Oxford for a year (for firing a gun at the windows of someone whose politics he disagreed with) and chose not to return. In 1795 he published *The Poems of Walter Savage Landor*, a collection which the poet was later to disown: “Before I was twenty years of age I had imprudently sent into the world a volume of which I was soon ashamed”. The best that Landor could say of the book, only three years later, was that “the structure was feeble, the lines were fluent: the rhymes shewed habitual ease, and the personifications fashionable taste.” (Landor 1969: 13.352). In search of a poetic voice of his own, Landor turned eastward. First in his narrative poem *Gebir* (1798) and then in an intriguing small collection, published in May of 1800 under the title of *Poems from the Arabic and Persian; with Notes by the Author of ‘Gebir’*. These were avowedly not translations from the oriental languages themselves. Even Landor’s implicit claim, in the Preface to the small volume, that his poems were versions of French poems which may themselves have been translations of Arabic and Persian poems, was subverted by his declaration that

Ignorant of both these languages, I shall not assert their authenticity. The few that I have ever met with are chiefly the odes of Hafez. In these, and in all the others, I observed that the final stanza contained invariably the poet’s name. If this be the peculiar to the Persian, as I think I remember it is said to be, then these must not be genuine or not be odes (Landor 1969: 15.242).

The destabilising of the reader’s sense of what would, or would not, constitute ‘authenticity’ in such a context is subtly created and developed. What Landor had done, in effect, was to read the Persian translations of Sir William Jones and John Nott and to ventriloquize their manner, doing so to give him access to what he himself described as “a new and rich collection of undistorted images”. The act of pseudo-translation was a form of liberation, a means for Landor to free himself from – and to register his dissatisfaction with – the “fashionable taste” which prevailed, and which had over-conditioned his own earlier (and now disowned) poems.

While *Poems from the Arabic and Persian* was part of a larger process of cultural change, it was also an act of literary individuation, in which Landor’s verse began to acquire many of the hallmarks that would characterise his mature original verse, in its fusion of an almost ‘classical’ epigrammatic quality unachieved by almost any other English poet with an essentially romantic sensibility. Much of what was to make Landor a great (if still seriously underrated poet) was first assayed in these fictive translations. The work anticipates Landor’s great achievements in prose too. The man who was to ‘speak’ so well through so many different voices in his *Imaginary Conversations* learned here some of the skills involved in doing so. But Landor’s temperament being what it was, there was also a sense in which the whole exercise was a kind of literary game. The parodic quality that characterises many of the notes Landor provided, pokes fun at the solemn scholarship of Jones and (perhaps particularly)

Nott. Learned as Landor was, he was at heart a poet, with a suspicion of the excesses and the possible sterility of pure scholarship, as well as an awareness of the ways in which scholarship's claim to the disinterested pursuit of truth is often the flimsiest of masks behind which lie extremes of vanity and egotism. Ironically, Landor's notes also insist upon his fidelity as a translator, his refusal of any temptation to "transgress the law which I rigorously laid down from the beginning" (Landor 1969: XV 430). For Landor the fiction of translation mattered, since it opened up complex possibilities of purpose and tone; Landor understands and exploits many of the possibilities of pseudo-translation in a manner wholly absent from the superficially analogous instance provided by William Collins and his *Persian Eclogues* of 1742, in which Collins' poems are presented as translations of Persian poems by a certain "Mahamed" who "was a native of Tauris", which Collins tells us, he "received at the hands of a merchant, who had made it his business to enrich himself with the learning, as well as the silks and carpets, of the Persians" (Collins 1969: 371).

Eighty years after Landor's slim volume appeared, another significant poetic pseudo-translation was published: a text which declared itself to be *The Kasidah / (Couplets) / of of Hajî Abdû Elyezdî: / A Lay of the Higher Law / Translated and Annotated / By/ his Friend and Pupil, / F.B.* Games of authenticity are here played with more complexity – but less humour – than was the case even with Landor's *Poems from the Arabic and Persian*. No such person as Hâjî Abdû El-Yezdî existed; no text available for translation preexists the present poem. Nor, except in a special sense, did 'F.B.' exist. The whole book, in which the 'translated' poem is surrounded by an extensive paratextual apparatus of biography, annotation, elucidation and praise, was the work (though he never publicly acknowledged this to be the case) of Sir Richard Burton – Victorian explorer, translator of the Arabian Nights and the *Lusiads* of Camões, ethnologist of sexual customs, polyglot, soldier, swordsman and poet (amongst much else). In life, as in literature, Burton had an almost Pessoa-like fondness for heteronymic personalities. As surveyor, interpreter and intelligence officer in India, Burton inhabited such personae as Mirza Abdullah of Bushehr, half Arab and half Persian, practitioner of a variety of trades, and was thus enabled to gain access to many tribal groups and social circumstances from which an English army officer would otherwise have been excluded. In the Islamic world he became Sheikh Abdullah, a Sufi and a doctor, and as such visited Medina and Mecca in 1853. Only a year later he was travelling in Somalia as a Turkish merchant. This protean sense of his own identity was also exercised in his work as a writer. Amongst the names Burton appended to his work on more than one occasion was Frank Baker or 'F.B.'. The name simultaneously draws on his own second name (Francis) and his mother's maiden name (Baker) and, in abbreviated form, simply represents the second and third initial letters of his name: Richard Francis Burton. In 1865 he published a long and aggressively satirical poem, *Stone Talk* as the work of one "FRANK BAKER, D.O.N.". The title page, more than a little enigmatically, describes the work (the poem occupies some 120 pages) as "BEING SOME OF THE / MARVELLOUS SAYINGS OF A PETRAL PORTION / OF FLEET STREET, LONDON, / TO ONE / DOCTOR POLYGLOT, PH.D". The poem is a dialogue (itself often very oblique and obscure) between an inebriated scholar and a paving stone in Fleet Street which he drunkenly takes to be an Indian. The device, somewhat clumsily handled, allows Burton to construct a dialogue between aspects of himself (his 'Western' and 'Eastern' sides, the sardonic and the generous, his learning and his coarseness, and so on) all ultimately serving the purpose of a fierce attack on British society and politics, on British hypocrisy and smugness. In the *Kasidah* of 1880 Burton returned to the 'F.B.' pseudonym, as part of a subtler attack on the limitations of contemporary British thought; the device of the pseudo-translation allowed for another inner conversation between various aspects of Burton, as well as providing an opportunity for Burton to indulge his passion for 'learned' annotation.

The central fiction of the *Kasidah* is that F.B. has translated a poem by a Persian he knows personally:

Hâjî Abdû has been known to me for more years than I care to record. A native, it is believed, of Darâbghird in the Yezd Province, he always preferred to style himself El-Hichmakâni, a facetious “lackab” or surname, meaning “Of No-hall, Nowhere.” He had travelled far and wide with his eyes open; as appears by his “couplets.” To a natural facility, a knack of language learning, he added a store of desultory various reading; scraps of Chinese and old Egyptian; of Hebrew and Syriac; of Sanskrit and Prakrit; of Slav, especially Lithuanian; of Latin and Greek, including Romaic; of Berber, the Nubian dialect, and of Zend and Akkadian, besides Persian, his mother-tongue, and Arabic, the classic of the schools. Nor was he ignorant of “theologies” and the triumphs of modern scientific discovery (Burton 1880: 19).

This is, of course, a refracted portrait of Burton himself (who F.B. had certainly known “for more years” than he “care[d] to record”), in terms both of the record of extensive travel and of “various reading” and, notably, in the fluency in many languages (Burton himself had a considerable competence in 30 or more languages). Hâjî Abdû is an Eastern man of wide experience (whose reputation was not primarily achieved as a poet) who is familiar with Western thought and literature; he is, in short, a mirror image of Burton, a Western man (whose reputation was not primarily as a poet) who is familiar with Eastern thought. The synthesis of Eastern and Western thought which Hâjî Abdû seeks to embody in his *Kasidah*, which F.B. has translated and on which he has commented at length in the extensive notes, is no more or less than Burton’s own attempted synthesis of two traditions of thought. Presentation of his ideas through the mechanisms of pseudo-translation, in which an invented poet is translated by an invented translator (who elaborately annotates his translation) allows Burton to give a kind of exotic glamour to his ideas and – with his text’s unmistakable echoes of another unusual translation, Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* – to take advantage of expectations already existing in the minds of potential readers. Yet this, like Landor’s *Poems from the Arabic and Persian*, is also part of what one might think of as (to quote Toury) an act of cultural planning. Landor’s desire to renew English poetry by making available “a new and rich collection of undistorted images” is paralleled by Burton’s desire that Western thought should learn from this fictional foreign poet’s advocacy of “an Eastern Version of Humanitarianism blended with the sceptical or, as we now say, the scientific habit of mind”. Though Burton’s verse is not very accomplished, the work taken as a whole is a significant piece of Victorian intellectual history, which has itself merited more than one translation – including an attractive recent version in Spanish (Burton 1999) – thus presenting us with another instance of what Ian McCall has called, in relation to the fiction of Andreï Makine, “Translating the Pseudotranslated” (2006: 286)

Things are yet more complicated in a third remarkable extended act of pseudo-translation, conducted more recently and concerned not so much to effect cultural change as to protest at the effects of such a change. Peter Russell’s ‘translations’ from the work of the late Latin poet Quintilius began at the end of the 1940s and continued until Russell’s death in 2003. Returning from wartime service in military intelligence in the Far East (where his ability to master new languages rapidly had been a major asset), the English poet Peter Russell, then aged 25, entered Queen Mary College, London, to read English in 1946. Just before the war he had turned down a place to read Natural Sciences at King’s College, Cambridge. At university in London he was a star student, but left without taking a degree. Even as a student he was heavily involved in the London literary world, much favoured by T.S. Eliot and in correspondence with Ezra Pound, on whose work he was soon to edit one of the earliest collections of critical writings (Russell 1950). From 1949 to 1956, Russell was the driving force behind the important periodical *Nine*, which published work by, amongst others, Marianne Moore, Borges,

Eliot, Pound, Robert Graves, C.S. Lewis and Allen Tate. *Nine* was decidedly internationalist in outlook, and generous in the space it gave to translations of poetry from both past and present. Russell himself contributed many such translations to *Nine* – from Petrarch and Boiardo, Camoes, Gutierre de Cetina and others. Concurrently he published translations from other poets (and other languages) elsewhere. He was the earliest English translator of Mandelshtam. His reputation as an accomplished young translator was, in short, established and growing. In issue 2 of *Nine* (Russell 1949/1950) there appeared Russell's version of the first elegy ('Daunia') of Quintilius; issue 5 (Russell 1950) contained his version of Quintilius' second elegy, 'The Dispossessed'. Russell's versions from Quintilius reached book form in 1955, as *Three Elegies of Quintilius* (Russell 1954), which added a third elegy, "The Golden Age". The manner of these poems reads plausibly enough as an Englishing of late Latin poetry, as in the opening of 'The Golden Age':

As long as the unripe figs keep dropping outside our door  
 So long will my modest hopes keep falling away.  
 A time there was when I envisaged a future  
 Of peace in the country, tillage of fruitful vines,  
 Lifelong possessions including a house with a terrace,  
 Clean water-pipes and plenty of nearby firewood  
 To keep at bay the frosty invasions of winter;  
 A few books on a dry shelf, the visits of friends  
 From far-off countries (occasion for slaying a calf  
 And serving the tired travellers with rich Falernian  
 The good beast's tasty brains in black butter);  
 Nightlong discussion of poets, the meaning of ancient myths,  
 The seeding-time, it might be, of our own hoped-for masterpieces,  
 To ensue at the end of our banquets, - happiness thus, I believed.  
 But sitting here disgruntled, with a poor copyist's text  
 (Garbled, misspelt and full of interpolations,  
 Sadly misinterpreted by the ass-eared Doctors of Rome),  
 What should I do but weep, hearing as the hours go by  
 Fig after fig crash down through the cool green leaves  
 To splash on the gloomy earth, a prey to ravenous insects.

(Russell 1975: 21)

The corpus Quintiliana continued to grow as new manuscripts were 'discovered' and translations from them were published (some of them as single sheets distributed to friends). The next substantial collection of work translated from Quintilius appeared in 1975 as *The Elegies of Quintilius* (Russell 1975). Lengthy annotation was now added; a supposed bust of Quintilius was reproduced on the dust-jacket. A brief biographical note on Quintilius, by Ian Fletcher later Professor of English at the University of Reading, told the reader that

Cittinus Aurelianus Quintilius Stultus (AD 390-427) was the son of a Transpontine freedman (cf. fragment of Lib. I, Ode IV in Schlügel, *Spicilegium Facietiarum* [1881], vol. IV, pp.703-704). His early studies, if Lib. II, Ode IV – again, a disjointed fragment – be borne in mind, would appear to have been exclusively legal. Later he became an intimate of Verus and his circle, dying, according to Flavianus Adeodatus, of a surfeit of lentils (*Scandals and Importunities of the Grammarians*, Lib. V, Cap. III); although, in view of Flavianus' marked antipathy to all but Montanist literature, this account must be accepted with the most severe reserve.

Of Quintilius' writings we possessed until recently six Elegies and two complete Odes only (Lib. I, Odes I and II), together with a few additional fragments from the first and second books. There were, it appears, four books originally. Flavianus mentions also an heroic poem with the medical subject: *Ars Vomitoria*. Among the MSS which the noted humanist, Guarino Veronese, lost when he was shipwrecked, was a copy of the *Odes* Book II, recensed from a Mandaean manuscript. It will be remembered that Savonarola is reported to have said when he heard the news: 'The Church can afford the loss.' The two extant Odes (*Codex Ureglius*) formed the favourite early morning reading of the Supreme Pontiff himself, at that time Alexander VI. The text is not given, as it is still being freed from interpolation (University of Tucson: *Studies in Early Romanic Philology* XI, III [1938]).

In April 1968, however, there occurred a discovery which has considerably added to the known works of our author. While digging for potash near the site of the ancient Aphrodisias, a Nicaraguan engineer stumbled over a massive papyrus, in superb condition. This was bought by the University of Texas for an undisclosed sum. It has not yet been catalogued, and access is unlikely before the twenty-first century, as what is left of the Classics Department is editing the papyrus. However, from a transcript made by an Egyptian scholar, now in the hands of the translator, it becomes evident that the papyrus contains no less than forty-eight Elegies, and a mock-heroic work, *The Apotheosis of the Dildo*, both by Quintilius, along with an anonymous 'epyllion', *Achilles among the Women* (Russell 1975: [7]).

By now even the suspicions of the most innocent reader must surely have been aroused. At this stage it was perhaps the apparatus surrounding Russell's 'versions', rather than the 'translations' themselves, that gave the game away. By the time that an expanded edition of *The Elegies of Quintilius* was published in 1996, the note of scholarly fantasy was yet more obvious. One of the poems added, "Elegy at the Winter Solstice", is described as "A Poem of Quintilius's Madness" (Russell 1996: 60) and its discovery is the subject of a delightfully absurd account by the translator:

in the summer of 1973 ... my friend Herr Harigastl, the renowned cuckoo-clock-maker of Bollingen in Switzerland, presented me with a very ancient specimen of that noble art of the antique Rhaetians. I confess my mind was not primarily on cuckoo-clocks that catastrophic summer and I finally intended to hurl it down the mountainside, but something oddly impalpable bade me open the thing up first and see what was inside, apart from the cuckoo. Having established that the movement was genuinely antique, and indeed of a type quite unknown to the Christian era, my interest was somewhat augmented. It kindled even more however when I noticed that the unusual cedar box was lined with a crinkled and blackened parchment. On examination I identified the characters on it as being in a late Etruscan script of the type which was employed by the wizards and sorcerers of the Northern Germanic peoples until they adopted the Latin script in the late eight century, when they became Christian – *creitin*, as their Swiss forebears had it (Russell 1996: 92).

In form, too, this 'poem of Quintilius's madness' breaks new ground; it is more obscure in style, fuller of quasi-modernist effects, as in the discontinuities of a passage such as this:

'Dark midnight' now	the end of an age	
Harbour bottomless	anchorage none	a buoy
Floats on the flood		

Late mooring ...

Many foul beast

great giants

I have overcome

(I was Athens)

More crowd in

In the Age of Woves

\*

Stone skulls of the monoliths

Unaided I smote

People prefer

Ballast and shar

mere makeweight

To living brain

the Bright River

With tinsel and tungsten

think to dazzle

Dim daylight's

blue dullness

Where is the marrow?

Although the machinery of pseudo-translation remains, the relationship between Peter Russell and Quintilius has changed significantly; rather than being presented with a plausible image of translator and translated poet, now Quintilius has, more clearly, become a persona, a mask, the poems a kind of extended series of dramatic monologues. This was to remain largely true of the use Russell made of Quintilius in the rest of his poetic career.

The origins of Russell's Quintilius are interesting. They are both scholarly and personal. He was, of course, Russell's invention, a statement which seeks to understand the word 'invention' in several of the senses attributed to it in the Oxford English Dictionary; "the action of finding out; discovery", "the finding out or selection of topics to be treated, or arguments to be used", "the action of devising, contriving, or making up", "a fictitious statement or story; a fabrication, fiction, figment". In one sense the poems of Quintilius are an act of authorial invention; yet, in another, as we shall see, many of them are, in a fashion which both confirms and contradicts appearances, acts of translation.

Russell himself gave several accounts of the original 'invention' of Quintilius. In a 1992 interview Russell recounted a visit he paid to George Santayana in 1947:

What happened was that when I visited George Santayana in that convent near the Colosseum in Rome, he was, at the moment that I walked into the room, translating an elegy of Tibullus. We discussed this and I was very taken with his translation, which later I put into *Nine* [Tibullus: "Book I, Elegy III, the opening and the close". Translated by George Santayana. *Nine* 2 (Winter 1949-50): 9-10.] ... The next morning, out of my existential situation of the moment – shall I marry this girl or shan't I marry this girl – I wrote a poem which, when I read through, I realised was an imitation of an elegy by Tibullus with elements of Virgil's eclogues, the *Georgics*, Propertius, Catullus, and some other things. I thought you've invented a personality. I have to find a name for him. Quite arbitrarily, after a name of a poet we know nothing about in Horace, I called him Cittinus Aurelianus Quintilius Stultus (Görtschacher 1996: 515).

After a first flourish of activity at the end of the 1940s and during the 1950s, Russell returned to this invented personality with the above-mentioned “Elegy at the Winter Solstice” (written while Russell was Writer in Residence at the University of British Columbia). No more Quintilius poems were written until 1984, many of which were declared to be part of a long poem, the Apocalypse, by Quintilius – as in *Quintilii Apocalypseos Fragmenta* (Russell 1986). A substantial selection of these later poems (some remain unpublished) was published in 1997 (Russell 1997).

Even more than was the case with “Elegy at the Winter Solstice”, these later Quintilius poems make no serious effort to trick the reader into believing that they are genuinely translations from Latin. The fictional nature of the overarching literary invention is implicitly acknowledged. Yet, paradoxically, many of these poems really are translations, albeit necessarily not translations made from the work of the non-existent Quintilius. As Russell himself said in an interview with Anthony Johnson, given in 1994:

In my Quintilius poems ... - at least in the Quintilius poems I've written over the last ten years, which are perhaps 600 poems, some of them very long – I don't think there's a single statement in them which is not based on something in the classics or in the medieval writers. Every single line is a calque of something from the past, but the scholars and the academics don't recognise this at all. They think I'm just eccentric.

Now this is a terrible indictment of modern scholarship (Johnson 1996: 536).

Elsewhere, in a note dated 30<sup>th</sup> January 1995, Russell has spoken suggestively of the ways in which the text of his versions from Quintilius incorporates ‘translations’ of more than merely classical and medieval sources, explaining that while the poems of Quintilius are characterised by their

many references to his well known contemporaries and to contemporary and ancient (even for him) historical events and with entirely authentic Romano-Greek apparatus culled from original sources as well as the modern scholars, they reflect not only our modern condition but something of most centuries between his time and our own. I make lines of Dante, Pontanus, Scaliger, Milton, Corneille, Voltaire, Goethe, Hölderlin, Novalis and many others into echt Quintilius. Shakespeare does not go unrobbed! Even William Carlos Williams is adumbrated by some of Quintilius's tropes.

I realize all too well that genuinely busy scholars will have little or no time to give to a contemporary artistic production unless they happen to be interested in poetry per se, which is pretty unlikely (Russell 1997: 221).

In some cases, individual poems are effectively translations of individual originals (originals which may precede or postdate the period of Quintilius's own imagined life). One interesting example is offered by the poem ‘Pitaffio’:

Far from the clinging brine-pool of Hadramaut,  
From the bitter Carthaginian heritage of dried-up blood,  
I lie here in the sweet Italian soil.

A life devoted to wandering

Has its consolations. You have to end up  
Somewhere, preferably in a tolerable bean-patch,  
However Pythagorean or Orphic you pretend to be.  
The Muses have cared for me if nobody else has,  
And instead of the bitter drenches of existence, Memory  
Provides sweet diet.



by the gift that the Muses have bestowed upon him). Quintilius, born in Sfax in North Africa and having travelled much of the Mediterranean world (the Hadramaut is a region of modern Yemen, in the pre-Islamic age a significant staging post on the trade route to and from India) finds himself in exile in Italy; Leonidas' happiness in the love that the Muses have extended to him for Quintilius serves, in part, as ironic praise of his future 'translator' (praise not so completely ironic that it disallows a denunciation of the limited linguistic competence of so many twentieth century translators, producing versions from languages they don't know). Russell – fluent in at least ten languages – is, like Quintilius, in 'exile' in Italy, though for him it is an exile which has brought him south rather than north and which is an aspect of his desire to write in closer proximity to the classical tradition than the critical tastes of contemporary London would allow; Russell was profoundly at odds with that approach summed up by Larkin's avowal that he had "no belief in 'tradition' or a common myth-kitty" and his declaration that for him "the whole of the ancient world, the whole of classical and biblical mythology means very little" (Press 1969: 258-259). As such views came to dominate English taste in the 1950s, Russell's geographical exile (in Germany, Canada, Iran and chiefly Italy) became a poetic necessity – a necessity explicated in the Quintilius poems.

Peter Russell has remarked that the Quintilius poems "use the device of a consciousness from the distant past penetrating 'unconsciously' into the future" (Russell 1997: 221). As such Quintilius makes use of poets who lived and wrote between his time and that of his 'translator', just as readily as he makes use of his predecessors. Consider, for example, the poem "Exsules damnatique":

Vile murderer of the Gods, are you content now, Man?  
 The deep woods, the mountain sides, the sky itself  
 are all deserted, rivers and streams deserted. You now  
 are reigning power, – look now for someone to console you,  
 someone to have pity on you. No longer are there voices  
 in the wooded valleys, in the caves, in the woods themselves  
 the trees no longer have voices, nor, Poet, the spring at which you drank.  
 The sea is silent now, earth too is without a voice,  
 and nothing now in the great sky's blue Sahara  
 to recognise you, – the fiery Sun is no longer a God.  
 No longer does he look down on you and see you. Nothing that lives,  
 quivers or thrills, glitters or glows or breathes,  
 knows you. From now on, nobody, nomad, knows or cares  
 whence you have come, whither you go, or can say  
 "It's Man. I know Him". Nature is now no more than a spectre,  
 grim and cruel. Her broken heart no longer beats,  
 her mouth is stopped and the eyes of the stars have been put out  
 and you will never finish the songs that you started.  
 Ignorant of the blessed torture, O Man, your children  
 will soon be asking: What, O Father, was a lyre?

(from a Gaulish text)

(Russell 1997: 96)

The poem's title is a phrase from Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* (V.55). That might seem sufficient to account for Russell's identification of his source as "a Gaulish text". But in fact Russell has translated a 'Gaulish' text of rather more recent vintage, understanding 'Gaulish' in its jocular sense of 'French', for it is a nineteenth-century French poet who has here been appropriated by the ancient poet Quintilius. "Exsules damnatique" is a largely faithful translation of part of "L'Exil des Dieux" by Theodore de Banville (1823-1891). Russell / Quintilius has made use of lines 141-160 of Banville's poem:

Homme, vil meurtrier des Dieux, es-tu content?  
 Les bois profonds, les monts et le ciel éclatant  
 Sont vides, et les flots sont vides: c'est ton règne!  
 Cherche qui te console et cherche qui te plaigne!  
 Les sources des vallons boisés n'ont plus de voix,  
 L'ancre n'a plus de voix, ni l'onde où tu buvais, poète!  
 Et la mer est muette, et la terre est muette,  
 Et rien ne te connaît dans le grand désert bleu  
 Des cieux, et le soleil de feu n'est plus un Dieu!  
 Il ne te voit plus. Rien de ce qui vit, frissonne,  
 Respire ou respandit, ne te connaît. Personne,  
 A présent, vagabond, ne sait d'où tu venais  
 Et ne peut dire; C'est l'homme. Je le connais.  
 La Nature n'est plus qu'un grand spectre farouche.  
 Son cœur brisé n'a plus de battlements. Sa bouche  
 Est clouée, et les yeux des astres sont crevés.  
 Tu ne finiras pas les chants inachevés,  
 Et tes fils, ignorant l'adorable martyre,  
 Demanderont bientôt ce que tu nommais Lyre!

(Banville 1926: 119)

'Exsules damnatique' is both a pseudo-translation (insofar as it is presented as a translation of a non-existent poem by a non-existent poet, Quintilius) *and* a translation (insofar as it is an English translation – though not identified as such – of an existing French poem). Where both Landor's *Poems from the Arabic and Persian* and Burton's *The Kasidah (Couplets) of Hajî Abdû El-Yezdî* can unproblematically identified as examples of pseudo-translation, Russell's Quintilius poems subvert such an essentially binary system of classification by being simultaneously translation and pseudo-translation. Any strategy of classification that sought to embrace Russell's Quintilius poems might, one suspects, have to have recourse to a complex process of triangulation, involving concepts such as pseudepigraphical creation, as well as translation and pseudo-translation.

Russell's Quintilius 'translations' are an assertion of the historical analogies that link the age of Quintilius with that of his translator, both of them times of huge cultural collapse, of disintegration and (possibly) of new beginnings. These pseudo-translated poems are also, centrally, an assertion of Russell's belief – *pace* Larkin – that poetry which doesn't ground itself in the twin sources of the culture it seeks to understand and represent, which undeniably grew from the Western fusion of the Christian and the Ancient World, is like a plant trying to grow by cutting itself off from both soil and water. The consequences of such intellectual and cultural impoverishment (and the inversion of such a

condition) lie at the heart of Russell's Quintilian texts. In an essay written in 1995 (at the height of his fascination with the 'translation' of Quintilius, Russell wrote powerfully of the temporally parochial nature of that impoverishment:

It is amazing to me ... how at a time when a vast range of the great classics of every age and race are available in every drugstore, educated intelligent people persist in reading the ineptitudes of the *Literary Review* or *The Sunday Times* or the latest best-selling novels and short stories ... The world we live in is not merely the sum of our immediate reactions to the material conditions we live in (like the supermarket and the comics). It is the sum of the perceptions and interpretations of fifty or a hundred generations of our forebears. The great myths of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Chinese Indians and Persians take us back into the Neolithic age, an age that perhaps was far more creative, inventive and wisdom-oriented than our own. If "philosophy" as we know it was the invention of the fifth century Greeks, we should remember that it emerged slowly and painfully out of several generations of chaotic speculation by the so-called pre-Socratics. Most of the pre-Socratic literature has been lost, but even the few fragments we have show us how wisdom literature, physical speculation and mythology were painfully mixed up in it ... It is this neglect of human culture as a whole, in spite of all the admirable specialist scholarship on it, that distresses me in our contemporary poets and so-called creative writers. The dominating or at least the most fashionable school of today is the "post-modernist" or "deconstructionist" movement. This amorphous intellectual movement seems to me to base itself on all the caprices of the past one hundred-and-fifty years, from Darwin, Nietzsche, and Freud to the more recent French schools of semiotic sophismatic. If there is one received view of the world in any one moment of history it is bound to be limited and circumscribed, since it has omitted so much of the great thought of the past (Russell 1995: 27-28).

For Russell the invention of Quintilius and the device of pseudo-translation provide opportunities for the uncovering and articulation of networks of historical continuity and interconnection; for the demonstration, in actual poems rather than critical prose, of the nature and the processes of poetic tradition; for the refusal of the single historical moment and the single voice, for protest against what he regarded as an "appalling shrinkage of consciousness" implicit in the work of "the then dominant "Movement" poets, Larkin above all, [who] seemed intolerably provincial" (Russell 1993: 11). Quintilius is a figure both comic and tragic when viewed across the long series of the poems attributed to him. Viewed in terms of either perspective he is a heroic figure, courageous in the absoluteness of his commitment to poetry (at any rate to his idea of it) and his willingness to mock the dangerously powerful, as well as in his refusal of easy worldly success; absurd in his volatility of mood and his sometimes over-weening self-confidence. Quintilius, indeed, is as interesting and well developed a figure as one can readily find in the English fiction of the twentieth century, let alone the poetry.

In a passage that writers in the field of Translation Studies have quoted more than once, Theo Hermans has suggested that "what makes [pseudotranslations] interesting is that they must mimic the appearance of translation if they are to have a chance of fooling the public. As a result they tell us a great deal about how, at certain times, translations are supposed to look" (Hermans 1999: 50). The work of both Russell and Burton (and, to a degree, that of Landor) suggests that this is to take too narrow a view of things; Russell early abandoned the desire to fool the public and Burton surely cannot seriously have expected most readers to believe in his supposed friend Hâjî Abdû El-Yezdî. When he first saw an announcement of Landor's *Poems from the Arabic and Persian; with Notes by the Author of 'Gebir'*, it was with more astuteness than he intended (given the cultural arrogance implicit in his question) that Robert Southey wondered "Can there possibly be Arabic and Persian poetry which the author of *Gebir* may be excused for translating?" (Elwin 1958: 83). Deception is not really the point – or at any rate by no means the chief point – in any of these examples of pseudo-translation. For Landor, Burton and Russell alike, the act of pseudo-translation is both an act of imaginative self-liberation, and

part of a strategy designed to promote (or in Russell's case to contest) a movement of cultural change in English poetry and thought.

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