

EDITORIAL NOTES I

Many people, even some of good will, will wonder about my decision, in 1991, to go almost entirely *samizdat*. It might well seem like an admission of failure. "If *they* won't publish my work I'll bloody well publish it myself"? It may well seem humiliating for a man of 73 years old, who has been publishing for fifty years, to have to resort to publishing himself (because no one else will). In fact, it is humiliating, but humiliation has very practical lessons to teach a man like myself, who can be devastatingly 'realistic' about immediate and practical things, but remains perpetually 'idealistic'. I have never paid a penny for any book of mine to be published, except when I have openly stated 'published by the author, since no one else would', (a formula which rather pleases a defiant me).

It is, of course, prestigious, to be published by some more or less recognised publisher, but after fifty years I realise that this is a total delusion. The publishers don't bother to sell more than a few dozen copies, they do virtually no publicity, they rarely get review articles printed in the literary magazines, and generally they pay no royalties. Anvil Press did a good job in printing fine editions of my *Quintilius* (1974) and *Selected Poems* (1983) and sold them well in the first year after publication. Thereafter they went into a state of lethargy. Anvil commissioned two new books from me in 1985 but they never replied to any of my communications after that date. The thing that made me drop them was their sloppiness in sending books out to me when I ordered twenty or thirty copies for special occasions like my tours in Yugoslavia, Switzerland and other places. The books arrived weeks or months AFTER my tours were over, in spite of their having my order three months in advance. Dr. James Hogg of the English Department, University of Salzburg, is more like a philanthropist than the usual type of publisher. He is immensely efficient with orders, quick producing the books, generous with author's copies. But neither he nor his distributors can sell more than a handful of copies or get more than a few column inches of publicity.

An even more pressing and valid reason for publishing myself is that I have such an enormous corpus of still uncollected and unpublished poetry. At 73 years old I want to edit all this work and try to get it published. With Dr. Hogg's

sovrano help we have published almost everything worth publishing up to the end of 1964. But that's only the beginning. I am now editing my VENICE POEMS 1965 which alone will amount to five hundred pages, and all my Quintilius poems, which look like being an even bulkier volume! My new and good friend Robert Ward has offered to publish a book of *One Hundred Sonnets* and I'm working on that too, as well as the many lectures and articles I'm currently preparing in order to scrape a living. If I don't do the work *now* it will never be done. I reckon I have enough on my work-tables to keep me very busy for twenty years!

I am extremely fortunate in having my now sixteen-year-old son, Peter George Russell, living with me. Peter George in his fifteenth year produced over a thousand pages of original poetry and translations in Italian and English. We have a huge task ahead of us in placing the best of that material in the reviews. A few of his poems have already appeared in the Italian reviews and he has published four very promising books of Italian poetry. He is now of an age to become a very helpful assistant to me, but however well he learns our trade, he cannot edit my poems for me! Many of them, written years ago, require careful re-writing, and titles have to be found for the many untitled pieces, and I have to transcribe hundreds of poems as yet never copied from hand-written notebooks. I am blessed not only by the presence of my son, but also by the enormous amount of exacting work done for me by my very dear friend Pier-Franco Donovan, both in computer-setting my old manuscripts and in translating literally hundreds of poems and prose pieces into Italian. Peter George has also translated very many of my pieces, very well too. This is confirmed by the fact that many of these have now appeared in Italian reviews. This is not the place for me to write an encomium of my son, but I feel I must relate an anecdote about him, which may demonstrate his calibre. One morning about a year ago he came down to breakfast and gave me a most ominous, almost menacing 'look'. After a pause, he announced:

"Babbo, from now on we *have* to be unrealistic".

It was the wisest and most positive remark I had heard in decades (or perhaps ever) and my Gargantuan roar of laughter at it has turned into energy, enthusiasm, determination and confidence, not to say *love* of what I am doing, which I think will give me some of that extra time I so passionately long for.

Being a real poet, passionately and sincerely but also seriously, is a matter of “talking to the gods” (try to get my double meaning here!) and that means finding a universal voice. So much clever modern criticism and theory has become so complex and remote from simple and serious life and so constipated with absurd, outlandish and purely arbitrary terminology, that I want simply to “talk to the world” in quite simple language, as I did in my article on Kathleen Raine in AGENDA last year. “Bullshit baffles brains” is a useful tactic for getting jobs, promotion, tenure and invitations to cocktail parties, but it is the worst strategy possible in the politics of eternity. I am an incurably political animal — and always will be. But my politics are based on universals.

That this ‘simple-minded’ viewpoint is valid (as opposed to the infantility of so many of the postmoderns) seems to me to be confirmed by a remark in a recent letter from a young, genuinely learned and ‘officially established’ poet. I won’t embarrass him by giving his name, but he says:

“Your *Albae Meditatio* is remarkable in many ways, the surefooted beauty of the natural imagery, blended with the metaphysical thought. No one else I can think of is writing (or probably could write) anything comparable.”

This young man, a pillar of contemporary academe, doesn’t need a crazed catachresty to express his views. I know he’s serious and sincere, from reading a brilliant summary of Eliot criticism over the past twenty years which he wrote for one of the ‘big’ mags a year or so ago. He is very much my intellectual superior as a critic and literary historian and he seems to be able to recognise that mysterious thing, sheer poetry, or ‘mystery’ at sight. Rare, oh rare!

The poem, *Albae Meditatio*, to which he refers, is a seven page piece, in my booklet *A Progress of the Soul*, which is based on Arabic and Persian sources which the critic admits he knows nothing of. Very different from the sly sneers of *PN Review* (well-intended even so) which because of its English provincialism is unable to distinguish an image of female beauty lifted from Ibn Arabī, and so purely divine, from a coloured picture postcard of a bathing beauty on Brighton Beach. Poor lambs. No wonder, in accordance with postmodern principles they all feel castrated! They read too much Freud and Lacan.

EDITORIAL NOTES II

We talk glibly about the Public Sector as a proponent and as a benefactor of the Arts. In 1948, in Wrey Gardiner's *Poetry Quarterly*, I inveighed against State subvention of the Arts. Subvention is dangerously like "subversion". I was angry then when they gave £10,000 to Tennant Brothers to produce Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, at a time when their allocation for poetry was an annual £500. I prophesied that the Festival of Britain Poetry Competition would produce no worthwhile results. I was not wrong. The winners are absolutely unknown and beneath consideration today. I even forget their names.

Since then, my views on the subject have not changed much, though I have far more knowledge and experience of the problem (pro and contra).

A real Maecenas did not have to have an army of bureaucrats (slaves and eunuchs) to decide for him who to give a villa to, who to give an attractive slave girl (or boy), who to give a letter of credit with Foyle's or Hatchard's. He just pulled out from under his toga a hand-written note, not counter-signed by a 'Literature' officer, and gave it to Quintus or Albius or Quintilius. Today, there are no Maecenases. I dare say Eddie Marsh gave the odd fiver to D.H. Lawrence, John Quinn was no doubt more generous, but those spacious days have long since departed. The Getties, the Rockefellers, the Carnegies and the Heinz's delegate everything to a Foundation with a hundred bureaucrats or more, hemmed in by 'guidelines' and 'office standing rules' etc., so that nine tenths of the (ill-gotten) wealth is fed back into the bureaucracy, and the other one tenth into safe bets, that is, the mediocre.

My own experience has only been with two-bit organisations like the British Council. In the 1940s the British Council used to employ distinguished authors like Edwin Muir, Lawrence Durrell, Ronald Bottrall, as their directors, Nowadays the usual British Council director is really no more than a commercial language-school man. A sort of Dotheboy's of 1995. British Council directors in Rome, which controls everything in Italy, have been politely inviting me to lecture for them for no less than 40 odd years, but the invitation has never come! In 1987, with an impressive CV and an imposing recommendation from the then Director of the British Institute (a private institution) I wrote to the Director in Rome of the British Council, offering a series of lectures all round Italy. After a few months I received a letter from a Mr. Brian Hedger, 'Literature Officer', saying that he regretted (?) that he was going on holiday within a matter of days, but that he would consider my application immediately on his return. After a silence of three years I ventured to write again, and the same Mr. Hedger informed me that he was about to be transferred, but that his successor would certainly 'consider my case' when he took up his post. After yet another year of total

silence, I ventured to write to Mr. D. Lay the new 'literature officer', who after a few months replied that he regretted to say that the literary policy of the British Council in Italy did not include poetry. After a decent interval I wrote again (believe it or not, I need to earn an honest living) offering scholarly lectures on prosaic English writers. After yet another decent interval of a good many months (or years) I got a reply saying that the British Council's cultural program now consisted solely in audio-visual presentations and films. I gathered without much difficulty that literacy was 'out' and movies were in, which is precisely the situation with the 'new' poetry in Britain today.

With the British Institute in Florence, for which in the 1980s I had given rather successful lectures three years running, and from whom I had received a really scintillating letter of recommendation, my luck ran out as soon as a new Director arrived, from University of Cambridge. The previous director had died of cancer, the occupational disease of bureaucrats. No active person ever gets cancer. This new director, a very pleasant young fellow, talked to me like a Dutch uncle, and informed me that "poetry, of course, is not a profession" and that I should forget about it. He also made some very snide remarks about Dante Alighieri, which did not encourage me to return to the home of British culture in Florence. I began to lose faith in the concept of British culture, and this shocking suspicion was reinforced when the University of Oxford around that time decided that it could not afford a Chair of Italian. The FIAT car company made good this wretched deficiency and now keeps its perhaps third rate mistress in Oxford. If my information is not precisely accurate it's because I base it on Italian press reports.

You may well think I am exaggerating. Here is a letter I received from a very eminent scholar in American and British literature in reply to the last issue of MARGINALIA, in which I reported on the totally negative attitude of the Arts Council of Great Britain, The Regional Arts Organisations and The Poetry Society of Great Britain towards my intended tour of U.K. in spring 1993.

Dear Peter Russell

I've just returned from a stay in London, and can well understand the unenthusiasm you report in MARGINALIA No. 11 for securing bookings and / or hospitality from writers' colonies in the U.K. I was there with no such agenda, but observed a noticeable diminution in the activities of poets and the venues that formerly supported readings; friends informed me that this reflected the diminished budget of the Arts Council — and, no doubt, the spreading philistinism of the Thatcher / Major government, whose education minister, the week we left for home, was proposing that the teaching of English history in the schools abandon mention of the Magna Carta,

Trafalgar, the conquests of the empire, and also agreed with a cohort of activist teachers that sports be no longer a required school activity since participation made some students feel uncomfortable or disadvantaged. One can imagine how much effort and enthusiasm is given to the teaching or reading of poetry in such an atmosphere, and what to expect when scholars graduate from such ideologically-determined curricula to become rate-payers and voters. Poetry by its nature is an art by, of, and alas for the few, the cultural elite. Our hope must be that somehow, democratic pluralism will permit and even encourage this minority among the other minorities of class, ethnicity, gender.

I've been reading an advance copy of the US edition of Eliot's hitherto unpublished lectures on the metaphysical poets. I wonder if today a lecturer could address an audience of Cambridge students with quotations from Dante, Baudelaire, Laforgue all untranslated, or compel their attention for hours on end with such close analytical readings. A conference my wife and I attended at Oxford in Feb. (on 'The Poetry Industry') gave some hope — there were those present who appreciated the discourse on the language of poetry and the poets' task by David Constantine and Jon Stallworthy, but then the program presented also Terry Eagleton and other commodifiers of literature, not without boosters among the attenders.

Nothing is more frustrating, and yet nothing more urgent at all times (for me, at least) than to reflect on the question of why the serious poet wants or needs to write poetry and with what purpose in mind he dedicates himself to this apparently unrewarding aim. Many of the "modernistic" or *avant garde* poets and critics hold that the first thing in this activity is to be original, to produce something different from what others produce. In my school days it was considered very "modern", and so "original" to write about pylons: now the *neoterói* write about the latest films, recent pop songs or the niceties of their computers, or little green men from Mars or other things out of the comic cuts. This, for them, is to be modern and original.

In 1799, when Hoelderlin was planning his new literary review *Iduna*, his purpose was "the unification and reconciliation of the sciences with life, of art and good taste with genius, of the heart with the head, of the real with the ideal", and as Michael Hamburger adds — of "civilisation with nature". Hamburger says that what Hoelderlin wrote about his *Hyperion* applies to all his mature works: "On no account would I wish that it were original. For originality is novelty to us; and nothing is dearer to me than the things that are as old as the world itself. To me originality means sincerity and intensity, depth of feeling and intellect. But precisely this, it seems to me, is most out of favour in our time..."

As Kathleen Raine says: "Only the oldest things remain" (*Selected Poems*, p. 62).

THE REAL THING

“The sense of love’s persistence far beyond the moment of the flesh, indeed, of its capacity to endure through all time, has always been a great focus of meditation for those who live without a theology of the eternal, either in ancient or modern times...

Clearly, E.A. Robinson’s world is fallen. Yet if the good and the beautiful did not exist we should never miss them nor feel our failure.”

From “The Epic Vision of Edward Arlington Robinson” by Henry W. Russell, in *The Formalist* (Evanston, Indiana, Vol. 4 No. 2, 1993).

“When mind is lost in the light of the Self it dreams no more; still in the body it is lost in happiness”.

“A wise man seeks in Self those that are alive and those that are dead and gets what the world cannot give” .

(from *Chandogya Upanishad*, Yeats’ version).

Going through a mountain of old correspondence last week, I came on my carbon of a letter to Kathleen Raine dated 16th February 1980, in which I told that wonderful lady that that morning my daughter Sara, then aged three years and four months, had come down to breakfast and announced to all of us “In my bedroom I have a garden and a mountain and a path”. This was perhaps the happiest day in my life. The visionary child had beheld with clarity what the ancient, pre-Islamic Persian sages called Hurqalya, the visionary land of Immortality. Henry Corbin has described this in his great study *Terre céleste et corps de Résurrection*. Little Sara’s simple words, *selige Worte*, immediately brought to mind the reproductions of the ancient Magian painting of the road to Paradise which can be found in the late Professor Corbin’s great and beautiful book.

(Footnote: I sent an advance copy of this page to my good friend Robert Ward in Seattle some weeks ago, mentioning that I particularly liked the poems of a certain Ms. H.A.. Robert wrote back: “H.A. is my, and my wife’s particular friend. A very talented young woman — just thirty years old — and one has high hopes for her. I showed her the note about your daughter’s vision of the holy garden in response to a story of H’s about a dream she had had about a similar garden: a dream which had frightened her and left her confused. Your explanation was the perfect anodyne for her upset. Re-armed she has picked up her sword and shield and gone forward to the battle lines.” Who dares to say that true poetry does nothing???? Even when it comes from a three year old? I too have gained strength and faith from this exchange across half the circumference of the world.

COMMUNICATION

We must hear the music of those Braque guitars
 Let unseen winds strum lightly on them
 Like sun on photographic paper making shapes

It must be beautiful that music that the wind
 Makes on the passive strings
 It must be beautiful, though neither you nor I
 Can make it so

It is the empty soundless wind
 That makes the leaves to tremble,
 Or dangling telegraph wires
 Like unknown choirs to sing
 All day all night
 Incessant as the birds
 Yet more mysterious

Lean your forehead on a tree
 And hear the trilling of the starry hosts
 The climbing and the drop, the drift of clouds
 And all the blood of animals and plants
 Which seeps and oozes, races like the birds
 Through spaces larger than the depth of sky

Savour that hidden music and rejoice
 And let the long vibrations hum
 Not only in your eye and bone
 But gently in the perishable tissues
 Of hand and heart and brain

Listen again and hear the ebb and flow
 Of crystals growing
 Grasses breaking through the soil
 Or baby organs forming in the womb
 Traced in the amniotic flow
 Like fluorescent images upon a screen
 Where forms turn into flesh and flesh into
 Music you may eternally remember

Creation rises from despair
 And ends in failure, but it is
 The ultimate temporal triumph
 Singing like time upon eternal
 Wings, borne gently on the blast
 Invulnerable

The heart-strings of the Eternal Man
Humming like bees among the lime-blooms

Listen with me
And put your hand, your heart, your soul
Softly in mine, and let us try
To feel the infinite universe within us
Without the mediacy of words

My soul, --
I never knew you were
A girl of seventeen listening the first time
To music that shall last for ever
In the poor heart of man

Vivaldi, Pachelbel and Bach
Would listen like that too
As you do, -- all their wonder-genius set aside
Chasing the stars and whipping atom-tops
Until all movement, modulation, rhythm
Becomes a single hum, a monotone like rain
And all philosophy hovers under a lime-tree leaf
All time and learning gradually stops
And man stops

Delighted simply by eternal grief
And grateful for eternal pain
Poor humankind is cheerful to complain

Holding the heavy plate and sickening with the drum
Salome suddenly is innocent again
And innocent will dance

Singing his anthem brief man chants
And now the Golden Age will come...

Venice
5th March 1969

Note: This poem from thirty years ago was printed in my *ELEMENTAL DISCOURSES* (Salzburg 1981) but I have no evidence that anyone has ever read it! The book has long since been out of print, but a samizdat reprint is available from me.

Poems from THE DULLER OLIVE

SNODGRASS WHO DIED LAST WEEK

After he found the rags of flesh and the insistent
 Hours of ennui; after the evening wanderings
 Disconsolate through ruins with the blunted ends of pleasure;
 After the memory rubbed like knuckles and knees
 And the dusty leaves of an earlier life,
 Middle-aged Snodgrass suddenly left the town.

He found home in an old shelter in the woods
 With a dozen coloured panels on the walls depicting
 An unimagined gaiety. Wet leaves
 And the sound of rain refreshed him, and he lived
 Content for nearly a year before he died.
*Why should the corncrake disturb him in mild June
 Or the raven in December?*

London,
 21st May 1948

SURJA'S DANCE

For Gloria Komai

Ram Gopal was the blood-red sun
 Golden upon the leaves. Above

The green erotic bird arose
 And the sword-bright rushes leapt
 At the first gleam of his ancient gilded coronal.

*The tawny panther smouldered in the glade:
 The ephemeridae danced madly in the air.*

London,
 24th June 1948

FORSYTE

Forsyte was content with the itineraries of other men;
 Footsteps forty years old and the memories of another generation
 Were sufficient inducement to lure him round the world
 Reliving the past for those who were no longer young,
 And often omitting to remember that he too
 Had a present. But he found that the present
 Was always ephemeral, the past everlastingly past.
 As a child he preferred Roman ruins
 To picnics and rubber-balls, the names of the fallen great
 To motor-cars, tin-soldiers or cricketers.
 Generally he tired of the larger cities,
 Had a horror of airports and rail termini;
 Spent much of his time searching for ancient churches
 Monuments tombs and sarcophagi,
 Preferring to take an irregular route
 Stopping only at the smaller towns.

Venice,
 August 1948

DANCE

Hermits and troglodytes
 In winter caves,
 Wise eremites or
 Ignorant aborigines
 Who have left the herd,
 All, all, are unaware
 Of music in a finger
 Or dance upon the tongue,
 Who sit upon a woven rug
 And lose the meaning in a word
 Pretending they were never young
 And that they never heard
 The beaten foot in clearings where
 The tribal demon in the jitterbug
 Unites them pair and pair.

London,
 1st January 1949

IMMORTALITY

After Plutarch: De Ser. Num., 17

Dear God, what waste, if Thou (Almighty!) made
 Man without soul to languish in the shade
 Of Death thy Slave; and, anguish dead, forbade
 His immortality.

Like Asia's mourning women planting seeds
 In shallow baskets when Adonis bleeds,
 Man briefly grows and briefly Oh! he breeds
 His slight Posterity,

Incarnate (God!), for Oh! some trivial span
 Like flowering fennel in an earthen pan
 Rootless, and dies again, (Thy servant Man!),
 Banned from Eternity.

London,
 1949

These five poems are from my *THE DULLER OLIVE: Poems 1942-1963* (University of Salzburg 1993).
 Very many of the poems in this recent book have never been published before, and many more were never
 collected.

Poems from A FALSE START: LONDON POEMS 1959-1963

REVISITING FAIRWARP

Remember the soft wind and the distant voices
 Riding the moist air of Spring over the harrowed fields
 In March, and the horses, three of them, gambolling.
 The first chiff-chaffs teetered in the thornbush, timidly
 Anticipating the April sun and the first dried bents,
 The advent of insects. Even in the cool late-Winter evening
 Above the cold cabbage-patch the gnats would swarm
 Finding a warm pocket or column of rising air.
 It was there we would heel in the new young plants
 Holing the damp soil with a blunt dibber. Thick cakes of mud
 Like parathas clung to our boots, and we killed each wireworm singly,
 If the clodhopping robin didn't pick it off first. The blackbird
 Angelically sang in the bare apple-tree opening his orange bill
 In the watery air, or chased his heavy ladies on the lawn.
 The woods nearby were waterlogged still, the old cart-tracks impassible
 Where the charcoal-burners gathered the cordwood, and once
 Long ago the green glades rang with the noise of forges.
 Now they are still but for the bulky doves stuffed full of green
 And grain, puffing and blowing like bellows, in the bare branches.
 Here the quarrelsome jay screams at every event
 And the exotic pheasant from time to time blares unseen
 In the bottoms. The bright-painted woodpecker yells,
 And the long-tailed tit gently warns of marauders.

It was dark by six and you used to make tea and crumpets
 While I cleaned off the spade in the garage.
 The house was still in the evening, and we never thought,
 Sitting quietly there by the spitting logs and the dog that dreamed,
 Of that unknown land of tears, and its mystery
 Only a few sodden acres away.

Fairwarp,
 April 1963.

APPEARANCES

Shall I go to Vanity Fair where the pop songs charm
 And the food is fair but expensive for what it is?
 Where the young are more foolish than most but quite well-behaved
 Except on Saturday nights. Or shall I stay
 In the small uncomfortable room of my self, with my books
 And the two thousand unanswered letters? The question
 Is hardly important — I am as much alone in the crowd
 As in the bareboard solitude of bookshelf and bed.
 No one is interested in "I" — not even myself —
 I shall be content to read and to think and, if lucky, to write
 Whether in the vapid café gloom or beneath my desklight.
 It is all the same — once you let the atmosphere settle down
 You can think alone, or in a crowd, equally easily
 If you've something to think about.
 I ask myself the eternal questions over and over again
 Banal and ambitious as they admittedly are.
 Why am I here, and why isn't it nicer, and
 Who started it all anyhow? No one could have been such a fool,
 Such a bungling fool to create such a world as this
 Purposely — *surely?* But I enjoy it, all the same,
 The variety, the agreeable delusions, the pain
 Which always hurts, but never too much, as in a dream.

Outside the meaningless stars must be shining,
 Sprayed in recurring mosaic on the false ceiling
 Revolving and lazily peeling above us, as it has been
 For centuries. It doesn't worry me much
 To think that the pretty pattern of Pole and Bear and Cross
 Is simply a chance design we've got used to
 But which is quickly changing through the swift millennia,
 And that the whole mass of stars is merely a cloud of dust.

London,
 28th April 1963

The summer's mighty cargo has been loaded
 In harbour all prepared the Sun's ship lies
 Behind you now the seagull plunges cries
 The Summer's mighty cargo has been loaded

In harbour all prepared the Sun's ship lies
 And on the lips of the galleon's figurehead
 Monstrous and vast the Lemurs' smiles spread
 In harbour all prepared the Sun's ship lies

Behind you now the seagull plunges cries
 Out of the West the order comes Go Down
 Still in the light with open eyes you'll drown
 Behind you now the seagull plunges cries.

translated from the German
 of Ingeborg Bachmann

Two poems from BERLIN-TEGEL 1964

THE AGONY

Silent walker in the snow

The wrist
Withers but not the bracelet
Rings but not fingers
Are found in ancient tombs

A silent man amid a hundred clocks
Tearing at hairsprings

Vain

And wicked as a genius should be

Pick up these nuggets in the barren rocks

Put off these human caricatures — become
Childlike curious
Complex and immoral

The savage rose
Exposes
Its rows of thorns

The lewd spring comes from winter's chastity

The desert flowers
With blood-red petals
and the lion

Slouches down
To the drinking pool

The holy man's tormented cries
Rattle off distant peaks
His lice
Jump
And brazen noon
Scorches the pallid skies

Berlin-Tegel,
10th August 1964

Note: This is one of many poems in free verse in my BERLIN-TEGEL 1964, due in September 1994 from University of Salzburg. I find no conflict between strict traditional forms and free form, so-called. When the first phrase of a poem 'comes' to me, I simply know instinctively what the form is going to be, even if I have no idea what the poem is going to be 'about'.

SONG

for Edith Sitwell

Grass is growing on the moon
 And dew is falling from the grass
 Drought dries the earth, but soon
 Will pass

The moon has no left hand
 The night is cold upon the sand

The moon has no right leg
 I had to beg, I had to beg

A lazy rain begins to fall
 The crocuses are buried yet
 The fields beneath the moon are all
 Sopping wet

The moon now has no hands
 She's hopping o'er the sands

The moon now has no legs
 The Phoenix lays her eggs

The nights are dark without the moon
 The fat frog quietly spawns
 The cowslips will be flowering soon
 And the snail put out his horns

Berlin-Tegel,
 30th October 1964

Note: This is one of the many lyrical poems in my BERLIN-TEGEL 1964 (University of Salzburg, September 1994). Very many of the poems in this new volume have never been published before. Those that have been, are scattered in so many small magazines, that no one person could have seen them all.

THE LITTLE MAGAZINES IN GREAT BRITAIN 1939-1992

Wolfgang Görtschacher

At last! This vast informative and wide-ranging-paperback explores the world of the magazines of Great Britain over the last 50 years. With a definitive history of the Little Magazine, a phenomenology that includes a look at 'The Editor — A Manic Obsessive' as well as 'The Contributors' and 'The Audience', and interviews with critics, poets, librarians and a wide range of magazine editors, followed by an evaluation of the magazine's themselves, this book is both a fascinating read and an invaluable reference book.

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Derek Stanford, Malcolm Bradbury, John Heath-Stubbs, Geoffrey Soar,
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Patricia Oxley / *Acumen*, David Woolley / *Westwords*.

The Little Magazines in Great Britain is published by The University of Salzburg Press,
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A limited number only have been imported.

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Damned by a purely negative and tendentious review in POETRY REVIEW by the 'wee man' from VERSE in St. Andrews (VERSE wasn't mentioned in it!) this blockbuster is the definitive guide to the little mags of U.K. over the last fifty or sixty years (Brittle Mags?). It is a scholarly and serious informative compilation which is indispensable to every library and every poet and critic. If it is deficient in critical judgments on the hundreds of little mags examined, this is no default. If you ask "Is AGENDA better than PN?" or "Is the TLS worse than LRB?" you surely deserve to end up in provincial St. Andrews, a sort of Malebolgettino. Wolfgang Görtschacher gave up five years of precious life and a place in the Austrian national football team to getting this enormous amount of information into more-or-less order. There's hope for humanity yet. The little man from Fife, which perhaps was still on the map when Douglas Young was there, refers not only to his regrettable self but also to his colleagues in U.K. and U.S.A. as "wee men". He seems proud of that kailyard postmodernist denomination. — P.R.

OUR GUEST POET

MICHAEL IVENS

Two Poems

FAUST'S DREAM

I dreamt that I was twenty three
 And thus your age and fancy free;
 But in my dream I knew wild rage —
 You loved a man of my true age.

COURTS OF LUST

Very soon, somebody must
 Get round to setting up Courts of Lust
 And making true love a pernicious crime
 In keeping with the temper of the time.

reprinted from *OUTPOSTS*, edited by Roland John.

WHO AND WHAT IS MICHAEL IVENS?

A year or two ago I read in *OUTPOSTS* 174/175 two brief quatrains which arrested my attention and enchanted me. The author was a certain Michael Ivens, of whose existence I had never heard. Simple and amusing as these two mini-poems were, intuition told me that their begetter was a man of wide culture, genuine humanity and delightful humour. For me, the reading of most contemporary poetry is a painful and often boring activity, rarely more illuminating than the reading of bureaucratic documents in some municipal office. I immediately wrote off to the unknown poet c/o *OUTPOSTS* expressing my delight.

“Through the dark ways what guide
 but heart’s delight?”

as Kathleen Raine wrote in a recent poem, wise and beautiful as ever. Mr Ivens responded friendly and generously and an extensive correspondence resulted. I still don’t know Mr. Ivens personally but there is no doubt in my mind that he is a sympathetic character and a man with a phenomenally well-stocked mind and with absolutely no pedantry or question-begging dogmatism. My purpose in *MARGINALIA* is not to present either book reviews or comprehensive critiques of authors and their works, but rather simply to share the delight I have in reading good books and giving the good news to my small circle of readers. The Mammon Press (Mr. Fred Beake of Bath, my home city) are to be congratulated for the publication of one of Mr. Ivens’ best books in 1990, in a modest but

most agreeable format — *The New Divine Comedy*. This consists of thirty-two poems recording “visits to the lands of *oltretomba*” which at a first encounter are extremely amusing without ever being slick or glossy, but which implicitly are soaked with a profound familiarity with the very great authors of the past, whether of remote antiquity or of fairly recent writers like Unamuno and Gentile or Borges. I found all of the forty odd notes to the poems not merely illuminating and helpful but also interesting in themselves.

*Thomas Browne led me to God's library.
There were infinite books: all varying
Histories of the universe. My own
Biographies stretched further than I could see.*

A Note on this says: “Boethius’ worry on the relationship between a foreseeable future and freedom was taken up by the Italian humanist Valla in his dialogue *De libero arbitrio*, by Leibniz in the *Theodicy* and Gentile in *The Theory of Mind as Pure Act*. The answer is that God sees all possibilities, which therefore exist: what I have experienced as ‘wrong time’. This can be expressed in a myth of a graduation of possible lives from the perfect to the abominable.”

This recalls for me the words of Titus Burckhardt: “Now spirit is essentially knowledge; nothing can prevent it from knowing itself and at the same time knowing all the possibilities contained within itself. Therein lies the mode of access, not to the material structure of things in particular and in detail, but to their permanent essences.”

Mr. Ivens thirty-two poems are something more than “possibilities” — each poem offers a plethora of possibilities. Mr. Ivens exerts the faculty of imagination in a masterly way. In this connection I think it worth mentioning that the title of one of the most profound works of Leon Shestov, *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness* had to be rendered into English as *All Things are possible*. Shestov is central for Ivens.

These scenes, mainly from Hell and Purgatory, but occasionally subsuming a convincing vision of Paradise, are witty, agreeable and totally devoid of any sort of malice or witch-hunting. He can make fun of his best friends (like William Gerhardie) or be indulgent to his spiritual enemies. There is richness of imagination, fancy and above all of symbol. The language is of the simplest, in the best sense. What amazed me was that there was virtually no metaphor, and absolutely no metonymy (the *sine qua non* of the so-called post-modernists). Nor is there any of the dried-milk of human kindness so abundantly supplied by the sociologists and the ideologists and pseudo-humanists and humanitarians of today, embattled in the UNO glass house; the Embassies, NATO, and all the other ineffective agencies.

Wisely, Mr. Ivens has made no attempt to imitate Dante. Religion and theology do not obtrude on the largely existential and psychological content of the poems. These are poems, not a philosophical text-book. We are closer to Cabell’s *Jurgen* and his dream-world than to the jargon of the prevailing modes of official academic poetry. If I say that I have read the book at least ten times both for pleasure and enlightenment you may be tempted to write off to Mammon (what an awful name for a small and harmless poetry press!) and BUY the book and READ it. I guarantee you a positive and agreeable, even animating, experience, whether you’re orthodox, atheist, heretic or post-modernist.

Mammon Press operate from 12 Dartmouth Avenue, Bath BA2 1AT. SOM; U.K.

Peter Russell
Christmas 1993

XXV THE PLACE OF LADYES

One dreamless night my guide was Branch Cabell
 (He of Jurgen); We went, not to Hell,
 But to an obscure place: cool and shady
 To find my long-sought gracious ladye.
 All my wistful loves were there:
 Helen combing her golden hair,
 Cleopatra, Garbo, Josephine Baker;
 None of these could ease or slake a
 Persistent passion in a tired heart, weary
 With unfulfilment: Dietrich, Piaf, Blossom Dearie,
 Ophelia and fair Rosalind;
 Once with these I could have sinned.
 Maid Marion, Monroe, Garland, Gretchen,
 Nuns and succubi from Hell's kitchen,
 La Princesse Lointaine and Doll Tearsheet,
 The auburn lady with the dancing feet,
 Anna Karenina, Sonia, Carmen,
 The long-necked wife of Tutankhamun,
 The girl glimpsed from a passing train,
 The girl who brought remembered pain,
 All the lost loves of my youth.

One who contained all their mysteries
 And shared my love in all my histories,
 Kissed my lips. 'At last you've won.'
 The kiss was the chill of a skeleton
 As she faded into gleaming bone
 Leaving me searching and alone.

'All your loves are out of fashion,'
 Cabell said gently with compassion.
 'What you looked for was a reflection,
 'A glimpse, a shadow, even a defection;
 'A memory of Eden's stream
 'That winds its way through a lost dream.'
 His sigh was rueful and deep
 As he returned me to blank sleep.

Michael Ivens

TO THE LONE PINE TREE

Never was your headway easy
 You lift up high your branches towards nothingness
 Hoping that light will be beside you
 But you are far away from the living world
 For ever, oh lonely pine tree

Your roots reach deep down
 In the ground searching for the lakes
 Which have made the soil fertile
 Thirst is the high price you pay
 For ever, oh pensive wanderer

You flee from your bounds with your mind
 Searching for the true divine port;
 I too move along your stream
 At its source I also bow
 And watch the ocean being born.

You don't believe in legends or magicians
 Not even the sun is round any more
 By night you see shadows like dragons
 I confuse your trunk with your branches
 Silent friend, you wander...

In this dark valley you can hear
 A voice calling from the far distances
 Of the real cosmos and of the present
 I hear and in me springs new hope
 Now I feel my people close to me

But the garden is just a dream
 Your green needles also hope
 That the sun will rise from its decline
 The future days remain still vague
 You are awaiting now your fate.

English translation
 from his own Italian
 by Peter George Russell

Peter George Russell wrote this poem just after becoming fifteen years of age. It refers back eight or nine years to the period when we were a happy and united family, and he and his two bigger sisters used to camp out and play by 'the lone pine' about a mile or so up the mountainside from this house. It's a wild place: the mountain torrent, Resco, rushes past noisily below it and the Roman (? Etruscan) bridge precariously spans the ferocious rapids — it might be a scene out of Salvator Rosa, but really it is here and now, and then and there, and eternal. It was the children's Eden. There was even a Snake, a huge viper that used to sun himself beneath the pine-tree. I think that life for the children then aged eight, nine, ten, was probably more real for them then than any life they have known since. In 1989 their mother took them away to Jackpot, Nevada, on the borders of Idaho and Utah, and there they lived with the tourist gamblers, the illegal Mexican immigrants and the swarms of whores, till Peter George could stand it no longer, and he came back here just after his fourteenth birthday. At the risk of appearing like an over-indulgent father, I truly believe that with this, for me, excruciatingly beautiful poem, Peter George became a real poet.

(continues bottom of next page)

AL PINO SOLITARIO

Mai non fu facile il tuo cammino
 I tuoi rami alzi verso il niente
 Sperando che luce ti sia vicino
 Ma sei lontano dal mondo vivente
 Da sempre, o solitario pino

Le tue radici scendono profondo
 Nel terreno per cercare i laghi
 Che hanno reso il suolo fecondo
 È la sete caro prezzo che paghi
 Da sempre, o pensoso vagabondo

Fuggi dal tuo confino con la mente
 Cercando il vero porto divino;
 Mi muovo anch'io sul tuo torrente
 Alla sua fonte pure io m'inchino
 Ed osservo l'oceano nascente.

Non t'illudi di leggende o maghi
 Neanche il sole è più rotondo
 La notte vedi ombre come draghi
 Il tuo tronco coi tuoi rami confondo
 Amico silenzioso, girovagli...

In questa valle oscura si sente
 Una voce che chiama dallo sfondo
 Del cosmo reale e del presente
 Odo e di speranza mi cirondo
 Ora sento vicina la mia gente

Ma è solo un sogno il giardino
 Sperano anche i tuoi verdi aghi
 Che sorga il sole dal suo declino
 Restano i futuri giorni vaghi
 Aspetti adesso il tuo destino.

Peter George Russell
 Neumarkt (Austria)
 11 marzo 1993

It has been published in Italian in *Bottega di Poesia* (ed. Gilberto Gavioli), to whom we are grateful to acknowledge permission to reprint it, and it will before long appear in American and British reviews.

Peter George has published *Pensieri e Sonetti* (Arezzo), *Ungarettiane*, *26 Poesie*, translated into Italian from English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, *Sonetti barocchi e rinascimentali*, and the Italian translation of *AFRICA: a Dream* by Peter Russell (bilingual edition). He has also translated the whole of Kathleen Raine's *Selected Poems* into Italian, the whole of Franco Loi's *Memoria* into English, about half Yeats' *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* into Italian, and six of my own volumes into Italian. Peter George has one great virtue: he knows very well that at just sixteen years old he is serving an apprenticeship to a difficult craft, and that apprentices don't write masterpieces. My very dear and wise friends Kathleen Raine and Franco Loi have both begged me not to force him into literary endeavours and I think I can honestly say that I have not done so. When he works at them I try to encourage him, but it must be very difficult for a young man to have a father so active and dedicated to the concept of poetry.

P.R.

BELLOWING ARK

A review that I always enjoy receiving new issues of is BELLOWING ARK (perhaps a slightly off-putting title until you realise it's an expression lifted aptly from Dylan Thomas). Its Editor, Mr. Robert D. Ward (P.O.B. 45637, Seattle, WA 98145) is a man of literary taste, critical acumen AND the ability not only to produce bi-monthly, regularly and well-presented issues, but also one who comes to grips with the real problems of creativity and the Imagination. He is also producing very attractive looking new books by poets who are more than well worth reading, doing all the work of production himself. Mr. Ward doesn't go for the big 'hyped' names (nor is he aggressively prejudiced against them). He is a cultured man who knows how to use the scholarly and the academic as authentic instruments, but also how to avoid the trade-unionism of academia, the mortmain of the Creative Writing mafia. Mr. Ward is not a polemist (like horrid me), but he, and his ally Mr. James Schofield, have balanced and wise estimates of the momentarily influential flood of post-modernism.

Of course one can't expect poets to be serious or to speak their mind coherently but we should be tolerant towards them because they are, after all, the only people who write poetry

Prof. *Italo Coglione*

Ordinario di letteratura inglese, Università di Cagoneria Veneta.

from the blurb on the dust-wrapper of *Africa: A Dream* by Peter Russell

On PETER RUSSELL's *Selected Poems, 1947-1974. All for the Wolves* (Anvil Press, 1984) a very well-known and highly respected poet and scholar, whose name we omit because such a statement might well damage his/her reputation, wrote to the author the following words: "Your poems shine out like stars in the darkness of the present poetry 'scene'."

Small-minded people will see that merely as flattery. I see it as coming from a generous heart, — *il cuor gentil*.

W.G. Shepherd's article "*Identities: A Selective Survey of the Poetry of P.R.*", accepted for the special P.R. supplement of AGENDA, Autumn 1994, contains two previously unpublished poems of QUINTILIUS, "Mirmillo" and "I am my own Erinnyes".

PN REVIEW and 'Journalism': A TIMELY REMINDER

"Journalism" says Karl Kraus "only seems to be serving the present. In reality, it destroys the intellectual receptivity of posterity"

quoted by Editor of PN Review, in *PN Review 21 Years*, 1994.

This is a very timely reminder. A lot of little mags are becoming very journalistic and even at pains to be rather cheaply "with it". This of course is to betray the very purpose of the little magazine.

Contrast the seriousness of this heartfelt passage

From 'Marina Warner in Conversation'

PN Review 86

Could a secular body of myth stand up against bodies of imagery which offer the fundamental identifications of faith?

If you look at how the Greek pantheon worked for the Renaissance, you have a sense of how this might be possible. I'm looking for a sort of Renaissance situation with regard to Catholic Christian images. I suppose it's a matter of allegory rather than belief. But the trouble philosophically is what happens when there is no-one who believes them — if you arrive at a point where no-one believes in Christ or Mary and these are simply signs floating free of that basis. Do we need someone to believe in them for them to work? I think psychologically we do. For instance, I find *ex-votos* giving thanks for miracles performed very moving. I don't believe in the miracle but I believe in the power of faith experienced by someone who believes in the miracle. And yet I'm also very distressed by it. I've been to many holy places and seen many pilgrims, and have been very distressed by their faith because I think that they're fooling themselves. And yet faith in itself communicates a human affirmation of hope.

It seems to me that Ms. Warner has identified the central problem of our time.

Loss of faith in the Divine or the Spirit, caused as much by the lack of spirituality in the Churches as by any rootless scientism, has disoriented modern man drastically.

There is a real danger of little mags becoming mere journalism, like the products of the columnists and disc jockeys, who after all are merely the paid servants of the money power. We need 'warners' not minion salesmen, a Cassandra not politically correct conformists who have sold out to the dominations and powers.

Perhaps we should switch off the box and turn back to old numbers of PN, and even more to Marina Warner's books on the Virgin Mary, Queen Victoria, Joan of Arc, and the feminine in general.

Nous tombons tous en proie des vers

WATER TO OCEAN TO MOON

She can renew and can create
 Green from the ground and flowers from stones
 In valleys parched set streams in spate
 And raise up with a word dry bones

Peter Russell

“Your book, *A PROGRESS OF THE SOUL*, is an extraordinary vision of the poet struggling with the metamorphosis of the human spirit into divine poetry. What you are doing in poetry is treading the sacred path. In an age of spiritually embittered materialism, this is miraculous and I own it a privilege to be in correspondence with you”.

The above generous and heartening words come from a man I do not know, who is at once one of the bigger names in contemporary British poetry and a high official in several national poetry institutions. I am sure he wouldn't mind me giving his name, but I do not want to compromise him with the nihilistic powers of the Establishment.

The very terms of his praise are precisely those which turn off the poetry editors not only of the Oxford-W.C. axis, but also the great majority of provincial poetry publishers.

* * *

I recall too with pride a letter from the late John Betjeman to me in, 1971 saying “Your poem ‘The Holy Virgin of Mileševa’ is a most beautiful poem. I have always wanted to write a poem in praise of the Blessed Virgin but each time I’ve tried I’ve failed. You have succeeded. It’s a lovely poem.”

There’s a marvellous passage in one of G.R.S. Mead’s *Echoes of the Gnosis* booklets where he says that only by giving the bread and the wine of your spirit to others can you nourish yourself. “Cast your bread upon the waters” has always been one my most treasured sacred instructions. It’s taken sixty years for me to begin to see some return, but I’ve had faith in it all this time. I think that’s why poor, infirm and insecure as I am, I am incomparably happy. Blessed in fact. Though who knows when the next bright bolt will fall?

from CHAPMAN No 75 (Jan. 1994, Edinburgh)

Myopics beware the latest works of Peter Russell to appear from the University of Salzburg Press: a magnifying glass reveals uneven value — though value there is — in these four volumes, from animadversion and verse in Italian and English (*Poetic Asides I & II*), to an impressionistic summary of his long term friendship with Ezra Pound (*The Pound Connection*): his defence of Pound's politics is unconvincing, his remark on McLuhan's interest in effect at the expense of cause genuinely sharp. A good editor would help, and, having been marginalised by 'The Movement', Russell's poetry deserves reassessment in these less xenophobic times. *The Image of Woman as a Figure of the Spirit*, a theoretical work, curiously has a picture of three males gazing from the cover.

The "three males" gazing from the cover are in fact one male and two females, that is, the poet and his two daughters. The feminist Marxist vision of the author of the chronicle is more prejudiced than perspicacious, certainly far more sexist than the author under discussion.

P.R.

extract from "Poetry Comment" by GLYN PURSGLOVE
in ACUMEN No 19, April 1994 (U.K.)

There is also much that wouldn't recommend itself to most contemporary literary editors in another Salzburg publication, Peter Russell's *The Duller Olive* (135pp; \$15.00; available from Peter Russell, La Turbina, I-52026 Pian di Scò (Arezzo), Italy) which collects 'Early poems uncollected or previously unpublished 1942-1959. The traditions from which Russell's work grows are more wide-ranging and less purely English than those that lie behind that of Edward Boaden Thomas. In both cases, however, the genuineness with which the writing grows from and extends the great traditions of poetry is perhaps the very thing which effectively guarantees their neglect in so rootless an age as our own. *The Duller Olive* takes its title from lines by Walter Savage Landor and, fittingly, concentrates on the more 'classical' side of Russell's work.

SIX SONNETS

by Peter Russell

So big the island! Who would know what calm
Engenders in the bones of men their rest?
Less than a requiem but far more blest
Than sleep beneath the shadow of a palm,
This island happiness is like a psalm
Melodious, triumphant to the breast,
Yet larger, sweeter, never fearing lest
Some god or man should take away its balm.

Each landsman knows all island beauty is
Environed by the sea, untouched by snow,
Its sons unherded like the mainland sheep
Or stars unnoticed in the galaxies.
This calm is of a single star, its glow
Is afternoon unending, summer's sleep.

O harmony of stars and wintry sun
That glistens on a church's white facade —
O arches fair-proportioned one by one,
O dark-blue domes eurhythmically starred;
Pythagorean ratios everywhere
Gentle among the fury lull the soul,
Like Macedonian wheels divide the air
And knit the scattered fragments of the whole.

O music, architecture, sculpture, painting,
You healing fates, physicians of our woe,
Open your gates to every soul that's fainting
And your ambrosial remedies bestow!
Your science only stops our clay from tainting
— Symmetria, decor, distributio.

O sandy time who speakest alway of tomorrow,
Thy heart were stony didst thou have a heart.
Small hope thou lendest us, which we do borrow
Dearly, but Fear thou givst us at our start.
Whet thy long scythe! Tithonus greets the dawn,
But takes no joy in his longevity.
Thy favours must be paid with age and scorn,
And brevity's extravagance to thee.

Listen, thou usurer, for I know how to cheat thee!
I'll forge a chain of words with links of rhyme
Of tested strain, and I'll arrest and beat thee,
And thrust thee, miser, in the generous slime.
There once again thy own soft worms shall eat thee,
And there eternally thou'lt serve thy time.

We spent the summer lazing in the North
While Helmut spent his honeymoon at Belsen.
We spent it swimming, going back and forth,
While Helmut studied Southey's *Life of Nelson*.
Helmut was working eighteen hours a day,
Elfrida was distinctly lonely, sighed
For all the months at Köln she'd passed away
Chaste, till she came with Helmut, as his bride.

We were unmarried, saw no point in it,
Saw something scientific in the sky
And something musical about the grit
That crunched beneath our feet as we walked by.
We both deceived each other quite a bit.
Helmut loved Southey — he never told a lie.

I lay upon the grass in Petrarch's garden,
A traveller in time as well as space.
I felt that I must beg the Poet's pardon
For my intrusion, and sue his Spirit's grace.
A sweet perfume as in some bower in Arden
Laced with the song of birds suffused that place
Enclosed and tranquil, whose ghostly gentle warden
Immortal sings of one immortal Face.

It was before the nightingale begins his song —
The apple-trees and violets were in bloom;
I gazed on the great Laurel that had long
Graced this green place, till it was hazed in gloom;
Then on night's loom, Venus grew bright and strong,
And a small light shone forth from Petrarch's room.

Seems once again the winter of my heart
This chilly August day that keeps me in
Against my will reminded of that sin
No one admits to now but all take part
In, honouring by omission, hiding art
That wilfully dissembles discipline
But is a vile parody wherein
We exalt the base and overpraise the smart.

Amongst the vegetarians and savage greens,
The social crediters, nudists and freaks
Of every kind who cultivate ideals,
(Like the Pythagoreans banning beans),
Some kind of partial vision, stammering, speaks —
But all they seem to think of is their meals.

ANNOUNCEMENT from University of Salzburg (Austria),
Department of English.

Widespread recognition has come to Peter Russell late. After a life of devoted service to the Muse, his published works are legion. Many of them can be obtained directly from the poet: Peter Russell, La Turbina, I-52026 Pian di Scò (Arezzo), Italy (Tel. & Fax: 055/960674). As the poet lives exclusively from the sale of his books and pamphlets, he is totally dependent on public support.

The TIMES described Peter Russell in his collection ALL FOR THE WOLVES (1984) as "a poet of the high romantic tradition" and the creator of a "supreme fiction" .

The Milanese poet, Franco Loi, wrote of his latest volume of poems THEORIES (TEORIE - bilingual edition in English and Italian, Rome 1991) in IL SOLE 24 ORE (31 July 1991): "In these poems of Russell, I recognise the style of that highest tradition which unites intensity of thought, simplicity of language, musical quality and the sacrality of imagery, with a profound general culture. He seems to continue that ancient dialogue, the troubled terrible discoursing of poetry which spans the generations and reaches out to the peoples of the world in the mirror of human folly and of renewed hope ... and like Homer, wrings from the darkness of the self and of the world, greater realities and hidden truths." The volume was also reviewed at length by Thomas Fleming in CHRONICLES: A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE, published by The Rockford Institute, Chicago, in November 1991. Fleming called him "the last of the great modernists".

Peter Russell also edits an occasional review MARGINALIA "combining lyric and satiric poetry with acerbic observations on the anti-poetic scene", which he distributes gratis against a contribution towards the printing and mailing costs.

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG (or direct from Peter Russell):

Outsiders Vol. 3: *The Pound Connection*, 1992.

Outsiders Vol. 4: *The Image of Woman as a Figure of the Spirit*, 1992.

Outsiders Vol. 5/6: *Poetic Asides*, 2 vols., 1992, 1993. Lectures and addresses

Outsiders Vol. 7: *The Duller Olive: Poems 1942-1958 previously uncollected or unpublished*, 1992

Outsiders Vol. 8: *A False Start: London Poems 1959-63*, 1993.

Outsiders Vol. 9: "The Angry Elder" *The Epigrams of Peter Russell*. pp50 essay by James Hogg. Plus essays on Ashbery, M.I. Fornes, Tom Stoppard, W. Oxley.

Outsiders Vol. 10: P.F. Donovan, *Condensations* (Introduction by Peter Russell, pp17), 1993.

Outsiders Vol. 11: Glyn Pursglove, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Peter Russell*, 1995.

Outsiders Vol. 12: Berlin-Tegel 1964 with pp50 Introduction by Peter Russell

In preparation: *From the Apocalypse of Quintilius* (1985-1993)

Each volume, post free \$15.00

Order from PETER RUSSELL, La Turbina, I-52026 Pian di Scò (Arezzo), Italy (Tel. & Fax: 055/960674).

TWENTY YEARS AGO

extract from: A REVIEW FROM "THE TIMES" (London) OF RECENT POETRY (June 5th, 1975)
by Robert Nye.

Of Quintilius we are told the splendid libel that he died of a surfeit of lentils and that when the only copy of his second book of Odes went down in a shipwreck Savonarola said, "The Church can afford the loss". A sharp shadow — and it goes perfectly with the body of verse assembled in Peter Russell's *The Elegies of Quintilius* (Anvil Press, £1.95 and 90p). Russell has been working on this pastiche for years - drafts of the first three elegies appeared as long ago as 1954, when the *TLS* hailed them as "the bitter sweet musings of a Roman country gentleman". That Roman gentleman has grown sweeter and bitterer meanwhile thanks to close textual criticism from Ezra Pound. Russell's *Quintilius* — like Pound's *Propertius* — offers at once a translation and a criticism, and must in the end be reckoned as neither, but something rarer: a poem, a supreme fiction,

*A little vice never did very much harm,
But Virtue has ruined many an innocent fellow.*

This has that quality of authority which comes when a man achieves his own tone and pitch after a lifetime learning the craft of verse.

The magazine *Agenda*, now in its fifteenth year, has for centrepiece in its current issue an outstanding sequence of sonnets, "Lachrimae", by Geoffrey Hill, as well as some instructive autobiographical fragments by the late David Jones. The merit of *Agenda* is that it has always been committed to difficult and dangerous things like genius — witness its support of Pound when he was still in "the bughouse".

Its editor, William Cookson, like Peter Russell, is a man who deserves recognition for his services to English letters, which have been uncommonly unselfish, dedicated to the thankless task of getting decent verse into print in a country where there is a ready market only for mediocrity. *Agenda* costs £1.50. You can get it from 5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE.

Finally, let me recommend a curious little volume which consists of a poem written in 1782 but never previously published — Charles Wesley's *The American War* (Keepsake Press, £3.95 and £1.95 — 26 Sydney Road, Richmond, Surrey). This is a backhand way to add to the celebrations of the bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence, for Wesley's high Tory satire sees Britain's defeat as deliberately contrived by the Whig general Sir William Howe, paw in glove with Washington, whose virtues, the poet concedes, may have been "worthy of a nobler cause". Such [sic] a spirited attack on democracy run riot has its points in the week of our first national referendum. The introduction and notes provided by Donald Baker make almost as delicious an apparatus of entertainment as Mr Russell's learned fictions about Quintilius. At the heart of each of these books there is however an irreducible seriousness, and this is what one values. In Russell's case it is concern for the ideal of good verse. In Wesley's it is concern that the worship of Man might prove more disastrous than the worship of God. The two views are not mutually exclusive, and of all the books in this batch I commend these two unfashionable ones as providing food for thought and other appetites.

QUINTILIUS: *In praise of Iambics*

When wily Lykambes
withdrew his permission
for young Archilochus
to marry Neoboulé
his pretty daughter

Enraged the poet penned
 such sharp iambs against
 the father's and the daughter's
 treachery

Both
 hanged themselves

Did any of your much vaunted
 free verse mumblings
 in broken pentameters
 ever kill anyone?

Translated from a Parian text,
 Neumarkt, Austria
 6th October 1992

QUINTILIUS

LUPUS

"Do you give, Quintilius, so much as one pious thought
 (or even a fig) for your poor girl now,
 When scorching fevers' moist sciroccos waste
 Her sopping brow, and Achaemenian lance-thrusts twist
 In all her joints?" The ruddy conflagrations flush
 Her once white skin as though the blushing wolf
 Had seized her by the throat. "Yet would I not trouble
 Ever to master this dread disease unless
 In my heart I were convinced it was your own true wish.
 What use would it be to conquer this lurid malady
 If phlegmatic you are able to brook my pains
 In your indifferent blood's cold sluggish stream?"
 The tablets' dull wax tore at my helpless heart
 And I prayed: "Gods in your upper stories hold back your wrath!
 Let not red Mars pimple my girl's soft cheek
 With fiery eruptions, nor smutty Vulcan lock her sweet joints
 As though with the toothed brass clasps of cold-blooded Vulnerarius.
 A loved one's pain is even harder for all fond lovers to bear,
 And to be called uncaring the sharpest-barbed of all Erôs' irresistible darts.

tr. 15th June 1986

Note: This trifling piece, written in elegiacs of very dubious quality (not to say dubious quantities) would hardly be worth translation, let alone publication were it not for the certain confirmation it gives us for Q's nodding acquaintance, as a quack doctor, with that disease known as Lupus by Hippocrates, and later named *érythémateux* in 1851 by Pierre Cazenave and later more fully investigated by Sir William Osler at Johns Hopkins and definitively named systemic lupus erythematosus. Rhetoric is, of course, a despicable vice, but the slightest rudiments of true scientific knowledge are something to be commended even in a decadent barbarian like the bard of Sfax.

Jesus Christ, Sun of God

Ancient Cosmology and Early Christian Symbolism

Jesus said, "It is I who am the light which is above them all. It is I who am the All. From Me did the All come forth, and unto Me did the All extend. Split a piece of wood, and I am there..."

— *The Gospel of Thomas*

Based on many years of research, this unique, highly-illustrated study throws a penetrating light on the inner teachings of early Christianity. The early Christian gnosis did not spring up in isolation, but drew upon earlier sources. In this book, many of these sources are revealed for the first time in the modern era. Special emphasis is placed on the Hellenistic doctrine of the "Solar Logos" and the early Christian symbolism which depicted Jesus as the Spiritual Sun, the illuminating source of order, harmony, and spiritual insight.

"In the beginning was the Logos," states the Gospel of John. In the Logos was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. The term "Logos" is usually translated as "Word," but this is highly inaccurate, based on a translation of a translation. In the original Greek, Logos refers to the order of the universe, the natural law of harmony which underlies the cosmos and links together all the parts of creation into a greater whole. In Hellenistic mysticism, the Logos was also personified as the "Gnostic Revealer," the spiritual teacher of liberating knowledge (*gnôsis*) and heavenly wisdom.

The earliest church fathers refer to secret teachings possessed by the first Christians, "the secret traditions of true knowledge." These teachings were based on the Pythagorean science of number and geometry, a study which throws light on the nature of the Logos, the pattern behind creation. This book conclusively shows how the Pythagorean symbolism of cosmic harmony was taken over by some of the first Christians, and how it forms the basis of the New Testament allegories of the 153 fish in the unbroken net and the feeding of the five thousand.

David Fideler studied Hellenistic philosophies and religions at the University of Pennsylvania, specializing in the study of Christian origins and ancient cosmology. He is the editor of *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library* and editor of the annual review *Alexandria: The Journal of the Western Cosmological Traditions*. He is the founder of Phanes Press, which publishes quality books on the spiritual and philosophical traditions of the Western world.

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- Conclusively demonstrates how the New Testament allegories of the 153 fish in the net and the feeding of the five thousand were consciously based on the earlier geometrical symbolism of Apollo and Hermes, the pre-Christian personifications of the Logos.

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PETER RUSSELL writes: I would like to add my small voice in harmony with the chorus of praise on the second page of this announcement, which is in no sense a 'hype' but sober and true description. We are living at the end of two thousand years of so-called Christianity. Mr. Fideler's entirely non-tendentious examination of the Jewish-Hellenistic culture out of which the first centuries of Christian belief emerged should help us all to get a better grasp of the foundations of what was centuries later to become Christian 'orthodoxy', The Phrygian mystery religion of Mithra involved the slaughter of the Bull (Taurus), Christianity centred around the slaughter of the Lamb (Aries). D.H. Lawrence in his extremely idiosyncratic essay on *Moby Dick* saw the hunting down of the great 'Fish' as symbolic of the end of the white Western culture distinguished by its Christianity, I recall reading years ago in Jung's *Aiôn* that a good while before the birth of Christ it was put out that Atargatis or Isis (surely the prototype of the Virgin Mother?) had "given birth to a great fish." The sort of 'truths' that are adumbrated or subsumed by myths, and especially zodiacal myths, seem so much more meaningful to us even today, than the opinions of rational philosophers and scientists, *just because* they are symbolic. See Marina Warner's rather sad paragraph, which I quote in this issue. Mr. Fideler's annual miscellany, ALEXANDRIA, is every bit as good as Kathleen Raine's TEMENOS. I beg all my friends and readers to buy it and live with it. As also Mr. Fideler's big book *The Pythagorean Source Book*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, seems to be the Athens of our time — so many of Fideler's contributors hail from that small town. Bethlehem and Nazareth were small towns too!

ON BEING FLOODED OUT OF PARADISE

I have circulated the whole
Directory of Little Mugs
And written plaintive notes
To all my correspondents

Homeless and bedraggled
I am in my fifth element.
What else can I do?

The Lord told Noah
Beforehand. Not me.

Patience is a virtue
To be acquired, if somewhat bitterly,
Through the slow posts of Italy.

A VISITOR

Shab'ya seventeen years
After being cast off
Has come back to tell me
She was innocent then, and now
"I am an old fart"

QUAESTIO

Man and woman are like two pumpkins
Trying to embrace one another

Can even two atoms
Be in the same place at once?
Clerk Maxwell said Yes

Modern physics
Is not so sure

But it may come round...

ON A FEMALE SINGER

She says she doesn't imitate
Madonna's style

Madonna then
must imitate
HERS

Or maybe I don't know
Madonna from a cow

PENSIERINO

Now God is dead
we turn our minds
Pious in greed
to the State

"to solve our
little problems"

THE OXFORD W.C. AXIS

The lowest common denominator
Of intellectual curiosity
May be taken as
The highest common factor
Of acceptability
Establishment support
Can tolerate

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