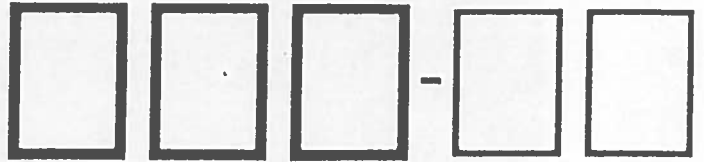
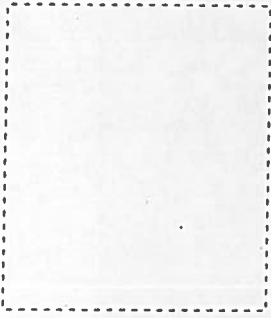


郵便はがき



Dear Peter -

This is how I  
imagine you, after  
all these years!

徳川美術館, 名古屋  
The Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya

James Kirkup

POST CARD

## THE EDITOR'S LATEST REPORT as at 24th June 1996

MARGINALIA No. 13 went out over the period Sept./Oct. 1994. Like No. 11 it consisted of 32 pages instead of the 16 pages of the previous issues, and from the considerable and encouraging response I felt that it had really established itself.

Then in November 1994 came a somewhat peremptory letter from my good friend Pier-Franco Donovan announcing that he would be unable to do any future work on the computer for me. I made no protest and simply accepted the fact. Donovan had helped me generously and efficiently between 1990 and 1994 and I felt eternally grateful. However, it was a great shock, and I felt deeply discouraged. At 73 years old I was going through a period of ill health and was little capable of new initiatives in the practical sense. My trouble was diagnosed as gastritis; in fact from mid-1994 onwards I was quite unable to "keep down" any food and anything I ate I simply vomited a few minutes later. My eyesight was seriously deteriorating, and my inability to hear what people were saying (call it deafness if you will) was isolating me to the point of something like solipsism.

However, over the winter of 1994 I worked intensely on Indian, Greek and Hebrew texts and wrote a great many new poems of "Quintilius" as well as my usual plethora of lyrics, sonnets and satirical poems. In March 1995, in the middle of one night after giving a talk to a group of young people here, quite unexpectedly and for no apparent reason, I underwent a serious crisis. All the normal functions were completely blocked and I suffered excruciating pains. I was carted off to hospital with a general infection of the lower abdomen. After four months of quite ineffectual treatment which did little to alleviate the pain and discomfort, in late July I underwent surgery and returned home in August realising that I had become well and truly an "old man". An almost total loss of muscular power, a deterioration of memory such that I often couldn't recall the commonest words even in English, let alone Italian, and a hand so shaky that I could hardly hold a pen let alone write a word legibly, all combined to make me feel that I was really senile. In common parlance you might say I became very depressed. In medical terms I was in no sense depressed—I continued to work at my studies and my writing as enthusiastically as ever.

In November 1995 I felt strong enough to venture away from home. I was invited to go to Reggio Calabria to present a new book by the distinguished poetess Maria Teresa Liuzzo and to give a series of readings and lectures in the schools in the Province of Reggio. Unfortunately a strike of the schools against Government policy wiped out my program of readings, but the audience of a thousand and more at the Teatro Cilea for my presentation of the book received it extremely well, as they did my readings in the nearby Province to which the strike was not extended. Alas, the physical effort was all too much for me, and I developed a new condition, acutely painful, and had to rush home, and undergo a second operation in early December.

This was embarrassing because I was scheduled to go to England to read at the Bath Festival, The Temenos Academy, and at both Oxford and Cambridge, in February. Over Christmas and the New Year I really did not know what to do. I desperately needed the money promised for my appearances in England, but just didn't think I could make it.

The Bath Festival, whose agreed fee would have covered my Air Fare, cancelled at the last moment. Cambridge dropped out, as did three other engagements, and I had neither the money nor the physical strength to make the journey.

Post Office money orders for a very considerable sum were delayed over Christmas and New Year by the unbelievably inefficient Italian posts, and I saw no alternative but to cancel the trip. My very dear old friend Kathleen Raine insisted on my coming, and put up the money for my air fare. I just could not refuse her.

I arrived in London on February 2nd, with five quid in my pocket. My kind friend William Cookson of AGENDA put me up for five days, but made it plain that after that he couldn't host me any longer. The whole undertaking seemed doomed. At the last moment a well-wisher put up the money for my stay in London, and a distant cousin whom I had not seen for literally fifty odd years resurfaced and offered me a room for the whole period. My cousin's house was only one block away from Cookson's flat. The money arrived from Germany after a delay of six weeks, and other cash arrived, and everything went smoothly!

I stayed in London till 14th March. The Temenos Lectures and the reading at the Festival Hall went extremely well, as did other performances in the provinces. Above all, my visit to London gave me the opportunity, probably the last, to meet dear old friends, and to meet new and younger personalities of real interest. In the practical sense, this trip to London, which started off so inauspiciously, produced enough hard cash for me on my return to Italy to buy a computer for my son, Peter George, who from now on will be taking the place of the good Donovan. Peter George is just eighteen. At fourteen years old he published a number of much admired poems in Italian in the literary magazines, and since then has added not only original poems, but also translations from seven languages, to his youthful accomplishment.

I have now been back at my home in Italy for three months. It's been a period of consolidation rather than active creation. A month spent on intense research into the backgrounds of Akiko Miyake's fascinating work *Ezra Pound and the Mysteries of Love*, which the scholars may disapprove of, but which I greatly admire. A month devoted to the preparation of a lecture on "The Revaluation of All Values" for the Schools Authority in Tuscany, which, quite surprisingly, brought me a standing ovation from five hundred School Presidents. And a month "messaging about" planning new MARGINALIAS in both English and Italian, various book reviews, articles, new poems, and projected new essays. Elsewhere in this issue you will see my "Progress Report". University of Salzburg's program of publication of my various books has been extensive, consisting already of some twenty volumes, and seems to be getting bigger with the passing of time. In addition to the pp.300 *VENICE POEMS 1965* and Anthony Johnson's brilliant *Studies in the Poetry of Peter Russell*, (pp.200), they have now published the "blockbuster" *Festschrift, The Road to Parnassus: Homage to Peter Russell on his 75th Birthday*, and what's more, they have requested some five more volumes from me this year, which I am working on. I certainly can't grumble that I'm a "neglected poet"! Even so, not one of my last substantial volumes has received more than one review in the little magazine world, and even more symptomatically, not even one review article in the Establishment press.

While in London I carried out an experiment: I sent an extensive selection of my best work with a brief collection of extremely favourable criticism of it, to fifteen of the recognised "Establishment" publishers. In each case I had strong recommendations from one or another respectable "name". Fourteen of the fifteen publishing houses replied

within four or five days with their usual formula letter of rejection. Only Mrs. Jacqueline Simms, of Oxford University Press, replied with a note saying that she would be glad to consider a new collection of mine. I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Simms, but I recall only too well how Jon Stallworthy in 1966 wrote me that OUP would like seriously to consider a selection of my work. Stallworthy is a good poet and a fine scholar; his objection to my collection was that it was heterogeneous, and in 1967 it was rejected.

My point here is not really to complain about being rejected but to draw attention to the "closed" mind of the so-called "Establishment". When I sent my fifteen collections off I knew very well that not one publisher would want them, but I wanted to prove my point. I have the feeling that the Establishment publishers have a preconceived notion of what the market demands. If your work doesn't meet it, it's OUT. On the other hand, quite a number of extremely sympathetic small publishers, including good friends whom I greatly respect, have equally refused to publish small collections of my work; while they do, in fact, publish volumes of, frankly, pretty banal work. The logic of this is far more problematic, and I leave it to the reader to work it out. The fact remains that apart from Salzburg, I can find no publisher--and Salzburg just can't publish everything of mine. They have published most of my work up to 1965. Thirty years' work remains outstanding. The sheer labour of sending it out to editors, and keeping track of what has been published where, is quite daunting! In future I shall probably publish things in MARGINALIA and only a few other reviews to whose editors I am close and with whom I am in some kind of intimate harmony.

The editor of a distinguished monthly in Chicago accepted by telephone one of my very best poems last April. Shortly after, he discovered that the poem had already appeared in AGENDA (I had already sent it to him myself!). True enough, in the tizzy of a transatlantic call I forgot that it had already been published in U.K. From this gentleman's reaction you might have supposed that I had stolen his gold watch! The infuriating thing is that this editor is actively keeping my text from the American public. I doubt AGENDA has more than a hundred readers in the U.S.A. Another fine review in the U.S.A. refused a long poem of mine because it had already been published in Japan! How cretinous can even intelligent and nice people get?

I've been so discouraged by this idiocy that for over a year I haven't offered a single poem to a literary review, except to two or three who are close personal friends, and don't make arbitrary and bureaucratic rules.

My son and I are so fed up with the *hoi polloi* of the editorial breed (and *hoi polloi* as pronounced in Greek is a homonym in Italian which means "chickens"!) that we are actively planning a new small press which we shall call THE ELITIST PRESS just to please the battery hens of the broody literary "world" with its "minimal" poems and its minimal comprehension! I'm a bit down on the "deaf hens" of poetry. The great thing about Sammie's Dart is that its recipients keep in touch with you and often become good friends. Bless them!--they are bit like Mandelstam's "Interlocutor"! And that's a precious gift to be endowed with.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find what I call my "Progress Report". If it looks a bit portentous and ambitious, I should assure you that much of it is already in an advanced stage of preparation and that I have quite realistic hopes of completing it, especially now that Peter George is so actively helping me.



ПРЕСВЕТА ДЕВА МАРИЈА, са фреске Бла-  
говести (око 1230. г.) у цркви Вознесења  
манастира Милешеве код Пријепоља.  
ALL-HOLY VIRGIN MARY from the fresco of  
the Annunciation (cca. 1230.). Church of the  
Ascension in the Monastery of Milesheva  
near Priepole

## THE HOLY VIRGIN OF MILEŠEVA

Let language speak: it is the gift of man.  
He hollowed it out like a reed-pipe  
Placed in his mouth, and out of words,  
Magical and musical and meaning,  
Created Intellect from the first images.  
History is hidden in his simplest words  
Which pulse with life like limbs  
Deep-threaded with invisible  
Branching capillaries.

The first Adam did not name the things.  
He knew the evident spirit  
Of everything that breathes,  
Knowing the life in stones and lakes and caves,  
The hidden power of mountains, rivers, trees--  
The definite voice of wind and waterfall.

Seeking to serve the wondrous powers  
Servant became of every living force.  
He feared, not loved, creation's forms,  
Naming not things but powers.

We live, or think we live,  
In worlds of naked things--  
A waterfall a fall of water--  
Rainfall and gravity combining with the drop  
Or chance proclivity among the hills  
Ancient upheavals randomly exposed.

And yet imagination longs to know  
The long lost secret of the roaring stream,  
The unseen spirit haunting the bright  
Rainbow above the pool  
Couched at the mountain's foot,

The beauty of a bird, bird' s song,  
 The wonder of a plant, the flower's beauty,  
 Making the heart rage and intellect delight  
 In mystery solemn things inspire.

But from long habit we are dead  
 To all that's living save ourselves  
 And what ourselves create--  
 The artificial paradise,  
 The world of art.

But here, in the thirteenth-century church  
 The peasants cross themselves and kiss the ikons  
 Too rapt in reverence long to gaze upon  
 The Mother of Heaven's lovely face;  
 While the grave art historians wrangle  
 About an unknown painter' s name,  
 A painting's date of composition  
 Giving their names to ' Schools'...

*I long to grasp the ikon's magic power,  
 To gaze intent upon the beauteous face,  
 The curve of cheek and nose and hand,  
 The long fingers' twig-like innocence;  
 To know the life behind the thing,  
 To see the thing in all its glory  
 And then to be myself  
 A part of that hid life*

Names are exact, but nothing that's exact  
 Is worth a straw.  
 It is the life-blood, spirit, essence,  
 That roars like hurricanes or soothes  
 Like soft-plucked lyre-strings  
 Man's unknown heart--



Not names or physical exactitude  
That lend me power...

I ask, in reverence and in awe,  
Adoring, yet in awe,  
The blue-robed Lady frescoed on the wall  
'Tell us your secret of eternal form--  
Soft-eyed compassion that we never knew--  
Tell us what Beauty is,  
You who are wholly beautiful.'

I wait, breathless and agonised,  
In passionate suspense,  
The doe-eyes motionless, the tensed lips still--  
And *words*, miraculous *words*  
Echo around the church,  
Silent as moth-wings or an eyelid's flutter,  
Soft breath soothing perplexity.

She says:

*'I am your image, you are mine--  
Mother and son, sister and brother,  
Father and daughter, beloved and beloved,  
Each in one another blest.'*

I said:

'Stone Lady stuck upon the wall,  
Is this your only secret? Is your Love  
Merely a mockery of me and all?'

O deathless pause, O vision in your eyes--  
The first faint gleams perhaps of Paradise--

She says:

*'I do not mock, I love with all my heart.  
But how can I, my learned lover,*

*Tell of all people you-- who know  
Or ought to know--  
I who am so remote, so fearful to you,  
No other am but you, your deathless Self?'*

But other voices filled the church,  
The raucous clangour of the day,  
And men with cameras came;  
And with bright magnesium flame  
They took Our Lady' s photograph.  
And one with hearty laugh  
I heard exclaim: ' O man, well done!  
Mary will like that one,  
Not half.'

I looked once more,  
But only saw  
A peasant and her babe, a dark-blue scarf,

And I went out,  
And wept for shame...

*Peter Russell  
Venezia,  
October 1968*

*Note:*

The above poem has been much admired publically by several critics, not to say very many private correspondents. It has been dismissed as "beneath contempt" by *English Studies*(Nijmegen), the "archetypal" expression of the turgidity of the English Department mentality in Universities. No

matter! The critical spirit today, favourable or unfavourable, is largely in thrall to "ideology" (whatever that is), and so necessarily political.

I don't give a rush for "opinion".

The poem was an authentic personal experience, as real as anything in all my life.

I have read here and there that Michelangelo had his inspiration for the Sistine ceiling from the frescoes at Mileševa. I'm not enough of a scholarly art historian to document this.

I can only say that when some five hundred years later than Michelangelo, I read this poem in English and then in Serbian to an audience of some two hundred individuals in the village of Mileševa, the reaction was positive and enthusiastic. What delighted me was that many of the genuine enthusiasts were Muslims, especially the President of the local literary Association. That was in 1989.

Since then, we have read in the press about the appalling situation in Bosnia. But no one seems to have drawn attention to the fact that in Serbia proper there seems to have been no problem between the Serbian Christians and the Muslims (Albanians muslim or christian are another matter!). I've never read of Serbian Muslims going to fight for their Muslim brethren in Bosnia.

I have no black and white diagnostic of the Bosnian problem. The vice President of the Serbo-Bosnian Republic is an old friend of mine, a distinguished member of the English Department of the University of Sarajevo.

I can only say that when politics (read "economic interests") become the basis of opinion, totally false opinions follow.

The Poundian interest in economics may seem boring to contemporary readers, but it seems to me to be absolutely central to an understanding of what is going on today.

If we are to be real and authentic people we have to oppose every tendency of our time, however impotent we may feel ourselves to be.

We all live in thrall to images. Weak spirits know only the banal images of films and the media. More vital spirits have lewd and sensuous images, others, perhaps more vital still, treasure romantic images of their would-be soul companions, others again are invaded and possessed by their miraculous Virgins. The strongest perhaps are those who are a prey to all four types of images, and manage to live, more or less, in harmony with all of them.

Titian's and Veronese's images of sensuous women seem to me to be essentially healthy. The modern equation of eroticism and *thanatos*, strikes me as unhealthy. Regency and Victorian fashion plates have a certain charm, though a certain hypocrisy may lie behind it. From the period

subsequent to the First World War, the common image of woman (and of man too) has become increasingly vulgarised and commercialised. Mae West and Greta Garbo were more or less contemporaries and illustrate the two divergent tendencies. In the post-war period we have had Bardot and Marilyn, and now we have Madonna. These have been the popular eidola. The beauty and the goodness of woman has simply dropped out of public consciousness as a result of the universal levelling and reductionism of total commercialism. But of course all these images are illusory, but it is through illusions that we come to some perception of realities. The young would be well-advised to fall back on their natural reserve of sentimentality. Older people, if mature, will discover for themselves the illuminating traditions of the Byzantine icon.

The hold that the media have over the imagination of the vast masses cannot be fought by the individual or the small group. Anti-Christ is unassailable--temporarily. We can but realise ourselves as *dissidents*.

## **MUWASHSHAH**

*La mia letizia mi tien celato,  
che mi raggia dintorno, e mi nasconde  
quasi animal di sua sete fasciato.*  
Dante, *Par.: VIII, 52-4*

The soul in its cocoon of faded gold  
Awaits in calm the world that shall unfold  
Her lovely wings studded with myriad eyes  
To throb with infant blood a while, then rise  
Weightless above the stubborn world that dies  
Into a waste of weeds and tales untold.  
The soul in its cocoon of faded gold  
Awaits in calm the world that shall unfold.

*Peter Russell  
Pratomagno  
17th July 1991*

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF PETER RUSSELL during the year 1996

- January:** VENICE POEMS 1965. Long Introduction, pp. 310.
- January:** STUDIES IN THE POETRY OF PETER RUSSELL, Semiotic studies by ANTHONY JOHNSON (University of Pisa).
- March:** ACUMEN 25, with nine poems of Quintilius and a review of VENICE 1965.
- March:** AGENDA IRISH issue, with six of Russell's best recent poems.
- March:** NORTH DAKOTA REVIEW with long essay on KATHLEEN RAINE by P.R.
- May:** *L'Umanità*: poesie di M.T. LIUZZO. 15pp. Introduction by P.R. Reggio Calabria
- June:** FESTSCHRIFT: *The Road to Parnassus*. HOMAGE TO PETER RUSSELL on his seventy-fifth birthday. Ed. James Hogg. University of Salzburg, pp.600. A handsome volume, price £20.00, post free. 80 very interesting contributions, and a summary of criticism about Russell over a fifty year period.
- June:** *Alles is Beseelt*: Sixty Poems, English texts with German opposite. pp.160. A handsome book. Kassara Verlag, Germany. £10.
- July:** THREE QUESTS: three long poems by P.R. "The Road", "Wildwood Notes" & "Packing" (all from 1995, not published before). £6.00 post free. Italian translations by Peter George Russell and Leonello Rabatti opposite the English.
- July:** THE VISIONARY COSMOS. Peter Russell's and Edith Sitwell's Poetry and poetic Theory, by WILFRID STEINER. University of Salzburg, pp. 92
- July:** THE THEME OF MUSIC IN PETER RUSSELL'S POETRY by HELGA DENKMAYR. University of Salzburg, pp.72.

### SOME PUBLICATIONS FROM 1995

- January:** A Bibliography of PETER RUSSELL. ed. Glyn Pursglove. University of Salzburg, pp. 250. Covers 1938-August 1994.
- January:** POETRY WALES 30/1. with QUINTILIUS, "Obsisti potest Fortunae" pp.10 and an oil portrait of P.R. reproduced.
- January:** NORTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY: with Quintilius, "Last Judgements" pp.3.
- January:** AGENDA Special Issue. TRIBUTE TO PETER RUSSELL. 14 poems (7 by "Q"), essays by Dana Gioia, Peter Jay, Roland John, Peter Levi, W.S. Milne, Glyn Pursglove, Kathleen Raine, Stephen Romer, Tom Scott, W. G. Shepherd, Charles Tomlinson. (in all pp.125. re Russell) Whole issue has pp.328.
- March:** TENNESSEE QUARTERLY. pp.20 including A Portrait, "A Note on Peter Russell" by DANA GIOIA, 15 poems by P.R., "A Brief Note on 'Q'" by P.R., and two new Quintilius poems.
- March:** Quintilius, "Non enses at ex Norico carmen" long poem in *Bellowing Ark*, Seattle.
- June:** BABEL IX. ed. Kevin Perryman. Beautifully printed, contains 3 new Quintilius poems, and five recent sonnets, plus a wealth of new work from English, American, German and French authors. A very distinguished review.
- October:** "The Lovelessness of Recent Poetry" pp.8 essay by P.R. In ORE No. 50 (ed. Eric Ratcliffe, Stevenage).

**If you are interested, write for a Proforma in your own currency.**

## FORTHCOMING TITLES for late summer and autumn 1996

TEMENOS ACADEMY. Four Lectures given in London in February 1996.

1. POETRY: The Language of the Spirit
  2. MYTH, SYMBOL, ARCHETYPE
  3. THE DEVALUATION OF ALL VALUES
  4. TOWARDS A REVALUATION OF ALL VALUES
- Book publication by TEMENOS with GOLGONOOZA PRESS

ANVIL PRESS: *The Elegies of Quintilius*. The 1975 edition, now quite unobtainable, reprinted with the Quintilius pieces and the Notes on them in *All for the Wolves* (1984), revised and updated. This will be the definitive "earlier Quintilius". Final proofs passed in July.

UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG: Poems from *The Apocalypse of Quintilius* (1984-1995). A vast collection which may have to be issued in 2 vols.

- OMENS & ELEGIES, DESCENT, possibly with additional material.  
 VISIONS AND RUINS            AGAMEMNON IN HADES  
 PAYSAGES LEGENDAIRES       ACTS OF RECOGNITION    proofs passed in July.  
 VENICE POEMS 1966 (for Winter)  
 MORE FOR THE WOLVES: *Selected Poems, 1973-1989*  
 MY WILD HEART: *Selected Poems, 1990-1995* (Salzburg)

BELLOWING ARK PRESS (Seattle) TOWARDS AN UNKNOWN LIFE. Fifty-one Sonnets (1946-1990). Final proofs passed long ago.

My son Peter George is working on the computer-setting of four new English issues of MARGINALIA, and four new Italian ones.

SWANSEA REVIEW tell me they are printing in the Summer and Autumn issues:

1. "Bad Dreams of Mr. Ion, A Moustertian Gentleman" a ten page poem with learned Commentary, which was a sort of prototype of the actual "Apocalypse" of Quintilius, which was burnt in the fire here in 1990. This poem was originally published in ABIKO REVIEW (Japan) but is unobtainable in Europe, it seems.
2. "Epithalamium" a five page poem in regular rhymed stanzas, which originally appeared in my "THEORIES" (Tehran 1978) and is now very rare. It appears with a note by the late Tom Scott, originally printed in *Chapman*.

Also available are my 36 page brochure PETER RUSSELL, POET & CRITIC (1994) which summarised many of my activities in the 'eighties and early 'nineties, and a similar 32pp. Information Brochure:

PETER RUSSELL: Some Activities with a few texts, 1994-1996. "London and After".

As these are very expensive to print, I shall not be sending them out, but anyone who would like them may write for copies to me, including please £5.00 each for expenses and postage.

Write to **PETER RUSSELL 52026 PIAN DI SCO' (AR) ITALY**

## *LAST DAY OF THE YEAR*

The yellow bird has not come back this year,  
 Yet I am still alive, though old and weak.  
 Each time it came it seemed about to speak,  
 Bringing spirit and life, also the fear  
 That all my joys may shortly disappear.  
 Silent, it ran along the sill, its beak  
 Tapped softly on the pane,--the brownish streak  
 Above its eyelid, tilted,--sure and clear

Seemed to express some message from afar,  
 From other worlds,--or, it might be, the Dead,  
 Neglected and forgotten for so long  
 By my inconstancy. But now my star  
 Is setting. Soon cold earth will be my bed.  
 My yellow bird, I yearn to hear your song.

*Peter Russell*  
*Pratomagno*  
*31st December 1995*  
*(Reprinted from AGENDA Spring 1996).*

The same yellow bird as in the Quintilius poem in the AGENDA Peter Russell issue Vol. 32 Nos. 3-4 Winter 1994-95.

This sonnet, roughly my two thousandth, was printed in AGENDA's Irish issue, Spring 1996.

For ten years now, in the last days of March, a yellow warbler, one of the prettiest birds I know, has arrived and for a few days frequents my window-sill. He seems to want to get in, though no doubt there are more convincing explanations on the scientific level, sufficient for Professor Dawkins.

What I find interesting and even touching, is that the bird then disappears till mid-October, when he repeats the performance, running up and down my window-sill and tapping on the panes. In the summer he is busy making his nest and bringing up a brood of four little warblers. My children found the nest with the four eggs several years running.

When this lovely little bird failed to show up in Spring 1995, I was deeply saddened. While not being superstitious, I am sensitive to a certain symbolic suggestivity in the manifestations of nature. Happily, I can now say that my yellow bird did return this year: On May 1st 1996 he tapped on my window-pane again, and however irrationally, I felt new life coursing through my veins. But why was he so late this year?

Man, the naked ape, is progressively destroying "Nature". In this beautiful valley here dozens of pairs of nightingales have sung each year through May and June in the acacias. Alas, in 1995 and 1996 there has been no sign of them. Pindar and Sophocles would be saddened as I am. Anti-parasitic blue powders sprayed on the vines are the only explanation I have.

QUINTILIUS

THE YELLOW BIRD

The yellow wagtail is running up and down  
 My window-sill, up and down, up and down,  
 Trying to get in, to get in. His eyes are no more than a yard,  
 A roman pace, a *metron*, a human step, a flit of the wings  
 Away from my face. *Twit twit, twit twit*, and I intuit  
 Offended innocence, a conscious worth. Little bird,--  
 Your worship, I entreat, you whom I entertain with love thoughts,  
 To fly away.

This Syrian glass, this screen between you and me,  
 Will be the end of you. You have brought your message, a message for me  
 From the Gods, though you yourself, humble messenger, the herald's *kerygma*,  
 Do not know the content of the message or what is advantageous  
 Or of benefit to the diviner, *me*, you being omen and oracle,  
 Symbolon and augury, *euangelion* itself. You bring me  
 To my senses, You, small bird, blessed angel, auspicious legate,  
 Winged ambassador shaking your swallow-tails up and down, up and down,  
 Remind me as Socrates was reminded, (though he by a lady in white),  
 And as Aristotle was reminded: *I must depart and go into my own country*.  
 The third day hence you will arrive at the fertile island.  
 You must depart to your own, no more of this flitting at men's windows for  
 you,  
 I to mine, no more banging my head against walls and doors.  
 Leave these account-books to slaves, these calculations to clones,  
 And depart. Divinity persuades us thus to act.  
 Leave this domain of opinions, the thralls of Thessalian disorder,



Thracian incivilities, the hundred-columned courts, abhorred,  
 Of the Great King, *kerygma!* I must return to my father's country.  
*L'enfant prodigue*, even Aristotle, shall learn a little humility.  
 This is the philosophic death, the exercise of the cathartic virtues,  
 This is life itself. It is one thing for the soul to be separated from the body,  
 Another for body to be cut off from the soul. How shall the soul,  
 Light and buoyant, return to the fat Phthian glebe,  
 Trailing its dogsbody of ailing and aching organs,  
 Kicking its heels about in deceitful forums?  
 Our obedience is to the whole, the hale, τῷ ὅλῳ, the sole  
 One Thing, *sola et salus, et salva--salute!*  
 This is the solution. Self itself is the indivisible whole.  
 By the dog, by the goose, by the ram, by the plane-tree or somesuch,  
 Something of great constancy, this is the solution.  
 Go then, over *solum*, over *salum*, to your sylvan Phaeakia,  
 Your gardens of Gerosolyma,  
*In solio sede regali, pispola trepida cauda.*

You, little bird, who run up and down my window-sill,  
 Wagging your tail, *motacilla*, you have told me, *ballerina*,  
 What many philosophers, all opinions but never a pinion atween'em,  
 Have failed to tell me. *Something of great constancy.*  
*Cutrettola*, go...

Fitting welcome the King will give you, for no one who goes to that place  
 Bides long there in sorrow, but truly all are sent forth  
 Rejoicing on the way. Pray, little bird, that soon I too  
 May follow you...

*translated 8th April 1987*  
*Pratomagno*

*Note for Quintilius The Yellow Bird*

Note: Line 40. "Something of great constancy"--Quintilius' "res certa--est et non est" gave me some trouble as a mere translator. A typically perverse paradox of the lunatic poet (or lover). That the words that came to me (by Providence or the Muses--*sunt et non sunt*) happen to be identical with certain words of one William Shakespeare, is neither here nor there. Harold Bloom would put this down to "influence", Leopold would have understood correctly and without any anxiety.

The expression obviously refers to Parmenides' "the One beyond Being". Neither Quintilius nor I had any need of the dubious influence of Shakespeare (or Harold) or even of René Descartes. Quintilius, for all his follies and grandeurs does seem, at least to have skimmed through Plato, and anyway knew the full text of Parmenides himself, which the modern scholars have never seen, as it was committed to the flames or the midden by the Christian devotees of learning.

That Shakespeare, in his naif verses, was directly referring to Plato's fictional Parmenides, has been admirably demonstrated by Percival Vivian in a study of Platonic influences in late Tudor England which, after a mere hundred years' lapse, actually began to read Marsilio Ficino. If the classical scholars think that poor barbarous Shakespeare didn't have enough Latin or Greek, they might ponder on the inconvenient fact that the text in question was translated into English twenty or more years before Shakespeare wrote his infantile fantasy. But let me remind you of Shakespeare's text:

Hippolita: But all the story of the night told over,  
And all their minds transfigured so together,  
More witnesseth than fantasy's images,  
And grows to something of great constancy--  
But howsoever strange and admirable.

(*MSND, V.i.*)

Line 46. The use by Quintilius of the word "pinion" will no doubt require some explanation, not to say justification, for modern, or postmodern, readers who lack imagination, intuition and knowledge. In English "pinion" means in effect the part of the wing of a bird which enables it to *rise* in the sky. In Italian "pinion" might be translated literally "punta dell'ala" or "penna remigante". The rustic Plato had the childish idea that the soul rises towards God or The One, on "pinions". I suppose that we devotees of Kellogg's Corn Flakes must forgive classical antiquity for its infantilities, but a trained philologist may preserve even the errors of his misguided authors.

If I may be permitted a very lame defence of the obviously superficial Quintilius, I would claim for him a privilege as one of the earliest commentators to realise that Philosophy, which had made a good start with Pythagoras, had degenerated from a genuine love of wisdom or Truth to a gallimaufry of *opinions*. Plato disapproved of *doxai*, opinions, even right opinions, unless they were grounded in a full understanding of their noumenal causes or principles.

Milano  
23.01.96

Birdsong  
for Peter Russell

I have heard your yellow bird.  
It is not gone. It is not gone.  
It came to me and left a word  
Between the lines you sent.  
Though death may call, it always did  
From your first breath, it chased,  
And constantly has made its bid  
— But trumped by your fine verse,  
Your sightings of the yellow one,  
Nesting near you, unafraid,  
Or flying, feeding in the sun.  
That's share on all you did,  
And do. Stars always set, leave us behind  
And mostly sink below the hill,  
But the workings of your mind  
Outshone the stars and always will.  
Your yellow bird sings soft, sings near,  
Will sing forever and a year.

David A. Hill,

ANNOUNCEMENT from the 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. and Fax: 055/960-674). 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*. pp.50 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.

Outsiders Vol. 15: *Venice Poems 1965*. With long Introduction, pp300.

Outsiders Vol. 16: *Studies in the Poetry of Peter Russell*. Semiotic studies by Anthony L. Johnson, pp207.

In preparation:

*From the Apocalypse of Quintilius* (1984-1993). With Introduction and Notes. Due Autumn 1996.

*Omens Elegies Descent* with some translations. Long Introduction. Due Summer 1996.

*One Hundred Sonnets* (Seattle, Washington). Final proofs passed Oct. 1995.

**Prices vary from \$12 to \$25. Ask for a Proforma in your own currency**

Order from PETER RUSSELL, La Turbina, I-52026 Pian di Scò (Arezzo), Italy (Tel. and Fax: 055/960-674).

## RUSSELL'S REST

For Tom Scott

*For I not whider I shal, ne hou longe her duelle*

Half way up the hill,  
And half way down the dale,  
Is the ruined one-time mill  
Where the waters never fail.

The mill-wheel, yes, has disappeared,  
A flower grows from the ground;  
The rusty gears no longer heard,  
But in the silence--dying sound--

Lament triumphant--on and on--  
Descants above the other birds.  
It is, it is, the dying swan--  
Apollo's voice, that needs no words

To say how bleak the landscape is  
Without the laurel's crown,  
And how these modern melodies  
Sadden the modern town.

*Pratomagno,  
15th March 1992*

# POETRY AND RELIGIOSITY

by Simone Scatizzi, Bishop of Pistoia

POETRY AND RELIGIOSITY: these two terms at first sight would seem to indicate areas of reality that are worlds apart, yet in fact, they point towards aspects of human existence which not only border on one another but are even consequent or dependent on each other, or which indeed actually overlap.

Poetry, that is, when one is not just talking about mere versification, but is rather concerned to draw attention to that subtle intuition of harmonic patterns and latent truths which is so difficult to define, and yet which represents the most profound dimension of things, is shot through with essentially religious content.

Poetry is the dimension nearest to mysticism, to contemplative intuition, to the joy of feeling oneself in communion with everything that exists. Reading or writing poetry is to enter into the play of multiple consonances, into the symphony of existence, into the poliphony of voices which are not only physical aspects of the universe. To experience poetry is to recognise oneself as ordained to become aware of what lies beyond the visible, the immediate, the perceptible.

To experience poetry is to become aware of the flow of time towards the shores of the Eternal. It embodies a recovery of the sense of wholeness and indivisibility of everything and a brotherly feeling towards every creature, "docile fibra dell'universo". ("docile fibre of the universe", --a line from Ungaretti--Ed.).

Poetry is prophecy, because it implies gathering the signs of something which is going to happen in the future, --not by some kind of magic, but rather by an anticipatory comprehension made possible by a sensibility sharpened by the force of the Spirit which allows an intimation of connections between aspects of experience which might seem to have nothing to do with each other and to be absolutely independent.

Religiosity is not the mere anagraphic record of a person's belonging to a particular religion, but an opening out to the Mystery, an uncategorised or non-categorical perception of the Invisible, a profound sense of life and of its meaningfulness, a welcoming acceptance of all the positive values that are fused together in the irresistible instinct of adoration and love.

Authentic religiosity, without ritualising formalities and without empty social gestures, is, as St. Paul says, to let oneself be guided by the Spirit. Having said this, we do not mean in any way to deny the value of Religion in itself and for itself, for it functions on a different plane, and insofar as it is a gift which comes from on High, is the result of Grace and of gratuitous love and salvation.

We only mean that religiosity is the capacity for receiving, it is the opening out of the Gift, and the making of oneself into a space which can resonate with the harmonies of Truth and Love, a resonant space that is to be found in every spark of action, in every "offering", in every dimension of relation, in every "sacrament".

It is difficult to speak of authentic poetry without entering into the Mystery, the zone of the unspeakable, the silence charged with the Presence.

It is impossible, I would even dare to say, to talk of religiosity without recourse to poetry as its natural language, as that linguistic code which permits man to express, through synthesis and analogies, through uncategorisable perception, through diverse intuitions "bundled together" in one [in Hume's sense? --tr.], whatever it is that the Mystery is, even if only as participated.

Poetry and religiosity thus travel more on the path of intuition than on that of cold rationality. There are few poets and fewer contemplatives because people chatter too much and keep silence

too little. Carlyle said "Silence is the element in which all great things are gathered and formed" [Carlyle's words not checked --tr.].

E. R. Christoflour wrote "Poetry touches the root which is common to man and to the infinite".

It's a matter then, in all poetry called religious--but every poem as we have hinted must have religious roots and every religiosity poetic expression!--it's a matter then in religious poetry, as we said, of letting oneself go, so as to intuit "the profound abysses" in which the eternal Mystery is evoked and actualised.

One does not find religious poetry where a certain statement is made, but where, evoking it, the poet kindles or excites the Presence, and our Being vibrates as to a chord struck by an invisible hand. Poetry does not come without the Pneuma, without the Holy Spirit.

*Translated by Peter Russell from the Italian, and printed by courtesy of Bishop Scatizzi*

Note: This simple but lucid and profoundly true statement was printed originally in *La Voce dell'Anziano* (S. Giovanni Valdarno, Winter 1995), the Comune's very interesting general purpose review published for the old people of the town. --P.R.

## ***IN ASPETTO***

Damp in my house, damp in my soul,  
Damp in my cobweb heart;  
The scorpion on the sweating stone,  
Rats in the rampart.

At no time was I so alone  
As now, when in this house,  
Eternal mould, Time trickles down,  
A sour dew as I drowse.

*Peter Russell  
Pratomagno  
16th November 1995*

Guest Poet, Beryl Cross

### **THE PERSECUTED**

I have been Jew and Christian, young and old,  
Tortured in desert wilderness, in cold  
And dripping dungeon, hung in an iron cage  
Or stretched upon a rack, known mindless rage  
From my tormentors beating out my brains  
Or spitting at me as I walked in chains.

I have been tall and crippled, short and tall,  
Jeered at by playground bullies, made to bawl  
My eyes out, or have stood tight-lipped, head high,  
Hiding my inner torments till the cry  
'Enough' suspended them. I was Tom Brown  
Before he challenged Flashman, knocked him down.

In my estate I have been high and low,  
Burned at the stake in both, keeping my vow  
To my beliefs in how I worshipped God,  
Against the state when its despotic rod  
Of government denied conscience the right  
To speak and act within that guiding light.

I have been black and white, taunted by each  
When clothed in opposite skin, made speech  
Against oppression, felt the tyrant's boot  
Grinding my neck, forced to be prostitute  
And slave. Yet none could crucify my soul.  
The persecutor plays the losing role.

*Beryl Cross*

I receive each month a great many Little Magazines and I try to read each of them with an unprejudiced eye. Alas, it's not often that I find anything that "quickens" my existence. Mainly all this junk mail slows me down. However, about a year ago I scanned a new review called *Symphony* (Bemerton Press, 9 Hamilton Gardens, London NW8 9PU) and came on the above text. It was an important and inspiring event for me. I thank Ms. Cross and "Symphony" for permission to reprint.

When someone says something worth saying, and in a manner worthy the saying, I feel it incumbent on me at least to "do something about it".

-- P.R.



An interim newsletter October 20th, 1995

IT HAS NOW BEEN MANY MONTHS since I sent out MARGINALIA 13 but surprisingly enough it is still producing new daily correspondence. In fact, Nos 15 and 17 (in English) and Nos 8 and 10 (in Italian) have been prepared for some time, but my good friend P.-F. Donovan's enforced retirement as typesetter due to his changed circumstances, (much improved I'm happy to say), has left me without my right hand.

At present I am working on five or six new possibilities, but it may be a few months before I can resolve the problem. But it will be resolved (D.V.). I have enough material in my files for another twenty or thirty MARGINALIAS, not to say new books and pamphlets, now ready, but awaiting cash to be printed.

Summer and autumn 1993 was an intensely busy period. It's a time-consuming and expensive game sending out poems to the reviews, but over the past months several hundred of my poems have been printed (or accepted) in magazines in the U.S.A., the U.K., Japan and Germany, not to say thirty odd items in the Italian periodicals. I was also extremely busy preparing lectures for the Swiss Education Authority, and for cultural organisations in Arezzo, Foggia, Montevarchi, and essays for English language reviews, not to say TV and Radio, and before long I have to make new appearances in Tübingen, Torino, Milano and Firenze (where I am to give a presentation of MARGINALIA at no less august an Institution than the Biblioteca Nazionale).

The Chicago review *Chronicles* published in the June 1995 issue a new long article about my poetry by Stacey Kors; *Tennessee Quarterly* published in March 1995 a group of Quintilius poems and an article by Dana Gioia, and *Abiko Quarterly* in Japan has just done a long poem "Bad Dreams" which was the prototype of the "Apocalypse" of Quintilius that, alas, was burnt in the terrible fire here in 1990.

The new *Norton Anthology of World Poetry in Translation* is to produce extensive selections for both their Western and their Oriental volumes.

POETRY WALES (Winter 1994) contains a new ten page Quintilius poem, and NORTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY yet another of the same length. The April issue of Swansea Review presents six more of my sonnets and EDGE CITY REVIEW (Virginia) has in its third number another half dozen poems of mine.

The recent publication of AGENDA's special issue (February 1995), TRIBUTE TO PETER RUSSELL is available from me here at 10 pounds sterling, post free. Fourteen poems (seven from Quintilius); Essays, etc. by Dana Gioia, Peter Jay, Roland John, Peter Levi, W.S. Milne, Glyn Purslove, Kathleen Raine, Dachine Rainer, Stephen Romer, Tom Scott, W.G. Shepherd and Charles Tomlinson.

Meanwhile, I try to study each day, and to continue writing poems. I'm happy to say that over the past months I have been rewriting the (burnt) "Apocalypse" of Quintilius, as well as many other

pieces, and personal lyrics and epigrams. The new "Quintilius in India" includes some 20 versions from Sanskrit.

*TOTAL INCOME FROM ALL THIS WORK over the past eight months, 500 pounds circa.*

The kind people who have supported me, some extremely generously, some modestly, are much appreciated. Those who have not replied presumably fall into two categories: that is, those who are just not interested in my point of view, and those "whose spirit is willing but whose flesh is weak". May I appeal to this second category to rally and send their donations to MARGINALIA in the near future according to their possibilities.

I shall have to drop many names from my mailing list. May it not be YOU!

I often get discouraged. Not so today. Here is Glyn Pursglove's review of my BERLIN-TEGEL 1964 from ACUMEN No. 21:

The most recent of the retrospective series of volumes devoted to the work of Peter Russell is *Berlin-Tegel 1964* (University of Salzburg; Distributed by Hippopotamus Press, 22 Whitewell Road, Frome, Somerset, BA11 4EL. 224 pp.; 9.95 pounds). It is every bit as fascinating as its predecessors--*The Duller Olive* and *A False Start*.. Its attractions include a 48 page introduction, mixing autobiographical reminiscence with observations and animadversions upon individuals, accounts of meeting with Xenakis, Borges, and many others (including, of course, Ezra Pound), the nature of the poetic tradition, the state of music and painting, and much else. Stimulating, annoying, wise and silly, the introduction's tone and transitions have the qualities of the best conversation. It is succeeded by a gathering together of one year's poetic production by the prolific Russell. Some of the poems are reprinted from previous collections, or from a range of periodicals; some are previously unpublished. The quality of poetic achievement is very mixed (one offering is--justly enough--entitled 'Roving Thoughts Not a Poem'), but the interest is unfailing. Even the weakest poems throw light on Russell's development and, in a wider sense, on the problems of the 'modern' poet. Indeed, this series of volumes ought to be compulsory reading for all who seek to understand those problems. The best poems here, though, need no such critical-historical argument to justify their claims to attention. Poems like 'Berlin December', 'Missing a Bus', 'In memoriam-Edith Södergran' and 'Four Songs for Benjamin Britten', in their very different manners, show Russell at something like his distinguished best. All of the most successful work here is permeated by Russell's characteristic energy, intelligence and essential seriousness (which is by no means the same as solemnity) of mind. Russell's attempt--it still continues--is to establish a real relationship with the great traditions of thought and practice. We are as far as possible, here, from the trivialities of too much so-called post-modernism.

---

### *VALETE*

I would die happy if my last words  
Were true and beautiful as Blake's "The Birds"

*Peter Russell  
Pratomagno  
22nd October 1995*

## SIX SONNETS

What is it spells this deepening solitude?  
 Who but the Muse can cure these creeping ills,  
 Or warm this heart the world's indifference fills  
 With cordial vacuousness that's all but lewd?  
 Old age, remorse and ailments have pursued  
 My days, these years; ill-luck, diminished skills,  
 Weakened resistance. *World* thrives on its frills,  
*I* wither in my barrenness renewed.

But when the Muse, from somewhere in the air,  
 Quickens the lymph stopped in the dried-up bough,  
 Smiling like spring puts violets in my hair  
 And her cool fingers lays upon my brow,--  
 Words form upon my lips, the black nightmare  
 Passes,--I am alive, and *here* and *now*.

I've chosen intellectual solitude,  
 A silent refuge from the world's dark laughter.  
 Nothing, you say, could possibly be dafter  
 Than this absurd and self-destructive feud.  
 Quite ineffective in my ruin mewed,  
 Awaiting patiently the veiled Hereafter,  
 A wreck subdued beneath a sagging rafter  
 Blackened by fire and rotted by the flood.

They say that cats grow thin through eating flies.  
 My fat's reduced, I pick at bread and wine,--  
 My only light a sense of pointless doom.  
 Job, by persisting in a way got wise--  
 The Sufi throve who fed the Christian's swine.  
 What can you see amid the indifferent gloom?

Speak not of Christ, and yet desire the World!  
 Fire of desire for things in me burns not;  
 But living waters speak, like sails unfurled  
 When fishermen seek bread and oil, forgot.  
 Sails windspreed speak to fishermen of Hope!  
 The sea's bleak blows against these bitter sands  
 Are like a cat o'nine tails or a rope.  
 Pain passes! Flaileed,--we reach the Peaceful Land.

Let us unlearn the love of trivial things!  
 We're dying while we live--ashes sublime!  
 Flesh in this desolation rather sings--  
 Chants of Eternity, chants not of Time--  
 Cry out the measure of our sufferings,  
 As monks all night chant Matins--till the Prime!

Something is missing in my feckless life,--  
 Roots, a foundation, a mythology;  
 Something to nourish, to fill the full-grown tree.  
*Half-dead at the top*, who says that it's alive?  
 It needs a milky sap to make it thrive,  
 A subsoil rich in life to branch out free,  
 And thrusting, spread in its maturity  
 Ring after ring, till in late autumn, rife--

Greener than spring, it sing aloud all day--  
 With bees and song-birds, resinous at night  
 With the aromas and the oils that it has stored  
 From centuries-long deposits in the clay,--  
 Of ancestors, imagination's play,  
 Millenial interrogations unexplored.

Urine and faeces, nights of grinding pain,  
 Blood on the covers, sick-room now my home--  
 Vomit and mucus, acid and livid foam,  
 The rumpled blankets, slime-smearred pinkish stain.  
 The dawns creep in through cobwebbed window-pane,  
 Gaps between tiles,--anaemic monochrome.  
 When young they told me all roads lead to Rome,--  
 This pilgrimage might seem against the grain.

Six weeks between my bed and writing table--  
 A septic foot,--three steps drive me insane  
 Like Philoctetes; but I'm not dead yet,--  
 I'll profit still by this if I am able,  
 And prove that sickness need not be in vain,--  
 For now I know a man I never met.

Much in my past has been against the grain,--  
 Moments of calm more like being out on bail.  
 Life seemed like being kicked out of the pale  
 Into a No Man's land. There was no Grail.  
 For if I had to take that test again,  
 Knowing what I know now, I know I'd fail.  
 Think, neither youth nor courage can avail  
 When you are old and sick and fraught with pain.

Hurry away before the hustling dark  
 Closes the gates of the now empty park.  
 Before I close my books and turn my face  
 To the grey wall behind which crowd the dead,  
 I'm glad I sought the Good, deplored the base,--  
 And proud I've said the proud things I have said.

## **DAS VERLASSENE MÄGDLEIN**

Früh, wann die Hähne krähn,  
Eh' die Sternlein verschwinden,  
Müss ich am Herde stehn,  
Müss Feuer zünden.

Schön ist der Flammen Schein,  
Es springen die Fünken;  
Ich schaue so drein,  
In Leid versunken.

Plötzlich da kommt es mir,  
Treuloser Knabe,  
Dass ich die Nacht von dir  
Geträumet habe.

Träne auf Träne dann  
Stürzet hernieder;  
So kommt der Tag heran--  
O ging' er wieder!

*Eduard Morike*  
1829

## **THE FORSAKEN HOUSEMAID**

Early when cockerels crow,  
Before the stars expire,  
Downstairs I have to go  
To light the fire.

Lovely the flames' bright rays,  
The gay sparks leaping;  
Long and long I gaze,  
Grief-bound and weeping.

Suddenly it dawns on me,  
Unfaithful lover,  
Last night I dreamed of thee,  
But all is over.

Tear upon tear smarts  
In my eyes then;  
That's how the day starts--  
If only it would go again!

*translated by Peter Russell*  
27 January 1966

## THE ELEGIES OF 'QUINTILIUS'

EXCERPT FROM A REVIEW BY EDWARD POWELL in OASIS No. 13, 1975, p. 58

"Anybody who admires Ezra Pound's 'Homage to Sextus Propertius', Day Lewis' translation of the *Aeneid*, and has read with sympathy and attention Gilbert Highet's *Poets in a Landscape*, will instantly recognize the flavour of Peter Russell's 'translations' of Quintilius. These reflect the atmosphere and language of some of the best classic Latin poetry. Quintilius is not Propertius, has not his range, but is the more ironic, more humorous and more sad of the two. Equally, the intellectual range is not as wide as Propertius', as Vergil's, but then Quintilius is from a later, more debased age. This book is beautifully produced, adequately equipped with notes and even contains, pace Eliot, a second version of the Fourth Elegy, written according to the blue-pencilled emendations of the 'old Vort' himself, old uncle Ez. From a comparison, it would seem that the famous blue pencil was having an off-day. Mr. Russell manages wonderfully enough on his own.

Put next to Quintilius, the Fourth Century Alexandrian epigrammist Palladas seems pretty slight. Tony Harrison has written some very clearly expressed, bitter little statements which I'm sure do justice to the original. There are some moving moments here and one can sometimes hear the saddened voice of this last Pagan facing the on-rushing tide of a victorious Christianity. Historically, this is an interesting document, but it is not great poetry and lacks the humane irony that makes Quintilius a greater writer."

### QUINTILIUS

#### **LOSS OF NERVE?** from the *Confessionals*

Sometimes I feel my Daimon has deserted me  
And I am abandoned to the terror of being my own ruler.  
The little boy goes back to his mother to tell his troubles,  
The youth to his father, the mature man to the God  
Who has appointed this Guardian to him

Me dread

Has settled upon like the Accipiter of evil omen  
Clutching the hairs of my head that have long since turned white,  
And I ask if even I have the right to hold an opinion.

*Translated from the Latin by Peter Russell,  
Pratomagno,  
2nd February 1991*

*QUINTILIUS****THE OUTCRY:*** from the *Improperia*

Your legions, Varus,  
 can go to Hell  
 I want my lost  
 scrolls back

*translated from the Latin of circa ad 420  
 by Peter Russell  
 Pratomagno  
 7th August 1985*

***CAIUS OR SEMPRONIUS?*** from the *Improperia*

I know him by his hair-cut  
 If he change his hair-cut  
 How shall I know him?  
 What shall I call him  
 Who has neither name nor nature,  
 But only a hair-cut?

*translated by Peter Russell  
 from the Latin of circa 440 A.D.  
 Pratomagno  
 22nd May 1988*

## *POSTMODERN POETS*

They say what they say  
They mean what they mean

Whether they say what they mean  
Or mean what they say

Is beyond even the linguisticians

### "Contemporary History"

History is sometimes unsettling,  
I'm wistfully pondering.  
The Jews now are settling,—  
The Canaanites wandering.

## SEXISTICS

The male's last stand  
was in the period  
of Fascism

Feminism was at its apogee  
During the dictatorship  
Of Margaret Thatcher

Think on this, my dear Europa,  
It may help to smooth out  
Your monthlies, which by all accounts  
Are highly irregular

## A PAGE OF RAGE

*Doctors make me sick*

"Quam misera sit conditio docentium literas humaniores"

George Buchanan (Lutetiae) 1505-1582.

### DIES IRAE

The I.R.A. -- victorious again!  
 First the Marines' band and all its men, --  
 Music, (of a sort), o glorious! Slain!  
 Now Poetry, -- Carcanet --P.N.

### THE POET IN THE STREET

Great Pan is dead, the forest all forsook,  
 The Poets now all have that dead-pan look.

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