



# Diminished Voices: Rainer Maria Rilke And Translation

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## 1. Preliminaries

I feel I am coming to this topic from the wrong direction. In the nearly five decades I have spent engaged with Rilke's works, I have scarcely been concerned with translations. There are two reasons for this: first, the critical debates in which I have joined about the meaning of what Rilke wrote and about his place in European literary history are, for the most part, conducted in German; second, whenever I have picked up a translation into English, I have usually put it down again because it does not sound like Rilke.

My first encounter with poems by Rilke occurred when I had been learning German intensively for six years, and this was an encounter with a voice: knowing nothing of Rilke but the name, I had bought a record on which a German actor, Matthias Wiemann, read a selection of his poems, mainly from *Das Stunden-Buch* (*The Book of Hours*). So my first impression was of a voice – not Rilke's own, since he had made no recordings before his death in 1926 – but one that brought to life the rhetoric of *Das Stunden-Buch* superbly, and so began the engagement with his German texts that has seen me publish well over a thousand pages in German devoted to elucidating his work. My reason for writing mainly in German on Rilke is purely pragmatic. The vast bulk of the Rilke industry uses German, and, if you want to be taken notice of, you make your points in German.

This was by no means dictated by Rilke's own inclinations. Born in Prague, and growing up in a German-speaking minority, his attitude to the language in which he wrote was marked by conflicts. From 1902 onwards,



the date of his first visit to Paris, Rilke preferred to live where German was not spoken.<sup>1</sup> His enforced sojourn in Germany and Austria during World War I he regarded as imprisonment.<sup>2</sup> After 1918 he chose to live in French-speaking Switzerland, wrote a plethora of undistinguished verse in French, and returned again and again to Paris to cultivate literary figures such as Paul Valéry. He saw himself very much as a citizen of a Europe that included Russia but emphatically excluded England.

But he was dependent on German publishers and German readers, and, after his death, the German wife and daughter he had spent most of his adult life avoiding formed an understandable alliance with his German publisher to exploit his legacy. In the 1930's, volumes of his letters appeared, tempered by a strict family censorship that continues till this day. In particular, the notebooks containing drafts for his novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* remain inaccessible after a century.

It was in this climate that writing on Rilke began, from journalism on new works, to memoirs by those who had known him closely, to books about what he had written. So the Rilke industry got going. Its present state is best characterised by a compendium published in dictionary format in 2004 and comprising 570 pages, *Rilke-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, edited by the eminent Rilke-scholar Manfred Engel, currently Taylor Professor of German at Oxford. Not only does this contain a closely printed, very select *general* bibliography of many pages, but each section, bearing on a single phase of Rilke's creativity, of his life, or on his reception of or by other authors or cultures, has its own selective bibliography. And yet the *Handbuch* – if only for reasons of space – likely does not list even half of what has been published on Rilke. It has a strong German bias, and ignores translations of Rilke into other languages.

This is the world in which I have been – albeit never very comfortably – active since I published my first article on Rilke in 1969. I soon switched to writing in German for the reason I gave above. German scholars can usually read English, but they need, in practice, a very strong reason to go to the trouble. There are branches of the Rilke industry in Japan and Korea, of which almost nothing is known in Germany because of the language barriers. I suspect that these scholars are quite grateful for their seclusion,



for German Rilke scholarship is a bearpit. The urge to prove oneself right begets vicious practices, and establishing a position is scarcely ever done once and for all. Rilke's writing lays itself open to so many interpretations that many bitter controversies have arisen, exacerbated by the changing fashions in Rilke reception in Germany.

As a Rilke scholar, I have been concerned with elucidating the intricacies of a voice, one capable of enormous subtlety and equal power. I stress: a voice and not a person. I do not think Rilke had any profound message to give the world, though he often chose to write as if he had. In a sense, the age demanded it, but wisdom was not his forte – if only because his view of the world was so poetocentric. Rilke dedicated himself to being Rilke with an intensity and a toughness that skews the general relevance of many of his statements about life, death and human relations. His poems are often of an astonishing conceptual intricacy, but concepts are in his case in the service of the poem and not vice versa.

I do not think his references to supernatural beings were, in the end, anything more than metaphors by which he sought to define the limits of human perception and feeling. When it came to history and politics, Rilke remained a dilettant. To enter into his emotional life, the endless failed relationships and the strategies he used to maintain the lifestyle of a full-time poet, set forth most recently and exhaustively in Ralph Freedman's biography of 1996, is for me frankly dispiriting. My reaction is doubtless influenced by having had to plough through so much hagiography in various languages. But the voice that speaks in so many nuances in his poems and prose is a source of endless fascination to me. To hear it accurately is a life-long challenge, not least because it is rarely single. There are voices within voices.

The major dualism here is between what Rilke terms the *Vorwand*, or pretext, of a poem and its apparently unrelated *Geständnis*, or avowal, that, once expressed, can exist independently of its author.<sup>3</sup> In its simplest terms, this interaction means that a work of art is never ultimately about what it presents as its ostensible subject, and the avowal that underlies the pretext does not ask to be related back to the author's own experience but rather takes on a life of its own in the finished text.





This opposition by no means exhausts the complexities of what Rilke could do with the voice of a text, be it poetry or prose, but it indicates the origin of some of the major controversies in Rilke scholarship. For there is an element of arbitrariness in any reader's decision as to what may be taken at face value in any given text. Multiply this over a body of texts, and the complementary possibilities of diffraction, on the one hand, and the understandable impulse towards selecting and privileging a single strand of meaning, on the other, set up the tensions on which Rilke scholarship still thrives.

Before approaching the issues of translating Rilke, it is worth recalling what the distinguished Austrian novelist Robert Musil had to say of Rilke in 1927 at a memorial celebration for the recently deceased: "Rainer Maria Rilke was badly suited for this age. This great poet did nothing other than make the German poem perfect for the first time ever."<sup>1</sup> Musil was a clear-headed rationalist, given neither to hagiography nor bursts of enthusiasm, and his dictum has stood the test of time.

Eighty years later, after Rilke's writing has been variably in fashion or out of it for reasons usually connected with external factors, such as the view of what literature *should* be prevailing for a given period within Germany, the formal perfection of Rilke's poetry is disputed by few.

There are those readers who are repelled by ideologically charged works, such as the *Duino Elegies*, for they cannot empathise with what they appear to be saying, but few deny Rilke's technical virtuosity. The problem this poses for translation is immense. After the age of about 24, Rilke attained a kind of 'perfect pitch' in his diction that he only rarely lost. Moreover, he was obsessed with the idea of progress in his own art and drove himself to change and develop styles, sometimes under the influence of earlier German writers he had not assimilated when young, but always with a firm grasp of technique.

The translator of Rilke is thus confronted, firstly, with a body of texts whose meaning continues to generate controversy among a large number of specialist literary scholars whose first language is German; secondly, with texts written according to an aesthetic which denies that the obvious meaning of any text is the 'real' meaning, indeed nowhere affirms the





existence of a unitary meaning, and gives no clues as to how levels of meaning are to be differentiated; thirdly, with a command of form that deploys the resources of the German language with a surety and sensitivity to which few other German poets can aspire. The question is thus: how much of this can any translator expect to capture in modern English? How much of Rilke's voice can survive the transition?

Before answering: "not much", a few caveats should be entered. Rilke had nothing against translation himself, and personally supervised, line for line, Maurice Betz' rendering into French of his own novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* over several months in Paris in 1925.<sup>5</sup> In the course of his lifetime his French had become so fluent that the exercise had some point. The same could not be said for his English, which Rilke declared to be the language that was "furthest from me and most foreign", meaning he knew very little and disliked what he knew.<sup>6</sup> The question of how much English he really did know, is, like most questions relating to Rilke, a vexed issue, but the most reliable statement, because unclouded by polemics, – England and especially America were later demonised by Rilke<sup>7</sup> – is probably that in a letter of 1902: "I read English badly and with a fair amount of trouble".<sup>8</sup>

This did not prevent him from producing, in early 1907, a verse translation of Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's 44 *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. He may have begun the deciphering of the poems in Paris in the summer of 1906 with Dora Hedrich, later Herxheimer, who had been born in London and spoke fluent English, though it is unlikely he achieved much, as he was taken up with other projects. His hostess on Capri in late 1906 and early 1907, Alice Faehndrich, happened also to have a firm grasp of English. She read the poems aloud to Rilke in the original, then roughed out a prose translation of each. Rilke wrote German sonnets on this basis and discussed the work in progress with her.<sup>9</sup>

What resulted are thoroughly Rilkean sonnets that play fast and loose with the nuances of the English. Rilke was much more concerned with giving the sonnets a credible voice in German than with rendering the English precisely. The conclusion of the final sonnet may serve as one example:





[...] *Indeed, these beds and bowers*

*Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,  
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,  
Here's ivy! – take them, as I used to do*

[...] *In den Beeten streiten*

*Unkraut und Raute. Du hast viel zu jäten;  
doch hier ist Efeu, hier sind wilde Rosen  
Nimm sie, wie ich die deinen nahm, als  
bäten*

*Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall*

*Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,  
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.*

*not pine*

*sie dich, in deine Augen sie zu schließen.*

*Und sage deiner Seele, daß die losen*

*in meiner Seele ihre Wurzeln ließen."*

"Overgrown" is sacrificed to "streiten", which Rilke needs as a rhyme, but which means "to quarrel" or "be in conflict", and makes little sense here, for it destroys the synonymy in the English between "bitter weeds" and "rue", a bitter herb. Again, for rhyming purposes, Rilke has the flowers "as if they were asking/You to enclose them within your eyes". This drowns the elegance of the English line: "Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true", so that the only imperative in German is to "thy soul", and the colours go unmentioned. A lot of weight is thus placed on the rhyme-word "losen" in the German, an adjective meaning "loose". This has no direct equivalent in the original, and it requires some thought to conclude that the flowers are so because their roots are in the other's soul. In German "los", if applied to flowers, first suggests that they are in a florist's display, but simply not bound together, rather than that they have been separated from their roots, which is, of course, a necessary secondary implication.

Rilke's two final lines are not as powerful as those in the original because they lack the parallelism of "eyes" and "soul" as the recipients of complementary imperatives at identical points in the metre. To give his final line a conclusive effect, he needs the awkward enjambement of the line before.

This is not meant to be pedantic, but to show where Rilke places his priorities: the form of the translation dominates the semantics of the original, and its emphases are not respected. This effect also marks Rilke's translations from the language he knew so well, French. In 1913





he translated the 24 sonnets that Louise (or Louize) Labé had published in 1555, and they finally saw print as a collection in November 1917. His friend and patroness, the Princess of Thurn and Taxis, paid him the somewhat backhanded compliment, on 1 January 1918, of responding to his dedicated copy by stating she thought those of the translations were perhaps “most beautiful when it is only Rilke writing – for I find they follow the original less precisely than you usually do”.<sup>11</sup> Their acquaintance dates from the end of 1909 and English was not one of her languages, so she is referring to Rilke’s other translations from French, rather than those of Elizabeth Barrett-Browning. Her point is that Rilke has here made very few concessions to the voice of the original, but yet the fact that there *is* an original lays the texts open to a mode of criticism that could hardly touch poems that were entirely his own.

Indeed, the first tercet of the second sonnet drew, in 1924, the ire of Karl Kraus, the Viennese doyen of German usage, for Rilke not merely capitulates before the simplicity of the original, but puts it into a German that was scarcely of this world:

*O ris, ô front, cheveux, bras, mains et doigts:*

*Stirn, Haar und Lächeln, Arme, Hände,  
Finger,*

*O luth pleintif, viole, archet et vois:*

*Geige, die aufklagt, Bogen, Stimme, - ach:*

*Tant de flambeaus pour ardre une femelle!*

*ein brennlich Weib und lauter Flammen-  
Schwinger.<sup>12</sup>*

The first line merely changes the order in which the parts of the beloved’s body are mentioned so as to suit the German rhythm. In the next, the “mournful lute” becomes a violin that utters a sudden cry of lament, and the viol disappears. For rhyming purposes, Rilke then adds the exclamation “ach”, to be taken up in the last tercet. The next line is superbly simple in French: “so many torches to burn a woman” – the impact of “femelle” is to stress the sexuality of the experience evoked. Rilke converts this into what must surely be one of the least effective lines he ever wrote. He uses “brennlich”, an adjective whose meaning is clear as “flammable”, though it is not in normal usage, but archaizes it by leaving off its grammatical ending, then “Weib”, a word for woman which is, by



the early 20th century, usually strongly derogatory, without necessarily having sexual connotations. Not content with this, he goes on to coin a word of his own “Flammen-Schwinger”, which, as Karl Kraus wrote, is “more reminiscent of warfare than of love”, since its nearest homonym in normal German is “Flammenwerfer” or flame-thrower.<sup>13</sup> Once more, it is demanded by the rhyme; but that it rhymes is the best that can be said for it. Why Rilke allowed this version to stand in such a prominent place, when his renderings of most of the later sonnets are much more felicitous, remains a mystery on which subsequent scholarship has shed no light.

Karl Kraus’ intervention reminds us that it is sometimes apposite, indeed politically correct, to regard translation as a dialogue with the original. Never one to back down from an argument, Kraus offered his own verse translation in rivalry to Rilke’s so as to expand the dialogue. His solution for “Tant de flambeaus pour ardre une femelle” is: “zu viele Flammen für ein armes Herz!”. It avoids producing dodgy German, but it is curiously weak and euphemistic in comparison with the original. I have looked at other German and English translations, and nowhere seen an adequate response to the unique power of Labé’s “ardre une femelle”.

There has been no lack of other criticism of Rilke’s translations of Louise Labé.<sup>14</sup> Mainly they tax Rilke with the liberties he takes with the original. Lately the pendulum has swung the other way, with Dieter Lamping defending Rilke’s freedom to do as he liked.<sup>15</sup> Bernard Dieterle, whilst admitting that Rilke was uninterested in rendering the original phrasing of Louise Labé in detail, maintains that his versions of these sonnets were guided by an idealisation of the life of the poetess herself.<sup>16</sup> Certainly she is eulogised towards the end of Rilke’s novel together with other women who transmuted their unhappy love into poetry.<sup>17</sup> The problem is that they are there idealised in such extravagant terms that questions of stylistics are left far behind. But the issue is surely not accuracy nor the lack of it, but the divided attitudes that see Rilke working through the French text of his own novel line by line with his translator, on the one hand, to ensure that Betz gets it right, and, on the other, his quite cavalier attitude to the originals of poems he translates.

What Rilke actually does in these translations is to create a voice



which he may have felt to be somewhere between that of the original and his own, but with what success is contestable. Happening, in an archive, upon a draft of his translation of the sixth of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* in a manuscript book transcribed from Rilke's notebooks by Katharina Kippenberg, the wife of his publisher, among notes he had made for his as yet incomplete novel, I was briefly convinced I had found an unpublished poem by Rilke.<sup>18</sup> It would have done me no good, since even publication of these transcriptions remains blocked by his heirs, but the voice was so unmistakably Rilke's that it did not occur to me until I looked up the published volume of his translations that there could be another voice behind it.

The thematics of voice in Rilke's own poetry are a rich and complex field. I have elsewhere explored it in some detail.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, Rilke had few inhibitions about letting his own voice dominate that of the original, perhaps because he felt that the overall persona that emerged from his translations would best reflect his vision of the original author, perhaps because he regarded the originals as "pretexts" in his own specific sense. As support for the latter view, there is the curious case of the poems Rilke put together under the title *Aus dem Nachlaß des Grafen C.W.* They were composed in November 1920 and March 1921, at a time when he was despairing of ever completing the *Duino Elegies*. They are a group of poems by a fictitious author, supposedly quoted from his literary remains. This elaborate fiction Rilke explained to one of his correspondents as follows: "neither in the right frame of mind nor capable of producing something original, it seemed to be that I had – as it were – to create a 'pretextual' [*vorwändig*] figure [...] this author I called Count C. W. A dilettant, strictly speaking".<sup>20</sup>

The use of a "pretext" to write poems Rilke had no intention of publishing in his lifetime – they did not see print till 1950 – is curiously reminiscent of the circumstances under which he translated the two sonnet sequences I have mentioned. He translates *Sonnets from the Portuguese* at a time when he has just been through the intense creative effort that brought the first part of the *New Poems* to a conclusion in January 1907. He was not to take up work on the second part till July of the same year,





and he also had problems with continuing the novel he had begun in 1904. Similarly, when he translates Louise Labé, he is in a slough, with the first two *Duino Elegies* complete, a few fragments of others sketched, but at a loss to continue the project that was to take, in all, ten years. The two sonnet sequences seem to have a function similar to that of the poems by the imaginary Count C. W. – to provide Rilke with a voice when circumstances made it impossible for him to write in his own. In September 1914, when the reality of World War I filled him with deep gloom and paralysed his creative faculties, he explicitly laments in letters the loss of his *Schreibstimme* or “writing voice”.<sup>3</sup> Translation thus seems to represent for him a middle-path between writing in his own voice and silence. It is more a variant of soliloquy than a dialogue.

I have gone into this detail to try and throw some light on how Rilke practised translation, before looking at the problems of translating Rilke into English, partly to gain some distance from what one might call the battle between the ‘purist’ and the ‘anything goes’ schools of translating Rilke. Anyone who takes the trouble to become a Rilke scholar is going to be a ‘purist’ to some degree, because the devastating effects of understanding Rilke imprecisely will be all too familiar. However, when it comes to Rilke and the English language, there has to be room for the ‘anything goes’ approach, if the possibility of translation as intercultural dialogue is to be kept open. As we shall see, too much purism simply shuts the door.

Translations are useful to those readers who either cannot access the original at all or at best very imperfectly. It is hard to make a case for total ignorance as a preferable alternative to even a slapdash translation. When it comes to poetry, there is a strong argument for the technique used by the Loeb Classical Library: a plain prose translation on the page facing the original, be this in verse or prose. This will not reproduce the voice of the original, but it will avoid excrescent semantics for the sake of a rhyme and, as well, the impression that the reader has somehow been cheated that underlies the several articles that criticise, for example, the inaccuracy of Rilke’s versions of Louise Labé.

Once one ventures into verse translation, there is an implicit claim





to mimicking the voice of the original. As I have tried to show using the example of Rilke, the voice that results may be nowhere near that of the original at all, but yet have a strong presence. Rilke, for all his voluminous correspondence lamenting writer's blocks, dissatisfaction with his own early work and frustration at circumstances he blamed for phases when he could not produce, translated with the awareness that he was a major poet in his own right. The same cannot be said of the vast majority of those who have – to date – rendered him into English verse.

My own translations were done for radio, which meant that they had to be meaningful in the fleeting experience of hearing a text once only. In doing them, I was guided by no theory of translation, since I consider such pointless, but by the sole proviso that an attentive listener should be able to take in English verse that imitated the original. I enjoyed the freedom of not having to translate any particular poem or an entire collection. If I reached a point where the German was too resistant, or the English was being forced too far away from it to preserve a simulacrum of the original verse-form, I simply gave up and tried another poem.

The failure rate was about 90%. There are various reasons for this. German and English grammar and syntax are very dissimilar. Furthermore, Rilke's German is very much his own. In 1954, H. W. Belmore published a substantial book called *Rilke's Craftsmanship. An Analysis of his Poetic Style*, which is essentially a compendium of instances where Rilke's usage in his poems differs from standard German prose usage in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Rilke's poetry very frequently rhymes, and, as we have seen when looking at his own translations of English and French sonnets, the need to rhyme can play havoc with the semantics of the original. Unrhymed blank verse in German offers relatively little resistance to being rendered into English, but Rilke did not use it very often.

There is, inevitably, the overriding question of what gets sacrificed, since there are always resonances that apparent equivalences do not capture and the translator will face invidious choices. Finally, there is often the simple difficulty of knowing what Rilke's text means. Rilke scholars with German as a first language frequently resort to "parallel quotations" in an attempt to decipher particularly dense passages. This has its own





dangers, as Rilke felt no constraint to maintain semantic consistency from context to context. All these factors combine to make Rilke's poetic voice, which is quite unmistakable in German, virtually impossible to imitate in English. In what follows, then, there are no prizes to be awarded, merely linguistic phenomena to be observed.

## 2. Pursuing a Panther

In late 1902 or early 1903, Rilke wrote a poem that he was later, in 1926, to describe as the first fruit of his "rigorous, good schooling under Rodin".<sup>23</sup> It was to set the tone for his poetic style for at least the next six years and has remained one of his best known anthology pieces. It evokes a caged beast of prey Rilke observed in Paris, and the designation of the place he saw it is part of the poem. I shall limit discussion to the title and first quatrain of three as an illustration of how hard it is to put Rilke into English. It begins:

### DER PANTHER

Im Jardin des Plantes, Paris

*Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe  
so müd geworden, dass er nichts mehr hält.  
Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe  
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.*

The quatrain is divided into two sentences, rhyming *abab*, with an alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes. The grammatical subject changes after line 2 from "his [its] gaze" to an impersonal construction "it seems [is] to him [it]". The grammatical gender does not of itself create a personification, but the second verbal construction edges the poem towards one. The sense of the first line requires the enjambement to complete it, while lines 3 and 4 are paratactic. Assonance and alliteration are very marked: "Stäbe[n]", "bars", occurs three times in an accented place in the line. The long "ü" of "Vorübergehn" anticipates the key-word "müd", and the assonance of "Stäbe gäbe" is obtrusive, as is the repetition of "tausend Stäben" in the next line. The iambic rhythm is





sustained throughout, with no marked dissonances between the metre and the normal stresses of the words. The effect is to mimic the monotony of the animal's pacing, whilst using the conceit of how its eyes perceive the world as a thematic pretext. This is a summary description of how the German works and may be kept in mind when considering the following attempts to render it into English.

The internet offers them, new and old, in great abundance. We start with one by David Cobb (2003) that uses rhyme and metre:

*Innumerable bars have dimmed his gaze  
while pacing past them with an unfixed eye,  
as if a thousand years before him lay  
and then, beyond the thousand bars, were haze.*

Contrast this with a recent version by Cliff Grego, which makes no attempt at doing so:

*His gaze is from the passing of bars  
so exhausted, that it doesn't hold a thing anymore.  
For him, it's as if there were thousands of bars  
and behind the thousands of bars no world.*

A 'purist' critic will pounce on the former rendering and demand to know how "years" get into the act at all, why the rhyme scheme changes, why one is a half-rhyme, why there are "innumerable bars" in the first line and only a "thousand" in the fourth, and, worst of all, why the precision of "keine Welt" dissolves into a "haze". This is only the beginning, for the panther's gaze is "tired" in German, not "dimmed", and "unfixed" is extraneous. It is also fair to point out that having "Blick" – "gaze" – as the subject of the first sentence is important, as the third and final quatrain will return to the theme of what the panther sees. Making "bars" the grammatical subject in English causes trouble later on.

If one turns to Grego's version that abandons rhyme and metre, then the semantics line up better, except that "exhausted" exaggerates the German for "tired" and the plural "the thousands" in the fourth line is misleading. Otherwise, the text is free from extraneous meanings, such as "years" or "haze", but there is no way we could even guess at the rhythm





of the original. Each line seems to go out of its way to avoid the original's evenly paced iambs. Line two has fourteen syllables, as against line one's nine. Line three suddenly breaks into anapaests, while line four has no discernible rhythm at all. The question arises: how does it differ from prose? The only answer seems to be that the English syntax is displaced in a few instances to follow the German.

Stephen Mitchell enjoys some prestige as a translator of Rilke, but his version hardly puts Grego in the shade:

*His vision, from the constantly passing bars,  
has grown so weary that it cannot hold  
anything else. It seems to him there are  
a thousand bars, and behind the bars, no world.*

Once more, the rhythm seems to go out of its way to avoid the steady, iambic pacing of the original. Mitchell's enjambement from line three to line four breaks the syntactic pattern of the original to no purpose beyond his half-rhymes, since the sense of the German is "nothing any longer", rather than "anything else". Can there be a closer approximation to Rilke's voice than either of these? Let us try another metric version, by Alan Crosier (2003):

*Passing by those bars has rendered numb  
his jaded gaze - which nothing else contains.  
A thousand bars, they seem to have become:  
and past the thousand bars no world remains.*

One more the 'purist' will have ample pickings. Why "numb", why "jaded"? – the German just says "tired". The idea of a panther looking "jaded" after an extended pub-crawl through a few too many of the "thousand bars" has its own charm – Henry Mancini's theme played *largo* comes to mind – but present in the German it is not. The rhyme scheme *abab* is preserved, though without the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes and at the cost of distorting English word order: "nothing else contains", for a start, and there are other instances. Rhyming again seems to produce more deficits than profits. William H. Gass does not attempt to rhyme:

*His gaze has grown so worn from the passing*





*of the bars that it sees nothing anymore.  
There seem to be a thousand bars before him  
and beyond that thousand nothing of the world.*

Nor does he, except in line three, try to reproduce the iambic rhythm. "Worn" in the first line mistranslates "müd". The point of Rilke's second line is not that the panther sees nothing but that its gaze retains nothing of what it sees. One could go on, but it may be more profitable to try another version, this time by Edward Snow:

*His gaze has from the passing of the bars  
become so tired that it holds nothing more.  
It seems to him there are a thousand bars  
and behind a thousand bars no world.*

This version is quite literal and preserves the iambic rhythm. The German assonance and alliteration have gone, together with the rhymes, but at least this text can be read against the original as, effectively, a prose translation that mimics Rilke's rhythm. There are plenty of other translations available, but I am aware of none that sounds remotely like what one 'hears' when reading the poem in German.

It is noticeable that translations get no closer to the original or to having a credible voice of their own with time. Edward Snow's translation first appeared in 1984.<sup>24</sup> It is understandable that many have felt moved to improve on the early, 'standard' translation of the poem by J.B. Leishman, since it too suffers from the inveterate problem of inept rhymes adding extraneous meanings:

*His gaze those bars keep passing is so misted  
with tiredness, it can take in nothing more.  
He feels as though a thousand bars existed,  
and no more world beyond them before.*

"He feels" takes the personification beyond Rilke's impersonal construction "ihm ist", and the syntax of the fourth line is a mystery. Still, Leishman copies the rhythm and syntax of the original, whereas some of the later versions cited above seem to want to get as far away from it as they can. Edward Snow's translation of 1984 can hardly be described as a





*tour de force*, but it is, to my mind, the least misleading of those presently on offer.

I cannot emphasise too much that *Der Panther* is Rilke at his most straightforward. The four lines simply develop a conceit, and pose none of the conceptual problems that can make his texts obscure to readers whose first language is German. The barriers to a recreation of his voice in English are, in this instance, essentially the differences between the two languages. The fact that the thrice repeated “Stäbe[n]” has two syllables, whilst the English “bars” has only one, and that the stem-vowel “ä” is made to resonate throughout the stanza in both its long and short forms is, like the alliteration, simply an effect that cannot be reproduced in English. I have no version of my own to pull out of the hat, and to weigh the pros and cons of just these seven versions through the remaining two quatrains of the poem would bring little in the way of fresh insights. Despite the “thousand bars” and the pack of translators, the panther still remains at large.

In conclusion, I should mention that Seamus Heaney has recently translated at least three of the *New Poems*. Unlike some of the dialogues with Rilke I shall look at in the next section, he has made no attempt to beef up the semantics of the original poems. I can look at only one briefly: *Rilke: After the Fire*, from the collection *District and Circle*.<sup>25</sup> It is useful that Heaney has “Rilke:” as part of his title, since, otherwise, there would be no getting back to Rilke’s poem of 1908. The rest of Heaney’s title would not lead us to Rilke’s original, since it is reminiscent of the Bible (I Kings, 19, 12), which Rilke’s *Die Brandstätte* is not. Rilke’s title is quite concrete: “the site of a fire”, in this instance a cottage on a heath that has entirely burned down.

Heaney has a “wallstead” there, whereas Rilke is at pains to stress that a new, empty place, “Stelle”, exists where previously the cottage had been. Yelling children run over it, as if nothing had been there before. Thus, Rilke sets up a tension, that cannot be imitated in English between the title, “-stätte”, and the close synonym “Stelle” that occurs twice in his poem. Still, Heaney does capture the before/after effect well in his treatment of the “son of the place”, who, like the site itself, has been altered by what





is no longer there: "And he was changed: a foreigner among them." We hear a poet's strong voice, but it is not Rilke's. For the rest, Heaney takes moderate liberties with the semantics, and uses his own rhythms and half-rhymes. But his poem stands in its own right, and the nod to Rilke in the title comes across as a courtesy, rather than an excuse for making a dogsbreakfast of English diction.

### 3. Going over the top

Many volumes of exegesis have been written on Rilke's *Duino Elegies* in German and other languages. Rilke regarded these poems as the summation of his whole creative life. His letters from 1912 to 1922 endow them with their own biography, or rather mythography, since he dramatised their conception, gestation and birth as something both independent of himself and, paradoxically, his crowning self-realisation. I was agreeably surprised when asked to contribute the article on this cycle to the *Rilke-Handbuch*, since I have been rude in print to a lot of Rilke scholars, but I would never contemplate attempting to translate the whole ten poems into English. From my perspective, to do so would, on the one hand, presume that there were English equivalents for some of the most dense and idiosyncratic formulations and, on the other, that I could produce a sustained echo of Rilke's virtuosity over the whole cycle.

I stress this is not because the *Elegies* dwarf any other poetic achievement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. I find parts of them too mannered and fulsome in German, when compared with other poetry by Rilke. The problem is rather that, having spent many years learning Rilke's poetic idiom, I am too aware of the dangers of misrepresentation to be comfortable taking up the challenge. I did translate the *Fourth Elegy* for radio, but that poem has the advantage of being in blank verse, and its content stands apart from the main rhetorical structure of the cycle in which the questions of the *First* and *Second* are answered in the *Seventh* and *Ninth* – after a fashion.

In 1999, William H. Gass did the world of English-speaking readers of Rilke a service by writing a flamboyant volume, *Reading Rilke. Reflections on the Problems of Translation*, that culminates in his own rendering of the *Elegies*.<sup>26</sup> In it he assembles parts of fourteen other translations into





English so as to justify his own. In a sense, he mimics Rilke by writing the biography of his own translation. If one looks on the internet, one finds he was very far from having had the last word. This is justly so, because, by any criteria, his text abounds in unnecessary departures from the original. Gass lines up the previous attempts he has collected to render the following lines from the beginning of the *First Elegy*:

*[...] Denn das Schöne ist nichts  
als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen,  
und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäht,  
uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.*

and then, at the end of the book, produces his final – now sixteenth – version:

*[...] – a beauty we can barely  
endure because it is nothing but terror's herald;  
and we worship it so because it serenely disdains  
to destroy us. Every Angel is awesome.<sup>27</sup>*

The purist in me comes out barking. Rilke's syntax, with its introductory "Denn..." – "For..." – is a standard didactic gesture, an elaboration of the opening lines which looks as though it offers an explanation. Whether it does or not, is entirely between the poem and the reader, but the gesture itself is as plain as day. Removing it does not help. Rather, "a beauty" moves further away from the original, which uses two adjectival nouns: "das Schöne", "das Schreckliche". The direct German equivalent of "beauty" is "die Schönheit", and Rilke could have used it without troubling the rhythm, but he opts for the more abstract "das Schöne" – an effect none of the translators Gass cites has tried to copy. "Terror's herald" gets Gass into more trouble, because the German clearly says "beginning", and affixes this by a simple genitive to another generalised and abstract adjectival noun "the terrible". "Worship" pointlessly exaggerates "bewundern" – "admire"; "serenely" hypes up the much flatter "gelassen", "calmly", and – worst of all – in place of the repetition of "schrecklich", Gass produces an "awesome". The irony of all this is that Gass himself has quoted the version of C. F. McIntyre, published in 1961,





which, of all those he has collected, does least violence to the German text as far as these lines are concerned.<sup>28</sup>

This is what I mean by going over the top. Gass' whole book turns translating the *Elegies* into an existential drama, just as Rilke's letters repeatedly dramatised their composition. But Gass is not Rilke. The lines quoted above are far from being the hardest to render in the *Elegies*. Eudo C. Mason, for example, devotes 18 lines of English prose to paraphrasing six lines from the *Seventh Elegy* out of a concern to capture their meaning exactly.<sup>29</sup> Many of the expositions of the *Elegies* in German are equally prolix.

J. M. Coetzee has given Gass' book an extensive and, to my mind, extremely charitable review, but is obliged to fault the translation of the *Eighth Elegy* as follows: "He understands what Rilke is up to, understands so well that more than once he succumbs to the temptation to clarify – to us, his readers, but in a sense to Rilke as well – thoughts that Rilke is still struggling to articulate."<sup>30</sup> However, cursed by my own knowledge of Rilke, I have to dismiss Coetzee's assertion that Gass "understands [Rilke] so well" as sheer window-dressing. To my mind Gass understands Rilke no better than any of his predecessors, or successors – he simply writes up his own efforts as those of a giant standing on the shoulders of dwarves. Coetzee seems in part to have been taken in by this gambit.

I would not wish to deny out of hand the possibility that readers who know no German at all might find themselves transported by Gass' whole version of the cycle into an enchanted poetic world, but I also have no trouble in finding passages that would turn a philologist apoplectic.

But perhaps I am setting out the issue in the wrong terms. The *Duino Elegies* are a literary phenomenon that continues to produce responses, especially now that the internet has significantly changed the economics of publishing. As we saw in the case of *Der Panther*, no translator seems deterred by the idea that a poem might have been better translated already. Any half-way informed rendering of the *Duino Elegies* is going to give readers who know no German some access to a marvellous imaginative construct that has no equivalent in English literature. Gass' signal failure to provide *the* definitive translation is proof of the *Elegies'* continuing



challenge and vitality, as are the translations that have appeared since. There are passages in the *Elegies* that can make even a hard-boiled Rilke scholar gasp at their artistry – a magic that will never find its way into English. Against this, the successive encounters with these texts that the many translations document show that something of Rilke’s voice has been heard, even if the responses will themselves be diminished voices.

Translation as dialogue has no necessary end. Randel McCraw Helms’ *Who Wrote the Gospels?* allows us to appreciate the extent to which these narratives may be read as four nuanced dialogues with the Greek Septuagint, itself an at times imperfect translation, and to have an inkling of how this voice is present in those of the later texts.<sup>31</sup>

If we look at the fortunes of, say, Chinese poetry in English, then most anthologies give the impression that the originals were written in free verse, whereas in fact they mainly rhyme and follow strict formal patterns. Are we poorer for the free-verse-experience? I think not. There is a lot to be said for the ‘anything goes’ approach, since any cultural interaction is better than none at all.

Thus I turn with some relief from William H. Gass’ enumeration of fifteen versions of the opening lines of the First Elegy – “Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel/Ordnungen?” – to John Tranter’s entertainment:

*After Rilke*

*I hate this place. If I were to throw a fit, who  
among the seven thousand starlets in Hollywood  
would give a flying fuck? Or suppose some tired  
studio executive, taken by my boyish beauty – no,  
I’d suffocate. Charm is only makeup-deep,  
I reckon, and staring in the mirror too long  
can give you the horrors: that thing in the glass,  
it doesn’t care. Every nymphette burns  
for some drug or other. I’m not drinking tonight,  
do you mind? Messages banking up, unanswered.  
On the screen a masked cowboy chases  
a masked cowboy: the moonlit glade  
is black and white. Even here among the big-wigs  
the servants are unreliable, the pool*



*fills up with foliage and seagull droppings.  
Who'll clean it up? Not the top brass, not  
the Mexican gardener raking leaves in the drive,  
who sees how uneasy we are reading the headlines  
and the newsreels' various interpretations  
of the shit going on in Europe. [...]*<sup>2</sup>

It is precisely because Gass takes himself and his translation so seriously, at times histrionically, that Tranter's wholly irreverent response to Rilke is so refreshing. Nor is it trivial: to have the "Mexican gardener" – rather than Rilke's "die findigen Tiere" ("knowing animals", "canny beasts", or whatever) – observe "how uneasy we are", makes a telling point about both the world of the original and the Californian setting of the riposte. Here, at least, we have a voice answering a voice. It might shock the devout Rilkean, but then devout Rilkeans are a humourless lot.

Robert Lowell was an aggressive proponent of the 'anything goes' school: "I believe that poetic translation – I would call it an imitation – must be expert and inspired, and needs as much technique, luck and rightness of hand as an original poem. My licenses have been many."<sup>33</sup> It seems appropriate to conclude with a consideration of the issue of license, since Lowell makes a virtue of necessity: "I have dropped lines, moved lines, moved stanzas, changed images and altered metre and intent."<sup>34</sup> This is dialogue with a vengeance, but we are surely entitled to judge it by its fruits.

It also gets us back to Rilke's concept of the "pretext" – *Vorwand* – since the thrust of Lowell's whole preface to his *Imitations* comes close to saying the originals are there as pretexts for him to do his own thing. Fortunately, Lowell had a go at one of Rilke's more translatable poems, a long narrative (95 lines) in blank verse entitled *Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes*. Lowell's version of the first section reads:

*That's the strange regalia of souls.  
Vibrant  
as platinum filaments they went,  
like arteries through their darkness. From the holes  
of powder beetles, from the otter's bed,  
from the oak king judging by the royal oak -*





blood like our own life-blood, sprang.  
Otherwise nothing was red.

The dark was heavier than Caesar's foot.

There were canyons there,  
distracted forests, and bridges over air-pockets;  
a great gray, blind lake  
moaned over the background canals,  
like a bag of winds over the Caucasus.  
Through terraced highlands, stocked with cattle and patience,  
streaked the single road.  
It was unwinding like a bandage.<sup>35</sup>

Neither "Caesar's foot" nor the "bag of winds" sound very much like Rilke. This is as it should be, since they neither correspond nor allude to any part of the original text. Before risking the application to Lowell of criteria I have not applied to Tranter, perhaps we should look at a version by Alan Marshfield, culled from the internet:

Das war der Seelen wunderliches Bergwerk.  
Wie stille Silbererze gingen sie  
als Adern durch sein Dunkel. Zwischen  
Wurzeln  
entsprang das Blut, das fortgeht zu  
den Menschen,  
und schwer wie Porphyry sah es aus im  
Dunkel.  
Sonst war nichts Rotes.

Felsen waren da  
und wesenlose Wälder. Brücken über Leeres  
und jener grosse graue blinde Teich,  
der über seinem fernem Grunde hing  
wie Regenhimmel über einer Landschaft.  
Und zwischen Wiesen, sanft und voller  
Langmut  
erschien des einen Weges blasser Streifen,  
wie eine lange Bleiche hingelegt.

It was that awesome underground of souls.  
Like silent lines of silver ore they went,  
like veins in the mine's dark. Through  
roots of trees  
rose up the blood that goes toward  
mankind,  
  
a massive sight, porphyry in the darkness.  
Otherwise, nothing red.

Great rocks were there;  
woods of no presence, too. Bridges on  
emptinesses  
and that immense, grey, dull and  
tarnished lake  
that far above its distant bottom hung  
like rain in heaven high above a landscape.  
Through meadowlands, softly and full of  
patience,  
appeared the pale strip of a single path  
like a long line of flax laid out to bleach.





This enables us to see where Lowell is coming from. It is remarkable how little of Rilke's imagery he has taken over in the opening section of his poem. Rilke's first line is memorable, but it has nothing to do at all with "regalia". Marshfield's "awesome underground" gets closer, but – if we are now talking straight translation – not all that close. At this point I should, in the spirit of Karl Kraus, put up my own version:

*This was the deep, outlandish mine of souls.  
Silently they traversed its darkness like  
veins of silver ore. From among roots  
sprang out the blood that flows on to emerge  
in humankind, and here it looked as heavy  
as porphyry in the gloom. Nothing else red.*

*Abysms there were here  
and insubstantial forests, bridges over  
vacuity and that grey, sightless lake,  
suspended over its own depths, as rain-clouds  
brood on a landscape. And between the meadows,  
patient and meandering, a ribbon  
of path appeared, like cloth spread out to bleach.*

Pleading now unashamedly *in causa sua*: in Rilke's first line, it is a mine and not an underground. Moreover, it is not "awesome" – the Moscow Underground is said to be, but we may be sure Rilke was not thinking of it in 1904. "Der Seelen [...] Bergwerk", is as strange in German as "mine of souls", and I do not understand why Marshfield leaves it to line three to reveal that the "underground" is really a mine. "Awesome" is about as far away from the German "wunderlich" as one can get, for the adjective's basic meaning is "odd, peculiar". A German-German dictionary gives the example: "Im Alter ist er wunderlich geworden" – "He's gone peculiar in old age". I suspect Marshfield has confused it with "wunderbar", meaning "marvellous". I opted for "outlandish" because, like "wunderlich", it has no positive connotations and it fits the rhythm. Still, it is not an exact match. "A massive sight, porpyhry in the darkness" in Marshfield's version once more puzzles me, since the German is literally "and heavy as porpyhry it looked in the darkness" – "massive" is extraneous. What Rilke suggests is that the blood *appears* to have taken on the stony density of porpyhry.





My own version stresses, as does Rilke, that it *looks* like porphyry, and then takes the liberty of putting “gloom” for “darkness”, not just because it suits the metre, but because this is not your typical coal-mine in which pitch-blackness prevails: there is enough light from wherever to see the landscape Rilke evokes in such detail. A “Regenhimmel” is not “rain in heaven” but an overcast sky that looks about to rain, the lake is not “tarnished” – and so on.

Looking for points where Lowell’s text and Rilke’s intersect, we have to ask: whose darkness is “their darkness”? Since Lowell has altogether suppressed the image of a mine that, in the original, transforms into a landscape, the question is hard to answer. “There were canyons there” takes up Rilke’s text, but “*distracted* forests, and bridges over *air-pockets*” are Lowell’s own inspiration. By the time the quite impressive image comes: “it was unwinding like a bandage”, then one can only hope it was not wrapped round Caesar’s foot, since what Rilke had in mind with his path appearing as a “pale strip” was an image of laundry, not of injury. In pre-technology times, most German villages or larger households would have a strip of grass – “Bleiche” – that was mown, but otherwise protected from cow-pats and the like, so that washing could be spread out there to bleach in the sun – “bleich”, like “blass”, is an adjective meaning “pale”.

Regrettably, Lowell’s text affects me like Gass’ translation of the *Elegies* raised to a power of three. I would not react so if I did not have Rilke’s original in my head. Since I do, I can only see it as a hatchet-job on Rilke’s poem, but one totally lacking in the humour of Tranter’s take-off of the first *Elegy*. I find Tranter refreshing, because I have often choked on the clouds of incense that surround the *Duino Elegies* in hagiographical writing on them. I cannot discern, for the life of me, what Lowell is up to, since no one has ever made a cult of *Orpheus*. *Eurydike*. *Hermes*, and the claims he makes for his “imitations” do not seem to me to be fulfilled here. His approach to translation is not dissimilar to Rilke’s own, rather the gap is simply one of relative talent. Yet Lowell has his admirers, and I wish them well.

By way of conclusion, I can do no more than wish everyone well who





takes up the dialogue with Rilke's German in that English language for which he professed such antipathy. It is an uneven contest, because the two languages have grown very far apart since English was a Saxon dialect.

Rilke is the Paganini of German lyricism, and some well-meant English translations are inevitably going to sound, to someone who knows the original, like one of Paganini's caprices transposed for barrel-organ, with the organ-grinder's monkey caught up in the works. This is how Lowell's text sounds to me. But the English-language dialogue with Rilke seems to be expanding exponentially on the internet, and, if you keep trawling, you may just be rewarded sometime by the sound of a violin.

## NOTES

- 1 Cf. Eudo C. Mason, *Rilke, Europe and the English-Speaking World*, Cambridge 1961, p. 19f., where a letter of Rilke from 1922 is quoted, in which he declared: "[...] when I am working I cannot endure to hear German spoken around me [...] but prefer to be encompassed by some other language, which is familiar and congenial to me as a medium for ordinary conversation".
- 2 Cf. *ibid.*, p.22, where Mason cites a letter written by Rilke on 11 September 1915: "To understand what an ordeal these times are for me, you must consider that I don't feel in a 'German' way – not in any respect."
- 3 For a detailed exposition of this dualistic aesthetics, which Rilke first formulated at the age of 22, see Anthony Stephens, *Rilkes Malte Laurids Brigge. Strukturanalyse des erzählerischen Bewußtseins*, Bern/Frankfurt am Main 1974, pp. 133-161; Anthony Stephens, „Alles ist nicht es selbst.“ *Zu den Duineser Elegien*, *Rilkes Duineser Elegien*, Ulrich Fülleborn and Manfred Engel (eds.), vol. 2, Frankfurt am Main 1982. pp. 307-348.
- 4 Cited in *Rilke-Handbuch*, Manfred Engel (ed.), Stuttgart 2004, p. xii.
- 5 Cf. Ralph Freedman, *Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke*, New York 1996, pp. 523-5.
- 6 Cited by Bernard Dieterle, *Rilke-Handbuch*, p. 461.
- 7 Cf. Rilkes letter to Witold Hulewicz of November 1925, commenting on the *Duino Elegies*, is translated, in part, by Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 163 as: "But now empty, indifferent things come surging down upon us, across from America, mere semblances of things, mere dummies of life [...] A house in the American sense, an American apple or one of their vines, have nothing whatsoever in common with the house, the fruit, the grapes, into which the hopes and the pensiveness of our forefathers have been transfused."
- 8 Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 10 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. VII, *Übertragungen*, Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig 1997, pp. 1032-5.
- 11 Rainer Maria Rilke/Marie von Thurn und Taxis, *Briefwechsel*, Ernst Zinn (ed.), Zürich 1951, p. 131.
- 12 *Sämtliche Werke VII*, p. 204f.
- 13 Karl Kraus, *Die Sprache*, Heinrich Fischer (ed.), Munich 1962, citing: *Die Fackel*, vol. 29, January 1924, pp. 829-839.
- 14 Cf. Ernst Rose, *Two German Translations of Louïze Labés Second Sonnet*, *Modern Languages*



- Quarterly 5 (1944), pp. 183-189; Duschan Derndarsky, Louïze Labé und Rilke, *Romanische Forschungen* 60 (1947), pp. 123-189; Hugo Friedrich, *Zur Frage der Übersetzungskunst*, Heidelberg 1965, p. 17ff.; Friedhelm Kemp, *Ich zweifle doch am ernst verschränkter Zeilen. Das französische Sonett und seine Aneignung in Deutschland*, Munich 1990, p. 11.
- 15 Dieter Lamping, *Die Freiheit des Übersetzers. Zu Rilkes Übertragung der Sonette Louïze Labés, Rilke heute. Der Ort des Dichters in der Moderne*, Vera Hauschild (ed.), Frankfurt am Main 1997, pp. 236-259.
  - 16 *Rilke-Handbuch*, p. 471f.
  - 17 *Sämtliche Werke* VI, p. 924f.
  - 18 *Sämtliche Werke* VII, p. 983. It begins: "Geh fort von mir. So werde ich fürderhin/in deinem Schatten stehn. [...]."
  - 19 Anthony Stephens, *Das "gleiche tägliche Entsetzen" und die Stimme des Dichters: Rilke 1914-18, Krieg der Geister. Erster Weltkrieg und literarische Moderne*, Würzburg 2000, pp. 153-169; Anthony Stephens, *Einzelgedichte 1910-1922*, *Rilke-Handbuch*, pp. 384-404.
  - 20 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe an Nanny Wunderly-Volkart, Rätus Luck* (ed.), Frankfurt am Main 1997, vol. I, p. 349.
  - 21 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe zur Politik*, Joachim Storck (ed.), Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig 1992, p. 89 and p. 93.
  - 22 H.W. Belmore, *Rilke's Craftsmanship. An Analysis of his Poetic Style*, Oxford 1954, 234 pp.
  - 23 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe in zwei Bänden*, Horst Nalewski (ed.), vol. II, p. 428.
  - 24 Rainer Maria Rilke, *New Poems [1907]. A Bilingual Edition*. Translated by Edward Snow, New York 1984, p. 73.
  - 25 Seamus Heaney, *District and Circle*, London 2006, p. 16.
  - 26 William H. Gass, *Reading Rilke. Reflections on the Problems of Translation*, New York 1999, 233 pp., *passim*.
  - 27 *Ibid.*, p. 189.
  - 28 Cf. *Duino Elegies*, translated by C. F. MacIntyre, Berkley and Los Angeles 1961: "For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror we can just barely endure, and we admire it so because it calmly disdains to destroy us. Every angel is terrible."
  - 29 Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 166. The lines from Rilke begin: "Wo einmal ein dauerndes Haus war [...]."
  - 30 J. M.Coetzee, *Stranger Shores. Essays 1986-1999*, London 2001, p. 84.
  - 31 Randel McCraw Helms, *Who Wrote the Gospels?*, Altadena 1997, 178 pp.
  - 32 Reproduced by kind permission of the author; to be found in *Fulcrum* magazine, no. 2, 2003, Cambridge/Mass. 2003, p. 363, also in John Tranter, *Urban Myths: 210 Poems*, St. Lucia 2006.
  - 33 Robert Lowell, *Imitations*, London 1962, p. xii.
  - 34 *Ibid.*
  - 35 *Ibid.*, p. 100.