

Intimations of Mortality – Byron’s Response to Hadrianus

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Byron came closest to the legacies of the enigmatic Hispano-Roman Hadrian in spring 1817, in ‘Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul!’ (CHP, IV, 694), although he addresses a city hardly eternal, with so much ruin on display. He had also crossed paths with the Hellenophile’s Eastern legacy in 1810-11 when, lodging adjacent to Hadrian’s quarter, he observed the rejuvenation of an Athens in decline. The notion of *Saeculum Aureum* or the ‘Golden Age’ of Hadrian personified his empire-building, absolute power and architectural genius. Byron’s earlier ‘pilgrimage’ to Petrarch’s resting place at Arqua en route to Rome revealed a tomb ‘venerably simple ... Than if a pyramid form’d his monumental strain’ (CHP IV, 31, 277-9). In stark contrast of place and style, Byron provides one of those many pictorial commentaries on Italy so characteristic of *Childe Harold IV*. Hadrian’s own Mausoleum with its pumpkin dome showcases the Near East as a conceptual determiner for the “Pater Patriae” in this gibe on a fantastic appropriation which provides the final postscript for the imperial farewell to the soul:

Turn to the Mole which Hadrian rear’d on high,
Imperial mimic of old Egypt’s piles,
Colossal copyist of deformity,
Whose travell’d phantasy from the far Nile’s
Enormous model, doom’d the artist’s toils
To build for giants, and for his vain earth
His shrunken ashes raise this dome: How smiles
The gazer’s eye with philosophic mirth,
To view the huge design, which sprung from such a birth! (CHP IV, 152, 1360-8).¹

While in Rome, the poet went riding over the wider Latium region, the Campagna and the Tiburtine hills. Tivoli had been the town sacred to Hercules, with estates owned by Arrian, Sallust, Brutus, Cassius, Catullus and Horace and of course Villa Hadriana’s eponymous architect and frontier soldier, who had emulated the sacred monuments and landscapes viewed on his inveterate travels, and furbished a sumptuous classical library. In 1817 Tivoli was still entombed, and Byron’s excursions have only passing mention in his correspondence, although he was gathering impressions for the literary and cultural vistas immortalized in *Childe Harold IV*.²

Post-Augustan thanatography has little to do with Latium, since Hadrian died in July, 138 AD near Naples, across the bay from Virgil’s tomb, and was apotheosized as *Divus Hadrianus*. He had lived sixty-two years, ruling for twenty-one of them, during which imperial ‘Rome’ reached its greatest geographical extent of acclaim and conquest under his *Tellus Stabilita* policy. As fifteenth emperor of Rome he embodied the concept of *translatio imperii*, that transfer of political and cultural legitimacy across civilizations; a power viewed throughout the Middle Ages, in the Carolingian tradition, as emanating from classical antiquity and the imperial glory that was Rome. The emperor’s prose, hymns and purported autobiography are lost, but he was at best a middling Silver Age poet, composing alongside Tacitus, Florus and Juvenal, among others, although his verse was no match for Juvenal’s concinnity.

Hadrian is on record as a man of restless character and of vast memory and frequent dictation (HA 2: 20).³ His alleged last poem, dictated perhaps to an amanuensis, certainly reflects the Platonic view of the soul as unfettering, but, strangely enough, contradicts his own lasting devotion to the Greater Eleusinian Mysteries, and their tenet on the bliss of the soul once delivered from materiality. Imperial biographer and historian Spartianus Delius is the authority for these compact lines of death-bed farewell to the soul, ‘where

1: Jerome J. McGann, (ed.) *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works* (7 Vols.). Oxford University Press, 1980-1993. Vol. 2 p.175. Hereafter CPW.

2: Typical views from Byron’s itinerary can be seen in William Brockedon, *Finden’s illustrations of the life and work of Lord Byron*, John Murray: 1833; particularly Volume 2, Chapter 22 ‘Tivoli’.

3: *Historia Augusta*. LOEB Classical Library, No. 140. “The Life of Hadrian” (Vols. 1 and 2), 1921, 1924. 10 May 2011 http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Historia_Augusta/Hadrian/2*.html

genuine feeling, echoed in tender diminutives, has bequeathed an immortal challenge to translators in many languages.⁴ The long-term, collective appeal of this haunting verse of the most contrary and highly visible of emperors lies less in the projection of his philosophical stance than in the rare occasion of the poem's making, and in its emotive tone of singular finality where the fading corporal self enables the schismatic onset of the soul's peripatetic destiny. Few other five-line poems would have generated, *ad infinitum*, so much remarkable enquiry and display through writing and speculation on the human factor in poetry. The disproportionate value of the legendary address, though perhaps the slightest of the imperial legacies, can be compared with a sacred text or palimpsest, written over in translations and imitations, with opinions divided but most differentiating little from the original. One Victorian anthology promoted a monothematic cohesion, with over a hundred translations of the single stanza by churchmen, laymen and poets, Byron exempted.⁵ In so doing, the anthology was foregrounding not only Latin as an *Italic* language but also intertextuality and allusion in the shared connections existing among writers and texts, as expounded by T.S. Eliot, and typified in this case by a focus on Hadrian's substantial voice in a miniscule stanza. Some of these contributors, no doubt, must have aligned themselves in principle with the rhetorician Quintilian (35-100 AD) whose competitive view of an ideal translation subscribed to paraphrase as an obligatory challenge 'to rival and vie with the original'; 'sensus certamen atque aemulationem' (10. 5. 5).⁶ Other translators might have been sorely tempted to colour the pagan farewell with Victorian religious consciousness and the Christian promise for the soul, while some have questioned the good faith of Hadrian's spiritual considerations in the light of his moral character.

Patently, the poem has been inspirational in its content and reception. This essay compares the representation of the intra-personal relationship of self and soul from the perception of historical distance, in the Byronic translation of 1806, alongside other versions in English ranging from the Early Modern to the Post-modern periods. The original utterance, which Byron affixes as epigraph to his translation, is literally historical in the *Historia Augusta* (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae*) 1787, a mostly reliable source on the reported scenario where the poem encapsulates creative concerns about personal allegiance within the sensual melancholy and *gravitas* of a death-bed scenario. The introductory comment is more anecdotal than factual in its fusion of the known and unknown, within a display of conventional Roman values such as Stoic acceptance, and *virtus* as both 'manliness' and resignation:

'And he is said, as he lay dying, to have composed the following lines.

O blithe little soul, thou, flitting away,
 Guest and comrade of this my clay,
 Whither now goest thou, to what place
 Bare and ghastly and without grace?
 Nor, as thou wont was, joke and play. (trans. A. O'Brien-Moore)

Such verses as these did he compose, and not many that were better, and also some in Greek.' (HA 2: 79).

Unlike the biographical *Historia Augusta*, poet translators do not indulge in the art of elaborate storytelling. The vocative meditation displayed above exhibits neither opacity nor trepidation towards the self's situation. It is not attempting to build a bridge between two worlds; nor is it epideictic, since the monologue is evoking nothing external to its own composition. In fact, *meiosis* characterizes the persona's want of self-piteous comment on his own imminent death as a displacement of hope. In the sentimental apostrophe to the 'soul' (the grammatically gendered 'Animula'), the verse avoids issues of morality or conscience or exclusive focus on the numinous, and gives no hint of 'soul' as synonymous with *alter-ego*. While the duality is partly heteronymic, any dominance is modified by the pleasing vocabulary of 'blithe'

Hereafter HA.

4: LOEB Classical Library, *Minor Latin Poets* (Vol. II). Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press: 1998 p.441. The English translators, J. Wight Duff and Arnold M. Duff, do note that the lines purportedly inscribed on the grave of the emperor's favourite steed, derived in turn from an ancient Latin manuscript, are the likely sources p.441.

5: David Johnston, and George Samuel Jenks (eds.), *Translations Literal and Free, of the Dying Hadrian's Address to His Soul*. Bath, The "Chronicle", 1876.

6: *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian* (4 Vols.). LOEB Classical Library, with an English translation by Harold E. Butler. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press: 1966. Vol. IV pp.114-115.

(1) ‘and ‘joke and play’ (5) in reference to the nuances and reciprocity of ‘Guest and comrade’ (2), potentially its own micro-narrative of hospitableness. This is a slight poem of the record of a moment, compounding past, present and future around Latin homophony and tight syntax, and a deterministic acceptance of the soul as irreplaceable. The persona is defining the tone of the poem in the two-word binary of ‘soul’ (1) and ‘clay’ (2), although, stylistically, one could speculate that Catullus’s solicitous lines may have guided the demonstrative pattern of diminutives throughout. Philosophically, John Stuart Mill in the “Utility of Religion” (1874) comments: ‘History, as far as we know it, bears out the opinion, that mankind can perfectly well do without the belief in a heaven. [...] And the pensive character so striking in the address of the dying emperor Hadrian to his soul, gives evidence that the popular misconception had not undergone much variation during the long interval.’⁷ Indeed, the persona imagines the soul’s impending release from domesticity to a ‘ghastly’ (4) dystopia, to an eternal wandering as a bereaved shade presumably, after a long and privileged coupling with carnate ‘clay’ (2). To all effect, the speaker’s death will become the perpetrator of another’s suffering. Apart from this debasement of the soul’s condition, the lack of lustre and dialogue in contrast, for instance, with Marvell’s *A Dialogue Between Soul and Body* (1681), is consistent with the dearth of dialogic Latin literature at that time. Similarly, W. B. Yeats in *A Dialogue of Self and Soul* (1933) presents separate monologues in tandem, which delineate the Self exuding its physicality and the Soul enveloped in darkness.

For Hadrian *gens Aelia* as an Epicurean, peace of mind was ideally the greatest good; but the fading poetic self figures here as a pseudo-conceit on the physical ruin of imperial splendor, supported by a didactic strain permeating the poem. Reminiscence is articulated in hedonism’s ‘joke and play’ (5) but underworld references to the realm of the dead are conspicuously absent as the persona turns inwards in this verse on dispossession and mortal deliverance. Hadrian’s verse inspired poets like John Donne (1572-1631) who wrote perhaps the earliest English version in 1611. His long metaphysical translation remains unmoved by Hadrian’s tender reflection. It takes on prototypical meaning, by opting for prose in a reductive one-liner, segmented in italics, and working around a single-minded strategy in *Ignatius His Conclave, a Satyr*, Donne’s extensive and immoderate censure of the Jesuits:

... that you may be aware of a common enemy I will relate what I saw. I was in an *Extasie*, and *My little wandring sportful Soule, Ghest and Companion of my body* had liberty to wander through all places and to survey and reckon all the volume of the heavens and [...] the roomes in Hell below. In the twinkling of an eye, I saw all open to my sight. I returned to my body which was with this returne of my soule sufficiently refreshed.⁸

The constricted soul is let off the leash, tentatively, on a reconnaissance for direct knowledge. However, Donne’s ecstatic adaptation retains the descriptive language, but not the form, of the source text by prescribing a contradictory perspective, namely re-union of body and soul. In contrast, the religious application of such lines was put to a different purpose a century later when Alexander Pope, adapting Hadrian’s poetic convention, wrote *The Dying Christian to His Soul* (1712) wherein the termination of physical life brings ecstatic rewards for the soul.

For Byron and others sourcing the *Historia Augusta*, any translation of the emperor’s lines would be informed by the tradition of *translatio studii*, the study and rewriting of classical works as a way of encoding their literary continuity and *auctoritas*. The notion of equivalence is of critical import, but also problematic, as Byron later conceded when he tackled the Tuscan dialect in Canto I of Pulci’s burlesque epic, *Morgante Maggiore* (1483). To his credit he gives instructions in November 1822 for his version to be published alongside the original, ‘because as it is a *close* translation I wish it to be judged by the Original.’⁹ And once again he has invited comparison by positioning Hadrian’s stanza as preface to his own. Walter Pater chose the same approach when he interpolated the imperial stanza to head Chapter VIII of *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), thus linking aestheticism and inter-textuality to a preoccupation with death and liberty of the soul.

7: John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays on Religion: Nature, the Utility of Religion, Theism*. New York, Prometheus Books: 1998 p.27.

8: Charles Coffin (ed.), *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*. New York, Random House: 1952 pp.319-56.

9: Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron’s Letters and Journals* (13 vols.). London, John Murray: 1973-1994. Vol. X p.25. Hereafter BLJ.

Byron, like the other poets under discussion, translates from the work of another (not from his own). Specifically, excepting David Malouf, they are translating from the former *lingua franca* of the Western world into their native tongue, a trend more widely modified in modern translation practice. None of these poets can presume to make the landmark contribution to translation studies epitomized by Jerome or the multiple translators of the Septuagint, or North, Wycliffe, Pope, or Rieu for that matter. Byron's interlingual translation of Hadrian is theoretically a translation proper as defined by André Lefevre, in that it modifies the first author's interpretation for a different audience and language, but with any freedom of interpretation curtailed 'by the concentric circles of language, time, place and tradition.'¹⁰ Accordingly, it is a translation that shares a stylistic but not a functional equivalence with Hadrian's stanza. His balancing of 'two equivalent messages in two different codes'¹¹ belongs among a dozen classical translations in *Hours of Idleness* (1807), an early volume which testifies to a proficient schooling in the classics within the educational community of Harrow: 'Oft have we drain'd the font of antient lore / Though drinking deeply, thirsting still the more.' (*Childish Recollections*: CPW I, 166). McGann suggests that a 'book of poetry seemed a good way to establish a reputation' although the *Eclectic Review* noted a juvenile poet's 'anxious search for notoriety'.¹² Of his early poems Byron was to comment: 'My literary pursuits were not very aspiring ...' (CPW I, 428).

Young Byron had read Gibbon's *History* ... and the writings of the senator-historian Arrian, Hadrian's life-long friend. He notes 'Adrian' in his 'Harrow Notebook' (1805) although the emperor, unsurprisingly, does not rank among Byronic poets 'who have distinguished their respective languages by their productions.'¹³ The young poet's appreciation of sparkling invective in Catullus, Horace and Juvenal encouraged his own imperial strain in Latin quips, as his correspondence with Edward Noel Long illustrates: "*Odi profanum Vulgas*"; "*vox populi*"; "*Turba Quiritium*", with reference to ironic Latin pseudonyms in his early poems (BLJ I, 109). He had around the same time translated other sombre themes such as the *Translation of the Epitaph on Virgil and Tibullus, by Domitius Marsas* and Catullus's elegy on Lesbia's bird ('*Luctis de Morte Passeris*'). Yet to some extent the poet and the emperor shared the finer qualities of *humanitas* as defined by Cicero in the *Pro Archia Poeta* (62 BC); literature and especially poetry as *litterarum lumen*, and as icon of utility in character building, and the poet figure as herald, with ambitions of man-centred public service (VII-VIII).¹⁴ Neither Byron nor Hadrian, though, were universally admired; nor did Byron hold the emperor in any special esteem. He promotes others when defining the leadership qualities of Roman imperialism in his Ravenna Journal of 1821: 'Augustus.—I have often been puzzled with his character. —Was he a great Man? Assuredly.—But not one of *my* great men—I have always looked upon Sylla as the greatest Character in History—for laying down his power at the moment when it was "too great to keep or to resign" and thus despising them all.' (BLJ VIII, 106).

Historians can be cursory and illuminating. Edward Gibbon (1737-94), in his definitive and imposing study of the Roman empire, describes Hadrian as 'by turns, an excellent prince, a ridiculous sophist, and a jealous tyrant.'¹⁵ Eminent historian and classical scholar J. B. Bury speculates on the emperor's protracted dropsy, in fulfillment perhaps of a relative's curse 'that he should pray for death but should be unable to die', although he also claims that the untitled, plain-speaking poem was composed in Hadrian's last hours 'in a happy moment of inspiration'. He further argues that it was 'impossible to render the effect of the diminutives and the tribrach feet in a modern version. Lord Byron attempted to translate it; but Merivale's version is rather better, though not successful.'¹⁶ Classical philologist Ludwig Friedländer, in *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, includes the poem in the chapter headed "Belles-Lettres: poetry and artistic prose". He notes how 'the most versatile *dilettante* who ever occupied the Roman throne wrote verse (including indecent poems) and prose equally well; some of his trifles have been preserved. Even on his deathbed, whimsical as ever, he wrote the famous lines, which according to his biographer are an

10: André Lefevre, *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint*. Assen-Amsterdam, Van Gorcum: 1975 p.19.

11: Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in R. A. Brower (ed.), *On Translation*. Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press: 1959 p.233.

12: Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust – Byron's Poetic Development*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press: 1968 pp.14, 5.

13: Andrew Nicholson (ed.), *Lord Byron – The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*. Oxford University Press: 1991 pp.197, 1-2. Hereafter CMP.

14: Cicero, *Orations*. LOEB Classical Library. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press, 1923 pp.16-21.

15: Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. London, Bison Books: 1979 p.33.

16: John L. Bury, *A History of the Roman Empire from its Foundation*. London, John Murray: 1922 p.518.

average specimen of his poetry.¹⁷ In commentary, the ex-Harrovian historian Merivale (1808-93), one of Byron's social circle and grandson-in-law of the poet's headmaster Dr. Drury, refers to the 'playful address to his departing spirit, which if it has attained more success than it deserves as a philosophical utterance, betrays at least no sign of the gloomy terror or remorse which haunt, no doubt, the death-bed of tyrants.'¹⁸ Regarding the key to its popular appeal: 'The force and character of this simple ejaculation consists in its abruptness, brevity, and uncouth-ness, like the verses we make in a delirious dream.'¹⁹ The reader, on turning to the Dean's own appended translation, notes that the untitled lines trade labels for the soul and give a greater sense of individuation in the repetitive 'pretty one, flitting one' (1) and 'Pallid one, rigid one, naked one ...' (4). Despite this, the connotations of forlorn closure in 'Never to play again, never to play?' (5) remain unsettled and equivocal:

Soul of mine, pretty one, flitting one,
 Guest and partner of my clay,
 Whither wilt thou hie away –
 Pallid one, rigid one, naked one –
 Never to play again, never to play?²⁰

This version shares Hadrian's concerns for the interruption of child-like hyperactivity and for the deprivation of such distraction as maltreatment. For both Byron and Merivale, reappraisal of materiality and soul transforms the original's nineteen words into thirty-plus, and functions on the principle of *transitus mundi*, the transient nature of life. It is feasible that a translation of equivalence may result in Latinate English, with straightforward loan epithets like 'Pallid' (4) enriching the target text language, although the hermeneutics of Hadrian's more complex 'Hospes' (2) is in fact at variance. Significantly, by affixing the original and devising a semantic shift in the title, Byron roundly locates his 1806 translation within the pragmatic reality of an adverbial-historical time frame, and visibly encourages a comparative critique:

"Adrian's Address to His Soul, When Dying":

Animula! vagula, blandula,
 Hospes, comesque, corporis,
 Quae nunc abibis in loca?
 Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
 Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos.

Translation

Ah! gentle, fleeting, wav'ring sprite,
 Friend and associate of this clay!
 To what unknown region borne,
 Wilt thou, now, wing thy distant flight?
 No more, with wonted humour gay,
 But pallid, cheerless, and forlorn. (CPW I, 69-70)

Any translation re-activates in turn the source text but no one attempt can offer full trans-ference. Byron's effort is, as expected, a disquieting rendition of the metaphysical, since he opts to stay close to the source text in his attention to form, diction and syntax. The promising poet-translator employs several rhetorical strategies, surprisingly, as a mere metaphrasis might have been more likely in a translation rooted in the mechanical approach of scholastic Latin drills. The verse begins with a courtly cadence, replacing 'Animula' and its long and short vowels with multiple descriptors of the 'sprite'. Though also drawn from Latin etymology ('spiritus'), 'sprite' in fact is Byron's only diminutive, and a positive signal that he is not restricted, translatively, to metaphrasis or absolute stereotype or to the emperor's five diminutives which some critics, quite reasonably, have interpreted as belittling of the soul. While foregoing

17: Ludwig F. Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire* (trans. A. B. Gough). London, George Routledge & Sons: 1908 p.291.

18: Charles Merivale, *History of the Romans under the Empire*. London, Longmans, Green & Company: 1876 p.250.

19: Ibid.

20: Ibid.

the pleasing nuances of Hadrian's 'grace' (4) and 'play' (5) for a 'wonted humour gay' (5), his verse does emulate, nevertheless, the source's sub-themes: of the apostrophe to the 'fleeting' (1) soul; of the unknown course and destiny; and of the soul's reckoned misery in *tenebrae*, once having fallen from a privileged state. At this early stage of his poetic career Byron is already writing about mobility (albeit of the soul and its outcomes) a theme that he will later employ more generally across the extended vista of *Childe Harold* with himself instead of Hadrian, as proto-*agonist*. Sequence is rarely a problem in standard translation. Regardless, while the original seems to present an adequate structure of linear progression, Byron's verse displays, necessarily, less economy of line in translating from Latin, by accommodating tetrameter rhyme and Hadrian's noun pairing in three couplets, three sentences, and by electing to diverge from the original's internal structure through reversal of the final couplet.

Like most translators, Byron is unable to disclose a response, affirmative, speculative or otherwise, to Hadrian's rhetorical question on destination: 'Whither now goest thou, to what place ...?' (3). As a transactional dialectic of ipseity, his handling of the numinous finds little resolution beyond laboring the onerous and sterile epithetic tone of 'pallid, cheerless, and forlorn' (5), of a soul's projected quest in an allegorical exile calling attention to its jettisoned self. This ultimate line indicates, in its sensory focus, how the language of materiality can be duplicated as transferred descriptor of the soul's attributes as well, in a preference for a reifying tendency instead of simplistic clichés. But it also provides, in prescient summary form, a dismal spatial chorography of the unknown rather than the enticing mythical landscape of the Elysian Fields. Here one can single out for contrast the more positive tone of camaraderie in *Translation of the Epitaph on Virgil and Tibullus* (1806):

He, who sublime, in epic numbers roll'd,
And he, who struck the softer lyre of love,
By death's unequal hand alike controul'd
Fit comrades in Elysian regions move. (CPW I, 71)

As the previous versions of Hadrian also intimate, the dark region of the spirit's hapless fate continues to remain a metaphor of antithesis, with the notion of the spirit of place assuming a less comforting dimension and the stray soul victimized by the agency of distance. Even so, Byron's dexterity as translator exhibits language and syntax as both thought and style, with the poet making his own choices in striking a harmony between semantic translation and form, and word-by-word rendering. In doing so, he takes his translation to a level of transparency beyond one of a mere cognitive *exercitatio*, by employing a *non verbum* approach with which Cicero and Horace would surely have concurred. On the other hand, translation of one diminutive stanza does not offer Byron's continental self-identity a flexibility to maximize any layered possibilities proffering 'a daring freedom, an inter-space opened up by translation ...', as evident in the politico-cultural milieu and terza rima of his four-Canto *The Prophecy of Dante* (1819) and its response to a Ravenna tomb.²¹

John Dryden (1631-1700), poet, literary critic and translator, declared that 'it would be unreasonable to limit a translator to the narrow compass of his author's words: 'tis enough if he choose out some expression which does not vitiate the sense.'²² Despite this, Byron does offer a qualifying gesture central to the soul's 'flight' with erasure from both his title and content of the affective 'little', the 'Animula', to qualify 'sprite'. In effect, this omission now undermines any physical sensors of paternal or playtime tendencies, which Hadrian and Merivale reinforce, but which Byron simply disregards. The deletion also raises questions about a Stoic emperor's initial choice of diminutive for his imperial self, even if the editing of 'little' credits, by default, the mature soul with a sounder sense of personality and self-sufficiency, an enhancement of the very aspect that Hadrian's persona seems to be fretting over. In this detail, his revision is a counter-example to Hadrian's, and as such seems equally an exposition of conative purpose and effect in aspects of literary translation, and an act of *translatio*. Considering the numerous versions of the poem, Byron's is not the only one to lessen the diminutive. A glance, for example, at Christina Rossetti's reading in the Victorian anthology reveals that while also omitting 'little', her version is compromised by rendering

²¹: Stephen Cheeke, *Byron & Place – History, Translation, Nostalgia*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 p.133.

²²: Christopher Kasperek, "The Translator's Endless Toil". *The Polish Review*, Vol. 28, (No. 2). New York: The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences. 1983 p.83.

a disturbing religious image of a soul devoid of heightened presence, and left 'rudderless and dis-cased.' (1-4).²³

Relevant to all re-writing of Hadrian's stanza, Louis Kelly's hermeneutical study of translation theory is of interest here in placing translation in a realistic bipolar framework; of a model of translator predisposed to sharing a close fidelity with the aims, content and form of the source; or conversely a model of competitiveness akin to Quintilian's philosophical analogy where the target text should adapt, and perhaps even outdo the source text.²⁴ Byron's version belongs somewhere between the two. His 'Translation' of Hadrian falls chronologically within his immersion in the classical past, through those Latin and Greek translations mostly derived from mundane school exercises rather than from a hankering for an inter-personal empathy with any one poet. For instance, The 'Reading List' under 'Poetry' notes 'Greek and Latin without number, these last I shall give up in future, I have translated a good deal from Both languages, verse as well as prose.'²⁵ Byron often tags his *modus operandi* during 1806-7: *Imitation of Tibullus. 'Sulpicia ad Cerintum'; Horace, Ode 3. Lib. 3. Translation;* and the much longer *The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus. A Paraphrase from the Aeneid lib. 9* are sample types focusing his translating purposes. Equally, regarding *Hints from Horace*, he states: 'The Latin text is printed with the Imitation, not only to show where I have left Horace, but where Horace has left me.' (CPW I, 428). Dryden, for his part, frowned on such adapted translations: 'when a painter copies from life ... he has no privilege to alter features and lineaments ...'²⁶ Terence, however, in the second century BC, adapted, quite loosely, character types and scenarios in translating from Menander's Attic comedies into Latin vernacular, arguing that such *transfere* was only to be expected when depicting humanity: 'Nothing, in fact, is ever said which has not been said before.'²⁷

From a very different angle, the Byronic verse might be indebted to the sentimental lyrics of a Petrarchan sonnet by a professional soldier, Luis de Camões (1524-80), Portugal's Renaissance national poet. M. K. Joseph, in arguing Byron's lack of sympathetic identification with most of his contemporaries, claims that Byron as literary critic was 'much surer in what he admired of the dead than the living: Tasso, Camoens, Milton, Dryden, Pope ...,' for example.²⁸ (132). He was certainly apprised of Camões' sonnets and lyrics, and the epic *Os Lusíadas* (1572), which he described as 'a dull poem, but prized by his countrymen as their only epic effort.'²⁹ He had also attacked Viscount Strangford's so-called translation of 'The Rimas of Camoens' in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: 'Let MOORE still sigh; let STRANGFORD steal from MOORE, / And swear that CAMOENS sang such notes of yore.' (CPW I, 258).

It seems that Byron's opening line – 'Ah! Gentle, fleeting, wav'ring sprite' (1) – was influenced by Camões' *On the Death of Donna Catherina de Athaide* (1556), which he no doubt read in Strangford's translations, as evidenced by the gift to his close friend Elizabeth Pigot: *Stanzas to a Lady With the Poems of Camoens* (1806). The word 'gentle' is not Hadrian's but rather a pointed link to a departed lady of the court in the elegiac sonnet beginning: 'My gentle spirit! thou who hast departed / So early, of this life in discontent.' (1-2).³⁰ The farewell context, with its emotionally charged rhythm and overtones of Petrarch, projects the ubiquitous role of a poet in an established trope of sorrowful homage to love and untimely separation, with the disembodied love object enjoying the redeeming quality of 'Heaven's firmament' (3), and the bounded bereaved seeking unity. In a side comparison, De Sena notes that Camões, despite an exact translation of the opening lines, departs from Hadrian's model, which he reads as an 'ironic and pungent, tender and uncomplaisant, farewell to life'³¹ Yet for Byron and Hadrian the mannered expressions of grief are scaled down. Rather than adopting Camões' dysfunctional time frames of temporality and eternity, acceptance forms part of the natural order of reflection and loss, deflating enough but in emulation of Hadrian's own evasion of any subjunctive mood. Similar to this Portuguese elegy,

23: Johnston p.49.

24: Louis G. Kelly, *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West*. London, St. Martin's Press: 1979 pp.60-63.

25: CMP p.6.

26: Kasperek, p.84.

27: *Publius Terentius Afer, The Comedies*. Translated by Betty Radice, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1976 p.166.

28: M. K. Joseph, *Byron the Poet*. London, Victor Gollancz Ltd: 1964 p.132.

29: CMP p.1.

30: Luis de Camões, *Selected Sonnets: A Bilingual Edition*. Edited and translated by William Baer. London, University of Chicago Press Ltd: 2005 p.127.

31: George Monteiro, *The Presence of Camões: influences on the literature of England, America, and Southern Africa*. Lexington, University of Kentucky Press: 1996 p.53.

Byron's brief lines do foresee continuity of the immaterial half, yet consciously presume, simultaneously, an interminable, second-rate life for the wanderer. Despite this, his particular statement from *Detached Thoughts*, on teleological purpose in 1822, is more positive, and cites the philosopher Epictetus, Hadrian's tutor, who upheld the moral authority of the human will:

96.

Of the Immortality of the Soul—it appears to me that there can be little doubt—I used to doubt of it—but reflection has taught me better. It acts also so very independent of body; [...] it is *Mind* & much more *Mind* [...] The Stoics Epictetus & Marcus Aurelius call the present state “a Soul which drags a Carcase” —a heavy chain to be sure, but all chains being material may be shaken off. [...] that the *Mind* is *eternal* seems as possible as that the body is not so. (BLJ IX, 45).

Albeit Emperor Marcus Aurelius calls man's metaphysical existence ‘a flux, his perception fogged, his whole bodily composition rotting, his mind a whirligig, his fortune unpredictable, his fame unclear ...’, (2: 17),³² Byron above is implying a fortuitous end to repression through divergence, even if his actual translation is less encouraging of the soul's self-determination. To some extent his position here, aged thirty-three, tallies not so much with his own translation, but with Marvell's version, where the Soul protests at being fettered in a corporal dungeon while the Body rails against tyranny and manipulative extremes. Byron personalizes his conviction on immortality more directly in 98. of *Detached Thoughts*: ‘—the devil's in it—if after having had a Soul—(as surely the *Mind* or whatever you call it—*is*—in this world we must part with it in the next—even for an Immortal Materiality;—I own my partiality for *Spirit*.—’ (BLJ IX, 46). Apparently, the Mind lives on, but Byron can be contrary. Not long after his return from the Near East in 1811, his long philosophical letter to Hodgson says other things as in his quotation from another Roman Stoic, Seneca, in the *Troades* (397ff.): “... Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque Mors nihil ...” / “There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing.” (BLJ II, 89).

Ezra Pound (1885-1972) in *Modernism*, turns mortal despondency aside, although desire *apropos* reality still figures prominently. He embraces a harmony of man and nature, by re-locating his resolute appreciation of Roman poetry (and its imagist potential) in a discernible paradise of the soul's destiny. He is functioning as poet-translator, or perhaps translator-poet, with a good facility of Latin language and its literary culture imbibed from his student days, unlike his occasional need for intermediaries in other literal translations. Regarding the intention of the original, Pound steers clear of the metrical verse and literality of Victorian classical translation and moves towards a modernist re-fashioning of form which he will take further in his re-arrangement of Latin elegies in *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1919). He has appropriated to some extent Hadrian's title, but focuses on the adaptation of the metaphysical concept of partition, leading him to surpass the boundaries marked by the source's ponderous philosophy in this imitation, composed at Lago di Garda in 1911 and initially published with other short, free-verse translations in *Lustra* (1917). As such, Pound's merging of the imperishable soul with exteriority is a two-fold commemoration of a sacred place, Catullus's lakeside peninsula, and points to the poem's deliberate levels of signification which disclose Pound's translation as both verbal and personal, unlike Byron's. In November 1816, associations of Roman poetry apparently surfaced *in situ* in the latter's mind as he wrote to Augusta: ‘I had the pleasure of seeing [the lake] in all its vexation—foaming like a little Sea—as Virgil has described it—but (thank God) you are not a blue-stocking—and I won't inflict the appropriate bit of Latin upon you— ...’ (BLJ V, 126). Neither poet, however, is advocating a topographically-constructed verse, although such an impetus does underline the ‘Childe's’ travelogue.

Unlike the speculative tones of other versions, the internal monologue of “Blandula, Tenulla, Vagula” addresses the promise of duality in a numinous invitation to an earthly rendezvous. The inter-semiotic imitation employs a looser degree of exegesis by nullifying that supreme paradisiacal destiny which Hadrian as well certainly rules out. Pound also bypasses in theme and style the confining death-bed to imagine the viability of a personal relationship in a posthumous utopia, in language partly reminiscent of Marvell's importunate metaphysical arguments to his mistress in another pressing scenario. The poem of free form and musical cadence opens onto an immortality ‘of terrene delight’ (8):

What hast thou, O my soul, with paradise?
Will we not rather, when our freedom's won,
Get us to some clear place where the sun

32: Marcus Aurelius. *Meditations*. Penguin Books, London: 2006 p.15.

Lets drift in on us through the olive leaves
 A liquid glory? If at Sirmio,
 My soul, I meet thee, when this life's outrun
 Will we not find some headland consecrated
 By aery apostles of terrene delight,
 Will not our cult be founded on the waves,
 Clear sapphire, cobalt, cyanine,
 On triune azures, the impalpable
 Mirrors unstill of the eternal change? (1-12)³³

The translation informs on the poet's long-held resolve to reflect on 'what part of poetry was "indestructible", what part could not be lost in translation ...'³⁴ Hadrian is decentralized and the title does not match exactly. "Tenulla" is either a deliberate misquote which remained unamended, or is perhaps 'tenella' / 'tender' as suggestive of diminutive. Although Pound mostly avoids Latinate English, the source text's imperial author / persona sets a presence, indirectly, in keeping with those prominent leaders like Lorenzo de Medici and Napoleon in the later *Cantos* (1917-69).

Overall, Pound's career, more than Byron's, verifies that the translation of literature as a pursuit surely brings its own literary credibility. His is neither an *ad sensum* nor a *verbatim* translation of the original, but as one critic comments: 'Ezra Pound's translations are Pound's and are read for that reason.'³⁵ The mute psyche seems, by inference, a compliant figure in lines prompted once again by Hadrian's ponderous question. Pound is adopting a union of souls in his anti-Gnostic stance, by declaring *undesirable* those 'havens more high' (14). The lofty religious symbolism in the above stanza – epitomized by 'paradise', 'glory', 'consecrated', 'apostles', 'triune', and 'eternal' (1, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12) – becomes an inverted register, absent from other versions, and functioning as a collective, almost ostentatious antonym of liminality to the impedimenta of regular piety. Obviously, with Pound externalizing his subject matter, the verse is not darkly oblique like earlier translations, since the soul is destined for re-habitation and repose in a familiar region. Indeed, multifaceted Sirmione as topos is a stimulating mnemonic device, an eye-catching metaphor of 'liquid glory' (5) with its lake presented as an everlasting pathway to the numinous, in opposition to philosophical binaries. It goes without saying that the visual topography is effectively an ekphrastic mirror-image *ad locum* of an Eden before the Fall. In the ultimate stanza of only three lines, Eros and a mystical 'She' (13) combine to facilitate a merger of souls, thus echoing Byron's shaking off of the material chains. But unlike the latter's scholastic approach Pound, at this stage of his career, 'is to be heard more often asking for a Platonic poetry of the metaphysical, transcending place and time, than for a poetry dense with the particulars of history.'³⁶

Hadrian, though, seems literally enduring, and there is a good case to be made for the comparative value of mimesis, something which becomes evident in David Malouf's idiosyncratic adaptation, which evades the fidelity of a translation proper. His fascination with the symbolic proximity of different worlds became apparent in *An Imaginary Life* (1978) with its disruptive Ovidian exile, and is manifest again in this septuple translation which explores the aesthetics of Hadrian's Latinate original. The poet, having come to the poem by way of T.S. Eliot's *Animula* (1929), is concentrated by the challenge to reconstruct the elusiveness of the original: 'It's a very, very tiny poem, it's a Pagan poem, it's a disguised love poem, but it's a poem essentially written by a man who's got a very strong religious sense of the relationship between the body and the spirit.' Furthermore, the diminutives were an obstacle, a 'kind of baby talk, which is difficult to translate into English and keep serious, as this is serious ...' (Malouf, *Interview*, 2007).³⁷

The poet stages homoerotic identity apposite Hadrian's own mores and lifestyle: 'He ran to excess in the gratification of his desires and wrote much verse about the subject of his passion [...] always in all things changeable.' writes Spartianus (HA 2: 14). *Seven Last Words of the Emperor Hadrian*³⁸ adopts untitled units which, by effect, represent a deliberate, post-modern fragmentation within the composite if

33: Ezra Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1952 p.53.

34: Alan Levy, *Ezra Pound: The Voice of Silence*. New York, The Permanent Press: 1983 p.11.

35: Mona Baker (ed.) and Gabriela Saldhana (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, (2nd edition). London, Routledge: 2008 p.175.

36: Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound – Poet as Sculptor*. New York, Oxford University Press: 1968 p.35.

37: David Malouf, "Interview." *The Book Show*, 2007. ABC Radio National, 6 April 2011 <<http://www.abc.net/au/rn/bookshow/stories/2007/1937855.htm>>

38: David Malouf, *Typewriter Music*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press: 2007 pp.25-28 .

unsettling *textura* of free verse and numbered framework. One should emphasize that the very limiting title is a perceptible play on words inconsistent with both Byron's and Hadrian's schema. The reader gains seven translations in one (each the sum of the other with their respective viewpoint and tone), and didactic digressions which the earlier versions cannot accommodate. Yet the poem is, nevertheless, a subjective monologue of complaint, with the self-monitoring persona exhibiting negligible imperial mien in paradoxical and fluctuating tendencies of the erotic, paternal, ironic and dismissive. This version articulates more fully the friction between Body and Mind, since the silent soul's action 'statements' seem like ricocheting retorts, compressing innuendoes of defection and inconstancy, and all the more forceful for being understated.

The colloquial translation, of fifty-two lines and two hundred and seventy-three words (compared to Byron's thirty-four), has its own medial history on a semi-liturgical occasion, when it became something more than a mono-semiotic text in an artistic transposition characteristic of the long-standing relationship between music and literature. Malouf recited Parts 1 and 2 at an Easter concert in 2004, interwoven between musical movements of Beethoven and Bach. By intersecting Roman paganism and fledgling Christianity, his text on that occasion was responding in transience to the concert's theme of another influential narrative, the seven last words, or rather sayings, of Jesus on the Cross. It was of course evocative performance poetry about a monumental turning-point, much like the dramatic timing of Hadrian's dictation.

Malouf's version perhaps comes closest to Hadrian's inference of *pietas* as affection and loyalty, which now in this translation implies an added sense of duty and loyalty as well. Part 1 suggests a deceptive simplicity of form and diction in launching the poem's multiple aliases (twenty-four actually) for Hadrian's diminutives. Some are definitely more endearing than others, depending on the persona's mood swings and postmodern ambivalence: 'soul mate', 'lightfoot spirit', 'bed-fellow', 'urchin', 'jackanape' (1, 13, 15, 20, 42) reflect the range and can alert the reader to synonymous patterns. The 'lightfoot' (13), for instance, equates quite nicely with Hadrian's 'grace' or nimbleness, shaping a personality for the little waif-like spirit. Conversely, the plurality of aliases might point to unruliness in a wayward soul's less than wholesome agenda. The motif of *jocos* resurfaces repeatedly (more than ten times) although the soul's character is revealed to respond negatively by not playing the love game. Part 3 foregrounds this tendency in a range of familiar aphoristic expressions. For example, in terms of the source text (and Malouf's Lebanese culture) one striking idiom targeting unreceptiveness – 'Where are you off to now? Cat got your tongue?' (16-17) – could better be read through Middle Eastern decoding of a liar's tongue being fed to the royal cats, instead of in the more typical medieval machinations of black magic. The demise of laughter is a cause for mourning in the earlier versions, but laughter as currency can be ill-used and ominous in Malouf, with the open-ended and vexed interrogative a repetitive formula which hints at the shallowness of trust in this 'courtship': 'Is this the one / joke ... your emperor does not get?' or 'Now the joke we shared is ended?' (6, 12). Nevertheless, the 'play' is still there, palpable throughout in the versatility, in the syntax.

Although the mute but obtrusive soul carries idiomatic connotations of appeasing levity and rebellious ephemia much like the source *Animula* ..., the designation of the compound 'secret sharer' (6) implies the privileged insight of duality as well. However, unlike other translations of *Animula* ..., mutual possession in a programmed sense dominates the syntax, thus projecting a convoluted scenario of the soul from the persona's viewpoint as an imposition in Part 6, yet the life and soul of the body in Part 7. Malouf rejects Byron's consideration of partial autonomy for the 'Friend and associate' (2) in a quasi-narcissistic hypothesis of a perpetual twosome, argued through parallel narratives of speaker and tenuous listener, and of reason and desire. Ultimately, the poem is, to all intents and purposes, a reciprocal translation. While the arguments do equate the solitary but hypothetical 'I'm dust' (52) within Hadrian's impending, inevitable divide, they also portray the self-conscious invisible soul, nevertheless, as a coveted if resisting presence in the ultimate Part 7:

So you're playing fast
and loose, are you? You've cut
the love knot. Well let's see how you get
on out there without me. Who's kidding
who? Without my body, its royal
breath and blood to warm you, my hands, my tongue
to prove to you what's real
what's not, poor fool, you're nothing.
But O, without you, my sweet nothing,

I'm dust. (43-52)³⁹

Despite complex poetic devices targeting both agape and eros, this longer version facilitates informed digressions on the underlying eroticism of Hadrian's model, and points to the repetitive syntax of 'without me' / 'without you' (46, 51) as essentially the key to all translations under discussion. Even so, such seductive phraseology is a reminder as well of its auto-function as paronomasia, expanding somewhat on the original in order to display the aesthetics of its own language and form. Like Pound's, a translator's goal is also target language and locution enrichment, and Malouf is providing fertile ground for heteroglossia in a layered commentary, in other words.

Merivale's superficial summation of Hadrian's poem as a doubtful translation exercise reads as follows: 'Polished and paraphrased by modern translators it becomes a trifling commonplace, hardly worthy of the considerable poets who have exercised their talents upon it.'⁴⁰ Despite the condescension (by implication of his own 'paraphrasing' too), comparative target texts from one small stanza of classical verse have revealed varying diachronic and interpretive degrees of closeness and fidelity, informed by the source text rather than a conjectural historicity. Altogether, these gifted lyrics of one-sided conversations from diverse personae are preoccupied meta-textually with interiority and empowered by an imperial Latin muse; what Marguerite Yourcenar describes so movingly in her valedictory 'autobiography' as 'the Portrait of a voice'.⁴¹ Whether or not they are perceived as gestures of obeisance to the source text, they can be read as meditations of tacit assent, representing polysemic scenarios on subjective reality and enfranchisement of the soul, within the unsettled phenomena of existence, subliminal or otherwise. To what extent each translation of a minor Latin poem upholds Quintilian's counsel is debatable, considering that as educationalist as much as rhetorician he exhorted writers to imitate the best if they wanted success (10. 1. 5).⁴²

Any translator, reworking Hadrian's ontological concerns, is responding to temporal place and literary tradition and to his own individuality in his target text. Answerable towards both the original author and to the sixteenth-century reader, Donne's prose exemplifies just this, created as it was within the polemical religious climate of his day and the fluctuating personal cynicism and anxiety leading up to his ordination. The student Byron's largely idiomatic and transparent translation at nineteen years of age is not his 'grand performance' (BLJ VIII, 65) of *Morgante Maggiore* at thirty-three. Despite the Byronic passion for history, time is an irresistible process, and Hadrian, along with the classical past and the juvenalia, is side-lined for the rest of his poetic career.

When rating a translation's surrogate fidelity to the source text, one presumes that, while imitations might demonstrate less literal equivalence, they can stimulate an absorbing expansiveness of reading. Certainly Pound, as a worthy advocate of the classics, designates an ethereal abode of entrancing and posthumous resonance. Maloufian versatility highlights the rich possibilities inherent in the art of classical translation, extending and probing the original and promoting the emperor's little poem as an itemized and recyclable commodity. One could say, too, that in the very many English translations of "Animula ..." from Renaissance times onwards, the individual translators have contributed to the long 'afterlives' of a Silver Age text and its poet, and importantly, to acculturation as well. Translation is more than just words, and Byron surely drew inspiration, if not from Hadrianus himself, then at least from a recollected affinity with the empathic dimension of the Latin tongue in this quite legendary prologue to a fragmenting moment in the classical world.

39: Ibid p.28.

40: Ibid p.255.

41: Marguerite Yourcenar, *Memoirs of Hadrian*. London, Penguin Classics: 1986 p.275.

42: Ibid.