

• Based on a talk given in the Gaberbocchus Common Room on April 1st 1958.

From time to time people politely ask me what I am translating now.

B:

So, what have you been working on lately?⁽¹⁾

A:

Oh, I'm doing some translation. I'm translating a book by the French author, Raymond Queneau.⁽²⁾

B:

Ah... (a brief pause) Which book is that?⁽³⁾

A:

It's called *Exercises in Style*.⁽⁴⁾

B:

Ah... (another pause) Interesting. That must be difficult.⁽⁵⁾

A:

“Oh yes, you know, it 's the story of a chap who gets into a bus and starts a row with another chap who he thinks keeps treading on his toes on purpose, and Queneau repeats the same story 99 times in a different ways-it's terribly good ... “⁽⁶⁾

.....

1. *God, I hope it's not another one of those 'creative' jobs. Just tell me you're making actual money.*
2. *(Anxiety rising) Should I have just said I work in 'finance'? They won't have heard of him. Here comes the 'unemployed arts graduate' look.*
3. *Queneau? Never heard of him. If he were important, I would know. This is clearly a niche hobby, not a profession.*
4. *I am putting years of effort and skill into this. Why do I feel like I have to justify my existence with this title?*
5. *(Patronizing smile) 'Difficult' means 'worthless' in my book. Get a real job. Your 'right to access' success is clearly hindered by your choices.*
6. *They're going to think this is just a gimmick. Does this sound like a pointless academic exercise? I should have mentioned the constraints. I sound defensive. I'm overcompensating for the fear that they already think I'm wasting my time on something obscure and pretentious. Justify! Justify!*