REVIEW

TRANSFORMATION

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Transformation

General Editor:

Daniel Dicks

Editors:

Michelah Brown

Esme Paul

Keni Li

Emma Elizabeth Porter Stone

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Cover art by Jennifer Sturrock

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Letter from the Editor

When choosing the theme for this year's issue, we at The Kelvingrove Review and our colleagues at e-Sharp had one criterion: 'does it include every branch of the Arts and Humanities?' In previous years, we might have chosen to focus on a theme which drew on a specific concept or movement within the field: queer, post-critique, the more-than-human. This year, however, we could not justify such a limiting scope. In choosing the theme of Transformation, we sought to take stock. To give ourselves, our colleagues, and our readers the opportunity to reflect upon what it means to work in our various, inter-connected fields now. Various currents work to transform (for better or worse) not only the arts and humanities, but the university itself, at a pace which is often impossible to keep up with. In the pieces below, our contributors tackle this idea of transformation from a variety of positions, engaging with work from across the breadth of fields which make up the arts and humanities. From narratives of transformation, to works which seek to chart the developments of a field, as well as reviews which are themselves products of the transformation in critical vocabularies.

Working on this issue has been a transformative process. We have grown exponentially from having this opportunity to get outside our own research, our own subject areas, and to not only gain a profound appreciation for the work that goes in to, and importance of, academic reviews, but also to gain a sense of the way in which the arts and humanities have undergone, and continue to undergo, transformation (beyond what we had even imagined in that first meeting when we alighted on the theme). We hope that reading this issue proves to be as transformative for you as editing it was for us; that the reviews contained within challenge you, offer new perspectives, introduce new ideas, and provoke further inquiry.

Yours,

Daniel Dicks
(General Editor, 2024).

As Surely As Spark Fly Upwards; Jacket || Couture Spring/Summer 25

Jennifer Sturrock

The Ancient Greek word for beauty is *kallos,* or to *kalon*[1] [τǐ καλόν], and was said to denote something as fine, good, fair (*kal*). Interestingly its roots of origin are from the verb *kaleo* [καλέω], which means 'to call'[2] (*Ka*, which means "the" and *leo* which means sound or "voice"[3]).

I was struck many years ago by a conversation between Irish philosopher and theologian, John O'Donohue and journalist Krista Tippet, in which they discussed the aesthetic pull. That 'in the presence of beauty, it's not a neutral thing, but it's (…) calling you (…) the notion of being called — being called to be yourself and called to transfigure what has hardened or got wounded within you (...) it's also (…) the heart of creativity, this calling forth all the time.[4]'

From this juncture, exploration of that calling forth can be defined in various forms as an act, *or art,* of transfiguration[5]. It is an invitation, door or gateway we meet time and again. Indeed, transfiguration is a liminal place that 'mediate(s) between (…). It is neither on the interior nor on the exterior: it is both; it is on the threshold'.[6]

As I stepped into the shipping container, (a recently acquired studio), I was met with blank space. Often just as terrifying as it is exhilarating, a blank page is exposing, vulnerable and full of unknowns... Stripped back to the bare foundations, the empty container seemed to reflect just that - as well as creative potential. So, in order to embrace the ambiguity, I set about materialising this invisible space, tracing the entire container with charcoal (ashes) and making visible all the marks, disruptions and multiple holes I found in the walls.

I explored the nature of 'messy manuscripts' – of perception and paratext (anything around the main text; images, titles, illustrations), with the use of thick black tape to hold the paper in place, keeping that as much part of the work as the mark-making. Stepping back from the pieces that surrounded me, I photographed the scene. Then I (digitally) printed the images onto fabric and began draping the material, now a malleable form, on a mannequin. Ideas that eventually culminated in a jacket.

Clothing, much like literal walls of buildings or rooms, is the *paratext* to our own bodies, outward skins, containing or concealing our inner worlds, and at the same time, always revealing interior narratives. Indeed, Maximus the Confessor said:

"About the scriptures we say the words are the clothes of Christ. The words veil: the meaning reveals. It is the same in the world where the forms of visible things are like the clothing, and the ideas according to which they were created are like the

[1] https://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2010/11/call-of-beauty-excerpts-from-benedict.html (accessed 16.04.2024)
[2]https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=33667#:~:text=Calling%20(2821)%20(klesis%20%5B,an%20invitation%20to%20a%20banquet. (accessed 14.04.2024)
[3]https://secure.wesleyan.org/kaleo#:~:text=καλέω%20(kaleō)%2C%20the%20biblical,Moses%20through%20a%20burning%20bush. (accessed 12.01.2024
[4] https://onbeing.org/programs/john-odonohue-the-inner-landscape-of-beauty/ (accessed 19.02.2024)
[5] O'Donohue, J. (2005a). *Beauty: The invisible embrace*. Perennial. p7
[6] Genette, G. (2001c). *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*. Cambridge Uni. Press p - xvii

flesh. The former conceal, the latter reveal. For the universal creator and law-maker, the word, both hides himself in his self- revelation and reveals himself in his hiding of himself."[7]

'As Surely As Sparks Fly Upwards' (taken from the Ancient Biblical manuscript Job 5:7), is a meditation of sorts, a collection of dark clouds rooted in the mystery of invisible things held, translated and embodied. These are the apophatic impressions and textures – abstract clouds of unknowing; the invisible blank space, made visible.

The full collection of the charcoal artworks can be found on: jennifersturrock.com

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[7] St Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, PG 91,1129. Alternate Translation in The Roots of Christian Mysticism. By Oliver Clement. New City Press, 1995, p.217.

Journey through the Discipline: A Review of *Metatranslation: Essays on Translation and Translation Studies*

[Theo Hemans. 2023. New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780367819590. 288 Pages. £35.99 (Paperback)]

Yidan Hu

Situating translation in wider cultural landscapes, *Metatranslation: Essays on Translation and Translation Studies* presents a curated selection of fourteen essays authored by the leading representative of descriptive translation studies, Theo Hermans. He advocates reading translations as translations — regarding them as metatexts — whether this acknowledgement is prompted by a preface or simply by the word 'translation' on the title page. Through this anthology which spans nearly four decades, readers embark on a transformative journey, witnessing the evolution of translation studies from its nascent stages of descriptive paradigm in the 1980s to its present-day state as a dynamic, introspective discipline. This journey underscores the recognition that translation is not merely a technical act or textual comparison, but rather a complex interplay of cultural power dynamics and the inescapable involvement of the researcher.

Drawing from a deconstructive standpoint, these essays are grouped into three principal sections: approaches of translation studies, key concepts of translation studies, and the nexus between histories and translation. This critique specifically offers a review of the initial section, approaches of translation studies, explicating the evolution of scholarly perspectives from conceiving translation as merely a 'proxy' or 'resemblance' that represents another discourse to recognising it as a form of social behaviour intricately intertwined with historical and culture-specific contexts (Hermans, 2023, 57). Translation thus cannot be reduced to or

captured by a singular disciplinary framework.

The opening pair of essays in the first section, ‘Translation’s Other’ and ‘Paradoxes and Aporias in Translation and Translation Studies,’ question the prevailing conceptualisation of translation that frequently disenfranchises and elides the translator as the subordinate of the author in the pursuit of asserting equivalence. Each essay contributes to the transformative journey by elucidating how this traditional view obscures intricacies inherent in translation practice. Hermans maintains that translation is not mere replicas but exhibits a plural, hybrid and polyphonic nature which implicates the study of translation in value systems, resonant with ethnography and historiography’s engagement with cultural translation. As such, translation studies can benefit from adopting self-reflexive methodologies akin to ethnography and historiography, utilising hermeneutics, narrativity, and second-order observation for critical analysis.

The subsequent essay, entitled ‘Translation, Irritation, and Resonance,’ advances the discourse on translation’s positioning by situating it within an emerging sociology of translation. A systems theory approach was adopted, positing translation as a dynamic social system that accentuates its pivotal role in extending communication across linguistic barriers. The system’s cohesion stems from its congenital function, which fosters the development of normative guidelines governing representation. Through structural coupling, the translation system adapts to the diverse demands of its environment, including the complexities of modern localisation needs. The notion of second-order observation is further elaborated by relating to social systems theory, scrutinising how translators make choices and interpretations that extend beyond just the translated text itself, in an endeavour to uncover underlying biases,

cultural influences, and historical contexts that shape the translator's decisions (Hermans 2023, pp.60-63).

The essay 'What Is Translation?' while serving as a comprehensive overview underlines the elusive nature of a formal definition for translation but suggests that it can be broadly understood as mediating differences through similarities. Concrete assumptions, particularly those narrowly construing translation as merely a target-language utterance, as proposed by descriptivists like Gideon Toury, are found to be vulnerable (Hermans 2023, p.69). Alternatively, insights from literary studies hint at viewing 'literature' as a contextual label. Prototype theory, propounded by Sandra Halverson, provides another perspective, albeit critiqued by Maria Tymoczko, who suggests treating translation as a cluster concept. Consequently, the essay concludes that translation defies precise definition, urging methodological caution and open-mindedness in its study across various contexts.

'Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding' examines the discourse surrounding untranslatability in the context of world literature debates and the publication of Barbara Cassin's *Dictionary of Untranslatables* (2014). By exploring three historical examples from the Early modern era wherein translators encountered significant challenges yet devised pragmatic solutions, it transcends the dichotomy of 'translatability' and 'untranslatability'. Translation in this sense is an ongoing effort with the outcomes always being temporary and circumscribed. The perpetual task of translation implies that different translations might reflect different interpretations, and none of them can be deemed ultimate or definitive. Hence, approaches toward translation should by no means be confined to mistranslations and non-translations. Rather, it is crucial to consider the historical conditions shaping

the translator's decisions, thereby delving into entanglements that characterise the practices of individual translators.

To conclude, the first part of an exploration of various approaches thus provides sage access routes into key areas of the discipline, a torchlight through which newcomers into the complex array of themes that currently characterise translation studies can be led. These essays reflect a notable shift from the once-established descriptive paradigm of translation to a more nuanced and unsettled viewpoint that calls for interdisciplinary approaches. This transition marks a recognition of the increasing complexity intrinsic to translation studies, signalling a need for deeper exploration and critical enquiry into its multifaceted nature. This section underscores not only the necessity of translating the subject matter of translation studies into its own lexicon but also the diverse approaches employed in doing so. The focus is on both theoretical and methodological issues, providing numerous examples and a critical overview of the challenges ahead.

Despite the rich discussion on different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, there is a notable absence of differentiating specific spheres of translation studies and conducting a nuanced examination concerning the varied nature of different translated texts. Whether it be literary translation, museum exhibitions translation, audiovisual translation, or legal translation, each genre presents its own set of challenges and considerations that deserve meticulous attention and analysis, as this volume attempts to be all-embracing research. Moving forward, further research is needed to indicate the extent to which these approaches apply to different types of translated texts. Aside from this, Hermans's discussion has leaned excessively towards the textual narrative, assuming translation primarily is a production of language (culture) or the

text for various audiences. With the rise of multimodality where the language-based view of meaning-making in the translation process is challenged, the notion of 'text' is queried. Other modes which have the potential to equally constitute meaning such as pictures and sound also merit exploration in translation studies, especially in hybrid texts such as comic translation and children's picture book translation. Of particular note is that his investigation also leaves much to be desired in addressing technical innovations within the industry, as these resources for translators introduce both affordances and constraints.

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Home, Memory and Belonging in Italian Postcolonial Literature

[Chiara Giuliani. 2021. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-3-030-75062-6. 186 pages. £89.99 (Hardcover)]

Samuel Fernandes

Written by Chiara Giuliani (University College Cork), *Home, Memory, and Belonging in Italian Postcolonial Literature* opens with the story of the request for inhabitants of contemporary Italy to stay at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, what could be done with individuals who don't have a traditional home? How would it be possible for those people to protect themselves? Further, what would it mean to belong to a home for these individuals? Giuliani uses this story to question the concept of home, and whether it is possible to experience feeling at home in different forms besides the common conception of a fixed location that provides security and stability. From this perspective, migrants represent cases in which the notion of belonging to a home can be reconfigured: on leaving their home countries, these individuals find themselves in new place, able to develop a new home in different locations.

Giuliani adopts a sense of home permeated by the possibilities of developing a sense of belonging in different spaces, going beyond the borders of nation-states. Therefore, the idea of home is instead situated in the field of experience, associating feelings, memories, and an idea of connection between a subject and a place. For this reason, an individual can develop a sensation of being in a home in multiple locations and at different times, creating various home spaces. The book uses these notions to discuss how different spaces can be considered home by migrants living in Italy. To achieve this, Giuliani

applies this specific form to understand home in the post-colonial literature produced by migrants in contemporary Italy and as well as newspaper articles.

In her analysis, the author starts with the development of home spaces situated in the public sphere, moves on to those categorized as semi-private, and finally to private environments. This book's structure is clear and adequately organized, which helps the reader to understand the debates proposed by the author.

Through literary works, for instance *La Mia Casa è Dove Sono*, by Igiaba Scego, and journalistic texts, Chapters 2 and 3 focus on public spaces by analysing Termini Train Station and phone centres. Giuliani discusses the meaning of the station for migrants, arguing that it is a place which serves as a socializing space for them. Meanwhile, the phone centre, discussed in works such as *Divorzio all'Islamica a Viale Marconi*, by Amara Lakhous, enables migrants to make international calls at lower prices in Italy. Therefore, the train station and phone centres represent a space related to feelings of belonging for the migrant population in Italy.

Then, in Chapter 4, the author discusses the semi-private spaces portrayed by two housing estates inhabited by migrants in two literary works: *Scontro di Civiltà per un Ascensore a Piazza Vittorio*, another book by Amara Lakhous, and *Amiche per la Pelle*, by Laila Wadia. According to Giuliani's analysis, in the first work, the condominium is not seen as a home space for the characters, while the opposite happens in the second book. The author addresses precisely this contrast in this section of her argument. According to Giuliani, the place in Wadia's novel is considered as a home as a result of the effort of the novel's characters to create this feeling. This case is an example of how migrants' agency is an important aspect to elaborate home spaces.

Chapter 5 of the book deals with the development of home in private spaces: a

bathroom and a bedroom. Lakhous's book, discussed in Chapter 4, considers a character who sees the bathroom as a space of privacy where it is possible to revisit memories of the period before living in Italy. The bedroom as a home space, on the other hand, is analysed by Giuliani in the book *Rhoda*, by Igiaba Scego, through a character who can access memories and feel the presence of her sister, even though she is not there, in that room. The discussion demonstrates two cases of developing the home sensation by the characters in a personal context. In the other chapters, the community aspect is important to construct, or not, the sense of belonging. Therefore, by adding a section about private spaces, Giuliani includes a new layer in her examination.

In chapter 6, the last of the book, Giuliani concludes her argument and presents reflections on the meanings surrounding migrants' suitcases. The author explores, in dialogue with the short story *Dismatria*, also by Igiaba Scego, how such objects carry not only the migrants' clothes or personal items, but also bring memories, desires, and connections to their place of origin. The suitcase further represents the desire to return. This is the case regarding the character in the story, who is in Italy but wants to go back to Somalia. In this sense, the suitcase weaves a connection between home spaces that are developed over different periods.

Giuliani's work explores, through the concept of home space, the ability to develop a sense of belonging in spaces that would initially have no such meaning. An interesting aspect is that, by addressing the formation of new spaces of belonging in locations already predominantly associated with migrants, the book highlights how the contemporary Italian context does not provide a welcoming environment on its own. Migrants need to access a sense of belonging among themselves and also through links with their homeland, even when they are living in a different country. This opens up an opportunity to debate,

broadly, the conditions that these migrants face when living in Italy.

Furthermore, the need to build new home spaces responds to situations in which migrants find themselves dispossessed of their homes. Giuliani points out the attempt to re-signify spaces to feel a sense of belonging in a place that is not their original home, indicating a certain agency on the part of these individuals. Another author who has debated the subject, Edward Said discusses the hard feelings associated with exile, defining the loss of one's homeland as a situation surrounded by sadness and instability (2013: 95). However, Said also points out that "while it perhaps seems peculiar to speak of the pleasures of exile, there are some positive things to be said for a few of its conditions" (2013: 100). For instance, the exiled has a vision that combines plural perspectives from at least two places, which results in an original perspective in a foreign land. In a certain way, Said's argument is in dialogue with Giuliani's perception that the act of developing new home spaces is a result of connecting past experiences with new places of residence. Thereby, Giualiani's work is an important analysis not only of the home sensations produced by migrants, but also of how their agency is closely associated with the loss and uncertainty experienced by these individuals.

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A Blue and White Sorority: Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's *Famous Women Dinner Service*

[*Famous Women Dinner Service*, Charleston Trust, Permanent Exhibition]

Figure 1. Full set of *The Famous Women Dinner Service* (Charleston Trust).

Serena Wong

I found myself greeted by a set of fifty decorative dinner plates as I entered the doors of Charleston Farmhouse, earlier this year. Located in the Outer Studio, the exhibit is hard to miss by those making their way into Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's former country home via the visiting route of the now house-museum. The plates are displayed in glass cabinets opposite the entrance and lean on a wall shared with the house's kitchen in which several blue and white willow pattern plates are also

Figure 2. Chinoiserie Plates at Charleston Farmhouse (photos by the Author).

collected. My research on Virginia Woolf's ornamental orientalism, which opened for me an interest in the Chinese or chinoiserie-style plates at Charleston, had led to my visit to the house in the first place. I was keen to study the china objects that would have been doubly serviceable as tools of décor and dining in the domestic spaces of Woolf and her extended family. Yet, the sets of plates displayed on the opposite sides of the wall together offer a curious sense of both juxtaposition and continuity that lingers on my mind even after visiting the rest of the house. The material medium of *The Famous Women Dinner Service*, as the fifty plates are collectively known, is a pivotal layer to its proto-feminist project. In particular, my protracted fascination with the plates is governed by a reflection on the project's value and reception in the global twenty-first century.

The fifty-piece dinner service set was privately commissioned in 1932 by Kenneth Clark, British art historian, broadcaster, and at the time newly appointed director of Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, who was inspired to have an artist-designed dinner service of his own after dining with art dealer Joseph Duveen in New York 'on a blue and gold Sèvres service made for the Empress Catherine of Russia' (Clark 1974, pp.245-46). Clark and his first wife, Elizabeth Winifred 'Jane' Clark, invited Bell and Grant to paint the set of custom dinnerware without a specific brief for its design. The artists consequently had great freedom with their work and returned with plates two years later that challenged Clark's expectation of a decorative service in Sèvres taste. Jane, however, would have been less ambivalent towards the final product given her involvement in its creative process, which is evidenced by regular correspondences between her and Bell throughout the making period. What the Clarks ultimately received was an evocative work of feminist art that hosts painted portraits of 'famous women' through history on white Wedgwood plates. These ceramic portraits

are moreover subdivided into four groups of twelve based on the women that they feature: the plates are sectioned as 'Women of Letters', 'Queens', 'Beauties', and 'Dancers and Actresses', with the remaining two depicting the artists themselves.[8] Little is known about what happened to the set when they left the Clark family's possession; it is believed that the plates were gifted to Clark's second wife, Nolwen de Janźe-Rice, on her marriage to Clark in 1977, and then came up for auction in Germany some time later. It was not until 2017 that they were acquired by Piano Nobile gallery, which assisted Charleston to purchase the dinner service to be kept at its original place of creation.

When asked about the dinner service plates, Matthew Travers, director of Piano Nobile gallery, noted the proto-feminist nature of their art by stating:

> '[A]ll of the women they depicted did something interesting and powerful, and often were quite scandalous – the Bloomsburys might have said "liberated" – in the way they lived their private lives,

[8] The figures painted are as follows. Women of Letters: 1. Jane Austen (1775–1817), 2. Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861) and her dog Flush, 3. Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855), 4. George Eliot (1819–1880), 5. Fanny Kemble (1809–1893), 6. Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973–c. 1014 or 1025), 7. Dorothy Osborne (1627–1695), 8. Christina Rossetti (1830–1894), 9. George Sand (1804–1876), 10. Sappho (c. 630–c. 570 BCE), 11. Germaine de Staël (1766–1817), 12. Virginia Woolf (1882–1941). Queens: 13. Catherine the Great (1729–1796), 14. Christina, Queen of Sweden (1626–1689), 15. Cleopatra (70/69–30 BCE), 16. Elizabeth I (1533–1603), 17. Eugénie de Montijo (1826–1920), 18. Jezebel (died c. 843 BCE), 19. Marie Antoinette (1755–1793), 20. Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587), 21. Mary of Teck (1867–1953), 22. Queen of Sheba (c. 1000 BCE), 23. Theodora (c. 500–548), 24. Queen Victoria (1819–1901). Beauties: 25. Beatrice Portinari (c. 1265–1290), 26. Marian Bergeron (1918–2002), 27. Sarah Churchill (1660–1744), 28. Pauline von Metternich (1836–1921), 29. Lola Montez (1821–1861), 30. Pocahontas (c. 1596–1617), 31. Rachel (Biblical figure), 32. Juliette Récamier (1777–1849), 33. Elizabeth Siddal (1829–1862), 34. Agnès Sorel (1422–1450), 35. Helen of Troy (Greek mythology), 36. Simonetta Vespucci (1453–1476). Dancers and Actresses: 37. Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), 38. Marie-Anne de Cupis de Camargo (1710–1770), 39. Mrs Patrick Campbell (1865–1940), 40. Eleonora Duse (1858–1924), 41. Greta Garbo (1905–1990), 42. Nell Gwyn (1650–1687), 43. Dorothea Jordan (1762–1816), 44. Lillie Langtry (1853–1929), 45. Anna Pavlova (1881–1931), 46. Sarah Siddons (1755–1831), 47. Marie Taglioni (1804–1884), 48. Ellen Terry (1847–1928). The Artists: 49. Vanessa Bell (1879–1961), 50. Duncan Grant (1885–1978).

> and often did not conform to the patriarchies they were living in' (Daley 2018).

Indeed, Bell and Grant's transhistorical selection of women subjects celebrate those who are recognised for their active roles in artistic, intellectual, and political pursuits, often in acts of patriarchal resistance and from outsider positions economically, socially, and racially. Focusing on the latter observation, only about 40 percent of the forty-eight 'famous women' painted are British. Diana Wilkins, who contributed to 'The Famous Women Dinner Service Catalogue', made the analysis that a little over another 40 percent of the women are of European, Scandinavian, and Russian descent, and to the best of the cataloguing team's discernment 'two are African, one Japanese, two North American, one from Asia Minor, and two from the Arabian Peninsula' (Leaper 2017). In its merging of aesthetics and dining, *The Famous Women Dinner Service* has utilised the ceramic canvas to invite the international to the domestic. By bringing women of broad temporal and geographic scopes to the culture of the table, Bell and Grant's painted plates show a sorority of diverse female pioneers that can be admired from a place of dining. The medium of ceramic dinner plates on which their artistic practice materialises pushes to the centre an engagement with the portrayed women through moments of hospitality; the plates potentially prompt dialogues around the dinner table that continues the legacy of their subjects. As it happens, the artists themselves appear to have hosted a tea-party using the plates. In the aforementioned correspondences between Jane and Bell, a letter dated 9 June finds Bell asking the former about the event: 'We wanted to ask if you'd mind if we had a tea-party to show them [the plates] to a few people before you have them, as so many

people have been curious to see them' (Yale 1933).[9]

Returning to the opening sentiments of this review, therefore, a viewing of *The Famous Women Dinner Service* and the artists' willow pattern plates in tandem is not only apt but essential to exploring the complicated undertones that underlie the twentieth century's association between inheritance and dining. The ornate domesticity of the British plate bearers is inevitably intertwined with a history of imperial and colonial possession that, in turn, steers aesthetic tastes at home and makes possible the means to fund such practices. Even on first glance at the dinner service, it is noticeable that the largely blue and white colour scheme of the painted plates echoes that of the chinoiserie-style dishes on the other side of the wall. And to make matters complex, this discourse is the source of Clark's motivation for the service, which also lies in an appetite for foreign Sèvres porcelain that has artistic origins in trades with the East. This is not to suggest that creative practices and products should be solely enjoyed by their rooted cultures, however that might be assessed, but the consideration is certainly based on an understanding that the shaping of modernist aesthetics is inexorably linked with the political dynamics underpinning their usage. The dinner service set that Bell and Grant created is resultant of an amalgamation between the 'exotic' and the familiar to its initial consumers. The plates are successful in translating the domestic space into a picture of the global. Yet these portraits, framed within the stagnant ceramic surface, invite viewers too to look at their subjects through the fixed lens of their makers.

In considering the orientalism that inexorably attaches to the performance of these plates, my attention lingers on the portrait of the Japanese novelist and poet

[9] The letter does not record the year. Given its context, though, it should have been penned in 1933.

Figure 3. Dinner Service Plate of Lady Murasaki Shikibu (Charleston Trust).

Lady Murasaki Shikibu, who is the sole East Asian woman included in Bell and Grant's project. The inclusion of Murasaki to their plated portraits seems to be a mystery. Hana Leaper in her article on the dinner service for *British Art Studies* has even stated that 'we [the cataloguing team] were unable to find a source for Murasaki' (Leaper 2017), though the catalogue itself, on its page about Murasaki by Claudia Tobin, offers a more certain postulation to the connection by suggesting Grant's copying of Japanese prints in his early education and his reading of the author's classic novel, *The Tale of Genji*, as translated by Arthur Waley (Tobin 2017, p.20). The catalogue too gestures to Woolf's review of the novel as well as her mention of Murasaki in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), the landmark book of twentieth century feminist criticism. Woolf's discourses on Murasaki, which would have reflected and formed similar ones in Bloomsbury, draws a full circle for my visit to Charleston. To mimic the careless homogenising in orientalist conflations of China and Japan, in the context of a much more careful contemplation on the political nuances produced by these acts, Bell and Grant's poetic trapping of Murasaki within the still walls of ceramic is a fitting replication of her entrapment in time to the audience who consumes her presence. For, in Woolf's review of *The Tale of Genji*, to give a compact example, she imagines Murasaki 'from the Eastern world' that has from it removed '[s]ome element of horror, of terror, or sordidity, some root of experience… so that crudeness is impossible and coarseness out of the

question, but with it too has gone some vigour, some richness, some maturity of the human spirit, failing which the gold is silvered and the wine mixed with water' (Woolf 1925, pp.267-68). The 'East' in which Woolf sees Murasaki residing is presented in stagnation; it is the epitome of idyllic removal from twentieth century British civilisation but also a place invented from ideas of aesthetic primitivism, temporally behind in experience and development to its fine dining counterpart. Fixing Murasaki on the ceramic plate is then another way of maintaining this orientalist fantasy.

It is clear that the reception of Woolf's text and, more importantly to the discussion of this review, that of Bell and Grant's dinner service, has spread to wider groups of unintended audience in the twenty-first century. The work of the artists is still to be admired; the *Famous Women Dinner Service* is a masterpiece of feminist expression and experimentation in modernist aesthetics. As we observe its artistic and political legacy with eyes of the new century, however, it is also pertinent that we consider our role in the continuation and rerouting of its narrative for forthcoming generations.

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The Afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots

[The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, October 2022 – February 2023]

New exhibition explores the afterlife of controversial monarch, Image Credit Martin Sheilds, Whats on Glasgow.

Jenny Alexander

Mary Queen of Scots is perhaps one of Scotland's best-known and most controversial monarchs. Mary became Queen of Scotland at only six days old, she was briefly Queen Consort of France aged Seventeen, widowed and remarried twice, gave birth to a son who would become the first King to unite the kingdoms of Scotland and England, and held captive by her cousin Queen Elizabeth I for eighteen-and-a-half years before being executed as a traitor in 1587. Mary was also a devoutly Catholic monarch who reigned over a Protestant

Scotland. There is no denying that Mary's life was one of constant transition, however it is the transitionary state of this Queen's afterlife and legacy which The University of Glasgow's Hunterian Museum explored in their recent exhibition, *The Afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots* (14 October 2022 – 5 February 2023).

The Afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots was the result of a Glasgow University led research project, *'In my End is my Beginning' – The Memorialisation and Cultural Afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots, 1567 – 2019,* which explored Mary's posthumous reputation via artefacts found in Scottish Heritage Collections. Building on this exploration, The Hunterian's exhibition brought together a range of archival artefacts spanning multiple periods of history. In doing so, the exhibition encouraged audiences to consider the many transitions Mary's reputation and legacy has gone through as it has been repeatedly reconstructed and co-opted in order to explore and represent Scottish heritage and culture, as well as themes of gender, sexuality, and monarchy.

Exhibits ranged from rare archival objects to everyday ephemera, including political legislation, works of art, and tourist memorabilia. Within the collection were objects from Mary's own lifetime, notably; *The Blackhouse Charter* featuring Mary's privy seal, and a 1553 deliberately defaced Testoon with Mary's portrait. *The Blackhouse Charters* date from 1304 and are the oldest records held by the University of Glasgow, documenting the expansion and relocation of the university. They are large, delicate documents featuring a wax seal attached by a ribbon. The charter featured within the exhibition dates from 1563 and documents Mary Queen of Scots' grant of former monastic lands to the University of Glasgow to provide bursaries for five poor students. This document has been cared for and carefully preserved as part of official

legislation and represents an item which arguably demonstrates an effort to preserve a record of Mary's influence over Scotland's domestic policy. By contrast, the deep and aggressive gouges within the defaced silver Testoon demonstrates the intensity of the hatred of the Queen of Scots from other political factions. The contrasting perceptions of Mary which can be detected in the comparison of these and other historical objects which date from Mary's lifetime, as well as the effort made to preserve them, helped to provide context to audiences as to why Mary's posthumous reputation has undergone so many variations.

Forming most of the exhibition was a range of artistic and cultural representations of Mary which were produced after her death. From paintings including *The Abdication of Mary Queen of Scots* (Gavin Hamilton, 1723 – 1798) and *Head of Mary Queen of Scots after Decollation* (by Amias Cawood, and once owned by Walter Scott), to Mary Queen of Scots's rubber ducks. The final part of the exhibition focused specifically on films which have depicted Mary Queen of Scots, including the newly restored *The Loves of Mary Queen of Scots* (Clift, 1923) and a selection of posters for Hollywood's most recent depiction of *Mary Queen of Scots* (Rourke, 2018). The emphasis on these artistic depictions, especially those from Hollywood help to convey the way in which Mary Queen of Scots' life has been so highly romanticised. Within the films and their posters Mary is predominantly depicted as a regal and powerful women, and highlighted her relationships with either her husbands or cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

In order explore the afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots, the Hunterian's exhibition followed the trajectory of Mary's life beginning from her time in France through to her death. Mapping the exhibition in this way also meant that exhibits could largely be presented in chronological order, with historic artefacts

from Mary's own lifetime telling the story of her life whilst those produced after her death explored her afterlife. This balance of old and new was extended to the branding of the exhibition itself, with historical imagery being recreated using a modern animated and colourful style (see above). By drawing attention to the consistency of depictions of Mary Queen of Scots within different time periods the exhibition introduced a strong sense of temporality. The chronological structure of the exhibition emphasised the way in which Mary's story has never fully faded from memory, her story maintains a relevance that is not constrained by the passage of time. Through this theme audiences could not only understand the transitionary nature of Mary's life and afterlife, but it also highlighted that the way in which Mary was depicted within individual objects reflected the values of the periods in which these objects were produced. For example, her depiction as a romanticised Scottish leader in Hamilton's and Cawood's paintings can be understood in more depth when you consider that they were both produced during a time when Scottish nationalism was undergoing a romantic reinvention. Perhaps more recognisable to current audiences, the films at the end of the exhibition depict a more empowered and sexual portrayal of Mary as both a woman and love interest, reflecting the changed understanding of women's place in society in the age of cinema.

The exhibition was careful to present a historically objective depiction of Mary Queen of Scots and instead drew attention to the multidimensional influence that she and her reputation have had throughout history. To do this, the exhibition asked attendees to focus on their own subject-object engagement of the exhibits and consider them alongside their pre-existing knowledge of Mary and draw their own conclusions of her as a historical figure. This subjectivity focused method added an interactive dimension to

what otherwise could have been just a more traditional look-and-do-not-touch exhibition. The Hunterian was able to extend this interactivity to all ages by including beautifully illustrated worksheets for younger attendees. The interactive elements of *The Afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots*, in conjunction with its focus on the temporality of the exhibits featured, positioned discussions of Mary as an important and continually relevant individual whose importance never ceases, but instead transitions throughout time.

As a biographical exhibition, *The Afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots* was extremely successful. It presented both a detailed representation of Mary as a historical figure and highlighted the way in the transitionary nature of her legacy reflects the subjective nature of history. Within the exhibition the temporality and focus on the audience's subjective understanding of Mary draws attention to the fact that her image has been (and continues to be) revised, co-opted, and at times manipulated in the construction of both national memory and social consciousness. Depending on which exhibit or element of the exhibition you focus on The Hunterian explores the ways in which Mary's legacy has been used to explore or emphasise debates around Scottish identity, power, gender, and sexuality. Yet when considered in its entirety, The Hunterian's exhibition demonstrates the importance of considering how the transitions of Mary's legacy are interconnected and contribute to the overall understanding of the afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots.

Films Mentioned:

The Loves of Mary Queen of Scots, Denison Clift, UK, Ideal Film Company, 1923.

Mary Queen of Scots, Joise Rourke, United States, Focus Features and Universal Pictures, 2018.

Image Credit

Glasgow, W.O. (n.d.). *New exhibition explores the afterlife of*

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Digitising History: Five Hundred Years Towards Understanding

[Freedom and Slavery: 1400–1877, The National Museum of African History and Culture, Smithsonian Museum, Online Exhibition]

Tatiana Köhler

The National Museum of African American History and Culture, an institution within the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C., has released a digitisation of their exhibition *Freedom and Slavery: 1400 – 1877.* The project is ambitious and powerful, beginning with attempts to address five centuries of history. It starts with a set of images that mark significant historical events such as the changing trade relationships between Europeans and West Africans, the Middle Passage, the effects of Industrialisation as well as the cotton plantation on the U.S. economy and the position of African Americans in the Civil War, among others, which have marked the protracted struggle for freedom from African Americans in the United States.

Beginning with a message that underpins the museum itself, we hear Maya Angelou's voice stating that '*history, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again*.' The exhibition divides its substantial timeline into four individual parts: 'Slavery and the Making of the Atlantic World', 'Colonial North America and the Paradox of Liberty', 'Slavery and the Making of a New Nation', and 'Coming of War, Coming of Freedom'. Each part contains several sections that deal with a composite of historical sources such as illustrations, maps, photographs, quotes and sometimes videos accompanied by a concise explanation of the object at hand.

We start the journey with ‘Slavery and the Making of the Atlantic World’. We are introduced to various European communities –such as the Spanish and Portuguese who, alongside some African leaders, benefited from the slave trade. The identity of these communities was understood differently than they are today, as indicated in this section by the nature of the trade between the various African communities and the European ones. As time progressed, the relationships between these trade partners focused less on raw materials and more on the enslavement of African people, creating the largest forced migration in history that was justified by the origin of chattel slavery, whereby humans are perceived as private property, largely informed by racist ideas.

To paint a more personal picture, we are provided with surviving documents, illustrations, objects and autobiographies that survived. One of the interesting comparisons is the pairing of illustrations of the African lands and its people made by European travellers, alongside the sculptures from the West African region, already showcasing a different way of conceptualising the world through art. There are also numerous objects made of gold, which were used by the different African communities to trade. Among these objects, we are given a short description of Emperor Mansa Musa (1280 –1337), described as one of the wealthiest men who ever lived and in possession of a ‘seemingly endless’ source of gold. In contrast, we are also presented with the autobiography of Mahommah Baquaqua, born in 1824 in Benin, enslaved in the Caribbean and eventually reaching freedom in Canada – his story illustrates the experiences of millions of West Africans who were kidnapped, compelled to convert to Christianity, forced into slavery to work in the Americas and later escaped to the north where emancipation was a possibility.

The next part of the exhibition is entitled ‘Colonial North America and the Paradox of Liberty’, where we focus on the community built in the United States of America by groups of Europeans and Indigenous people, as well as enslaved and free Africans. The co-habitation of these groups of people gave way to the creation of sub-cultures in different geographical locations of the country, such as the West Coast and the southern states, despite the enslavers' drive to stamp out cultural practices be it by language or religion. Even so, this section centres on the experiences of African Americans as the people who physically transformed the land creating the plantations that would enrich a powerful elite.

There is a notable selection of maps which illustrate the growth of American colonies, as well as the expansion of land south and west, which begins with the tobacco plantations in the Chesapeake region (today Virginia and Maryland). There is also a selection of watercolours and illustrations which show everyday life on the plantations such as people cutting the plants with a sickle or partaking in grooming practices before going to church on Sunday. We can also appreciate copies of the drafts of what would later become the Declaration of Independence, and the farm book of Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers, who kept track of the enslaved people working on his plantation. Today, we know that Jefferson kept a longstanding relationship with one of the enslaved women on his plantation, Sally Hemmings, who he owned as property as well as their children.

The third section, ‘Slavery and the Making of a New Nation’, explores how the history of enslaved African peoples and the ideas of race directly influenced and shaped the genesis of the United States as a newly formed and expanding nation-state. The enslaved people who had for

generations been systematically denied their freedom saw the rise in even crueller forms of slavery after the American Revolution, such as the domestic slave trade between 1820 and 1860 where enslaved people were auctioned to continue the plantation labour in the deep south and the west. It was precisely the labour of enslaved people that turned the country into the economic world leader by being the centre of cotton production in the world, despite the movements towards the abolition of the slave trade.

Given that this section looks at a more recent part of the timeline, we can appreciate illustrations and prints that were circulated among people with purchasing power, as well as some photographs. One picture shows us what the cotton gin looked like, a machine that revolutionised cotton production by compressing the picked cotton into bales. There is also a selection of maps that show the large geographical area that we know to be the United States today and how these vast regions that were westward of the original colonies came to be incorporated into the nation. As more cruel dehumanising ways of control were instilled, so did the thinkers of abolition become more radical. One example of this is a copy of David Walker's 1829 appeal to enslaved people in which he boldly argues for enslaved people to rise against their enslavers. As a consequence, and, out of fear, white Americans banned the knowledge of reading and writing from enslaved Black Americans.

Lastly, 'Coming of War, Coming of Freedom' underlines how the struggle for freedom of Black people continued after the establishment of the nation, ultimately leading to the American Civil War. Even if black people had physically and figuratively built the foundation of the nation, these same institutions that they built —the White House, the U. S. Capitol, universities, churches, etc— continued to

oppress them and deny them their freedom. Still, the desire to reach a position of liberation and equality continued and enslaved people revolted, escaped and organised, even with other white people, in order to achieve their freedom.

This section offers a specific timeline that focuses solely on the lives of African Americans during the Civil War from 1861–1865. There is a plethora of photographs of African Americans as a group or with groups of white people posing for the camera or standing in fields. There is also a striking illustration of African Americans gathered together in a dark room, with only one man at the centre holding up a torch, as they read the Emancipation Proclamation.

The digitisation of this exhibition is a thought-provoking attempt at creating a platform that continues to share this painful history that affects the lives of Americans to this day. As we go through the many artefacts that attest to the physical presence of a large number of the population who have recurringly been denied a place in the wider narrative of the nation, the exhibition gives the viewer a sobering look at the crude ways in which humans have acted towards each other. The substantial timeline and number of objects give the viewer a fuller picture of this period in history. However, the exhibit could benefit from a deeper dive into the objects presented to their digital audience, given that not all objects were presented as a 3D scan and the manuscripts were only presented by the cover or the first page.

In addition to this, it was interesting to see how they had been able to digitize some of the artefacts, for example, a vase that was marked and used by an enslaved African – presented as a 3D scan, allowing for some exploration of all parts of it – and whose existence affirms the continuation of African culture even in their forced

diaspora. The digital access of these artefacts gives the viewer less geographic or financial constrictions when considering questions of slavery in the American context. Still, it remains a different experience from seeing these physical objects in real life that are permeated with a painful history given that a space dedicated solely to it would create a specific atmosphere that cannot be transmitted on screen and that would invite the viewer of a full tour of the exhibit once there.

Engaging with this part of history feels particularly important today, not just because much of our modern lives were built by people who were denied their rights to freedom. The exhibit gives us an informative outlook on the constant struggle towards freedom, and how even if there were instances when rebellions were shut down and escapees were killed, the fight to reach equality continued and continues. In light of the Black Lives Matter movement, which has been prominent in the public eye for the past few years, this exhibition presents itself as an insightful resource to explore when thinking about the histories that make up our communities, and what we inherit and choose to pass down. Although these are uncomfortable parts of history, the exhibition encourages us accept that reality is an all-inclusive experience where pain, joy, courage and fear can cohabitate. These continuous attempts to discuss a painful past can aid a community to live with narratives that complicate the underlying notions of what is ‘true’ or what is ‘right’ by addressing the paradoxes that lie at the centre of liberation movements.

How to Have Sex

[dir. by Molly Manning Walker. Mubi. (UK, 2023)]

Eugina Gelbelman

"Girlhood is a story of desire; innocence; fall from innocence; being desired; being not desired; being desired by the wrong people; by dangerous people; by the right people; by excitingly dangerous people. There's so much storytelling in girlhood. There's so much revision in telling it. So much of my girlhood was fictive. I lived in my mind. I made up the girl I thought I was. Whether that's delusional or not, I really felt the happiest and safest in my fictional girlhood. I think the girls in these stories are the same way. There's the story of their lives, and there's the story that they're telling."

- Jenny Zhang (quoted in Siemsen, 2017)

How to Have Sex (Walker, 2023), is the debut feature film of British cinematographer Molly Manning Walker. It won the Un Certain Regard Award at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for two BAFTA's. Walker cites *Fat Girl* (Breillat) and *American Honey* (Arnold) as thematic and stylistic influences for the film. She has said that the film is about the social pressure teenage girls often feel and are put under to engage in sex and sexual activity before they are emotionally and mentally ready for it and has expressed gratitude that the film has sparked a conversation on this issue, as well as around the topics of consent and sexual assault. For a debut feature film, *How to Have Sex* is assured, accomplished and focused, although there is a problem in how it portrays a young woman's bildungsroman or coming of age

experience as entirely shadowed by the threat of sexual assault, without further subtlety. The film follows a friend group of three teenaged girls on their vacation to Malia, Crete to celebrate the completion of their school exams. The audience experiences this trip through the eyes of one of them, 16-year-old Tara, portrayed with depth and intelligence by Mia McKenna-Bruce.

Her friends are the sexually adventurous Skye and the ambitious, high-attaining student Em. The three connect with another group of teenagers, Badger, Paddy and Paige, who are staying in a nearby hotel room. Together, the six pass the time drinking, dancing, partying, hooking up and throwing up. In the midst of this, Tara, the only virgin in the party, has a questionable first-time sexual experience with Paddy, where her desire and consent to be with him is murky. We see Tara consent to sex with Paddy initially after he sexually teases her in the ocean, but through a focus on her uncomfortable body language and close ups on her face, we can evidently see she does not enjoy the experience with him. Tara is then explicitly raped by Paddy in a second encounter, when he climbs on top of her whilst she is asleep. Tara hides her assaults up until the end of the film, when she quietly reveals the truth to compassionate Em. She cannot, however, be truthful with Skye, who is jealous and dismissive of Tara's experiences. The film ends as the three girls run for the gate of their return plane home.

On the one hand, *How to Have Sex* addresses a commonplace reality for many young women. However, on the other hand, its portrayal and depiction of this reality results in the central character of Tara, appearing to lack agency and the ability to speak up for herself. Perhaps, like Jenny Zhang says, Tara, like many young women, would rather live in the safety and happiness of a fictional story of her young adulthood, one she has written for herself. Admitting that Paddy has

violated her sovereignty over herself is too unbearable and thus something she struggles to acknowledge to herself, let alone her friends. Such nuance can be read into the film, which has a wide open, opaque quality that leaves it open to many interpretations.

Overall, sexuality in the film is filtered through a lens of negativity, there is sparse positive portrayal of sexual discovery for young women. Badger, who Tara initially has a crush on, seems to be the one source of positive romance for her. However, as the film progresses he is shown to be cowardly, unwilling to reign-in Paddy's abusive behavior with even as much as a serious talk with his friend. He is ultimately not the young man Tara hoped he was. Like the others in Tara's friend group, he stands by and watches her be sexually violated, offering little support. The filmmaker makes some key choices which prevent the film from being more deeply layered. The film is about three young women on holiday, and the experiences of Tara's friends Em and Skye are largely sidelined. While Em forms an apparently positive same sex relationship with Paige, we see little to none of this subplot in the film, no screen time is devoted to it. Skye is a character who is deeply unsympathetic, and she constantly pushes Tara into situations where she feels unsafe, then antagonizes Tara for her discomfort and pain. Manning Walker could have made a greater effort to more fully show the range of young female experiences with first time sexuality if she spent more time with Tara's friend group in their sub plots. In depicting sexuality as terrifying and largely unwanted, negative and performative for women, the filmmaker is sending a dispiriting message. Her message about the toxicity of sexual peer pressure is well made, but the film's unsubtle delivery of the message takes away from the message itself. Showing young women as incapable of communicating their desires, boundaries or experiences, robs women of agency,

and reinforces the helplessness that Tara experiences in the film. It is disheartening to see young women in the 21st century act so helpless around sex and sexuality, despite how fast they are forced to encounter that sexuality in a hyper sexualized world. This toxic hyper sexuality, in a world addled by easily accessible pornography, is another element of the teenage experience that Manning Walker addresses, and this she does very well.

Manning Walker's influences of *Fat Girl* and *American Honey* can be roughly seen in the film, although *How to Have Sex* is more readily reminiscent of the film *Spring Breakers* (2012) and British TV series like *Skins* and *Misfits*, with the moralist spirit of *Promising Young Woman* (2020). The film's similarity to *Skins* and *Misfits* can be located in its televisual aesthetics, thematics and lack of fully cinematic narrative depth. And much like *Promising Young Woman*, it is a single message movie, delivered rather bluntly. Manning Walker lacks the experimental artistic audacity and transgressive spirit of both Catherine Breillat and Andrea Arnold, who are willing to challenge the audience with psychosexual murkiness in a way this film does not. Films like *How to Have Sex* face the challenge of depicting their young woman protagonist as more than a victim, as a person defined by more than her sexual trauma. It is difficult to say that this film achieves this.

The director makes up for this lack in her film by hammering home the message that sexual assault is bad and traumatic and challenging the viewer on the topic of consent. Katherine Angel's book *Tomorrow Sex Will Be Good Again* parallels the central discussion raised by the film. Angel writes, "My question is different: why are women asked to know their own minds, when knowing one's own mind is such an undependable aim? Self-knowledge is not a reliable feature of female sexuality, nor of sexuality in general; in fact, it is not a reliable feature

of being a person… We need to articulate an ethics of sex that does not try frantically to keep desire's uncertainty at bay" (2022, 40). This is the crux of the issue raised about Tara's sexual assault in the film. In her first sexual encounter she does give an uncertain, tentative consent. It is verbalized, but through close ups on her expression and body language the audience is made privy to a suggested reluctance. The second time with Paddy is much more clearly a case of rape, the first time could be interpreted as merely bad sex. The most interesting quality of the film is the way that it shows how often for young women, and for all women, desire is not certain, consent is a negotiation and the emphasis on women knowing themselves enough, especially at a young age, to offer clear consent, is a troubled and problematic insistence.

However, seeing young women suffer silently from sexual assault on film is as old as the medium itself, and much of Manning Walker's film is spent watching Tara suffer from the trauma of her sexual assaults in silence. In *American Honey*, Sasha Lane's character Star, escapes from a home where she is being molested and runs away to find freedom and herself on the American interstate, finding infatuation, danger, lust and maybe even love with a young man along the way. There are many different shades and experiences in Star's developing sexuality, her journey is not played for one note. She is a young adult female character of distinct agency, an agency not afforded by Manning Walker to her protagonist Tara in *How to Have Sex.* Star contains dimensions that underwritten Tara does not display.

Tara undergoes some transformation in the film, passing from naïveté and lack of self-knowledge into self-possession, self-knowledge and experiential wisdom. She undergoes a traumatic hero's journey from teenage girl to young woman. Through her difficult experiences on holiday, Tara steps into adulthood and knowing herself. She

allows herself to be vulnerable with her friend Em, communicating clearly with her for the first time, and stops hiding from herself and others.

How to Have Sex ultimately is an important film that creates discussion around the issue of sexual peer pressure, as it polarizes the viewer, setting up sexual discovery as a crucible of transformation that young adults must pass through. However, there is a rote single message pessimism which it does not manage to transcend. Without greater subtlety, more room to breathe and deeper exploration of its sub plots, it fails to feel like a fully fleshed out film.

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Emily Wilson's *Iliad*: Crafting an Attainable Tale

[Homer. 2023. *The Iliad*. Trans. by Emily Wilson. New York: WW Norton & Co. ISBN: 9781324001805. pp. 848. Price: £30 (Paperback)]

Tatianna Kalb.

'Modern' is not a word usually used to describe the *Iliad*, though 'dry' is one that is heard often. Yet, to one well-versed in the poetry of Homer, there is an endless richness and vibrancy to the text. And to Emily Wilson, there is nothing more potent and impassioned than this story, a sentiment which lead her to spend six years translating the *Iliad* in order to welcome students and modern audiences alike into an ancient world, where loss and love can be experienced as vividly as clanging armour on a battlefield or a roaring sea in a storm.

Wilson's goal in translating the *Iliad* is made clear in the Translator's Note: the Homeric poems should not be weighed down by overly flowery and complex language. Too many translations diverge too far from the original metre and do not retain enough of the oral tradition of the poem, making the text, in her own words, 'stilted or archaizing' (Wilson, 2019: 12). Translators should aim to retain the distinct stylistic features of the original work and provide readers with an experience that closely resembles the original oral tradition. So, whether it be students guided by instructors or new audiences engaging with the *Iliad* for the first time, readers should be able to fully experience and understand Homer's world without barriers and the need to speak the original language.

Wilson's translation uses unrhymed iambic pentameter, while the original is in dactylic hexameter. This creates shorter lines, but also lines greater

in number than the original, which she believes closely mimics the oral tradition. It is important to note how the metre works in this text: iambic pentameter creates a natural rhythm to read in, to oneself and aloud, especially in the English language. In terms of other lexical choices in the translation, Wilson has deviated from the use of the Homeric 'dual', which is 'the grammatical form perched between singular and plural that is used when two people act together, and most easily translated by 'both'' (Buchan 2023: 8 of 10 paras) and has replaced it with the simple third person plural. As Mark Buchan critiques in his review, this choice creates a grammatical separation between characters who would otherwise be inherently entwined in the original language. This does, naturally, present a problem to a reader well-versed in ancient Greek and the Homeric world, and is certainly an aspect that would benefit from being discussed in a classroom that relies on this text. Yet a student not yet fluent in ancient Greek, or an everyday reader who has never even heard the language, does not fully lose out on the dynamics of the world while reading Wilson's translation, despite this lexical choice. And it is these readers who this translation is truly for.

It is fair to say that Wilson has accomplished her main goal: immediately, from the call on the Muse at the opening of Book 1 'The Quarrel', the beautifully vivid language echoes the oral tradition, and the sentences are structured in a way that provides the reader with much more clarity and ease in the dialogue and action than previous translations do. Wilson opens strongly, translating the word 'οὐλομένην' [oulomenen], meaning 'ruinous', or 'destructive', as 'cataclysmic', which instantly sets the reader up for the scale of devastation that is to follow:

Goddess, sing of the cataclysmic wrath

of great Achilles, son of Peleus

(Homer 2023: 1)

As Emily Greenwood points out in her review, the use of ‘cataclysmic’ makes Wilson unique to her predecessors, even referring to it as Wilson’s ‘bold calling card’ (Greenwood 2023: 8 of 20 paras), as it has not been used by anyone else; in contrast, some other translations, such as Caroline Alexander’s from 2015, chose to use the direct translation ‘ruinous’ (Homer 2015: 1). Another distinction is the sharpness and clarity of sounds which is constantly present. It is clear that the life found in the work of Homer has been translated with extreme care and detail by Wilson, making these descriptive aspects some of her strongest in the text. Take her descriptions of the sounds of crashing armour and the sea in Book 4 ‘First Blood’:

and as he moved the bronze around his body

clanged horribly, a noise to terrify

even a person rarely touched by fear.

Just as when Zephyr rouses more and more

waves from the deafening sea to dash against

the shore - a crest of water rises up

out of the deep, then with a mighty roar

it crashes on the headlands, rises high,

and at its peak disgorges briny foam – (Homer 2023: 91)

The beauty of the translation of this passage lies in Wilson’s ability to make description and simile complement each other so well and so clearly, which, when faced with a text where a simile is encountered on nearly every page, is of vital importance. By not weighing this passage down with complex sentence structures and verbose language, Wilson has created a sensory experience where the

frightening crash of armour is brought to life by an audible description of the crashing sea. Thus, the reader is situated right alongside the warriors and their landscape, envisioning their world as they fight and die side-by-side.

It is worth noting that there are occasions where the word choice in the translation feels too modern. For example, in Book 14 'An Afternoon Nap':

From now on, we ourselves must keep away

from combat, out of range of all the missiles, (Homer 2023: 332)

'Missiles', originally 'βέλος' [velos], means 'arrow' or 'dart'. The risk of using 'missiles' lies in what the image conjures for a 21st century reader, as Wilson herself points out: '"Missile" is likely to suggest modern technology, rather than a simple projectile; "projectile" suggests vomiting' (Wilson 2023: 71). And though other translators, such as A.T. Murray in his 1924 translation, have also used 'missiles' (Homer 1924: 77), others have not: Caroline Alexander simply used 'spears and arrows' in her translation (Homer 2015: 295). While Alexander's translation of the original word is missing the implication of an object in forceful motion that is conjured by Wilson's choice, Alexander's use of 'spears and arrows' may keep a modern reader more engaged, given that the words are not mistaken by the contexts of two different time periods. And yet, occasional translation choices such as this do not hinder Wilson's overall work as, though some of her choices are not necessarily perfect, they are certainly true to the meter and to Wilson's goal: to introduce and engage students and new readers alike to the vast, wartime landscape which surrounds the characters of the *Iliad.*

By the end of Book 24 'A Time to Mourn', a reader of Wilson's translation of the *Iliad* has been taken through an expressive emotional journey, filled with

tears for fallen comrades, fear for friends on the battlefield, and anger at the gods for their careless vanity. The oral tradition of the story is inherent throughout, and as someone who has also spent time with the *Iliad,* I found myself experiencing the story anew, and wishing I had had access to this translation during the years in which I first started reading Homer. And that is where the beauty of this translation lies: one does not need to be able to read ancient Greek or recite passages from Homer already in order to understand the devastating violence, loss and pain found in this story. This makes Emily Wilson's translation perfect for anyone interested in exploring Homer's poems for the first time, no matter if they are a student with an instructor beside them or an entirely new reader. It seems likely that those who choose this translation will find themselves ignited by it, and that the broader realm of Homer may in turn seem less daunting. Through this text, it is made clear that the gods of the ancient world live on, and the pain of ancient mortals can be lifted from the pages and felt deeply by the modern world.

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Out of Time: Poetry from the Climate Emergency

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Carrie Foulkes

The anthology *Out of Time: Poetry from the Climate Emergency* features fifty poems by fifty poets that speak of, and from, a time of ecological collapse. Two epigraphs set the tone of the collection. The first, by Greta Thunberg, asserts the moral imperative of speaking out 'in clear language'. The second, by Anne Carson, speaks both to the urgency of our current situation and to the suitability of poetry for engaging with crisis: 'If prose is a house, poetry is a man on fire running quite fast through it.' Carson's image of a man on fire is an apt choice for a collection that grapples with environmental devastation and questions of agency and action via a range of poems that vary in form. Rather than seeking to critique individual poems, this review will consider the conceptual framework of the book and reflect on its role in climate activism and social change.

Out of Time merits sequential and sustained reading. The reader finds echoes, dialogues and motifs that accumulate over the course of the pages. We encounter recurring images of rivers and water systems that flow across the collection's pages: 'you / cast me away like rubbish as if / I were not part of you. How you shove me / under, naked, a dying river god' *(*John Wedgwood Clarke, 'Red River at the A30 Culvert', 42); 'And what is there to do now but love this unfinished work / of the river, carrying everything it has ever been / given [...] We know the word end / is never an end, but always a mouth instead.' (Teresa Dzieglewicz, 'Confluence after Standing Rock', 44*).*

What does it mean to think of the word ‘end’ as a mouth? A mouth consumes. A mouth also speaks. A mouth kisses, and a mouth breathes. A river’s mouth is the place where it enters a larger body of water. Poetry offers us a different way of knowing, of constructing and inhabiting meaning via the ‘building blocks [...] of rhetoric, meter, rhythm, rhyme, metaphor and imagery’ (Out of Time, 22). This permits new perspectives and ways in to engaging with issues that may feel overwhelming in scale. Philosopher Timothy Morton proposes: ‘Reading a poem is a wonderful exercise in learning how not to be conned by propaganda [...] That’s because a poem makes it very uncertain exactly what sort of way you are supposed to hold the idea it presents [...] Reading a poem introduces some wiggle room between ideas and ways of having them. Propaganda closes this space down’ (Morton 2018, 74). Poetic ambiguity can be understood as a literary tool, encouraging the reader to think critically and to embrace uncertainty.

In her introduction, editor Kate Simpson writes: ‘Ecowriting, for as long as it is recognised as a sub-category or genre of literature, is not simply about conjuring a path to help others imagine its shape, surface, texture and direction, but demolishing the structure of the path entirely’ (Out of Time, 20). She posits that literature has a vital role in dismantling harmful structures and creating new ones. I would agree with her claims that the anthology ‘cannot be a solution...But it can do *something*’ (20), and that ‘the restorative properties of linguistics’ (22) have a pivotal role in social change. Despite this, I personally feel we should protect the right of a poem to simply be a poem and liberate art from the need to fix, heal or otherwise save the world, thereby letting its transformative powers work in subtler and less overtly political and didactic ways. That having been said, can such a stance be defended in the face of existential threat?

We encounter numerous images of, and odes to, trees in the book: ‘mandala of wood, atlas of the imperilled world, shield against the weather’ (Linda France, ‘Giant Sequoia’, 69); ‘What would the trees say about us? / What books would they write / if they had to cut us down?’ (Raymond Antrobus, ‘Silence / Presence’, 76); ‘For each tree is an altar to time [...] For how each leaf traps light as it falls. / For even in the nighttime of life / it is worth living, just to hold it’ (Seán Hewitt, ‘Leaf’, 126). In her poem ‘#ExtinctionRebellion’, Pascale Petit juxtaposes the living world with human technologies via hybrid imagery: ‘an apiary of apps’, ‘wood wide web’ – and an image that evokes rhizomatic mycelium networks as emblematic of activism: ‘Underground / where resistance is in progress - / fungal friends working in darkness, / their windows blacked out’ (78). Potent linguistic imagery inspires a quality of attention to and care for the environment. However, on reading these poems the reader may wonder if by writing about trees, mushrooms and insects, poets are using the living world to write about themselves, and whether this could be considered another form of extraction. Timothy Morton believes ‘humans are traumatized by having severed their connections with nonhuman beings, connections that exist deep inside their bodies’ (Morton, 76). This severance is evident in the dualistic notion of ‘nature’ as something external to human beings. Is it possible to write about or even from the imagined perspective of other species, or does all writing emanate from a necessarily anthropocentric position? Reflections on issues of cognition and perspective are present in poems such as ‘god complex (excerpt)’ by Rachel Allen: ‘I intellectualize the sky / that feels like it’s opening up / but that is just my mind’ (66), and ‘Blue Morpho, Crypsis’ by Fiona Benson: ‘trying to find a poem / in this butterfly’s blue sheen’ (65). These poems suggest a detached and solipsistic

conception of consciousness that reaches to the sky, the butterfly, as a means of shoring up the self.

In her book 'The Mushroom at the End of the World', anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing insightfully finds links between cultural, social and economic narratives:

> But how does one tell the life of the forest? We might begin by looking for drama and adventure beyond the activities of humans. Yet we are not used to reading stories without human heroes... Can I show landscape as the protagonist of an adventure in which humans are only one kind of participant? Over the past few decades many kinds of scholars have shown that allowing only human protagonists into our stories is not just ordinary human bias. It is a cultural agenda tied to dreams of progress through modernization (Tsing 2015, 155).

Tsing illuminates the ways in which human-centric stories reveal ideologies and hierarchical narratives that support an exploitative relationship with the more-than-human world. This speaks to the urgency of eco-literature and volumes such as *Out of Time* as a mode of repair, a method of engaging with and shifting the conditioning (and language) that sustains the status quo. The introduction to *Out of Time* situates the book in the 'throes of the Anthropocene' (14) a term that was popularised by atmospheric scientist Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000 to highlight the significant impacts of human behaviour on the global environment. The word Anthropocene supports a view of humans as inherently destructive and implicates *people* rather than *economic systems* as the drivers of climate crisis. It has been critiqued by many thinkers, including Donna Haraway, writer on the interrelation of nature and culture, who claims: '[The Anthropocene] feeds into some extremely conventional and ready-

to-the-tongue stories that need far more critical inquiry. The figure of the anthropos itself is a species term. The anthropos—what is that? ... All of mankind? Well, who exactly?' (Haraway, 2015, 233). Haraway posits the term *Capitalocene* as a more suitable name for our era of capitalistic extraction:

> The mass extinction events are related to the resourcing of the earth for commodity production, the resourcing of everything on the earth, most certainly including people, and everything that lives and crawls and dies and everything that is in the rocks and under the rocks. (Haraway, 2015, 233).

As another alternative, Haraway and Tsing propose *Plantationocene* as a term that speaks to the histories of colonialism that are at the root of the climate crisis. The ongoing debate around how to name our current epoch highlights the values and worldviews embedded in words and also what is at stake beyond the verbal realm. **'**This is a crisis inextricably tied to the metrics of justice: both human and non-human', writes Simpson (*Out of Time*, 18). Can poetry give us words for the ways in which humans and the rest of the living world are continuous?

The poems are collated in five thematic sections responding to the climate crisis: 'Emergency,' 'Grief,' 'Transformation,' 'Work,' and 'Rewilding.' In this framework there are echoes, whether intentional or not, of the Kübler-Ross model of the five stages of grief, moving from denial to acceptance (Kübler-Ross, 1968). While the framework was groundbreaking at the time and has its utility, it also has major limitations for suggesting a linear journey through experiences of loss that can be chaotic, unpredictable and non-linear. Grief is a process, not a pathway or an event. Similarly, the conceptual structure of *Out of Time* is not particularly effective, the discrete themes seem contrived and many

if not all of the poems could sit within multiple categories. The reader is left wondering if the poems could have been organised in a different and more meaningful way, although the suggestion of a trajectory from apathy to activity, loss to creation, has potent resonances for climate work.

In the 'Work' section of the collection, two poems are printed in a landscape format, presumably because they are too wide for the book's pages. Seeing as poetry is also a visual art, this feels like a distracting error, a decision made to conform with the constraints of the portrait-oriented book rather than a reflection of the poems' meanings or the intentions of the authors. It's a shame, but there are other poems whose experimental forms are compelling, such as 'Cassandra: The Second End' (Sasha West, 108): 'And then I woke. Even my fear had been living / in that old human fallacy: singular redemption, self as fulcrum: Other bodies had started / the burning before me: after me other bodies would / cover the last cold ember...' The colons, like the virgules in an earlier poem in the collection ('Fuck / Humanity' by Inua Ellams, 97) are powerful instruments of pacing. Thoughts lead to more thoughts; the grammar represents a flow of interconnected ideas.

Out of Time brings to mind the work of poet, editor and human rights advocate Carolyn Forché on what she calls 'the poetry of witness' (Forché 1993), a literature that is rooted in the personal but occupies a space of political resistance and struggle. Forché explores links between poetry, the documentation of atrocities, and activism that are relevant when considering the realm of 'eco writing'. A poet can be understood as a conscientious objector in the war against life, or perhaps as a doula sitting vigil at the deathbed. It could be that the art of the poet in a time of crisis is to skilfully lead a reader into a place of discomfort prompting neither hyperarousal nor disassociation (Simpson refers to *two modes – of panic and*

complacency (19)) – but action. Reading the poem is a form of sanctuary, as is the act of writing it. As readers, we are simultaneously witnesses, memory bearers and participants in the making of the future.

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Contributor Biographies:

Jennifer Sturrock is a multidisciplinary artist, designer and researcher, integrating fashion, installations and poetry, born in Edinburgh. Formerly senior producer of Residencies at the V&A Museum (in London), she has curated exhibits and multiple events, as well as styling for ad campaigns, such as Lancôme. She has also worked with a range of cultural organisations including the Royal Society of the Arts, Courtauld Institute and University of the Arts London. Her poetry book, Pulling Threads, which combines poems and textile artworks, has been acquired by the National Poetry Library's permanent collection in London, as well as the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh. Currently, Jennifer is doing a practice-based PhD at Glasgow University in Theology through Creative Practice, funded by the Templeton Foundation and exploring ideas of transfiguration and liminality. For more information: www.jennifersturrock.com | www.schoolofunknowing.com | @jensturrock

Yidan Hu is currently a PhD candidate in theatre studies at the University of Glasgow. Her research interests include theatre translation and contemporary Chinese literature with a theoretical focus on the intersection between postcolonialism and translation studies. Her PhD project concerns China's theatrical representations on the historical London stage during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She holds a MA in translation studies and graduated with distinction from the Joint Graduate School of Nankai University and the University of Glasgow. Alongside her broader translation portfolio, she also has provided translation services for IOHA (The Institute of Human Anatomy), IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) and HoGem, a high-tech enterprise in Beijing.

Samuel Pinheiro gained a BA in social anthropology from the University of Brasilia, in Brazil. Now, he is a student in the master's program Managing and Cultural Heritage in Global Markets. His research interests are particularly focussed on the representation of love and passion in works of art from Greco-Roman antiquity; in dressing, through the study of clothing used in wedding ceremonies; and in literature, especially in the works of Jane Austen and George Eliot. He is also particularly interested in the intersection in the intersection of study regarding love and passion, and postcolonial studies, to understand how the representation of these emotions occurred during and after the colonial period.

Serena Wong is a PhD Candidate in English Literature at the University of Glasgow. Her doctoral study situates itself at the crossroads of British modernisms and Chinese modernity, with a focus on the orientalism in Virginia Woolf's stylistic and formal representations of China. Her research also looks at theoretical and creative studies of ornamentation, which she positions as an important dimension of orientalist thought. Serena has presented her work at conferences organised by the British Association of Modernist Studies (BAMS), the Modernist Studies in Asia Network (MSIA), the Modern Language Association (MLA), the International Virginia Woolf Society (IVWS), and more. She has served, too, as a postgraduate representative for BAMS, as a co-organiser of the Autotheory: Thinking through Self, Body and Practice conference (2022), and as a co-editor of the University of Glasgow's postgraduate journal eSharp (2022-2023). Her chapter contribution to the Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and Transnational Perspectives, titled 'Ornamental Woolf: A New Critical Perspective on Ornamentalism, Orientalism and Virginia Woolf's "Chinese" Discourse' has been accepted by the Edinburgh University Press for upcoming publication.

Jenny Alexander is a Researcher and Creative Freelancer specialising in archival and silent film, and film festivals. She recently graduated from the University of Glasgow with a Master's in Film Curation and has worked with a number of Scottish arts festivals including HippFest, the Edinburgh Fringe, and the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival.

Tatiana Köhler is a first-year PhD student in Comparative Literature. Her research has focused mostly on large-scale atrocities and the literature that has emerged from them as a place for knowledge creation, exploration, and reconciliation. Currently, her thesis project focuses on four different genocides and the transcultural narratives that bring them together in Guatemala, Chechnya, Rwanda, and the Holocaust.

Eugina Gelbelman is a first-generation American screenwriter and director from Brooklyn, New York. Her parents are Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. She graduated from the Film MFA Program at Stony Brook University with a concentration in Screenwriting in 2019. Previously, she attended McGill University where she studied History and Russian Literature and received her Bachelor of Arts degree, with Honours, in 2013. She is a Film Studies PhD Candidate at Glasgow University.

Tatianna Kalb is a writer and editor who recently completed an MLitt in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow. She received a BFA in Acting and Classical Civilizations from New York University, where many of her studies were centred on the Epics and the Tragic Stage. Her current literary practices centre on Comparative Literature, as she is now researching the use of Classical mythology in the writings of 19th and 20th century Colombian writers. As a long-time classicist and creative, the main goal of her work, across its multiple forms, is to bring ancient stories to modern audiences, whether through analysis and comparison, adaptation, or original work. Her creative pieces have been published in a variety of indie magazines, and she is currently a volunteer Drama editor for *Spellbinder Magazine*.

Carrie Foulkes is a doctoral candidate in the DFA Creative Writing programme at the University of Glasgow. She is a 2024-2025 Harry Ransom Centre Fellow at the University of Texas, Austin. She was formerly a guest researcher at the Centre for Medical Humanities and Bioethics at Linköping University, Sweden, funded by the Turing Scheme. Carrie writes creative nonfiction on environmental and human health, personal and social histories, politics, literature and visual art. **www.carriefoulkes.com**

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