

ON PERFORMING PHILOSOPHY THROUGH TRANSLATION

Madeleine Campbell*

University of Edinburgh

Ricarda Vidal*

King's College London

ABSTRACT: This article proposes a 'translation philosophy' commensurate with the immanence of praxis in the authors' collaborative endeavour to create a Gesamttranslation (a total work of translation) of Kurt Schwitters' seminal poem "An Anna Blume" (1919, 1922 ff). Through arts-informed and transformational practices of translation and retranslation, the authors explore their own multimodal translations of the poem and those of others as concrete examples of translating with/through art. Placing this work within the context of Anne Carson's translations of *Antigone* and Caroline Bergvall's *Via*, they focus on the affinity of the practice of translation with the practice of performance. They also examine parallels and synergies between translation, performance philosophy and art practice in a wider sense, exploring common interests such as representation, appropriation, originality and the role of play and creativity. The article is presented as a multimodal document whereby words and images, video files, poetry and prose come together to advance the argument.

KEYWORDS: Experiential Translation, Intersemiotic Translation, Performance Philosophy, Translation Philosophy, Arts-Informed Research

1. Introduction

In this article, we present our recent exploration of arts-informed and transformational praxes of translation and retranslation in our collaborative endeavour to create a Gesamttranslation (a total work of translation) of Kurt Schwitters' seminal poem "An Anna Blume" (1919, 1922 ff). We discuss our own multimodal translations of the poem and those of others as concrete examples of translating with/through art. Placing this work within the context of Anne Carson's translations of *Antigone* and Caroline Bergvall's *Via*, we focus on the affinity of the practice of translation with the practice of performance. We also examine parallels and synergies between translation, performance philosophy and art practice in a wider sense, exploring common interests such as representation, appropriation, originality and the role of play and creativity.

On the book cover of Rothenberg and Joris' (2002) translations of Kurt Schwitters, emanating from the mouth of the poet and starting from the edge of three concentric circles radiating outwards, is the graphic PPPPPP, itself an eponymous departure from Schwitters' (1923) poem "ppppppppp", created by drawing a thick black line down the middle of a children's picture book and blanking out its right-hand side. This visual expression of the centrifugal force of the six Ps embodies the performative in this assemblage of "poems performance pieces proses plays poetics". The metaphor of translation as "centrifugal practice" (Scott 2010) aptly captures the inexorable but aporetic propulsion in Schwitters' work towards a Gesamtkunstwerk for the Merz stage, "the ultimate, total Merz work...,"

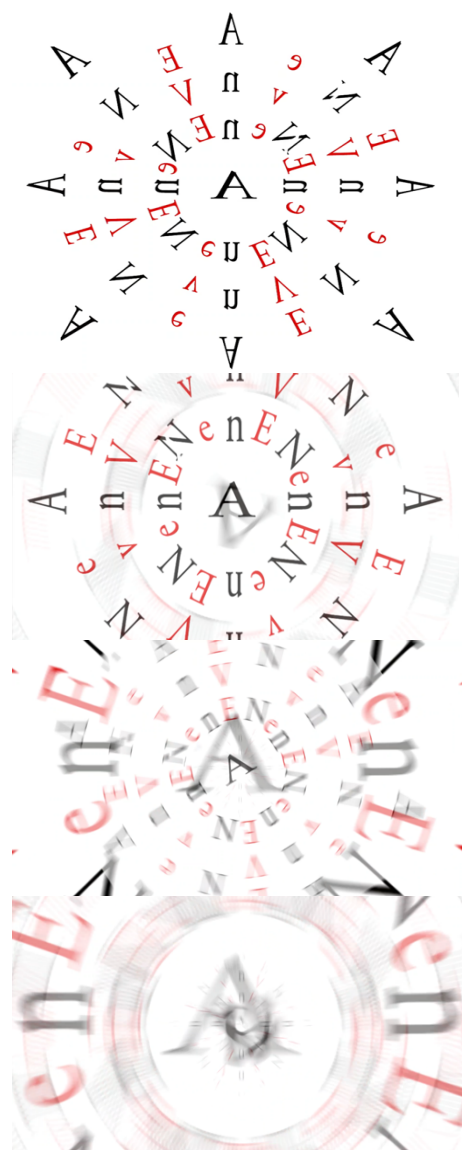
* madeleine.campbell@ed.ac.uk

* ricarda.vidal@kcl.ac.uk

distinguished by the fusion of all factors [even people can be included] into a total work of art” (Schwitters ,1920, as cited in Rothenberg and Joris, 2002, pp. xvii). In this paper, we explore Schwitters’ ambition of the Gesamtkunstwerk through translation in the context of a renewed perspective on translation philosophy. In doing so, we aim for a collective Gesamttranslation of Schwitters’ most iconic poem “An Anna Blume”, which takes previous, current and future translations of the poem into diverse languages and media into account – and also includes people.

Charting the centrifugal pathways of Schwitters’ poetry in translation reveals a multimodal journey of self-translation and retranslation where language, typography, image, 2- and 3-D collages of found objects are assembled in multiple configurations (see, for example, Collins, 2016/17 p. 12-16 for a near exhaustive account of the myriad verbal and non-verbal “Manifestations of Anna Blume”). Collins’ argument, following Luke (2014) and others, is that the palindromic A-N-N-A epitomizes an erotic identity poetics of “flux and indefinability” (2016/17, p. 20). In the present paper our interest lies in the arts-informed, transformational praxes of translation and retranslation, as manifested in both lingual and multimodal forms. In the process of our research, we not only collected versions of “An Anna Blume” but also actively contributed to the proliferation of the text in translation by making collages, new linguistic translations (e.g. into slang, multilingual dialogue, morse code, etc.), filmic and performative versions. Some of the work we made is reproduced in this paper in the margins of the text and sometimes in the centre to supplement and/or present our argument. Many of the images we present here are taken from our film collage “Knowing Anna Blume” (2022).¹

At the end of the paper, we shall return to Schwitters’ performative aspiration for the Gesamtkunstwerk as an illustration of the affinity of the practice of translation with the practice of performance. At the heart of this affinity lies its transformative capacity for individual and collective meaning-making: “Translation passes through continua of transformation, not abstract ideas of identity and similarity” (Benjamin



*AnnA/eve/EVE – nen/nene/nenA
pulsating, moving in and out in a
centrifugal whirr reflecting the
many translations the poem has
experienced since Schwitters first
fly-posted it on lamp-posts around
his home town Hannover in 1919.*

¹ Available at: <https://vimeo.com/726064366/c529120630> (Accessed: 11 July 2023)

1994, p. 214). We shall argue that translation, like performance, is a deeply embodied process of meaning-making through dynamic transformative processes, which has the capacity to both inform and be informed by philosophical thought.

2. Multimodal becomings: translating in the present

The structuralist semiotic conception of meaning being carried in a sign that could be coded and decoded with any degree of equivalence, intra-, interlingually or across media (Jakobson, 1959) has undergone a paradigm shift in the postmodernist notion of multimodality. Understood as the use of several modes or media in the creation of a single artefact or event, and fuelled by the new modes of digital media, recognition of the materiality of the sign as modal affordance initially developed in the domain of social semiotics (e.g. Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; 2021) before attracting the attention of translation and comparative scholars (e.g. Gambier and Gottlieb, 2001; Elleström, 2010; 2016; Littau 2016; O’Sullivan and Jeffcote, 2013; Bennett 2019). In comparison with arts and performance research, however, translation research has tended to rely on a critical approach to contemporary socio-cultural developments, including the cultural turn in the late twentieth century (Lefevere and Bassnett, 1990; Bassnett and Lefevere, 1996), and more recently the outward turn (Bassnett and Johnston, 2019). Such culturally-aware discourse, celebrating difference and diversity and informed by theories of power including Bourdieu’s symbolic capital and Foucault’s theories of societal control nevertheless tends to adopt a principally Hegelian dialectic for its argumentation. In philosophical terms structuralist, empiricist, or hermeneutical principles upheld by Schlegel, Kant, or Schleiermacher tend to continue to value ‘thought’ (logos), embodied in words, as the unit of interpretation in a translation event (a critique partly entertained, for example, by Gentzler (2017)).

While Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy is now germane to the postmodern critical



Looking for Anna Blume, her flowers and her birds.

Anna Blume hat ein Vogel.

Anna Flor tiene pájaros.

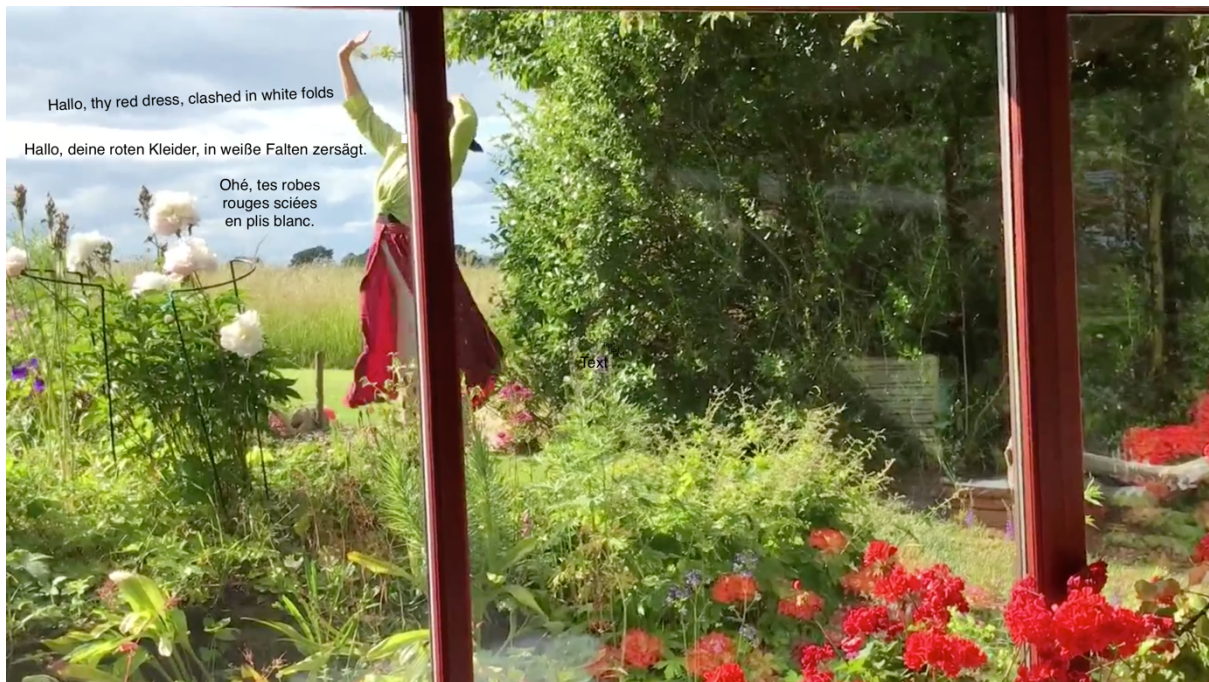
Anna Bloom has an eagle – Anna Blume hat ‘nen Igel. “Igel” sounds like “eagle” but means hedgehog –look closely and you can spot a hedgehog in the collage above.

means. With their focus on the process rather than the product, these methods offer an embodied, temporally contingent platform to conduct and present our enquiry.



Indeed, anyone can do collage.

Truman writes about creative writing as research-creation, but what she says about the perpetually unfinished process of writing and reading resonates with Benjamin's notion of the "Fortleben" (the "living on") of the text in translation. Quoting McCormack she points to the perpetual presence of the event(s) that gave rise to the creative text "not as image or recollection, but as kind of field of virtual potential that never quite exhausts itself in the process of becoming more than it never (actually) was. (McCormack, 2008, p.8)" (Truman 2016, p. 136). In our approach to Schwitters' "An Anna Blume", we propose to treat the poem as such a field of inexhaustible potential, where translation is situated as a continuous rewriting that is enriched by the (re)readings and (re)writings of others as well as our own.



Choreographer Tricia Anderson performs “An Anna Blume” in the ‘field of inexhaustible potential’ – later, the performer was joined by a falcon that suddenly appeared in the sky. It will reappear below when we discuss birds in “An Anna Blume”.

Performance philosophy stems from a critical stance towards a ‘philosophy of performance’. As Cull Ó Maoilearca argues:

...the more important and interesting work is to attempt to do performance philosophy, to produce an understanding of performance philosophy through practicing it. Indeed, as is the case in certain artistic research contexts, there may even be an impatience with the ways in which practices of ‘talking about X’ (be it artistic research or performance philosophy) can seem to take precedence over ‘actually getting on with doing X’ insofar as the latter may well prove more instructive or at least potentially less circular than the former. (2020, p. 3)

Similarly, while much has been written about translation, and much ink has been dispensed on the philosophy of translation, our intention here is to aim for a ‘translation philosophy’ commensurate with the immanence of praxis. In common with contributors to performance philosophy, the field of translation comprises academics and independent researchers, freelance translators, artists, publishers and curators, including many “who produce work that moves across disciplines or otherwise challenges conventional classification” (Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2020, p. 5). In common with performance philosophy, and informed by such an assemblage of researchers and practitioners (see for

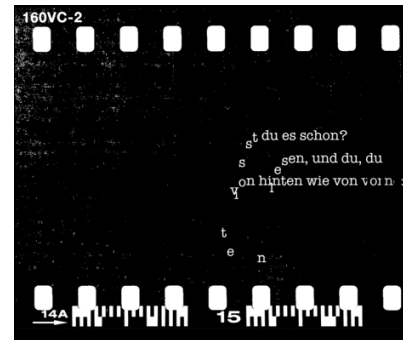
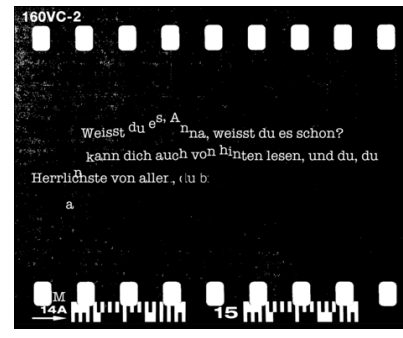


example the Experiential Translation Network)², the present researchers are concerned with a performative model of communication (in translation) and this entails questioning “the relationships between form, content and medium with respect to philosophy, theory and thought” (6). And rather than applying philosophy to translation as an object of study, we seek to understand how translation and philosophy can inform each other on an equal basis, in pursuit of a “radical equality” of thought (Laruelle, 2012) in order to “reinvent our knowledge practices in relation to the forms of thought they tend to devalue, marginalize or exclude – including arts-based knowledge” (Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2020, p. 8).

Performance philosophy is an ongoing inquiry that seeks to understand itself in conversation with common if disparate concerns in any emergent field, including defining key terms and questioning the nature, function and forms of ‘doing philosophy’, with:

the various modalities in which ‘thought’ might be understood to take place – not only as the conscious act in the mind of an intentional human subject, but in terms of a thinking through the body or the doing-thinking of performance practice or a more impersonal idea of thought as that which produces a subject rather than being authored by a pre-existing “I”, and even possibly a nonhuman thinking of the animal or even of so-called inanimate materiality (Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2020, p. 9).

While the notion of, and contested need for, definitions (of originality, performance, translation or philosophy) is an object of inquiry in itself and beyond the scope of this paper, the praxes of theatre and translation often bear the resemblance that a pre-existing “I”, in the form of a pre-existing authored work or source text, is an existential premise, and thus in translation philosophy the question of the ‘nature, function and forms’ of ‘doing translation’ bears reframing as that of “a thinking through the body or the doing-thinking of [translation] practice or a more impersonal idea of thought as that which produces a subject rather than being authored by a pre-existing “I””. And this pre-existing “I” is equally present in the broader field of performance, which includes both product-oriented drama or theatre and process-oriented drama (Stinson and Wilson, 2011), if we take the “world as text” (Geertz, [1973] 2000) as starting point for the latter.



Deconstructing Anna Blume

² Available at: <https://experientialtranslation.net> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).

Translation as performance is understood primarily in the narrower context of translating for the theatre (see, for example, Johnston 2013). Johnston's approach attends to the hermeneutic dimension or renewed signification of pre-authored scripts in contexts of the "here and now" where "the text itself is subject to processes of reading and interpretation in which the emphasis on meaning as becoming makes the translation of that text a performative constituent of the *mise-en-scène*." (2013: 366). Here Johnston interprets Benjamin's "continua of transformation" in terms of "cultural flows" propelling the source text forward through practice in the contingent present (369) where "hermeneutics [is] a structuring element of translation" (371). In doing so, Johnston elaborates the role of the translator of historically situated texts for the stage, or 'playtexts', as one of conjuring a Heideggerian sense of *dasein* or presence, abandoning the more traditional historiographic approach by adopting, for example, a contemporary vernacular, as well as drawing, along with Gumbrecht (1997), on historically accurate 'arrays', 'codes' and 'frames' to convey a present experience of past times. However, we seek to engage with temporality in a radically contingent manner to instantiate thinking through translation, or translation philosophy. As we shall explore in depth below, Anne Carson's *Antigonick / Sophokles* (2012a) is a pertinent example for the kind of translation philosophy we pursue in our striving for a *Gesamttranslation* of "An Anna Blume".

4. Performing translation: Anne Carson's 'manifestations' of *Antigone*

2015 ushered in a new staging of Sophocles' *Antigone*, premiered at the Barbican in London in a translation by Anne Carson commissioned by Belgian avant-garde director Ivo van Hove with Juliette Binoche in the lead role. The Guardian's critic Charlotte Higgins describes Carson's translation as "deft and elegant", while she refers to her earlier *Antigonick* as a "more personal version" (Higgins, 2015, n.p.). The title page for the 2015 playtext staged by Ivo van Hove simply features ANTIGONE, while the hardcover reads, on three separate lines in different fonts: SOPHOKLES / ANTIGONE / TRANSLATED BY ANNE CARSON.

Noting how translation as both product and practice is "particularly revealing of the ideological constraints of theatrical humanism, its reliance on a mutually stabilizing notion of the literary, the textual, the speakable, the audible, and the performable", Hanna Worthen (2020: 243-4) analyzed the plural manifestations of *Antigone* in Carson's translations. In the context of a critical posthumanism, she argues, the double performative act of translation and adaptation for theatre "refuses to translate the text" in the reductive, domesticating sense of theatre adaptation for a target audience. Worthen characterizes Carson's successive published versions of *Antigonick*, from hardback to paperback of the 2012 and 2015 publications respectively, as an "act of unwriting":

... their meanings multiply from the ways this constellation deterritorializes the Antigones it thematically animates, to address their philosophical and cultural territorializations. An open-ended becoming, this assemblage enacts verbal and performative de-singularizations of the humanist conventions of "the book" as the signifying container of "the work" and of "the character" as the living variable of the ordained center of Being, "the human." Moving beyond

the performance of “the cultural book,” ANTIGO NICK – ANTIGONICK – antigonick – Antigone performs a rhizomatic dramaturgy. (pp. 244-245)

Not unlike Anna Blume’s centrifugal linguistic manifestations in German and in translation, its typographical instantiations spilling into image assemblages in collage and sculpture, “ANTIGO NICK – ANTIGONICK – antigonick – Antigone” performs a transformative fugue. As Worthen (2020) posits, Carson’s manifestations of *Antigone* depart from Sophocles’ original play to quarrel with both academic citation conventions and the “philosophical cultural territorializations” such conventions betray. Authorship is fragmented (Anne Carson is listed as translator and a foreignised Sophokles [sic] is also acknowledged). Books, book titles and performances proliferate: the hardback cover of the 2012 version is titled ANTIGO NICK, followed by SOPHOKLES in brackets, while its inside title page features ANTIGONICK as one word, followed by SOPHOKLES without brackets. In addition, the hardback is interleaved with velum drawings by Bianca Stone, whose lack of apparent relation to the text confounded some critics. George Steiner’s review in the Times Literary Supplement, for example, stated “‘This is not a book’....Rather...an objet trouvé...a postmodern or Dada artefact...a ‘comic-book presentation’” (2012, p. 8). Taking equal issue with the typography (the book’s designer Robert Currie “pencilled the text first, [Carson] went over it in ink” (Carson, 2012b, n.p.)), “embedding the identity of the speaker within the block” and with Stone’s drawings, whose “pertinence to the Sophoclean action, to its intricate intensity, is hard to decipher”, Steiner’s review acknowledges moments of linguistic brilliance in the works but ultimately cannot come to terms with the translator’s “populist” stance towards the complexity of Sophocles’ original tragedy (ibid, pp. 8-9). Hannah Silverblank, in contrast, interprets the text’s typographical rendering as one where “words read like monuments, ... possess a heavy presence, whereas the speakers of the words (the characters) become something...more like ghosts or memories” (2014, p. 355).

The oneiric quality of Stone’s drawings and apparent lack of connection with the storyline is deceptive: A spool of thread, which appears in several drawings, could be suggestive of Ariadne’s thread, for example, or the thread of fate, given the later appearance of what could be the three Moirai with breeze blocks for heads – (or temple columns?). Such artifacts serve to evoke an intertextuality with Greek myths that would have been present then (and arguably now) in the popular psyche, the visual medium affording both a temporal and modal porosity to the text, spilling out its contents from writer/translator to reader to viewer/audience. A multi-layered interpretation would also position this thread as *Antigone’s* way of controlling her own fate: “Your plan is to sew yourself into your own shroud using the tiniest of stitches. How to translate this?”, says Carson in ‘the task of the translator of antigone’ (Carson, 2015a, p. 5).

The thirty-two semi-transparent images in the hardback ANTIGONICK partially reveal underlying text, their individual juxtaposition clarified (and amplified) as we turn the pages and see both text and image side by side. Far from following ‘comic-book’ conventions (there are no speech or thought bubbles, and only one image per page, hence open panels), the

visual grammar of these images, rich in metonymy and metaphor, serves to bridge the said and the unspoken, and although Bianca Stone is listed as the book's 'illustrator' and Robert Currie as 'designer', their contributions would be more accurately described as that of intersemiotic translators collectively engaged in a Gesamttranslation. The design of ANTIGONICK, with the text on the right-hand page, also performs translation, where the gutter is the "channel between two languages", much as it was in Nox (2010), the structure of which Carson explained as originating:

Probably from the structure of the bilingual translation, because I spend a lot of my life looking at books with left-hand-page Greek or Latin, and right-hand-page English, and you get used to it, you get used to thinking in the little channel in between the two languages where the perfect language exists. (2014, n.p.)

In contrast with Steiner, Rebecca Bates in *Guernica* (2012) sees the drawings and text as integral to the modern-day telling of this tragedy: "While the poet and her illustrator stray from the expected narrative, the tragedy of the work isn't lost on anyone... It's hard not to shudder." Bates' embodied 'shudder' aptly evokes how the affective affordances of Carson-Stone-Currie's 'not book' have transformed and transported (translated) Sophocles' tragedy across time and space. Silverblank interprets the visual and textual interplay as a "spectral reading of the body" (2014, p. 4), where "the words are endowed with solidity and the bodies instead float around them, bolting away from them, like shape-shifting spectres" (p. 347).

The paperback published by Oberon (2015b), which refers to itself as "First published clothbound by New Directions in 2012", differs from the hardback in that this edition is paginated, and lacks Stone's drawings. Nevertheless, its cover page also features ANTIGO NICK, followed by (SOPHOKLES), while the title page simply features *antigonick* in lower case. A second title page features *antigonick* followed by (*sophocles*), both in lower case, and a third title page again features *antigonick* in lower case. Aside from the many transformations of *Antigonick's* title through its different editions, there has been much speculation about the meaning and import of the elusive NICK, who turns out to be a character in the play who says nothing but is introduced as "[always on stage, he measures things]" and remains unseen until the last page where "[exeunt omnes except Nick who continues measuring]" (2015a, pp. 5, 44).

Some have speculated on Nick's presence in the title as an act of public mourning for Carson's late brother (see Worthen 2020, p. 246, for example). According to Worthen's interpretation, Carson merges the personal story of the translator and poet with Antigone's loss. Other interpretations place the significance of Nick as a metaphor of time, or the groove occupied by Antigone as an 'inbetween thing': "for I'm a strange kind of inbetween thing aren't I/not at home with the dead nor with the living" (2015a, p. 30). The opaqueness of the title ANTIGO NICK, of its split/merged instantiations, invites the reader/viewer to participate in a multimodal thinking through Carson's translation, through both the gap and the merging of words, and leaves its interpretation open, as unfathomable, perhaps as death and time. From its first instantiation, then, "ANTIGO NICK – ANTIGONICK – *antigonick* – Antigone"

enters into dialogue with its readers and audience, posing ontological and epistemological questions through the sometimes personal and always visible intervention of its translator(s). We posit that such visibility is fundamental to a collective act of thinking through translation that involves not only the ‘translator’ but the reader/viewer in the performance of a Gesamttranslation.

The print versions of *Antigonick* were followed by live reading/performances, including one with Carson as chorus, another with Judith Butler as Kreon^{3 4} Together with the series of “not-quite-edition[s]” reviewed above, argues Worthen (2020, p. 48), the performance also repositions theatre, where the poet reads while Nielsen, the actor in the role of King Kreon at the Louisiana Theatre Festival, for example, tends toward enacting the character, resulting in a hybrid performance that resists reduction to the poem, poet or theatrical actor, but where the poetry reading emphasizes both “the material presence of the poem, and of the performer” (Berstein, as cited in Worthen 2020, p. 249). We aim for a similar blend of reading and embodied, emic materialities (through dance, collage, gesture and voice) to be manifest in the collective act of translating the poem “An Anna Blume”.

In the spirit of engaging with the contingent, our proposed approach, like Carson’s, also aims to challenge historicity. Carson’s intertextual assemblage engages, in both the translations and the preface to the (2015) paperback version of *Antigonick* in ‘the task of the translator of antigone’, with its prior translators as well as prior critical and creative interpretations, from Berthold Brecht to Jean Anouilh, Judith Butler to Ingeborg Bachman, Samuel Beckett to Virginia Woolf. Ben Hjorth (2014, p. 135), noting *Antigonick*’s proleptic dialogue with future interlocutors and detractors, highlights how she defies Hegel’s reading of her character as “lacking in self-consciousness” with her statement “Hegel says I’m wrong” (n.p.). Carson’s engagement with sources that post-date Sophocles’ ‘original’ text, argues Hjorth, “traverses and problematizes chronological temporality itself” (2014, p. 135). This act of resistance toward the Hegelian narrative, like the transgressive refusal to allow the series “ANTIGO NICK – ANTIGONICK – antigonick – Antigone” to be categorically attributed and hence cited by the critical academic apparatus (as noted by Worthen, 2020), enacts a transformative translation philosophy. Hjorth’s (2014) reading posits Carson’s thinking through translation in *Antigonick* as twofold: it is both dialectical (for example in its quarrel with Hegel) and ontological. Ontologically, it “brings the temporality of [translation] practice into direct interrogation, in both its form and its content,” challenging the originary authority of the source text but also “the ideal of translation itself, whose conceptual structure is thus displayed in all its moral, political and philosophical significance” (Hjorth, 2014, pp. 134-135).

³ “Anne Carson: Performing *Antigonick*”, YouTube video, 45:27, from a performance recorded at the Louisiana Literature Festival on August 25, 2012, posted by the Louisiana Channel (Louisiana Museum of Modern Art) on 3 February 2013, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEfJKjOg3ZU> (as cited in Worthen, 2020, p. 280) (Accessed 11 July 2023).

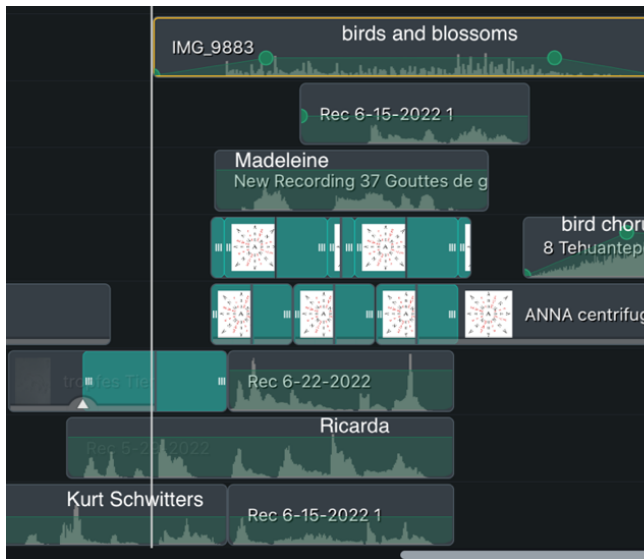
⁴ Public reading of *Antigonick* by Anne Carson at Sorbonne University, featuring Judith Butler as Kreon, YouTube video, TPP2014, 1:11:00, curated by Ben Hjorth, 4 September 2014. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ygeQDu-4EU>. (Accessed 11 July 2023).

Rejecting a conservative philosophy of translation that invests the original with authority and aspires to the faithful through the literal (Lecerclé, as cited in Hjorth, 2014), Carson considers her work a translation and not a ‘re-write’: “a play is (note etymology of ‘drama’ from Greek DRAN to do or act) a collection of actions or doings.” (Carson, 2012b, n.p.).

The temporal paradox of mentioning Hegel on the first page of *Antigonick*, explains Carson, is in keeping with “what happens in the original text”, when Sophocles reminds his audience of the story of Antigone (ibid). Carson’s praxis here is to think through translation, with a lucid orientation towards the drama, not the said, in the ‘original text’. And while the ‘said’ may tend towards signification and invite a hermeneutic approach, the ‘doings’ invite an experiential one, which must engage with the past through the present time and place: “for us, in 2012, the Antigone legend includes Hegel” (ibid). This reading of the past, argues Hjorth after Benjamin’s Theses on the Philosophy of History, acknowledges “its constant return and transformation within the present” (p. 138). And this present in *Antigonick* draws on both personal (in Worthen’s, 2020, reading of her mourning of her own brother) and collective experience in its intertextuality with interlocutors and events (such as WWII) unknown in Sophocles’ time but which are of a piece with contemporary collective memory. In this way the ‘doings’ of tragedy, the necessary “temporal disjunction” (Butler and Crichtley as cited in Hjorth, 2014, p. 138), without which the human psyche could not withstand the horror of the story told, makes the distant past closer, introducing a lens through which to filter the horror of the present. Carson’s *Antigonick*, argues Hjorth, offers a powerful philosophical reflection on temporality through “translation-transformation, reminding us that the past is never truly past” (p. 139).

5. A multiplicity of voices: translation as dialogue

Another instantiation of thinking through translation can be found in performance translation where the starting point was not originally written for the stage, at least not in the conventional sense of a playtext. In her article “Performing Translation” Sandra Bermann references the “play of voices in the translator’s mind” (2014, p. 290) as she prepares to translate a text, “the ‘voice’ of the author, the sounds of the text in her own mind” as well as the sounds of previous translations. This certainly resonates with Carson’s explanations regarding the inclusion of Hegel and references to other more contemporary elements in her translation. While Carson distances herself from the term “re-writing”, Bermann embraces it as a natural aspect of translation when she notes “what we might call a translation history [...] is never a linear continuity but rather a re-writing across chasms of time, in dialogue with others.” (p. 295).



Audio-collage of voices – our encounter with Schwitters to the background sound of the birds of Tehuantepec and Whitstable was enabled by modern technology: youtube sound sharing, phone recordings and video editing platforms... How would Schwitters have worked with the possibilities open to the 21st-century collagist?

Translation has been theorised as a form of dialogue before (Benjamin, 1923, or also Torop, 2008), but for Bermann the dialogic character of translation is central to her approach of translation as performance. Performance is here understood in the sense of the doing or completion of a task, i.e. the translator undertaking the translation, as well as, and perhaps above all, in the sense of acting, i.e. a “kind of interpretive performance, bearing the same relationship to the original text as the actor’s work does to the script.” (Grossman, quoted in Bermann, 2014, p. 285) Just like the actor, the translator

has the agency to interpret, to inject their own reading and make the script/the text come to life for their audience. And just as an actor does not work in a vacuum, so the translator, too, can situate their performance of the text in relation to previous and future readings. By doing so, as Bermann shows with reference to Caroline Bergvall’s *Via* (2004), the act of translation questions the dominance of the original, of convention, of established hierarchies, of the self.

Bergvall’s poem *Via* bears the subtitle “(48 Dante Variations)” and consists of 47 translations of the first 3 lines of Dante’s *Inferno* into English plus a composition by Ciaran Maher. The translations are in the alphabetical order of their first lines rather than in chronological order. The poem is available both in print and as a sound performance in which Bergvall reads out all the translations including the translators’ surnames and date of publication, with short pauses between each over the stretch of 10 minutes. Listening to the performance is a mesmerising experience of

Identifying Anna Blume’s bird: The following is a visual translation of the line “Anna Blume hat ein Vogel” – literally: Anna Blume has a bird, but idiomatically “Anna Blume is mad”. The line is followed by a set of questions culminating in the “prize question” “What colour is the bird?”. For us, this also became a search for the nature of the bird.



repetition, echo and variation. The longer one listens the wider the possibilities of interpretation and reading become. In the process, Dante's original text loses its authority and eventually becomes another version.

While Bergvall has not attempted a literary translation of the tercet herself, her performance of the 47 versions can be understood as an experiential translation of Dante's work, of the history of its translations and, by implication, of Western literary tradition. Given the dominance of white male authors in the Western literary canon as well as the dominance of male translators of said canon, Bermann sees Bergvall's intervention as essentially feminist. Her female voice as well as her anti-chronological ordering break with established conventions and open up each version (including Dante's own) to a myriad of interpretations. As such, *Via* also functions as a translation of the act of translation itself.

In her reading of *Via*, Bermann refers to Barbara Godard's notion of "transformance", an amalgam of performance, translation and transformation, which sees the translator as "an active participant in the creation of meaning, who advances a conditional analysis" (Godard 1989, p. 50, quoted in Bermann, 2014, p. 292). In other words, the translator puts herself and her work firmly in the picture, or, in Bergvall's case, on record. By doing so, she busts the myth of the invisible, uninvolved translator. As Hjorth (2014, p. 138) remarks in defence of the 21st-century contemporality of Carson's *Antigonick*: "The translator cannot disappear. Access to the original can never be direct, unmediated or complete, because the translator's presence, and thus the trace of the present, are ineradicable".

6. The Visible, 'inaugural' act of translation

Of course, as Jen Calleja writes, it is not helpful to a literary translator's career to be too overtly present in their translations, but works like Bergvall's, Carson's or indeed Calleja's own experiments with intersemiotic translation (e.g. her feminist translations of Christian



Marclay's photobook *The Clock*, 2019), as well as a focus on translator (instead of translation) studies, all raise the awareness of "what's going on in translation" (Calleja, 2019, p. 368). Making the act of translation visible through a focus on the performance of translation, is an essentially political endeavour, which denies the existence of a neutral translator and exposes the power structures and ideologies within translation. As Calleja writes "[w]ho the translator is matters." (2019, p. 367) And it matters what cultural and social circumstances they find themselves in. It matters how they read and for whom they perform.

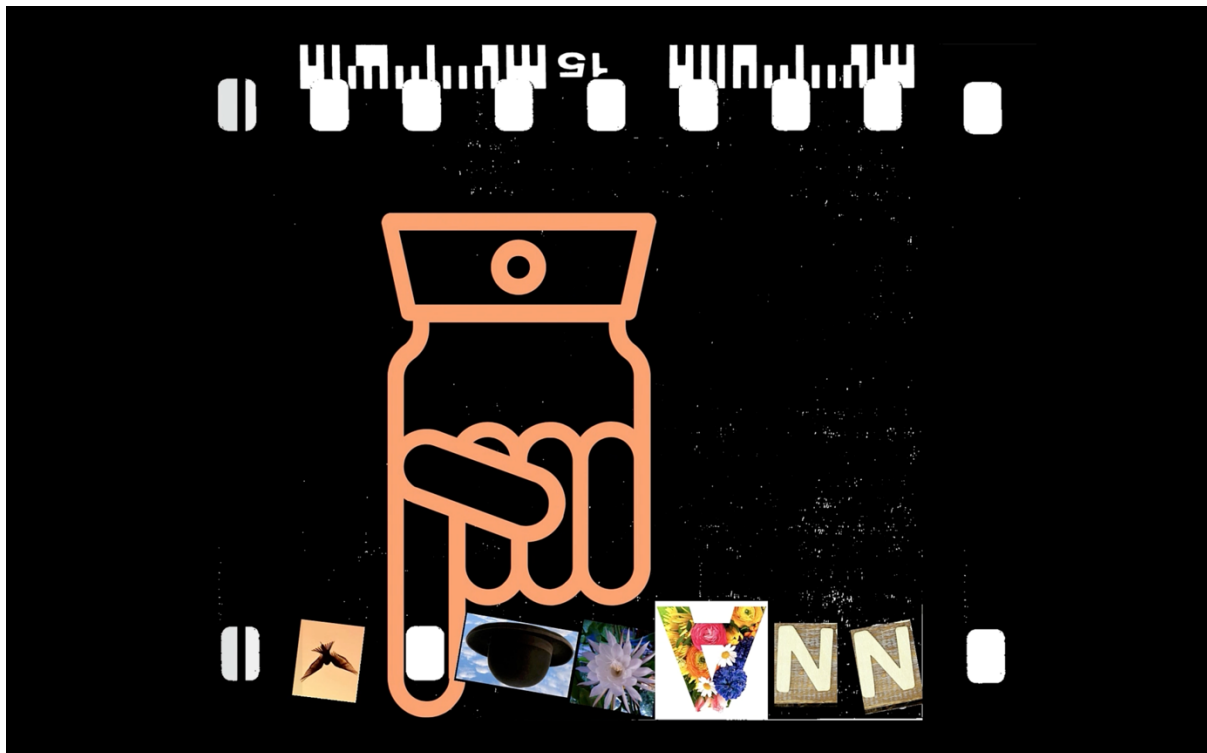
Let's return to Grossman's comparison of the act of translation with the actor's performance of a script. While the actor has the agency to interpret, they are also restrained by the limits of the script and influenced by the actors that have interpreted the script before. Acting is informed by repetition and citation and Bermann makes a similar argument for translation, which she supports with reference to Austin's concept of performative language, Derrida's thoughts on performativity and Butler's notion of gender performance. With recourse to Derrida (1991) she asserts the inaugural power of literature to do something in and to the world by using the citationality of language. She writes:

Just as all literary writing entails an ongoing iterability, along with an array of intertexts and conventions, so does the language of translation. But translation adds to this its reference to a particular prior text. By bringing within its scope the "other text" with its clearly different language(s), conventions and historical context, translation dramatizes the encounter with alterity that exists to a more limited extent in every instance of language use. Moreover, it prompts that frequent reference to the play of voices in the translator's mind [...] At the same time translation's scene-stealing encounter with otherness generates linguistic innovation. (Bermann, 2014, p. 289-290)



Eventually we suggest that the bird must be a tit:





In performing our translation of ‘An Anna Blume’, our encounter with the line “Anna Blume hat ein Vogel” led us to riff on this verse with homophonic intermodal and translanguag play, translating the German verb ‘hat’ or ‘has’ in English, to an image of the English word ‘hat’. Using the image of a bird for the German word Vogel, led us in this instance to settle on the image of a falcon – and then we extended the notion of the palindrome A-N-N-A, to voicing whole words backwards, rather than individual letters, which led to entirely new sentences:

- *Falconer had blooming ANN-...*
- *Vögelein hat Blume, ANN-...*

Invoking translation’s capacity to “generate linguistic innovation” (Bermann, 2014, pp. 289-290) picks up the argument brought forward by Antoine Berman in his seminal “Translation and the Trials of the Foreign” ([1985] 2000). Berman suggested that translation needs to create a new language forged by the collision of the source and target languages which would result in a foreignizing of the target language rather than a “naturalisation” of the foreign text in the new language ([1985] 2000, p. 241). Where Berman focuses on literary translation, Sandra Bermann widens the scope to think about the place of translation in society at large, when she calls for a new politics of translation built around ‘foreignizing strategies’. With reference to Butler’s concept of gender performativity she suggests that translation “can enact a [...] theatrical repetition and questioning of social and historical norms. Using the citational potential of its mode, it can exaggerate, highlight, displace, and queer normative expectations across genders and cultures as well as languages” (Bermann, 2014, p. 292).

7. Conclusion: centrifugally projecting Anna Blume into the future

At its best, the language of translation is an in-between language, one that undermines and breaks conventions and eschews ownership of a single group. And in the case of the type of translation practiced by Bergvall or Carson or that referred to by Calleja, it is a language which consciously embraces its multimodal and multisensory qualities. Here we can return to Scott's translation as centrifugal practice, which we quoted at the outset and where Scott advocates the creation of "an eco-centric translational language, a language ideophonically alive, looking to express a multisensory engagement with its environment of reception" which is written "both from the source language, and the target language" (2010, p. 159). As an eco-centric language that is sensitive to its surroundings, it needs to be a language in constant flux that adapts to changing circumstances and underlines what we established earlier, namely that translation is an on-going process that is open to interpretation and change and is never finished.

So in our translations of "An Anna Blume" we are aware that we are merely contributing to something that is on-going and growing as long as there is a reader with an interest in the poem. We aim for our translations not only to produce an "echo of the original" as suggested by Benjamin ([1923] 2000) – because, what is the original in the case of "An Anna Blume", or, in fact, any other piece of writing? – but we want them to echo with the voices of the readers that have gone before us and are coming after us, we want ideally to produce translations that contribute to the resonance of Anna Blume, that swells and ebbs and flows and reverberates in perpetuum. We set out to think through translations which not only perform but also invite ontological and epistemological dialogue on a multisensorial level. Hence, inspired by the work of Carson, Bergvall, Calleja and others, we translate performatively and across media, using collage techniques like Schwitters, but with the modern-day affordances of Photoshop and 21st-century video and sound recording technologies.

We conclude with a link to a Padlet which charts our collected translations of "An Anna Blume" to date and continues to grow as we add to the always unfinished translatorial projection of Schwitters' poem into the future, available at: https://kings.padlet.org/ricardavidal/knowing_an_anna_blume_Gesamttranslation (Accessed: 11 July 2023).

hallo, ur blush red dress, criss-crossed in white, / blushing I <3 Anna Blume, blush <3 I 2u/u, ur, u 2 u, I 2 u, u, 2 moi, — — — —, we?

ncidentally it's a fit w/ cold incandescent! /Anna Blume, Anna Blume blush, how do ppl say?

Preis pregunta:

1. Anna Blume hat loco
2. Anna Blume ist blush
3. wha color hat loco?

blau ist da colour of ur yellow coiffe/blush ist da colour of yr green loco.

This multilingual, internet slang translation of 'An Anna Blume' illustrates an eco-centric mode of thinking through 21st century digital materialism.

While the Padlet can be seen as a Gesamttranslation in its own right, it also contains a recording of an improvised performance, titled “Gesamttranslation 1”, which was devised in collaboration with participants (artists, translators, students) of the one-hour ‘Knowing An Anna Blume’ Workshop we led during the conference ‘Performative and Experiential Translation’ at King’s College London in July 2022: After sharing examples of prior versions of Schwitters’ poem, the workshop aimed to develop multilingual and/or multimodal versions of “An Anna Blume”, including but not restricted to dialogic poems, which trace participants’ individual readings and associations, collages, drawings, and performative pieces (gesture, sound, spoken word). “Gesamttranslation 1” was performed by volunteer participants (including the audience) in the Inigo Rooms, Somerset House, on the final day of the conference. Since then, new translations have been added, namely collages and a performance by a group of Polish students who took part in an “Anna Blume” workshop in April 2023. By the time you will read this article, the Padlet may well have grown further.

REFERENCES

- Bassnett, S. and Lefevere, A. (1996) *Constructing Cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bassnett, S. and Johnston, D. (2019) ‘The Outward Turn in Translation Studies’, *Translator*, 25(3), pp. 181–188.
- Bates, R. (2012) ‘Anne Carson’s Collapse of History’, *Guernica* [online]. Available at: <https://www.guernicamag.com/rebecca-bates-anne-carsons-collapse-of-history/> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Benjamin, W., Scholem, G. and Adorno, T. (1994) *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Benjamin, W. ([1923] 2000) ‘The Task of the Translator’, translated by S. Rendall, in Venutti, L. (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd edn. Routledge, pp. 75-83.
- Bennett, K. (2019) ‘The New Iconicity: Challenges for Translation Theory and Practice’, *Translation Matters*, 1(2), pp. 1–8.
- Bergvall, C. (2004) *Via (48 Variations of Dante)* [online]. Available at: <https://carolinebergvall.com/work/via-48-dante-variations/> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Berman, A. ([1985] 2000) ‘Translation and the Trials of the Foreign’, translated by L. Venutti, in Venutti, L. (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd edn. Routledge, pp. 240-253.
- Bermann, S. (2014) ‘Performing Translation’ in Bermann S. and Porter, C. (eds.) *A Companion to Translation Studies*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Calleja, J. (2019) ‘Life’s too short: on translating Christian Marclay’s photo-book *The Clock*’ in Campbell M. and Vidal R. (eds.) *Translating across Sensory and Linguistic Borders: Intersemiotic Journeys Between Media*. Palgrave, pp. 353-370.
- Carson, A. (2010) *Nox*. New York: New Directions.
- Carson, A. (2012a) *Antigonick (Sophokles)*, translated by A. Carson, illustrated by B. Stone. New York: New Directions.
- Carson, A. (2012b) ‘Interview by Alex Dueben’, *Suicide Girls* [online]. Available at: <https://www.suicidegirls.com/girls/sash/blog/2680448/anne-carson-antigonick/> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Carson, A. (2014) ‘Interview by Eleanor Wachtel’, *Brick*, (89) [online]. Available at: <https://brickmag.com/an-interview-with-anne-carson/> (Accessed: 11 July 2023)
- Carson, A. (2015a) *Antigonick (Sophokles)*, translated by . A. Carson. New York: New Directions.
- Carson, A. (2015b) *Sophokles Antigone*, translated by A. Carson. London: Oberon Books.

- Collins, C. (2016/17) “‘Anna Blume hat ein Vogel’: Madness and Identity Politics in “An Anna Blume””, *The Journal of the Kurt Schwitters Society*, 6, pp. 14-24 [online]. Available at: https://colescollins.files.wordpress.com/2020/02/cole-collins_anna-blume-hat-ein-vogel_ksuk-2018-2.pdf (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Cull, L. and Buchanan, I. (eds.) (2009) *Deleuze and Performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Cull, L. (2012) *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*. Springer Link [online]. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9781137291912> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Cull, L. (2013) ‘Philosophy as Drama: Deleuze and Dramatization in the Context of Performance Philosophy’, *Modern Drama*, 56(4), pp. 498–520.
- Cull, L. and Lagaay, A. (eds.) (2014) *Encounters in Performance Philosophy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cull Ó Maoilearca, L. (2020) ‘Performance Philosophy: an introduction’, *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença*, (10)1 [online]. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/2237-266092544> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Deleuze, G. (1967) ‘La Méthode de Dramatisation’, *Société Française de Philosophie*, 61(3), pp. 89.
- Deleuze, G. ([1968] 1994) *Difference and Repetition*, translated by P. Patton. London: Athlone Press.
- Elleström, L. (2010) ‘The Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations’ in Elleström, L. (ed.) *Media Border, Multimodality and Intermediality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11–48.
- Elleström, L. (2016) ‘Visual Iconicity in Poetry: Replacing the Notion of “Visual Poetry”’, *Orbis Litterarum*, 71(6), pp. 437–472.
- Gambier, Y. and Gottlieb, H. (2001) *(Multi) Media Translation: Concepts, Practices, and Research*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Geertz, C. ([1973] 2000) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gentzler, E. (2017) *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Goulish, M. and Cull, L. (2009) ‘Sub Specie Durationis’ in Cull, L. and Buchanan, I. (eds.) *Deleuze and Performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gumbrecht, H. U. (1997) *In 1926. Living at the Edge of Time*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Higgins, C. (2015) ‘Death Becomes Her: How Juliette Binoche and Ivo van Hove Remade Antigone’, *The Guardian* [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/feb/18/juliette-binoche-ivo-van-hove-antigone> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Hjorth, B. (2014) ‘We’re Standing in/the Nick of Time’, *Performance Research*, 19(3), pp. 135-139 [online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2014.935178> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Jakobson, R. ([1959] 2000) ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’ translated by L. Venuti, in L. Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 113–118.
- Johnston, D. (2013) ‘Professing Translation: The Acts-in-Between’, *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 25(3), pp. 365–384.
- Kress, G. R. and van Leeuwen, T. (2021) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 3rd edn. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kress, G. R. and van Leeuwen, T. (1996) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Laruelle, F. (2012) “‘I, The Philosopher, Am Lying’: Reply to Deleuze’ in Alkon, G. and Gunjevic, B. (eds.) *The Non-Philosophy Project: Essays by François Laruelle*. New York: Telos Press Publishing, pp. 40-73.
- Lefevere, A. and Bassnett, S. (1990) ‘Introduction. Proust’s Grandmother And The Thousand And One Nights. The “Cultural Turn” in Translation Studies’ in Bassnett, S. and Lefevere, A. (eds.) *Translation, History and Culture*. London: Pinter, pp. 1-13.

- Campbell, M. and Vidal, R. – On Performing Philosophy through Translation
Translation Matters, 5(1), 2023, pp. 9-28, DOI: https://doi.org/10.21747/21844585/tm5_1a1
- Littau, K. (2016) 'Translation and the Materialities of Communication.', *Translation Studies*, 9(1), pp. 82–96.
- Luke, M. R. (2014) *Kurt Schwitters: Space, Image, Exile*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- O'Sullivan, C. and Jeffcote, C. (eds.) (2013) 'Translating Multimodalities', *Special Issue of JoSTrans – The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 20.
- Puchner, M. (2013) 'Afterword: Please Mind the Gap between Theatre and Philosophy', *Modern Drama*, 56(4), pp. 540-553.
- Schwitters, K.(2002) 'pppppp. Poems Performance Pieces Proses Plays Poetics' translated by J. Rothenberg and P. Joris (eds.). Philadelphia. Temple University Press.
- Scott, C. (2010) 'Intermediality and Synesthesia: Literary Translation as Centrifugal Practice', *Art in Translation*, 2(2), pp. 153–170 [online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2752/175613110X12706508989415> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).
- Silverblank, H. (2014) 'Spectral Presences and Absences In Anne Carson's Antigonick', *Logeion: Periodiko gia to Archaio Theatro*, 4, pp. 343–363.
- Steiner, G. (2012) 'Marrow Versus Marrow', *Times Literary Supplement*, pp. 8-9.
- Stinson, M. and Winston, J. (2011) 'Drama Education and Second Language Learning: A Growing Field of Practice And Research', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 16(4), pp. 479-488.
- Torop, P. (2008) 'Translation as Communication and Auto-Communication', *Sign System Studies*, 36(2), pp. 375-397.
- Truman, S. E. (2016) 'Becoming More Than It Never Actually Was: Expressive Writing as Research-Creation', *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 13(2), pp. 136-143.
- Worthen, H. (2020) 'Disassembling Performance' in Worthen, H. (ed.) *Humanism, Drama, and Performance*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 243-291.

Picture credits: All images were created by Ricarda Vidal and Madeleine Campbell, with the exception of the photograph of the marsh tit, which was taken by Steffen Hannert - Vogelruf.de, BirdGallery. Available at: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumpfmehse#/media/Datei:Sumpfmehse1.jpg> (Accessed: 11 July 2023).

Funding: This work was supported in part by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council: grant number AH/V008234/1.

About the authors:

Madeleine Campbell teaches at Edinburgh University and investigates arts-informed language education, experiential translation and creativity. Her book *Translating across Sensory and Linguistic Borders* (2019), co-edited with Ricarda Vidal, challenges traditional notions of literary translation through the embodied perspective of practitioners working across media. She is Co-Investigator of the AHRC-funded Experiential Translation Network.

Ricarda Vidal is Senior Lecturer at King's College London and Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded Experiential Translation Network. As researcher, text-maker and curator, she explores the multimodal aspects of communication across perceived cultural and/or linguistic divides. Recent publications include *Translating across Sensory and Linguistic Borders* (2019), *Home on the Move* (2019) and the bookwork series *Revolve:R* (2011-2023).