

Introduction

Tony Harrison's 2005 version of Euripides' *Hecuba* was his first production for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC). With Vanessa Redgrave in the title role, Harrison's involvement in this production expanded from translator-adaptor to director for an international tour that included New York, Washington and Delphi. Harrison had previously interrogated major classical roles for women, such as Phaedra, Clytemnestra and Medea, but the *Hecuba* project provides an opportunity to examine his engagement with the centrality of a significant female role from the perspective of his persona as a political activist. The trajectory of the production development and the international tour presents evidence of Harrison's collaboration with Redgrave to craft a text and production criticizing the intervention of the USA and its allies in Iraq. Redgrave's involvement enabled Harrison to take his critique to the geo-political centre of the policies he condemns through his portrayal of Hecuba's interaction with her Greek victors. Harrison's introduction to the published text is clear in its intention: 'We may still be weeping for Hecuba, but we allow our politicians to flood the streets of Iraq with more and more Hecubas in the name of freedom and democracy' (2005: x).

This multiplicity of Hecubas provides a further insight to Harrison's approaches to translation, performance and activism through its reoccurrence in Harrison's original play *Fram*, performed at the National Theatre in 2008 but already under development in 2006, with Harrison still fresh from his *Hecuba* tour. *Fram* has an international agenda, moving from Fridtjof Nansen's polar exploration in 1895 (in an icebreaker named *Fram* – 'Forward' in Norwegian) to contemporary protests by Kurdish poets and frozen African stowaways. *Fram* also resurrects the Classicist translator Gilbert Murray and his regular actor Sybil Thorndike, 'a sensation / as Hecuba' (2008: 43). This chapter reads *Fram* as Harrison's commentary on his role as an activist writer in relation to his production of *Hecuba*. It investigates the intersection of Harrison's activities of poet, translator, adaptor and director and examines Harrison's conviction of the relevance of Classical drama for contemporary issues and the persuasive role of performance as activism.

Tony Harrison, translator

In his survey of modern European poet-translators, Jacob Blakesley points out that 'there exists no comprehensive overview of [Harrison's] translation practice' and that 'his translation activity has not been seen as a vital, integral part of his *œuvre*' despite extensive scholarly study of his work as a whole (Blakesley 2019: 165). Blakesley makes a significant contribution to the study of Harrison as a translator, arguing for the importance of translation in his poetic career, both from a quantitative perspective (with eleven published books of translation) and with regards to the 'geographical and chronological breadth' of Harrison's active engagement with 'poets and writers from numerous cultural and literary traditions worldwide' (Blakesley 2019: 165). I would contend, however, that the integral nature of Harrison's translation within his broader work is in fact the very element that sheds light on his practice of translation as a creative activity that both feeds into and feeds on his original compositions. I have traced the authorial presence of another translator-playwright, Martin Crimp, 'throughout his work, whether self-authored, translated or adapted' (Brodie 2016: 94). Harrison's translations similarly display characteristics of his authorial style. Furthermore, Harrison's translations provide insight not only on his own practice as a translator but also on the nature of translation itself. For Harrison, translation – like all his work – is an activist, performative practice with an urgent communicative function, enhanced by imaginative and creative devices even as it is rooted in meticulous research. This approach provides fuel for the long-running debates around the dividing line between translation and adaptation and the attribution of ownership of a translated

text, in which several of the contributors to this volume have participated at length, including myself (Brodie and Cole 2017; Brodie 2018; E. Hall 2004; Hardwick 2010).

Paratextual evidence provides one indication of how Harrison's translations are absorbed into his authorial output. In illustration, the sixth and most recent published volume of his collected plays is comprised of *Hecuba*, 'a new translation', his own composition *Fram*, and *Iphigenia in Crimea*, 'after Euripides' (Harrison 2019). This volume thus groups what might arguably be categorised as an original, a translation, and an adaptation together in a collection authored by Harrison, who also holds the copyright for all three plays. Adding to the proliferation of potential labels for Harrison's activity as a dramatic writer, the volume begins with an introduction by the playwright Lee Hall, who describes Harrison's work as a 'call to "public poetry" through the theatre' (L. Hall 2019: xiv). Harrison's theatrical compositions demonstrate the complexity of translational writing, as this collection shows. Furthermore, just as Harrison sees his position as a poet permeating throughout his creative activity, stating 'everything I do is poetry – for the page, for the stage or the screen' (Harrison 2017: 25), the performance qualities of poetry are equally omnipresent throughout the various genres of his output. In Harrison's work, poetry, performance, and the adaptive techniques of translation and interpretation combine; reading the two staged plays from this collection, *Hecuba* and *Fram*, as complimentary works offers further illumination of both texts while providing an insight into Harrison's translation practice as an activist poet and theatre practitioner.

Touring translation

Both plays under consideration have a significant international aspect. In Harrison's translation, *Hecuba* portrays the aftermath of an international armed conflict between Troy and 'the Greek coalition' (Harrison 2019: 13), obliquely referencing the contemporary involvement of US-led forces in Iraq, and devised in the knowledge that the production would be visiting the Kennedy Center in Washington. Harrison asks in his introduction, written before the play's first performance, '[t]he audience might weep for Hecuba in Washington when the tragedy plays there, but will they squirm with regret for Iraq, or the re-election of George Bush [...]?' (Harrison 2019: 8). The production additionally toured to the Howard Gilman Opera House (the largest of the three theatre spaces of the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York) and opened the newly built open air Phrynikos theatre in Delphi. *Fram* takes the form of a voyage in time and space, beginning in Westminster Abbey in London and moving through the Arctic, Christiana (modern-day Oslo), New York, and Moscow before returning to London and closing in an icy South Bank of the Thames. The play also refers to international humanitarian crises, specifically the Russian famine of 1921-22 and contemporary forced displacement, including the characters of a Kurdish poet with sewn-up mouth, eyes and ears and two young African stowaways, frozen on an airbus. Both plays thus address international themes and aim to speak to diverse audiences; these aspects shed light on Harrison's approach to constructing dramatic text, both in translation and in original composition, in order to encompass the elements of touring and voyage, in content and production.

As Eastman points out in her chapter, Harrison's stagecraft has developed from the one-off productions of his early years to more extended runs which have had to negotiate the tensions of maintaining a classical ephemerality with the theatrical formalities of regular venues and performances. Touring productions, such as *Hecuba*, illustrate characteristics of both one-off and extended productions in as much as they appear in a succession of different venues and therefore are created to be repeated on a regular basis but in a range of environments where the physical capacities of the performance site can materially impact on both the delivery of the text and the reception of the audience. As I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Brodie 2014), *Hecuba* developed textually and visually as it moved along its voyage from London to New York and Washington, and

then back across the Atlantic to Delphi. The number of revisions to the text performed in London was substantial enough to merit the production of a new master script for touring purposes, dated 23 June 2005 and now held in the archives of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon. Harrison's text, published in March 2005, does not reflect these alterations, and it is this version that is included in the volume of collected plays published in 2019. The most visible development was the redesign of the set from a formal semi-columnar stone frame in London to what the designer Es Devlin described on her website as 'an amphitheatre of Desert Storm tents returned from the Gulf War' (Devlin 2011). *Fram* deconstructs the effects of movement on a production, showing how the theatrical environment for the famine relief fundraising morphs from New York to Moscow to a London campaign centre, reflecting different national reactions to the crisis (Harrison 2019: 106-11). At another point, Nansen is portrayed delivering a fundraising lecture tour in which he changes the name of the city (London, Newcastle, Aberdeen) in an otherwise identical speech; notably, reflecting the progression of *Hecuba*, the first iteration of the speech in London is reduced in length and increased in focus for its subsequent repetitions (Harrison 2019: 138-39).

Harrison thus writes the significance of theatrical space and communication with audience into his plays. This phenomenon is examined by Gay McAuley in her analysis of the different elements of space which form part of the communication between live actors and live spectators in making meaning in the theatre: physical places of theatre in the community, the space of interaction between performers and spectators, the 'energized space' of the occupied stage, fictional places evoked, and, 'interacting with all of them, the space of verbal reference' (McAuley 1999: 7). These spaces change as a production tours, with corresponding shifts – both explicit and implicit – in the underlying nature of the performance. Harrison's incorporation of flexibility into the development of a production is a signifier not only of how he responds to transition between venues but also how he sees the mutability of his texts – another symptom of his approach to translation.

Theatrical space therefore affects the conveyance of meaning; however, developing a production for international touring has further potentially fundamental elements that influence transmission and reception. Exploring theatre-making for international festival contexts, Jen Harvie identifies three shared characteristics of work developed for international touring. One is the promotion of innovation, the second is the fluidity of the design aesthetics, and the third is the necessity of working across more abstract registers. Therefore, Harvie concludes, '[w]here the "local" is presented [...] the concrete political determinants [...] illustrate more broadly recognisable categories of experience or relationships between people, places and issues' (Harvie 2010: 10-11). Harrison's international theatre displays these characteristics, which lend themselves to interpretations of classical texts. Any translation presents a work in a new light; Harrison takes full advantage of the translation opportunity to create the unexpected in a dramatic text, as is shown by the implied alignment between the Greek 'coalition' in *Hecuba* and the coalition led by the USA in Iraq. The *Hecuba* trajectory shows how Harrison works with the creative and acting teams to devise a production that operates at a range of levels, regarding period, place and language. Marshall points out that Harrison's use of space in conjunction with his preferred design collaborator, Jocelyn Herbert, 'went far beyond a historical interest in original [classical Greek] practices [such that aspects of the physical location of performance were used to give the play a political edge]' (Marshall 2007: 121). This approach is replicated in *Hecuba*, especially with the use of tents from the Desert Storm operation for the stage sets in Washington and New York. That this overt reference to Iraq was preferred over the earlier columnar set is evidenced by the use of new dark green military-style tents for the Delphi production, since the Desert Storm tents had been returned after the

Washington run. What was 'local' in Washington was more abstractly referenced in Delphi but retained its political edge.

Translated texts developed for international performance are even more subject to the tension between the locally specific and the globally abstract because the language environment also changes between performances. A Washington audience will respond differently from a London audience, even to the same language. A Greek audience may be dependent on surtitles or their knowledge of the classical play to follow the English-language version. Evaluating Harrison's *Hecuba* on both sides of the Atlantic, Lorna Hardwick nevertheless considers that the production was 'directed at audiences with a high degree of commonality in their experiences and attitudes' (Hardwick 2015: 837). Harrison's text relies on slight shifts in register within an internationally accessible contemporary English language to distinguish between characters and nationalities in *Hecuba*, which is mirrored in the dialogue in *Fram*. My assessment of Harrison's approach to translation is at odds with Blakesley's view that Harrison 'frequently domesticates the text [...] because he strives to render the original play pertinent and understandable to the specific audience viewing it on stage in a particular locale' (Blakesley 2018: 64). Blakesley cites *Aikin Mata*, Harrison's early translation (with his co-translator James Simmons) of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* for a Nigerian audience, as an example of a domesticating translation targeted for a specific audience. In my view, Harrison's choice of setting this play in a Nigerian context was a foreignizing approach, according to Lawrence Venuti's definition. Venuti critiques the standard domesticating expectations of translation in the Anglo-American market whereby translations are characterized by a 'fluency' which obscures their origins. According to Venuti, all translation enacts 'ethnocentric violence' on the foreign text. A foreignizing translator, however, 'seeks to expand the range of translation practices not to frustrate or impede reading [...] but to create new conditions of readability' (Venuti 2008: 19). I argue that Harrison's siting of his translated drama in unexpected locations demonstrates his aim to expand the range of translation; to disrupt the audience and destabilize the text and performance. Even though Harrison's translations may move away from closely covering the source text, his performance texts display a multi-layered, multi-temporal engagement with the source that clearly marks their provenance. As Margherita Laera insists, '[o]nly those translations that remark themselves as translations can do the work of uprooting and regrounding that is necessary to resist cultural narcissism' (Laera 2019: 45)¹. *Hecuba* is labelled a 'translation' but in his play, Harrison seeks to continue what he sees as Euripides' activism in creating 'one of the great archetypes of suffering' (Harrison 2019: 3-4). Harrison's approach is to uproot *Hecuba* and empower her to speak across time and place, drawing, as he demonstrates in *Fram*, on a range of resources within the spheres of translation and performance.

Harrison's Hecubas

Harrison's construction of *Hecuba* presents a multi-layered opportunity to investigate the significance of activism in translation and performance; in this portrayal, in text and on stage, he addresses the representation of women from a range of aspects. Edith Hall has noted that '[t]he unfair treatment of women in professional theatre, as in society, is something of which he is well aware' (E. Hall 2017: 13). There are few major roles in classical theatre for mature female actors. *Hecuba* is not only the central protagonist of the drama that bears her name, she is on stage for most of the performance, she has a good share of the dialogue and her lines range beyond the personal to discuss abstract concepts. Furthermore, *Hecuba*, although suffering, takes action (albeit horrific) to counter her subordinated position; she is not a passive victim. Arguably, this play passes

¹ Laera's italics.

the Bechdel Test which measures the gender equality of the representation of women in media based on three linked criteria: 'One, it has to have at least two women in it who, two, *talk* to each other about, three, something besides a *man*' (Bechdel 1986: 22)². In an early scene, Hecuba and her daughter Polyxena deplore their impending fate, focusing more on their mutual relationship than on the men who inflict their slavery and death. This play consequently presents material for an exploration of the female presence in what Harrison identifies as the theme of the play for the twentieth century: 'the corruption of both power and powerlessness' (Harrison 2019: 4).

Hallie Marshall's description of Harrison's portrayal of the predicament of the women in his film-poem *Prometheus* (1998) can be applied more widely to Harrison's general approach to female characters in his work: 'The female narrative that Harrison is telling is a narrative of violence against women—not the physical and sexual violence so frequently presented in film and other media, but a violence that has systematically worked to break down all of the traditional female bonds of security, both familial and communal' (Marshall 2013: 249). Harrison's interest in this aspect of the female narrative, and how it is represented in and through antiquity, is documented in the seven notebooks³ researching his proposed trilogy *The Common Chorus*, for which the conceit is a production of a series of classical plays performed in protest by the women of Greenham Common. The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp consisted of nine camps inhabited by female protesters between 1981 and 2000 around a NATO base in southeast England where nuclear cruise missiles were stored. In one of the many protest events organised, 50,000 women encircled the base in December 1983, holding up mirrors and taking down sections of the fence (The National Archives 2019). Harrison's notebooks reveal the resonance for his work of this illustration of women banding together to create new physical and symbolic female bonds with the aim of disrupting what they perceived to be the existential threat of nuclear weapons - the ultimate in nihilistic violence encompassing family and community. The first three of the seven notebooks are devoted to Euripides' *Trojan Women*, which was to be the second play in the trilogy.

Hecuba, of course, features in *Trojan Women*, although in less complex form as the victim and witness of atrocities and not also the perpetrator. Edith Hall believes that Euripides' *Trojan Women*, along with Herakles, are 'two of the handful of works of world literature that [...] have most fruitfully informed [Harrison's] creativity, even though, paradoxically, no translation by him of either of them has ever been performed' (E. Hall 2018: 119). The RSC commission offered Harrison the opportunity to revisit this character more fully in the eponymous play; it also brought him together with the actor Vanessa Redgrave for the first time, a practitioner whose political and creative stance aligned with his own. My earlier article notes that 'Redgrave was in a position to exercise influence over her own lines' (Brodie 2014: 60), discussing the alterations incorporated in the master script for the Washington performances. My published analysis of one particular line compares it to other renditions, both contemporary and in the earliest published English translations from the first half of the eighteenth century, investigating the wide range of variations and their contexts (Brodie 2014: 55-59). Harrison's line in the published text, 'Does something force them into human sacrifice', was delivered by Redgrave as, 'Democracy demands a human sacrifice'. Based on my analysis, I suggested that Redgrave was active in the prompt script amendments to her lines. Since writing that article, I have been able to consult Harrison's notebooks for the production (now held in the Brotherton Library) which show that in an early draft of the text he wrote 'Did necessity drive them into human sacrifice', echoing the choices of 'fate' or 'necessity' made by most translators of this

² Bechdel's italics.

³ BC MS 20c Harrison 03/COM

line⁴. In the following notebook⁵, Harrison muses on the concept of ἀνάγκη [please check the diacritics] (necessity), pasting an extract from Judith Mossman's study of *Hecuba* in which she asserts that the theme of 'necessity or compulsion' runs throughout the play (Mossman 1995: 206). This provides further context for my conjecture that the line finally spoken was at the very least a subject for discussion between Redgrave and Harrison. The interchange of 'democracy' and 'necessity', however, also underlines an observation made by Lorna Hardwick in her discussion of the reception of the production: 'few critics commented on how close Harrison's text was to the Greek, notably in its presentation of the parody of democracy in Euripides' play' (Hardwick 2015: 821). If the suggestion to refer to democracy in this line did indeed come from Redgrave, this demonstrates the extent to which she and Harrison shared a common vision for the enterprise.

Furthermore, the genesis of this production appears to have been unusually swift, especially for a translation, which would usually be commissioned twelve to eighteen months in advance. In this case, the involvement of Redgrave and the director Laurence Boswell in the production were announced in March 2004, less than one year before the planned opening (Billington 2004). Harrison's notebooks for this production are also dated from 2004. As I have noted in my analysis of Harrison's role as translator in this production, 'this timing suggests that [Redgrave] may have been active in proposing that the play adopted its political line'; her media appearances around this time indicated that she wished to highlight the situation in Iraq (Brodie 2018: 87). The active nature of the collaboration between Harrison and Redgrave was reinforced by the departure of Boswell after the London run. Edith Hall, who was a consultant in the development stages of the production, observes that '[t]he relationships between Boswell and Redgrave and Boswell and [Harrison] were highly inflammable' (E. Hall 2018: 121). It seems likely that Boswell's vision for the production was less attuned to the stance adopted by Harrison and Redgrave. Boswell had previously directed the play, in a translation by Kenneth McLeish, in 1992 at the Gate Theatre Notting Hill, when the role of Polyxena had been played by his wife Sara Mair-Thomas, the sister of Sian Thomas, Harrison's 'long-term partner in private life' (E. Hall 2017: 16). Addressing the question of why he would wish to revisit the play, especially when other interpretations were in production⁶, Boswell explained in an interview for the *Birmingham Post*:

My production at The Gate ten years ago was the first major production for 30 years, so I jumped on the bandwagon before most people! I think people are interested in the play because the world's in a bit of a state. When we had the AmericanRussian [sic] stand-off, the world had a balance of terror. As communism collapsed, instead of moving on we've created a new scapegoat and bogeyman. [...] That's what *Hecuba* is about, it's about how we create baddies. [...] I'm surprised that people are surprised you return to these things, because if you're working on pieces written by some of the greatest minds there's always more to discover. (Grimley 2004)

This divergence from Harrison's focus on the 'recurring image' of *Hecuba*, in agony 'in front of the utter devastation that had been her home, or before her murdered dead' (Harrison 2019: 6), may well have added to the tension between these three practitioners, which is also a further illustration of Helen Eastman's chapter in which she discusses 'the tensions between Harrison's artistic and

⁴ BC MS 20c Harrison 03/HEC/01: 88

⁵ BC MS 20c Harrison 03/HEC/02: 289-290

⁶ At the Donmar Warehouse, in a version by Frank McGuinness, and by Foursight Theatre, translated by John Harrison, both 2004.

intellectual project and the wider theatre community⁷. The ultimate result was to consolidate Harrison's control over the production. He replaced Boswell as director for the tour, which also goes some way to explaining the unusual level of changes in the script and the set. This episode highlights the importance of the relationship of the principal artistic contributors in a production. Not only does an uneasy collaboration affect the whole production, and thereby its reception, but it also destabilises content, as can be seen from the prompt script. Harrison's performed translation thus reflects the shift in relations between the practitioners during the production. Once Boswell had left the production, the remaining practitioners were able to focus on establishing the changes which would communicate the broad intent of the production and translation to the audience. Boswell's departure also permitted the professional relationship between Harrison and Redgrave to develop in deepening their engagement with the production. The reviews for the Washington and New York performances were an improvement on the London reception and Redgrave went on to be nominated for the Helen Hayes Outstanding Lead Actress, Non-Resident Production, Award for 2006 for her portrayal of Hecuba.

The trajectory of the production development and the international tour presents evidence of Harrison's collaboration with Redgrave to craft a text and production criticizing the intervention of the USA and its allies in Iraq. Redgrave's involvement not only supported Harrison in his activist approach to the translation but also, due to the extent of her recognition as an internationally renowned actor, enabled Harrison to take his critique to the geo-political centre of the policies he condemned through his portrayal of Hecuba. These contextual factors indicate that the collaboration between Harrison and Redgrave is significant for the development and performance of Harrison's translation. Harrison's portrayal of a similar relationship between a translator and actor in *Fram* sheds further light on this significance.

Gilbert Murray and Sybil Thorndike

Fram provides context for Harrison's aims in creating the character of Hecuba: what she stands for, how she is embodied on stage, and the specific resources he draws on for his creation - notably his collaboration with the practitioner playing the role. The conceit of *Fram* is Murray's posthumous attempt to write original drama, proving his ability as a dramatist alongside his undoubted prowess as a translator, and allowing him to 'cross the floor to mingle with the Poets' Corner crowd' (Harrison 2019: 74). Murray is referring to the space in Westminster Abbey, an iconic church at the centre of the English establishment for many centuries, which commemorates the most celebrated writers in canonical English literature. One of the threads running through Harrison's play is the longstanding antagonism between Murray and T.S. Eliot, a controversy which in its time was sufficiently polemic for James Morwood to highlight eighty-five years later in his introduction to Murray's translations of Euripides: 'Everyone who feels well-disposed towards Murray's translations has to take on board T.S. Eliot's 1920 denunciation of them' (Morwood 2005: ix). Harrison's Murray provides a succinct, if slightly de-barbed, paraphrase of Eliot's criticism, lamenting the assessment of his poetry as 'Swinburnian haze' and regretting the charge, 'With no creative instinct he leaves Euripides quite dead' (Harrison 2019: 76). Harrison thus sets the tone for his play as an exploration of the interaction of poetry and creativity and how these elements can be harnessed to transmit a social message and activate its hearers. Nansen provides the inspiration for Murray's play both in respect of subject matter and activist message: '*Fram*, and famine, is the play I hope to write' (Harrison 2019: 77). Harrison's drama seeks to demonstrate the activist power of theatre,

⁷ Eastman's abstract "'Illuminated by the light of the sun": Stagecraft and the politics of performance conditions'

resurrecting Thorndike, a major performer in the Murray's translations of Greek drama, and presented as a key performer of his works: 'my Hecuba, Medea' (Harrison 2019: 75).

Thorndike performed in Murray's Greek translations over an extended period during her career, first appearing as Hecuba in Murray's *Trojan Women* in 1919, at the Old Vic, London, produced by her husband Lewis Casson. Thorndike's long-term association with the role is exhibited by her appearance in a 1963 production at the Little Theatre, Haymarket entitled *Some Men and Women* which included the "'Final Scene of The Trojan Women" performed by Sybil Thorndike and Louis [sic] Casson' (Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama 1963). Thorndike was then in her early eighties. Although Harrison depicts Thorndike recalling fondly her parts in the classical plays translated by Murray, she had a long, varied and prolific career, playing most of Shakespeare's leading female roles and also achieving critical success in contemporary productions, including the title roles in George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1924) and *Major Barbara* (1929). Harrison, however, portrays Thorndike as a strong supporter of his writing and builds a picture of a close working relationship between the two in which Murray provides the lines and Thorndike the acting skills.

It is tempting to see the Murray-Thorndike working relationship conveyed in *Fram* as a parallel to the Harrison-Redgrave collaboration in *Hecuba*. It is certainly possible to establish an affinity between Harrison and Murray. Fiona Macintosh notes Harrison's 'deep admiration for Murray and his sense of outrage at the slight perpetrated by the high Modernists, and T.S. Eliot in particular, against Murray's popular and enduring translations of Euripides' (Macintosh 2018: 103-04). Marshall traces a direct connection from Murray to Harrison in the staging of their work; when Harrison's *Oresteia* was performed at the National Theatre in 1981, 'there had been no tradition of Greek drama in English translation as popular theatre since the translations of Gilbert Murray were staged at Sloane Square and in the West End in the early-twentieth century' (Marshall 2010: 65). Harrison does, however, intimate divergences between the two. Harrison describes himself (via Gilbert Murray) as 'a grubby Yorkshire poet with a bad degree in Greek' (Harrison 2019: 80). This assumed modesty however forms part of Harrison's understated boast that it was his version of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* that was played at the National Theatre, and not Gilbert Murray's. Furthermore, Harrison – the 'grubby Yorkshire poet' - also dwells on Murray's chagrin that, although buried along with other elite literary figures at Westminster Abbey, there is no place for him in Poets' Corner. Nevertheless, Harrison's decision to structure his play around the figure of Murray renders *Fram* as a form of homage to Murray. As Edith Hall observes, Harrison 'recognises in Gilbert Murray, as a translator of Greek tragedy for not just the public stage but for a radical and politically searching style of theatre, one of his principal forebears' (E. Hall 2018: 128). *Fram* thus provides an insight into Harrison's approach as a poet-translator. However, it also establishes the significance for Harrison of Euripides' portrayal of Hecuba as it is mediated by Gilbert Murray and suggests the extent to which Murray's relationship with the translation of *Hecuba*, and how Hecuba is performed, has influenced Harrison's own readings.

With regard to the performance partnership between Murray and Thorndike, initially *Fram* depicts the relationship largely from Murray's perspective. Murray is instrumental in resurrecting Thorndike, searching for her in the Abbey - 'I know! I need Sybil Thorndike' (Harrison 2019: 75) – and she is rarely on stage unless Murray is present, apart from her closing lines. Thorndike's contribution to the partnership is focused on practical issues for an actor, asking for a text, set, costumes and make-up and insisting on her 'clarity of sound' (Harrison 2019: 79). However, Thorndike is also an advocate for Murray's writing, claiming that she finds his verse divine, 'whatever critics say' (Harrison 2019: 75). Generally, the two practitioners are portrayed as enjoying a mutually supportive and easy-going relationship; in one such occurrence, Murray introduces Thorndike to the head of the American

Relief Administration's Moscow bureau as 'a sensation / as Hecuba' and Thorndike interjects, 'in Dr Murray's own translation!' (Harrison 2019: 113). Nevertheless, even though Murray supplies Thorndike's lines, her delivery of them is crucial for their performative effect, as is demonstrated in Thorndike's campaigning speech as a starving Volga Woman (Harrison 2019: 129-31). Furthermore, after Murray's final exit returning to his grave, Thorndike remains on stage to deliver another example of the power of performance in a monologue portraying the effect of the frozen corpse of a stowaway as it falls from a jumbo jet into a supermarket car park, which she follows by passing on the symbolic poet's wreath to a mutilated Kurdish poet accompanied by the exhortation, 'Wear the laurel wreath. Make poems. Make a play.' (Harrison 2019: 158). The balance in the relationship thus shifts as the play progresses, highlighting the importance of the contributions from both sides. Again, it is tempting to read this portrayal as referring to Harrison's working relationship with Redgrave in *Hecuba* and depicting the personal warmth in that relationship. There is an oblique reference to Redgrave in a mention of the dancer Isadora [Duncan] whom Redgrave portrayed in the 1968 eponymous biographical film directed by Karel Reisz. Sheldon, of the American Relief Administration, criticises the arrogance of Duncan, who he describes as 'this podgy passé prancer', in performing the Russian famine through the medium of dance. It is precisely this critique to which Thorndike responds in her monologue as a starving victim, demonstrating by her actions that 'an actress can play starvation, belly or no belly [...] and you'll believe it's true' (Harrison 2019: 128). The fact that Thorndike was played by Harrison's partner in private life, Sian Thomas, adds to the personal nature of the defence.

Conclusion: *Fram* as a commentary on *Hecuba*

Harrison attributes a visit to Poets' Corner as the creative impetus for *Fram*, recalling, 'the Abbey geography of the Greek scholar and translator of Greek tragedy Murray set between the inspiring stained glass of his Aeschylus and his most vicious critic [T.S. Eliot] got me going on my play *Fram*' (Harrison 2017: 476). Edith Hall points out that although *Fram* is ostensibly concerned with Murray's interest in Nansen, 'Murray was in fact far more closely identified with the tragedian Euripides. He published the most influential book on Euripides of all time, *Euripides and his Age*, in 1913' (E. Hall 2018: 124). Marshall, on the other hand, sees *Fram* as engaging with Old Comedy generally and Aristophanes' *Frogs* specifically (Marshall 2010: 170). Harrison certainly uses the play as a vehicle to interrogate how the comedic and tragic elements of classical drama can be harnessed actively to address key issues for contemporary audiences. Appropriating this lens to view the dramatic force of *Hecuba* resonates with Harrison's theatrical approach. Harrison describes, for example, how, in order 'to guarantee that [...] the chain of commemorative empathy is unbroken' between the Athenian spectators of the *Trojan Women* in 415 BCE and the audiences of today, he used 'the contemporaneity of comedy to first establish the parallels' and thus place the tragedy in context (Harrison 2017: 231-32). Harrison is referring to his pairing of the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes with *Trojan Women* of Euripides in *The Common Chorus*, in which he imagines these two plays 'performed by the women of the peace camp at Greenham Common for the benefit of the guards behind the wire who were defending the silos where the weapons of our ultimate extinction were stored' (Harrison 2017: 230). Harrison remarks, 'where Hecuba is, then Lysistrata isn't far behind', illustrating his conception of how absurdity compounds the horror of war (Harrison 2017: 239). *Fram* interweaves these opposing but complimentary notions, and in so doing provides the opportunity to review Harrison's portrayal of Hecuba as a character who 'leads her women into theatricality' (Harrison 2017: 232). *Fram* deconstructs theatre-making and performance techniques to reveal both artifice and power.

Harrison's twelve notebooks documenting the development of *Fram* span the period 2001-2012⁸, indicating the extensive nature of his research, as was necessary for a play seeking to engage with such a range of themes. Given the relatively rapid commissioning process for *Hecuba*, it is likely that the gestation period for *Fram* was already underway when Harrison began work on *Hecuba*. The four notebooks for this latter production are dated 2004-5⁹. Nevertheless, the references in *Fram* to Thorndike's performance as Hecuba (albeit the Hecuba of *Trojan Women*) suggest the significance of this character for Harrison. Discussing *Trojan Women*, Harrison emphasizes that Hecuba's first action is to lift her head from the ground, while her last word in the play is *biou*, 'life' (Harrison 2017: 187-89). 'My dramatic instincts tell me that Euripides brings his Trojan women low to the ground not only to take a last leave of their dead, but in order that they again had to raise their heads like Hecuba at the beginning of the play, and stand, in order to make an exit. And the bearing of that exit and the department of the mask are reasons why we are able to gaze on terror and not turn to stone' (Harrison 2017: 188). The same image of Thorndike as Hecuba in *Trojan Women* 'with her son, Christopher Casson, at the Holborn Empire, December 1919' is pasted into the *Hecuba* notebooks¹⁰ and the *Fram* notebooks¹¹. Harrison's view of this character as a symbol of hope in the face of darkness informs his rendering of both plays.

The multiple metatheatricalities of *Fram* (Thorndike's speech as the Volga Woman, in particular, is a performance within a campaign production, within Murray's fictitious 'play', within Harrison's *Fram*) represent Harrison's approaches to his own work: his response to Euripides as a dramatist, his perceptions of the theatricality of Hecuba as a character, and the activist power at the intersection of translation, drama and performance which also inspired Murray (who controversially for his time saw *Trojan Women* as a pacifist play). *Fram* exposes the mechanisms of composition that operate in Harrison's *Hecuba*. Analysing the current concept of a 'democratic turn' in the deployment of Greek tragedy to oppose contemporary wars, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz observes that 'the democratic effect comes not from "turning" to the ancients per se but with what modern producers/translators do with the text' (Rabinowitz 2014: 129). *Fram* presents a physical display of the themes that Harrison also pursues in *Hecuba*: the rootlessness caused by war, the effect of superpower intervention, famine and migration, and the futile protest of victims. However, *Fram* also shows how these themes are conveyed and performed. Reviewing Harrison's approach in his own translations of dramatic works, Jacob Blakesley notes that 'he works collaboratively with directors [...], readily and willingly incorporates suggestions from actors, translates directly from the source languages and brings a forceful ideological poetics and language of his own to bear upon the text' (Blakesley 2018: 63). *Fram* reveals the importance for Murray/Harrison of a close working collaboration with fellow theatre practitioners. In giving life to Murray's text, Thorndike pays tribute to Redgrave's embodiment of Harrison's words in *Hecuba*. She also reveals the crucial interaction between composition and performance.

Cédric Ploix considers Harrison's approach to the translation and adaptation of canonical drama as a 'new paradigm of theatre translation' that 'influenced future generations of translators', attributing this phenomenon to Harrison's 'reterritorialization' of the text which generates 'two competing axes of reading [and] cannot take place without a profound stylistic recast' (Ploix 2018: 490-92). *Fram* provides a visual demonstration of the competing axes of past and present which Harrison negotiates in his work, and which motivates his reading of *Hecuba*. *Fram* also conveys Harrison's

⁸ BC MS 20c Harrison 03/FRA

⁹ BC MS 20c Harrison 03/HEC

¹⁰ BC MS 20c Harrison 03/HEC/03: 494

¹¹ BC MS 20c Harrison 03/FRA/06: 1553

generosity in recognizing the significant influence of Murray in his own work as a theatre translator, placing the activist approach to translation on a continuum; as Murray prepares to return to his grave in Westminster Abbey, he links his notion of tragedy to Nansen's belief in his ship: 'a vessel of the spirit that could withstand the force/ of crushing coldness and still move on its course' (Harrison 2008: 76). Like the icebreaker, Harrison suggests, tragedy has the power to struggle against the ice in men's hearts and bring some relief to the bleakness of the human condition.

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