

Editorial

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We are living through an era of profound mutability. Despite exhortations that we are now in a ‘post-COVID’ world, society continues to be shaped and re-shaped by the effects of and responses to COVID. Climate change, economic instability and political unrest threaten to upend society as we know it on a near-daily basis. Precarity is rapidly becoming the norm, and it is increasingly difficult to imagine, let alone plan for, the future.

Despite this bleak picture, the volatility of contemporary life contains within it a kernel of hope. In academia alone, contested histories can lead to the rediscovery of untold stories, and unanticipated new collaborations can bloom from unsettled research environments. In a broader sense, unfixed futures leave open the possibility for positive change.

It was in this spirit that we selected the theme of ‘mutability’ for this issue. Taking advantage of a newly wide disciplinary remit and developing continuity with last year’s ‘synergy’ issue, we sought submissions from across the humanities. All of our authors broadly respond to our theme, and we hope that you find something unexpected in the blurring and crossing of the disciplinary boundaries around the field of humanities.

Opening this issue is an article by Caterina Pan, ‘The performative femininity of Charlotte Smith, pre-Romantic poet and novelist’. Pan explores the ambiguous divide between the private and public persona of this notable female writer. Considering Smith through the ‘performative femininity’ expressed in her published works and private correspondence, Pan argues for Smith’s formation of a doubled identity to preserve her literary reputation. Following this is Rachel Heald’s creative-critical piece ‘Harry Potter and Proust’s Magic Key’. Fore-

going an academic treatment for a personal essay, Heald meditates on the mutable memories of childhood reading. Heald recalls personal developments—both invited and unwelcome—wrought by her own and her children’s readings and re-readings of the Harry Potter books.

Rounding off the issue we have four reviews of recent books reflecting the wide disciplinary remit of the issue. Cinzia DuBois reflects on the weaving of women’s stories in Charlotte Higgins’ *Greek Myths: A New Retelling*. Hardeep Dhindsa explores the unstable meanings of ‘home’ with personal reflection in his review of Onni Gust’s *Unhomely Empire*. Mark Wilson appraises Michael Questier’s recent intervention in the study of Catholic martyrology in Elizabethan and Stuart Britain in his review of *Catholics and Treason: Martyrology, Memory and Politics in the Post-Reformation*. Our final review is from one of this issue’s editors, with Aimee Hinds Scott touring ironic multiplicity in modern popular culture in Ian Kinane’s edited volume *Isn’t It Ironic? Irony in Contemporary Popular Culture*.

This issue has been the work of many hands, and we would like to express our gratitude to those whose labour has made it possible. We would like to thank the department of English and Creative Writing at the University of Roehampton, in particular Susan Greenberg and Alison Waller for their guidance. We would like to thank the editorial board and all of the peer-reviewers for freely giving their time and expertise. A special thanks must go to last year’s editor Odhran O’Donoghue for his time and patience. Finally, we would like to thank all of the contributors to this issue of *RoundTable*, whose diverse and fascinating interpretations of our theme of mutability populate this issue.