

The Triumphs of Anna Hume

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One book on display in the literature case is the first secular work written by a woman to be printed in Scotland: Anna Hume's *The Triumphs of Love: Chastitie: Death, Translated out of Petrarch*, printed at Edinburgh in 1644. Petrarch was, of course, one of the most celebrated writers of the Renaissance, and Anna Hume was not the only woman to translate his poetry: [Mary Sidney](#) had translated the *Triumphs* a few decades earlier.

Anna Hume was the daughter of the poet and historian David Hume of Godscroft. After his death, she was instrumental in getting an edition of his *History of the Houses of Douglas and Angus* into print in 1644. This was with the Edinburgh printer [Evan Tyler](#), who also published *The Triumphs*. It must have been the publishing of her father's book which made Hume think of having her own poetry printed, and enabled her to form the connection with a printer, at a time when ladies of good family were not expected to think of professional authorship as a career.

Hume's poetry reflects the growing use of English rather than Scottish as the language of print in seventeenth-century Scotland. Here is an excerpt from 'The Triumph of Death':

In sum, her countenance you still might know
The same it was, not pale, but white as snow,
Which on the tops of hills in gentle flakes
Falls in a calm, or as a man that takes
Desir'd rest, as if her lovely sight
Were closed with sweetest sleep, after the sprite
Was gone. If this be that fools call to die,
Death seem'd in her exceeding fair to be.

More of Anna Hume's poetry can be read online at [Project Gutenberg](#). If you have access to [EEBO](#) (available with an NLS Reader's Ticket or from most universities), you can read the 1644 edition [online](#).

The exhibition also has on display the first book written by a woman to be printed in Scotland - which will be blogged about at a later date.