



# Transcription

Written by Kate Atkinson

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# Transcription

By Kate Atkinson

## Transcription Definition

A dramatic story of WWII espionage, betrayal, and loyalty, by the #1 bestselling author of Life After Life

## Transcription And Translation

In 1940, eighteen-year old Juliet Armstrong is reluctantly recruited into the world of espionage. Sent to an obscure department of MI5 tasked with monitoring the comings and goings of British Fascist sympathizers, she discovers the work to be by turns both tedious and terrifying. But after the war has ended, she presumes the events of those years have been relegated to the past forever.

## Transcription Jobs

Ten years later, now a radio producer at the BBC, Juliet is unexpectedly confronted by figures from her past. A different war is being fought now, on a different battleground, but Juliet finds herself once more under threat. A bill of reckoning is due, and she finally begins to realize that there is no action without consequence.

Transcription is a work of rare depth and texture, a bravura modern novel of extraordinary power, wit and empathy. It is a triumphant work of fiction from one of the best writers of our time.

## Transcription Factor

It's funny how some books can immediately grab hold of you and cast you under their spell. This is that sort of book. The book immediately transports you back to London in the 1940s and 50s. The language is just spot on perfect.

The story revolves around a young woman who is drafted to transcribe conversations among a group of fascists that have been infiltrated by MI5. Juliet is only 18 and before she knows it, has been drafted for some spying in addition to her transcription duties.

Atkinson d

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The story revolves around a young woman who is drafted to transcribe conversations among a group of fascists that have been infiltrated by MI5. Juliet is only 18 and before she knows it, has been drafted for some spying in addition to her transcription duties.

Atkinson displays a dry sense of humor. It seemed she had acquired all the drawbacks of being a mistress and none of the advantages - like sex. (She was becoming bolder with the word if not the act.) For Perry, it seemed to be the other way around - he had all the advantages of having a mistress and none of the drawbacks. Like sex. Poor Juliet is truly naive and I had to keep reminding myself how young she was. She keeps waiting for a romance the reader knows is never going to come.

The rest of the characters are equally well drawn. The pettiness, the certainty, all are brought out for our inspection.

This is not a fast paced book by any stretch. The writing is meant to be enjoyed, lots of beautiful phrasing. But there is a tension to the book and the ending wasn't anything I saw coming. Juliet had the sense that she was taking part in a farce, although not one that was particularly funny - in fact, not funny at all. But it is, in its own weird way.

In this day and age, I'm never sure if I'm seeing symbolism where it doesn't belong. But it seems fitting that Atkinson picks as her topic the problem of Fascism in England during WWII. Do not equate nationalism with patriotism, Perry warned Juliet. Nationalism is the first step on the road to Fascism. Or this Juliet could still remember when Hitler had seemed like a harmless clown. No one was amused now. (The clowns are the dangerous ones, Perry said.)

Make sure to read The Author's Note. What is the nature of historical fiction?

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There are some interesting ideas here, like what constitutes the real self. Or what's worth fighting for. "This England" . It's a book meant to be discussed.

My thanks to netgalley and Little, Brown for an advance copy of this novel.

...more

As this novel opens, it is 1981, Juliet Armstrong is 60 years old, and while she was distracted by her thoughts, she was struck by a car when she attempted to cross the street. Her story comes through in a series of jumps between 1940 and 1950 before landing back in 1981 again.

In 1940 at the tender age of 18, Juliet is recruited by MI5 to work on transcribing taped conversations between one of MI5's agents disguised as a subversive and several informants. There are short excerpts from these tran As this novel opens, it is 1981, Juliet Armstrong is 60 years old, and while she was distracted by her thoughts, she was struck by a car when she attempted to cross the street. Her story comes through in a series of jumps between 1940 and 1950 before landing back in 1981 again.

In 1940 at the tender age of 18, Juliet is recruited by MI5 to work on transcribing taped conversations between one of MI5's agents disguised as a subversive and several informants. There are short excerpts from these transcriptions throughout the 1940 portions of the novel.

In 1950, the war is over, although the aftermath lingers. Especially in the world of MI5, where spying on whatever enemies exist continues. Juliet's everyday life has changed, however. She is involved in the production of several radio programs for school children. However, as Juliet discovers, one is never entirely free of the spy business. Once a part of MI5, always a part of MI5. Maybe. Unless . . .

One of Juliet's thoughts from 1981: The Russians had been their enemies and then they were their allies, and then they were enemies again. The Germans the same "the great enemy, the worst of all of them, and now they were our friends, one of the mainstays of Europe. It was all such a waste of breath. War and peace. Peace and war. It would go on forever without end.

Of the many things I have always admired about Kate Atkinson's writing, one in particular stands out: how brilliant it is. We experience first-hand the intelligence and rapid-fire brain synapses of Juliet Armstrong right from the beginning. Although she is resigned to always being the one expected to clean up, to get the tea, and other "female tasks" like typing up the transcripts, her mind is always working at the speed of light and she both sees and knows far more than she would ever let on. And people notice.

The author's notes at the end of this story are wonderful. Ms Atkinson describes where real situations and events from the war years are blended with the fictional story she is telling. It is virtually seamless, and if someone had said this is a true story, I wouldn't question it for a moment.

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This is an ingeniously plotted story, and I felt instant kinship with Juliet Armstrong “ even at the same time that I was bowled over by her intellect. Her relationships with her fellow co-workers and those in the hierarchy above her were fascinating and had me feeling by turns loftier and humbled.

Although this is not what I would describe as a “funny book” , it was overflowing with humour and entertaining situations. I laughed out loud a few times, and I also felt sad a few times because there is also pathos here.

Kate Atkinson’s writing in this novel gave me a strong urge to immediately pick up another one of her books. Fortunately, I do have a few that I have not yet read, and I hope to read some of them in 2019. In the meantime, this finely crafted novel will have to hold me “ and it definitely has the strength to do so. ...more



## Transcription Services

Great historical fiction in the world of British espionage in WW2 and the repercussions that emerge in the 1950s. Touches on issues of class in spying circles, being gay, the monitoring of fascists, a young Juliet, recruited to engage in the process of transcription that develops into so much more. Then some time after the war, Juliet is now a BBC radio producer and sees a familiar face that refuses to acknowledge her leading to the entry of a host of familiar figures from the past. There are so many great reviews on this, so I will limit myself to saying this is complex storytelling that I found thoroughly absorbing, enjoyable and immersive historical fiction. ...more

Not all of Kate Atkinson's novels have been what she calls historical fiction, but the last several have been. This novel may hew closest to the truth, though like she says in the Author's Note at the end, she wrenched open history and stuffed it with imaginative reconstruction, at least one fantasy for each fact.

The author tells us afterward what her intentions were: we have questions that are inevitable and instead of farming out possible answers to various reviewers, she's just blunt with us what we've been wondering about. There is something comparable in theatre, when the actors take off their masks for the final bow and we all celebrate together.

Atkinson returns to the Second World War, periodic releases from the National Archives of secrets from that time fueling her creative process. When she discovers [true fact] an ordinary-seeming bank clerk was a major cog in rounding up British supporters of Nazis, her story had a frame. When she discovered [true fact] hundreds and hundreds of pages of transcripts of conversations of dissident groups in London, her story had a heart.

What Kate Atkinson does is not necessarily unique (using historical documents to create fiction), but what she does with it is unique. Her style, tone, and characters are recognizably hers. She is funny: one knows there are people out there whose droll delivery of witty responses to ordinary questions is quintessentially British but we don't come across it enough. Atkinson can do repartee.

By now Atkinson may be incapable now of writing a straightforward fiction with a chronological timeline. This novel has only three time periods to work with and really only one central character, which simplifies the action enough that I only had to reread an earlier section once. This was partly due to my surprise, maybe a little resentment, and finally pleasure at being taken out of the action at what seemed like a critical moment – again! She –d done that to me in the previous section as well. I was burrowed in like a tick, and am yanked to a later, earlier, whatever time. Atkinson manages to satisfy and confound a reader at the same time.

Atkinson’s characters always have the “ghost of Jackson Brodie” about them. This is a very good thing, considering how much we liked Brodie and wouldn’t mind having him resurrected. We could make the case that the main character in this novel, Juliet Armstrong, is a female Jackson Brodie – honest and therefore vulnerable, she doesn’t have so high an opinion of herself that she is insufferable. In the end she is well able to take care of herself. She’s smart, and a very good liar, but keeps herself a little distant. After all, who can one trust?

At eighteen, Juliet is parentless: "her mother's death had revealed that there was no metaphor too ostentatious for grief." Young and alone, Juliet was not, however, callow. She lied like crazy through a job interview with a flippant and overly-inquisitive young man who interviewed her for a job, which she was surprised she got. Later she learned he'd known every lie, and appreciated the ease with which she misled him.

This book is about spies, spies working in the service of the British government, or so we believe. What is special is that we see what is British about them – what is ordinary, patriotic, courageous, honorable. But we also see a nation at war and we see duplicity, hunger, ambition, pettiness. Then we lay over that the work of the other nations at war, France, Germany, Russia, the United States and a few exceptional people emerge alive, not unscathed, but breathing at the end. The tension comes when we are not sure who will remain standing.

Atkinson writes about the middle of the twentieth century, but she could be talking about the twenty-first: Juliet could still remember when Hitler had seemed like a harmless clown. No one was amused now. (“The clowns are the dangerous ones, Perry said.”)

and

Do not equate nationalism with patriotism – Nationalism is the first step on the road to Fascism. One always senses the intelligence in Atkinson’s work. She not only writes a good story which means getting the humanity right, she makes us think while we read. She’s unpredictable. And frankly, I like her politics. It’s always a pleasure to enjoy another of her books. ...more

## Transcription Vs Translation

2 oh my disappointing stars.

I do like Atkinson's novels so when this one popped up, I was anxious to begin turning pages. Unfortunately the anticipation for this novel went south as I become bogged down in a uneven plot, and the flipping of time elements. This is a book I should have loved. It had everything, World War 2, a strong intelligent woman, espionage, London, all the things that make for a poignant novel. So, what went wrong?

For me, I just could not connect with any of the characters. T 2 oh my disappointing stars.

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For me, I just could not connect with any of the characters. They were choppy figures that seemed to drift about as I wondered exactly why they did what they did. There really didn't seem to be much of a plot and though I am sure Ms Atkinson did her due diligence on the topic, it just fell ever so flat. It was hard for me to maintain attention and though I did skim a bit, and found myself adverse to continuing at times wishing and hoping it would get better.

So, for me this novel just didn't come together. I am hoping Ms Atkinson does continue to write for she does it so well.

Thank you to my local library for a copy of this book.

...more

Juliet Armstrong is only eighteen years old when she is recruited by the M15 in 1940. She is tasked with transcribing the conversations of British fascists sympathizers during WWII. Before long, she is given more duties such as working as a spy herself and watching a dog which is being held for a sort of ransom. Ten years later she finds herself working for the BBC as a radio producer. She appears to have moved on with her life until those from her past come back, reminding her that one can never get away, and there are spies who spy on the spies, and that past crimes can and will haunt you. The plot shifts

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around mainly between the 1040's and 1950's with brief time spent in the 1980's

The plot shifts around mainly between the 1040's and 1950's with brief time spent in the 1980's. Juliet begins the book as a young woman mourning the loss of her Mother while attending school to learn a trade. She is recruited right out of the school and passes the initial test and is thrown into the world of espionage. "You've come a long way, baby" comes to mind. This is a slower moving book and one needs to really pay attention to detail. I did struggle at times with the slowness. Initially, I really enjoyed the book and then things felt tedious, then things picked up once again. Juliet is also an interesting character. I failed to connect with her and yet I enjoyed reading her thoughts. She had a dry sense of humor and had some witty and insightful thoughts. The other characters in this book had their own sense of humor as well. I do not read a lot of espionage/spy novels and it was nice to see the humor thrown in.

As Juliet's job is transcription, the reader gets to see the transcriptions that Juliet has made. I enjoyed this touch even though some of the conversations were mundane. I thought this was a nice way to show that a spy's life is not always exciting and how many spy organizations gather their data. Plus, this is another way of giving the reader a glimpse into Juliet's life, her interactions with others in the M15.

Apart from some pacing issues, I was hoping for a little more action in this book. But again, as I mentioned before, this book was dealing with transcribing data so there can't be too much action in that and even the "fight" scene was all very proper. Atkinson's writing is wonderful, and I thoroughly enjoyed her Author's Note at the end. Don't skip that!

I enjoyed this book and appreciated that Atkinson used a female protagonist \*ahem\* spy in this book. I just wished I connected more with Juliet. She started off as naive and got some maturity and oomph as the book progressed, but I never felt connected to her character. There are quite few characters in this book, but I found it easy to keep track of them.

Fans of Atkinson, WWII buffs, and fans of spy/espionage novels will surely enjoy this book.

Thank you to Little Brown and Company and NetGalley who provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All the thoughts and opinions expressed in this review are my own.

Read more of my reviews at [www.openbookpost.com](http://www.openbookpost.com) ...more

## Transcription And Translation Worksheet

\*2.5\*

I am having a really bad historical fiction year (looking at you Washington Black). So I was absolutely convinced that dropping all my reading commitments to immediately pick up Kate Atkinson's new WWII spy novel would help raise my spirits. Her previous books *Life after Life* and *A God in Ruins* are favourites of mine. I trust her to deliver a distinct kind of uber-British novel, complete with her rather sardonic humour and droll observations.

All of these Atkinson-isms are here, at least \*2.5\*

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All of these Atkinson-isms are here, at least in part, but the final result is, I am deeply sad to report, a bit of a mess.

I am sure Atkinson knows wit is one of her trade marks but she totally over does it here, it loses its charm. This starts out a very promising espionage novel that ends as farce. I don't recall her other novels being so peppered with asides in parenthesis not to mention the Greek chorus like repetition of text from earlier in the story. This technique not only drove me entirely batty it also succeeded in ousting me out of the story at key moments.

An impressive amount of research has gone into this book, particularly the role of MI5 in monitoring Nazi sympathisers (*The Fifth Column*) during WWII. I feel like the source material is rife with intrigue and danger but somehow that is not carried over into this story. Many times I considered that I might have been better served by reading a non-fiction account of this era. The sense of the war, the political machinations of MI5 and the various elements of seditious activity became quite lost in this rather curiously light-hearted plot. Was Atkinson trying to show that spy craft was relentlessly dull and often pointless? That all MI5 men are essentially interchangeable types and that it is impossible to tell who is spying on who and why? If so then this was a success.

It hurts me to review this so unfavourably and other fans of Atkinson should not be disheartened as it is entirely possible that I was still suffering a Warlight hangover. The two books share some overlap in a setting of post-war London and espionage as a critical driver however in all other respects they could not be more stylistically opposed.

A slight blemish then on my otherwise complete adoration of this author. I now need to go back and reread *Life after Life* to remind myself how good Atkinson can be. ...more

## Transcription

“May I tempt you?” This question is the impetus which shifts a very young woman from a job merely transcribing traitorous conversations deliberately overheard during WWII in London into a bonafide spy. Working at the BBC ten years, later her misdeeds of the past come back to haunt her. For a novel about espionage, I found the characters to be rather dull and the plot lacking in tension.

## Transcription Software

Atkinson is one of my favorite authors and, with *Transcription*, she has moved her star even higher. The tale is set in England, primarily London, in 1940, 1950 and 1981. The pivotal events occur in 1940, when Juliet Armstrong at 18, is recruited for the war effort. But not for any battle-related job, no. She is to file and type. Soon she is recruited further as a transcriptionist for an MI5 developed cause, to reel in and control English Fifth Column citizens, those who sympathize with the Nazis. Atkinson is one of my favorite authors and, with *Transcription*, she has moved her star even higher. The tale is set in England, primarily London, in 1940, 1950 and 1981. The pivotal events occur in 1940, when Juliet Armstrong at 18, is recruited for the war effort. But not for any battle-related job, no. She is to file and type. Soon she is recruited further as a transcriptionist for an MI5 developed cause, to reel in and control English Fifth Column citizens, those who sympathize with the Nazis.

While the outline of the story may appear relatively simple, in Atkinson's hands and with her wonderful verbal skills, the tale becomes one of identity in a much-changed world, reality vs multiple other possible realities, issues of truth or whether there is truth, and the ever present layers of deception in Juliet's new world. As in other of her novels, there are questions of self and reality along the way, though tackled in a more concrete way than the last two novels.

These are just some of my favorite lines/quotes scattered throughout the book.

Come now, quite enough of exposition and explanation.

We're not approaching the end of a novel, Miss Armstrong.

( loc 4836 )

In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

( loc 60 )

Older men of a certain type were drawn to her. They seemed to want to improve her in some way. Juliet was almost thirty and didn't feel she needed much more improvement. The war had seen to that. (loc 152)

It was a terrible place really, but she was predisposed towards it. It was a thread in the labyrinth, one that she could follow back to the world before the war, to her self before the war. Innocence and experience butting up against each other in the greasy fug of Moretti's.

(loc 242)

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That is me, she thought, I am crushed by loss. “Don’t seek out elaborate metaphors, her English teacher had said of her school essays, but her mother’s death had revealed that there was no metaphor too ostentatious for grief. It was a terrible thing and demanded embellishment. (loc 277)

And one final quote.

Juliet felt rather ashamed, as her mind had been on what dress to wear this evening rather than bottomless pits of evil. The war still seemed like a matter of inconvenience rather than a threat. (loc 945)

I believe these samples give an idea of the spark behind the prose of this novel.

Atkinson provides an interesting Author’s Note outlining the inspirations and sources used before imagination and artistic license took over. She also provides a bibliography relevant to the war years, MI5, etc.

I wholeheartedly recommend this novel.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review. ...more

Please see full review on my blog.

I wasn't a fan of Kate Atkinson's Life After Life and was hesitant to try this, but after seeing the praises I couldn't resist the temptation of asking the publisher for a copy.

This is a book that will take you to 40's and 50's, it's quintessentially British in all levels. I haven't read a more satirical, sharp, enjoyable book that takes place in WW2 so far. This piece of history is clearly something Atkinson excels in, she takes us through the war-ridden London Please see full review on my blog.

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events, the conversation, the characters in this book, all 5 stars and I found this book an absolute reading joy, can't recommend enough if you're fan of books that are related to : British, spies, WW2.

Thanks for Penguin for sending me a copy of this book. ...more

## Transcription Meaning

Juliet is adorably clueless. The spy-guys stuffy and charadesque. All of them: So. Very. British. (Or it could be just me stereotyping the world, if so, then I'm sorry!)

The humour appropriately dry. The atmosphere noirish, just a bit, to add in enough grit and some patina of time that feels to have passed between the reader and the plotline origins.

Just what I love to read occasionally.

PS. Mangling Russian dishes didn't improve the novel. By 'Verushka' a 'vatrushka' probably was meant. Took me Juliet is adorably clueless. The spy-guys stuffy and charadesque. All of them: So. Very. British. (Or it could be just me stereotyping the world, if so, then I'm sorry!)

The humour appropriately dry. The atmosphere noirish, just a bit, to add in enough grit and some patina of time that feels to have passed between the reader and the plotline origins.

Just what I love to read occasionally.

PS. Mangling Russian dishes didn't improve the novel. By 'Verushka' a 'vatrushka' probably was meant. Took me ages to guess. Why the hell couldn't the writer just call it a pie or a cheese pie or a Russian cheese pie? The book gained no extra authenticity whatsoever from making it sound as if they were all eating someone called Vera (Faith!) in an endearing form!

Q:

I was beginning to think that you were lost.â€™™

â€™™ But now I am found,â€™™ (c)

Q:

â€™™ Joy is an admirable goal,â€™™ Juliet said. â€™™ Completely unobtainable, of course.â€™™ (c)

Q:

Older men of a certain type were drawn to her. They seemed to want to improve her in some way. Juliet was almost thirty and didnâ€™™t feel she needed much more improvement. The war had seen to that. (c)

Q:

... had been employed as an Announcer. It had a capital letter. (â€™™ A woman!â€™™ everyone said, as if theyâ€™™d never heard a woman speak before.) (c)

Q:

The cat, a ginger one â€™™ they were the worst type of cat, in Julietâ€™™s opinion â€™™ had jumped up on the desk and bitten her â€™™ quite sharply, so that she couldnâ€™™t help but give a little yelp of pain. It then proceeded to roll around on the desk before rubbing its face on the microphone and purring so loudly that anyone listening must have thought there was a panther loose in the studio, one that was very pleased with itself for having killed a woman. (c)

Q:

... forlornly earnest about even the most trivial things... (c)

Q:

Juliet supposed that any one of those things â€™™ the war, philosophy, Vienna â€™™ was capable of making

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you both forlorn and earnest, and perhaps badly dressed too ... (c)

Q:

Did she understand what that meant? ... It meant that she was about to lose the only person who loved her. She was seventeen and her grief for herself was almost as great as her grief for her mother. ... her mother's death had revealed that there was no metaphor too ostentatious for grief. It was a terrible thing and demanded embellishment. (c)

Q:

Her mother had represented a form of truth for her, something that Juliet knew she had moved away from in the decade since her death. (c)

Q:

Inside each pearl there was a little piece of grit. That was the true self of the pearl, wasn't it? The beauty of the pearl was just the poor oyster trying to protect itself. From the grit. From the truth. (c)

Q:

Thinking had always been her downfall. (c)

Q:

But wasn't artistic endeavour the final refuge of the uncommitted? (c)

Q:

Juliet used to think that someone who seemed as ordinary as Godfrey Toby must be harbouring a secret – a thrilling past, a dreadful tragedy – but as time had gone by she realized that being ordinary was his secret. It was the best disguise of all really, wasn't it? (c)

Q:

I should have followed him, she thought. But he would have lost her. He had been rather good at evasion. (c) Wow. Lovely phrase, it could mean both physical and intellectual stuff.

Q:

“Do you like Beethoven, sir?” she asked.

“Not particularly,” he said, seemingly puzzled by the question. “He makes for a good paperweight though.” (c)

Q:

Choice, it seemed, was one of the first casualties of war. (c)

Q:

“Juliet?” the man said contemplatively. “As in Romeo and Juliet? Very romantic.” He laughed as if this was some kind of private joke.

“I believe it was actually a tragedy, sir.”

“Is there a difference?” (c)

Q:

She didn't like that supercilious eyebrow and so she gave her unfathomable father a promotion.

“An officer.” (c)

Q:

“A Bedford bus pulled up in front of Juliet.”

The driver opened the door and shouted over to her, “MI5, love? Hop in.” So much for secrecy, she thought. (c)

Q:

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â€˜Juliet.â€™

â€˜Oh, bad luck. I bet everyoneâ€™s always asking you where Romeo is. (c)

Q:

â€˜Well, Pa always said Iâ€™d end up behind bars.â€™

And that was how Julietâ€™s career in espionage began. (c)

Q:

It would be menials who would win this war, she thought, not girls in pearls. (c)

Q:

The Four Hundred, the Embassy, the Berkeley, the Milroy, the Astoria ballroom â€” there was no end to the entertainment to be had during a war. (c) Iâ€™ve a feeling I might know why Hitler went as far as he did, around the Europe.

Q:

â€˜He spoke Swahili (What was the point of that, Juliet wondered? Unless you were a Swahili, of course)

(c)

Q:

Juliet was waiting to be seduced by him. By anyone really, but preferably him. It was turning into a rather long wait. (c)

Q:

It seemed that she had acquired all the drawbacks of being a mistress and none of the advantages â€” like sex. (She was becoming bolder with the word, if not the act.) For Perry, it seemed to be the other way round â€” he had all the advantages of having a mistress and none of the drawbacks. Like sex. (Ñ•)

Q:

Juliet felt rather ashamed, as her mind had been on what dress to wear this evening rather than bottomless pits of evil. The war still seemed like a matter of inconvenience rather than a threat (c)

Q:

She imagined him creeping up on some poor unsuspecting hedgehog and giving it the fright of its life. (c)

Q:

â€˜Today is Friday, Miss Armstrong.â€™

â€˜All day, sir.â€™

â€˜And tomorrow is Saturday.â€™

â€˜It is,â€™ she agreed. Was he going to name all the days of the week, she wondered? (c)

Q:

The prospect of more tea was tedious, she had drunk enough with Mrs Scaife to sink HMS Hood. (c)

Q:

It was an alphabetic jumble, rather like being given an insight into the chaotic workings of a catâ€™s brain... (c)

Q:

â€˜Can I do something, sir?â€™ she asked.

â€˜You canâ€™t help me,â€™ he said bleakly. â€˜No one can.â€™

â€˜Are you having a spiritual crisis?â€™ she hazarded â€” tenderly, as seemed befitting for spiritual crises... (c)

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Q:

Perry gave a wretched kind of sob and, unable to think of anything else, Juliet made a cup of tea and placed it silently on the carpet next to him, where he remained in supplication. She shut the door quietly and got on with her work. It turned out that discovering a man on his knees, weeping, was a surprisingly effective deterrent to romantic feelings about that man. (c)

Q:

...she plucked "Middlesbrough" out of thin air. "Wonderful," she heard someone whisper. People always said they wanted the truth, but really they were perfectly content with a facsimile. (c)

Q:

"You should know it," Hartley said. "Why don't you know it?"

"Perhaps because I don't actually work for you any more, you know. You're not even paying me, just expenses. And you're obviously incompetent or I would know it." (c)

Q:

She feared that she was beginning to tread the wilder shores of her imagination. (c)

Q:

She didn't feel she had the fortitude for all those Tudors, they were so relentlessly busy "all that bedding and beheading.

Q:

Did people hunt flamingos? It was a bird Juliet had never given any thought to and now it seemed to be perched on every corner. No, not perched "they didn't perch, did they? Too big, probably. And the legs would be too long. You needed short legs for perching or you would be unbalanced, especially if you had a predilection for standing on one leg. Juliet sighed and wondered if one day she would think herself to death. (c)

Q:

She was dressed in an odd assortment of black garments, as if she had simply raided her wardrobe for everything in that colour and then piled it all on. She looked like a large, rather distressed bat. (•)

Q:

But then what constituted real? Wasn't everything, even this life itself, just a game of deception? (c)

Q:

You had to ask yourself, which was better "to have sex with any number of interesting (albeit possibly evil) men (and some women too, apparently), to be glamorously decadent, to ingest excessive amounts of drugs and alcohol and die a horrible but heroic death at a relatively young age, or to end up in Schools Broadcasting at the BBC? (c)

Q:

And that was that. Juliet's war.

â€|

"Oh, my dear Juliet," he laughed. "One is never free. It's never finished." (c)

Q:

â€| Juliet seized her chance.

She was the deer. She was the arrow. She was the queen. She was the contradiction. She was the synthesis. Juliet ran (c)

Q:

## Transcription

It was a nice lie and she thanked him silently for it. He always had such good manners. She expected it wasn't a matter of sides at all, it was probably much more complicated than that. (c)

Q:

She wished she could see her son one last time. Remind him to live his life well, tell him that she loved him. Tell him that nothing mattered and that that was a freedom, not a burden. (c) ...more

Just what I needed! I've struggled with various very long and overwrought novels of late. Transcription on the other hand is breezy and wry and thoroughly entertaining. A light hearted romp through the world of espionage in London during world war two. I had a sense of déjà vu through much of the novel, as if I had seen a documentary about the events Atkinson was writing about- essentially a secret service operation set up in a flat eavesdropping on the conversations of a motley crew of Nazi sympathisers in the flat next door. Atkinson's heroine is an eighteen year old virgin, who struggles to take anything very seriously. Her breezy naïve outlook is the novel's tone. Everyone is living double or even triple lives, one of Atkinson's favourite themes. Any kind of abiding truth is an elusive commodity. Atkinson perhaps could have dug a lot deeper on this theme. But this is less of a literary novel than Behind the Scenes at the Museum or A God in Ruins.

Twenty pages from the end it delivers what for me was a thoroughly unconvincing twist and the novel suddenly becomes messily entwined with a very real and familiar part of British history. But because it was so near the end it didn't spoil my enjoyment. ...more