Language as a Material Process

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This article examines Julia Kristeva's (1984) ideas of significance and negativity as facets of the meaning-making process, 'productive violence' and revolutionary practice of art that employs what she describes as 'creative textual practice'. It describes the use of text, language and text-based practices in contemporary works by the author and other artists including Annette Schmucki, Amanda Stewart and Annette Iggulden. These practices embrace the familiar, unfamiliar and uncanny by intertwining the symbolic and semiotic aspects of written and spoken textual communication through concrete poetry, sound poetry and textual processes that originate from the *Oulipo* movement. In particular, the employment of dialect, 'dead' languages and layers of intelligibility is explored alongside what Estelle Barrett—in her reading of Kristeva—describes as the 'hyper-differentiated realm of latent and possible values and meanings' in the work. (Barrett 2011, 19) This reading considers the way that creative textual practices themselves highlight the performative properties of text and considers the material process of language within feminist creative practice and discourse. As a result, I argue for a materialism in which text, speech or language are valued for their shape, appearance or sound, rather than their meaning or role in communication.

Keywords: creative textual practice; sound poetry; notation; music and language; speech

Text and Materialism

In this article, I explore language as a material process that is manifest through creative textural practice with specific reference to works by Annette Schmucki, Amanda Stewart and Annette Iggulden and to my recent practice in the piece *séo níedhæmestre; se tidfara* (2018), one of a series of works that employ Anglo Saxon art and language. In all of these examples, the use of text and language is described as a kind of materialism, in which text, speech or language are valued by the creator of the work for their shape, appearance or sound, rather than their meaning or role in communication and in which resultant linguistic or literary meaning can therefore be considered secondary to the shape, appearance or sound of the work itself. This—perhaps lesser-considered— aspect of text, is one that could also be characterised as its 'remainder' when its layers of meaning-making signification are removed: something that it holds in common with what Nicolas Bourriaud, in the book *The Exform* (2016), describes as 'waste'. In this context, 'waste' is anything that is not 'at work' in the (re)production of meaning in everyday life: Bourriaud considers this specifically within capitalism, whereas here I will consider this aspect of 'waste' or 'remainder' only in relation to the linguistic or semantic meanings of speech acts and text. Nevertheless, in both formulations this intersects with an idea of value: if the value of language is in its communicative or linguistic meaning-making properties, then its other potential aspects and meanings are indeed 'waste' and do not reproduce this value.

In order to describe how 'waste' might have a role in artistic practice, Bourriaud describes how such materials may enable the avoidance of ideological norms: that is, those social or disciplinary practices that would reproduce meaning and value in an expected way. He quotes Louis Althusser's (1996) concept of 'aleatory materialism' to account for this. Describing aleatory materialism as 'the logic of emergence' (Althusser, 1996, 22 quoted in Bourriaud 2016, 11), he identifies occasions in artistic practice that exemplify this as those where something 'begins to function *in an autonomous manner*' (Althusser, 1996, 42 quoted in ibid.; original emphasis). This, then, is a material approach that simultaneously creates new meaning as it reveals the absence of socially expected or obsolete meanings (those that might be assumed by the presence of the materials themselves or by the disciplinary context). The examples that I will present do exactly this by presenting or re-presenting text—sometimes at the expense of intelligibility, or otherwise without a concern for it—as an artistic practice or process rather than a path to linguistic meaning. Rather, sonic and embodied meanings are here considered as by-products of this working with text and of the material approaches of these practices themselves. Therefore, I seek to show how artists may use text and creative textual practices to conversely find meaning that is beyond text.

When I use the term 'materialism' in relation to artistic practice, I refer both to ways of making that place value on the material things that are used in that process and that seek to reveal their aspects rather than considering them as tools for realising the 'idea' of the artist, and also to the observation of the effects of those materials on both the work and the artist in ways that cannot be attributed only to the creative processes undertaken by the individual who makes the work. Therefore, while objects such as manuscript paper or instruments might be considered material and so might the body, ephemeral or intangible aspects of the work such as spoken text or sound might also be considered in this way precisely because of their tangible effects. My personal interest in materialism as a facet of my own practice therefore relates to materials beyond the conceptual and the instrumental, but includes the physical realities of the score, sounds and the body.

I have a particular interest in text and notation as something that is often overlooked as a medium in musical practice. For example, Christopher Williams' extension of the understanding of notation beyond what he calls the 'prescription-preservation model' (2016, Chapter o) still focuses on the relationship between the interpreter and the notation, even when this is described as 'an active journey rather than a passive reproduction' (ibid). Rather than explore what notations *mean* or *imply*, my compositional work seeks to explore the way that notations are made, the practices that they employ or borrow and what the embodied experience of their creation might suggest for performance. Similarly, Paulo de Assis's statement that 'notation [is] the totality of words, signs, and symbols encountered on the road to a concrete performance of music' (2013, 5) goes some way to identifying material aspects of notation that may have an effect in performance, but still neglects the material fact of the score itself. To consider this both in its creation and its role in performance, further links to the agency of the body within notating processes *as* performing processes. Such an approach might be described as part of a feminist new materialism: one that similarly foregrounds the body and practices of making. This would not only consider the material resistances of the component parts of the artistic work and their enactment but also the links between materials, processes, politics and bodies that intersect with culture and biology. In this approach, matter and the body are considered 'not only as they are formed by the forces of language, culture, and politics but also as they are formative', (Frost 2011, 70) and thus so are the ways that 'culture and biology have reciprocal agentive effects upon one another' (71). Taking this into account, it is both aspects of the material experience of the creation of notation and material practices involving text, speech and language that this article relates to material principles within my work and that of others.

Language as a material process

Music, text, speech and language are linked in my examples through their use as both structuring and performative materials. These uses and enactments of text can be considered as what Estelle Barrett (2011; 2102) reads in Julia Kristeva (1984) as 'creative textual practice'. Kristeva's consideration of the symbolic and semiotic dimensions of meaning describe how the art object communicates beyond its textual meaning even where text is employed. Kristeva assumes that music is purely semiotic (1984, 24), but I contend that music that contains aspects of creative textual practice involves what Estelle Barrett describes in relation to Kristeva as 'reconnecting the symbolic and semiotic dimensions of language' – connecting 'language as it signifies' and 'language as it is related to material or biological processes that are closely implicated in affect and emotion' (Barrett 2011, 8). The 'semiotic', in this case, can be understood as 'bodily knowing' (ibid., 9) and articulates 'a continuum between the body and external functions and the body and language' (Kristeva 1984, 27), In the case of language, its 'articulatory or phonetic effects' sound the semiotic function, which serves to 'multiply the possible meanings of an utterance or text' (Barrett 2011, 10). In artworks that use text materially, then, there is always already a state of symbolic tension between the symbolic and the semiotic.

In the book *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), Kristeva describes how her concepts of '*significance*' and 'negativity' are facets of the meaning-making process, 'productive violence' (16), and revolutionary practice, of art that employs such creative textual practices. These are the concepts that—along with the 'remainder' of text and language—form the basis of my analyses. *Significance*, here, can be defined as the potential for meaning making in a signifying process involving the semiotic and the symbolic, and is related by Kristeva to the 'signifying processes that [result] from a crisis of social structures' (ibid., 15). This is violent in the sense that it represents the 'transgression of a frontier' between the signifying code/phenotext and the body of the subject (Kristeva 1986, 29). However, this violence is also productive because it 'shatters the established discourse and in doing so changes the status of the subject, its relation to the body, to others and to objects' (Kristeva 1984, 15). This is also a part of the concept of negativity, which itself is intertwined with rejection: in Kristeva's case, it is created thought the shattering of the perception of unified meaning in relation to text in a way that is pre- or alogical. Therefore, creative textual practices, as described here, are productive practices in as much as they create meaning as they deconstruct text.

Barrett—in her reading of Kristeva—describes as the 'hyper-differentiated realm of latent and possible values and meanings' that arise in work that attempts to combine the symbolic and the semiotic in this way (2011, 19). Her reading situates art practice as a central component not only of revealing such meanings but of fundamentally changing language at the same time through the

internal logic of practice. In Barrett's assessment, all practice enacts material processes and in so doing alters them from the inside. This alteration, then, is not only performative. If it were understood to be so, it would be the case that this process of transgression arises from an 'already constituted' discourse. (ibid.) Rather, she describes how discourse is constituted through and by the artwork even as it is becoming formed or being performed: '[i]n creative production, there is no opposition between inside and outside: consciousness and materiality are mutually constitutive, enfolded and emergent' (ibid., 72). It is this process that I hope to highlight in combination with those concepts of Kristeva's described above: the ways that artists may not only deconstruct but materially reveal and thus alter the aspects of speech and language that might be described as their 'remainder' and the ways in which this meaning-making process may be significant for those who encounter their work.

Creative Textual Practices

Sound Poetry

Barrett's reading of Kristeva therefore leads me to a new materialist understanding of art and language in relation to each other, in which both the artist's intervention into her material and the intervention of the material into the artist's approach and understanding can be considered in parallel. Examples of this can be seen in the sound poetry works of the Australian poet Amanda Stewart, who herself has discussed similar issues of the materiality of text and its affect. In an interview about her practice, she stated '[i]f we look below the surface of speech we find beginnings, residues, disjunctions—the flux of complex oral and propositional codes that recombine at the edge of distinction (culture)'. (PROPOSTA, 2004) One example of this can be seen in the poem *It Becomes: July 1981* (Stewart [n.d.]b), in which the poet combines repetition and pitch to create the idea of looping in her vocal performance of the repeated fragments of the poem: the rise and fall of the phrase 'with all this' contrasts with the rising phrase 'it is' and the low tessitura of her repetition of 'it' in the final line of the poem. The *significance* of this aspect of performance is to create a separation in meaning of similar phrases (e.g. 'it's' and 'it is' which are therefore presented differently) and to emphasise repetition in shape and gesture. This reflects the topic of the poem—the reproduction of outrage in and by the media—but does so by performatively demonstrating it beyond the text of the poem itself.

This emphasis of the musical or sonic aspect of the words of poetry can further be found in the poems *Kitsch Postcards* (Stewart [n.d.]c), in which Stewart presents a fragmented text about Australia, and in *Absence* (Stewart [n.d.]a), in which performance Stewart sings, hums and vocalises, before presenting a text that seems to critically engage with this absence of meaning and its relationship to psychoanalytic theory. The initial decomposition of language in this second poem effectively demonstrates the idea of negativity: by breaking down speech and language into what seem to be its

component parts, the opening of the poem defies intelligibility and presents language as sound. In combination with the other spoken lines of the poem, the listener is then led to contemplate this sonic and gestural aspect of all of the sounds of the poem, even where linguistic meaning may be evident. Indeed, while the sound and shape of speech may be thought its 'waste' or 'remainder', the listener to *Absence* may be led to conclude that the linguistic aspect of the poem may in fact be the 'remainder' of Stewart's vocal performance. As a final, brief, example: this particular idea of sound and text beyond the page is itself represented both textually and performatively in the poem *Sound and Sense* (Steward [n.d.]e) in which performance Stewart's voice is layered and processed, causing the buzzing sounds of sibilance to obscure the text of the poem itself, allowing it to emerge as a rhythm: again, here, the 'remainder' of the poem's performance becomes its material.

In each of these cases, the sonic result of performance can further be read as demonstrating meaning in an otherwise textual aspect of the poem; nevertheless, the linguistic expression of that meaning—from which such a reading might originate—is often lost. This is an example of productive violence: in degrading expected textual meanings, other relationships emerge from the poem, to the poet, her body and to sound. Stewart has addressed this aspect of her creative textual practice in relation to the poem *Postiche* (Stewart [n.d.]d), whose written format is revealed as non-linear only when compared with Stewart's performance of the same text: the spatialised presentation of the text on the page suggests one set of emphases, which is both different to that in her performances and also presents the text in a slightly differ order 'rhythm' to that performed. She has described both of these artefacts—textual and sonic representations—as having a 'notational' function, stating '[i]n this case, a poem consists of two entities, a written score which is open to lateral interpretation and an aural score which remains fixed and immutable' (PROPOSTA, 2004). Noting that in her other works, a larger number of textual or sonic artefacts may exist, Stewart describes how a single performance may never represent the poem in its entirety, further stating: '"[t]he work" is the work of a process of engagement with overlapping fields of notation' (ibid.). Finally, she describes the listener who encounters her work in terms similar to those of Kristeva and Barrett, calling her work a 'multi-referential field of signifiers' which may 'reveal the listening subject beyond the edge of it/self' (ibid.). In this way, Stewart demonstrates the materiality of text in her work both in her relationship to it and in her written and spoken performances of it through her poems.

Visual Art

A similar, but differently presented, approach to text in and as an artwork can be found in the practice of the visual artist Annette Iggulden. Many of Iggulden's artworks employ layers of text and text-like writing practices to create parts or sections of her images or indeed present text as an image in itself.

These practices are explored in her PhD thesis, *Women's silence: in the space of words and images*, in which she sought to investigate the use of 'alternative forms of speech' to foreground practices and experiences that were otherwise not articulated in speech, with a particular focus on the script-writing practices of medieval nuns (Iggulden, 2002). In creating these images with and from text, Iggulden has described four intersecting forms of visual art practice: 'writing as a form of drawing and speaking'; 'copying the words of others'—including texts from the Bible or by Roland Barthes and transcriptions of Australian Sign Language (Aus-Lan); 'changing written texts into visual images'; and '"imaging" the letters of the alphabet' (Iggulden 2010, 69). As in Stewart's work, these practices involve forms of transformation, and Iggulden focuses on those processes that involve the body of the artist as a central part of this process. This process is evident in many of Iggulden's works and should be considered as a practice of her work rather than only an aspect of several of her images; as a result its *significance* extends beyond its appearance on the page or canvas to its evocation of the idea of the artist at work.

For example, in *Elegy Echo* (2008), a work in six panels, script writing can be seen on the central four as white/grey text on a dark background. The text itself is small, closely spaced and clearly the work of a person's hand. The piece draws the viewer in to read the text only for it to be found that an intelligible message is not present, even in places where individual words stand out in contrast to Iggulden's symbols and shapes. From a distance, the textual element of the work also makes up its texture and shape and may remind the viewer of tablets or scripts presented in archaeological contexts inscribed with, perhaps, as-yet-untranslated languages. Here, the concept of productive violence is relevant to the erasure of the written linguistic message in favour of foregrounding the act of writing itself. Similarly, *Time Passing* (2006) employs text in order to articulate a shape that may, perhaps, be of a boat. While from a distance the dark background and lighter contrasting layer of text are indicative of Iggulden's artistic signature, a further layer of text is evident: the work is made from treated newspaper cuttings whose original type and images can be discerned beneath her script. Here, the negativity present in rejecting written meaning is translated to this other material: the typescript and the presence of writing in an image that appeared in the newspaper are further translated into the work's shape. In others of her works, Iggulden similarly employs text to create shape and texture for and in themselves: these might be read as aspects of movement or traces of the body in otherwise abstract shapes.

For Iggulden, this is linked in particular to her practice as a woman and a feminist artist. She describes the term 'scripto-visual' in relation to her work and that of others as the 'use of words and images within the visual field as a means of feminist enquiry and critique into the function of language and

sign systems' (2010, 66). As described by Kristeva and Barrett, then, this is a dynamic practice with the potential to undermine, re-configure and re-assess the function of text and language through creative textual practice. Indeed, the artist describes how 'not being able to read the words as text [in the emergent artworks] had prioritised my seeing the writing as a visual image: a record of cultural and individual traces that re-embodied the invisible body and "silent" voice of the scribe/artist' (ibid.). However, she also links these texts with their spoken performance, even when that is no longer possible in their new artistic context, by identifying them as 'an image of sound' (ibid., 70). The use of text in Iggulden's paintings is arresting precisely because of this image of sound: her texts are not completely transformed or repurposed but still invite their consideration *as* text. Iggulden writes, 'these images retain their tenuous link with both verbal and visual language, for, although illegible as written language, they stem from alphabetic writing and its associations with the spoken word' (ibid., 73). Beyond the materiality of text, then, this work also demonstrates another 'productive violence' of this creative textual practice: as text, it can be spoken but is now beyond speech; it invites the consideration of meaning but eschews the usual communicative functions of textual presentations of language.

New Music Composition

My final example comes from the discipline of New Music composition and, as such, is the one that holds the most in common with my personal background and artistic training. Annette Schmucki is a Swiss composer whose work centres around the use of language not only as a source of sound but as a structuring principle. In her biography, she writes that 'her interest has always been in the overlap between language and music; she composes, writes, performs in this borderland'(Blablabor 2019a).[1] For example, the piece *staben_extended* (2014/16) is described by the composer as scored for piano, samples, live processing and words (the pianessence pool [n.d.]). The 'words' are notated in the score as a separate rhythmic line that appears in relation to the piano and triggering of the samples; some of these are recognisable and intelligible—although not necessarily arranged in a sense-making order, while at other times the balance of the ensemble renders them inaudible or phonemes or letter names are otherwise recited. The result is a sonic collage in which the piano, words, samples such as birdsong, and processing become de-hierarchised, equally carried forward by the rhythmic structure of the piece. This practice of the combination of regular rhythm, instrumental sound and spoken sound is a key feature of Schmucki's work that decentres the rhythm of spoken text and thus re-focuses the listener towards its sound, even when it is rendered naturally by the spoken voice. This productive violence, then, is towards linguistic meaning. It directs attention to the *significance* of the text in its

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[1] 'ihr interesse gilt seit jeher überlappend sprache und musik, in deren grenzland sie komponiert, schreibt, performt [sic]': my translation.

potential for meaning not in its original linguistic context but rather in its relationship with the sounds that seem to be triggered by it and its own status as sound.

As a further example, Schmucki's project 'blablabor' with another Swiss artist, Reto Friedmann, similarly centres language as the structuring principle and material of artistic practice. Through what they describe as 'collective text-working' they employ processes of working with and analysing texts as the starting point of a creative process. Describing this, they write, 'blablabor analyse and discuss the word, etymologically, associatively and by comparing its spoken/linguistic forms. This results in metaphorical images, word-lists, clouds of sound and writing-criteria' (blablabor, 2019b).[2] The results of these processes are *Hörstücke* (listening pieces) that also have a relationship with the tradition of *Hörspiel* (radio art works) in European radio. An example of this, *Ungefähre* (2002) ('approximates') contains texts in Russian, Chinese, German, Swiss German, English, Hungarian and Albanian; not all of these languages are spoken by the artists and performers who appear in the piece. A collage of words in these languages is presented, often overlapping and without allowing for intelligibility even where the listener may be familiar with some of the languages. Combined with an accordion performance that mirrors the rhythm of the resultant sound-collage, this piece reflects Barrett's concept of a lack of distinction between the inside and outside of the text: musical performance in this case is both external and internal to the performative presentation of the spoken word. A further case of negativity in that it erases the sense-making properties of the spoken word, *Ungefähre* is also yet another example of 'productive violence': in this case, the composers themselves take part in this production in the composition of the accordion part which stems from the text, even though this direct relationship may not be intelligible to the piece's listeners.

séo níedhæmestre; se tidfara (2018)

Creative Textual Practice

These three examples of creative textual practices are the background and context in which my work *séo níedhæmestre; se tidfara* (2018)—that employs text and language in its process-compositional, notational and sonic aspects—can be understood. In this piece I sought to employ these ideas—and to centre creative textual practice as a music and notation practice—through the intertwining of the familiar, unfamiliar and uncanny, or of the symbolic and semiotic aspects of written and spoken textual communication; through concrete poetry, sound poetry and procedures which were designed

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[2] 'das wort wird von blablabor etymologisch, sprachenvergleichend und assoziativ analysiert und diskutiert. daraus entstehen metaphorische bilder, wortlisten, klangwolken und schreibkriterien [sic]': my translation.

by the *Oulipo* movement.[3] The underlying textual materials for my work were Gavin Bone's (1950) translations of the poems *The Seafarer, The Wanderer, The Dream of the Rood, Gnomic Verses, Judith* and *The Battle of Maldon*. I had previously quoted from the Anglo-Saxon poetry of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* in other compositions, but on this occasion I decided to begin with Bone's translations which were published posthumously, his collection potentially unfinished. These translations belong to a tradition that considered the most effective translations of Anglo-Saxon poetry to be ones that caused the poem to conform to more modern and recognisable poetic properties, denying some of the stylistic functions of language in the original poems such as alliteration and introducing others such as rhyming. Bone writes that the original poems' alliterative effect 'cannot be captured in modern English' and 'is of no practical importance [since] if it makes a difference to that poetry it is a difference which the reader unlearned in Anglo-Saxon can never understand' (1950, 13). In relation to the arguments I have presented here, such an assessment denies the importance of the semiotic in this aspect of the works, in particular the 'remainder' of the text beyond its linguistic meaning, that might be expressed by repeated sounds, shapes or sibilance (as in Amanda Stewart's works).

Rather than re-performing the original poems or accepting Bone's 'modernising' of their language, I sought to create a new epic poem using the translated texts as source materials. Reading each poem backwards, I used a variation of Jean Lescure's *Oulipo* procedure of n+7: I took the shortest sense-making clause from each seventh line in order to create a textual collage from the original poetic materials (since the lines are selected in reverse, this might then be referred to as an n-7 procedure). This yielded a text in continuous prose which was then subjected to further systematic procedures of repetition that themselves yielded further texts. These included the procedure of reading every other line of the newly generated text and then of repeating the n-xth line of subsequent texts until almost exact repetitions were achieved. These procedures were enacted without respect for, or seeking, textual meaning. A final procedure then re-read these blocks of text, adding punctuation to re-introduce sense-making clauses and—at the observation of the surfeit of men in Anglo Saxon poetry—changing pronouns from male to female. These procedures recaptured something of the nature of the alliterative effect of the original poems through the re-introduction of repetition and mimesis into the textual material.

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[3] *Oulipo* is a contraction of 'Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle' (Workshop of Potential Literature). This movement was founded in France in the 1960s by artists such as Raymond Queneau, George Perec and Jacques Roubaud, and developed processual methods of working with existing textual materials in order to create new textual compositions.

The resultant poem, in four parts, recounts the story of a woman who, after witnessing atrocities, has fled but seeks to avenge her land. In response to this emergence of meaning, I then composed the title: *séo niedhæmestre; se tidfara* (a woman who has been violated; a traveller, the time of whose journey has come) and the programme note which uses quotations from the original text of *The Seafarer:*

> Mæg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan; hu ic oft þrowade atol yþa gewealc; hu ic werig oft in brimlade bidan sceolde. þær ic ne gehyrde butan hlimman sæ, iscaldne wæg. Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg. (The Seafarer, based on lines 1-4a; 28-32a; *I sing myself as a true song: how I have often endured the tossing of the waves; how, weary and often, I had to endure in the sea-paths. There I heard nothing but the roaring sea, the ice-cold wave. That was overcome, so may this be* - my translation; literal rather than poetic.)

Text and Notation

While the procedures described above may be thought an example of 'productive violence' with respect to the original source texts, the rest of the materials of the piece respond to this new text, addressing its significance or meaning-making potential. A set of notational materials present the 'source materials' pertaining to the journey described in the poem in the form of a score-catalogue that employs staff notation, graphic notation, text, illuminations and decorative art practices (that relate to the poem or intertextually to Anglo Saxon manuscripts), as well as audio recordings based on my readings of the epic poem. The full poem is thus not heard in the performance of the work—although the audio recordings layer fragments of it—rather, it functions essentially as the notation *of* the notation, in that it was used as the performative basis from which to create the other materials. The piece can be thought to have three categories of source materials in relation to the poem—text, sound and images—which themselves may contain text. Possibilities for the performance of these materials in linear, nonlinear or improvised orders are permitted.

Each page of the catalogue has a corresponding sound sample derived from the poem. These sound-samples have been created using comparable processes to the *Oulipo*-derived practices I used to yield the text: that is, procedures that were designed and enacted without the intervention of the personal aesthetic preferences of the artist.[4] The poem was read in its entirety and layered and folded back on itself. These layerings were subject to audio processing and manipulation—such as the use of

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[4] The Oulipo author is described by Marcel Bénabou and Jacques Roubaud (2017) as 'a rat that builds the labyrinth for itself, from which it intends to emerge.'['un rat qui construit lui-même le labyrinthe dont il se propose de sortir' – my translation.]. It is precisely this labyrinth of text ('constraints') that allows for the emergence of new potential literatures and meanings, which could not have been previously imagined by the artist who designed the constraints.

implausible reverb that emphasises late responses, ring modulators, delays, etc.—that emphasised audio artefacts and undermined the sense-making possibilities of the text itself. The durations of the 15 fragments were created using random number generation and re-ordering. Thus, these audio fragments present the possibility of sense-making whilst simultaneously denying it, emphasising the semiotic aspects of the language of the poetry that Bone dismisses as 'of no practical importance' (1950, 13). These fragments cause the performers always to perform in relation to the text, since they are the only fixed aspect of the music and they foreground negativity in their erosion of the text's sense-making possibilities. They are its sounding notation.

Figure 1: *séo níedhæmestre; se tidfara* (2018) score detail: fragment IX.

An example of the combination of these aspects can be seen in fragment IX of the score. Staff notation presents a chorale-like melodic prompt that is nevertheless indeterminate in pitch owing to the lack of clefs. Two sets of texts are presented, both extracted from the original poem: one, handwritten, might be interpreted as either lyrical or as a performance direction; the other, printed, perhaps as descriptive. The image of a fish is derived from similar decorative manuscript images and the drawing practices of illustrating them. This score page has a corresponding audio fragment lasting 48 seconds. Multiple performances are possible in relation to this notation but none are preferred or indicated as such; rather, it is itself a product of the 'productivity' of creative textual practice.[5]

Text and Meaning
Through the score and the performance of the work, the poem that is the basis of this piece is obscured in perhaps a similar way to that in which the original Anglo Saxon poems have been in their 'modern' translations. Some of this meaning may be excavated by a listener with the ability to translate the title and the programme note, or perhaps in fragments of textual meaning caught in the recorded materials or during the performance (as one might in blablabor's *Ungefähre*), or perhaps glimpsed in the score (as one might fragments of words in Iggulden's works). However, these symbolic properties of the material aspects of the work are undermined by their presentation both in the work's materials and in its performance: they may be sought but they cannot be grasped, as they are already obscured by the semiotic aspect of the text.

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[5] A recording of this piece can be heard as part of the album *hearmleoþ—gieddunga* (Redhead 2018, pyr262).

As a practice, the creation of this work holds aspects in common with each of the three case studies with which I prefaced it. In its performative aspect there is a link with Stewart's performance practices in which the spoken performance of text may be obscured either through performance, recording or lack of understanding. This type of presentation foregrounds the plurivocality of text and its production in relation to the speaking body. In its use of text as a structuring principle for the music, it relates to Schmucki's compositional practices and the layering process of multiple languages that she uses with blablabor. In its employment of the physical acts of writing and drawing it relates to Iggulden's reproductions of text. The combination of these three aspects of practice function to situate the resultant music beyond text and language, even though it stems from it. However, this breakdown, dissociation and ultimate obscuring of text function as a way to make clear what Iggulden has described as the 'cultural and invisible traces' (2010, 68) associated with text and the writing of history. Similarly, as she used the term 'scripto-visual', the traces of my poem in *séo níedhæmestre; se tidfara* might be thought of as 'scripto-sonic'.

The distortion of speech and alienation of speech in favour of the semiotic in *séo níedhæmestre; se tidfara* is an example of productive violence that emphases the link between negativity and *significance*: it erodes the symbolic content of language in order to centre what is usually absent—its semiotic component. As in Stewart's recordings of her own works—particularly, as discussed, in the poems *Absence* and *Sound and Sense*—this is made possible in the confluence of text and practice. These are combined in my examples, through the employment of language as a material process, to explore practice, meaning and the material intervention of the body through the medium of visual, sounding or performative uses of text in recordings, images and notation. The unfamiliar or uncanny—as experienced through the enactment of Anglo Saxon poetry and language in my own work—simultaneously offer the opportunity for *significance* through a surfeit of meaning and negativity through its negation and/or inaccessibility. As such, it is conversely through the employment of text and language that the work foregrounds the semiotic.

Reference List

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