God's Little Cow

&

An Argument for Hybridity

(A Practice–based PhD)

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Declaration

I, Aoife Casby, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Aoife Casby

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Date 26/11/20

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Abstract

This practice based PhD thesis asks questions and explores creative practice related to the production of a multi-modal work. Part One is the creative writing project, *God's Little Cow*, a book of texts containing manually typed pages and a language-based sound and object installation as part of the final reading. This project serves as a practical reading experience of multi-modal work necessitated by an understanding of language that demands to be seen in all its materialities. Part Two comprises of a close reading of Anne Carson's multi-modal work, *Nox*, as an exemplar of work using the form of the Artist's Book to explore issues in relation to language, translation and the use of source materials. I outline elements of process that are pertinent to work that deals with the materialities of language and the visual-verbal relationships, the materialities of the text and the production of meanings. The conclusion outlines how Anne Carson informed my practice and shows how this critical exploration influenced my approach to the work *God's Little Cow*. It argues for the visibility of hybridity in creative practice and articulates the ways in which the language-based installation operates as a conclusion to thinking of the book as a four dimensional phenomenological experience.

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PART TWO: CRITICAL COMMENTARY

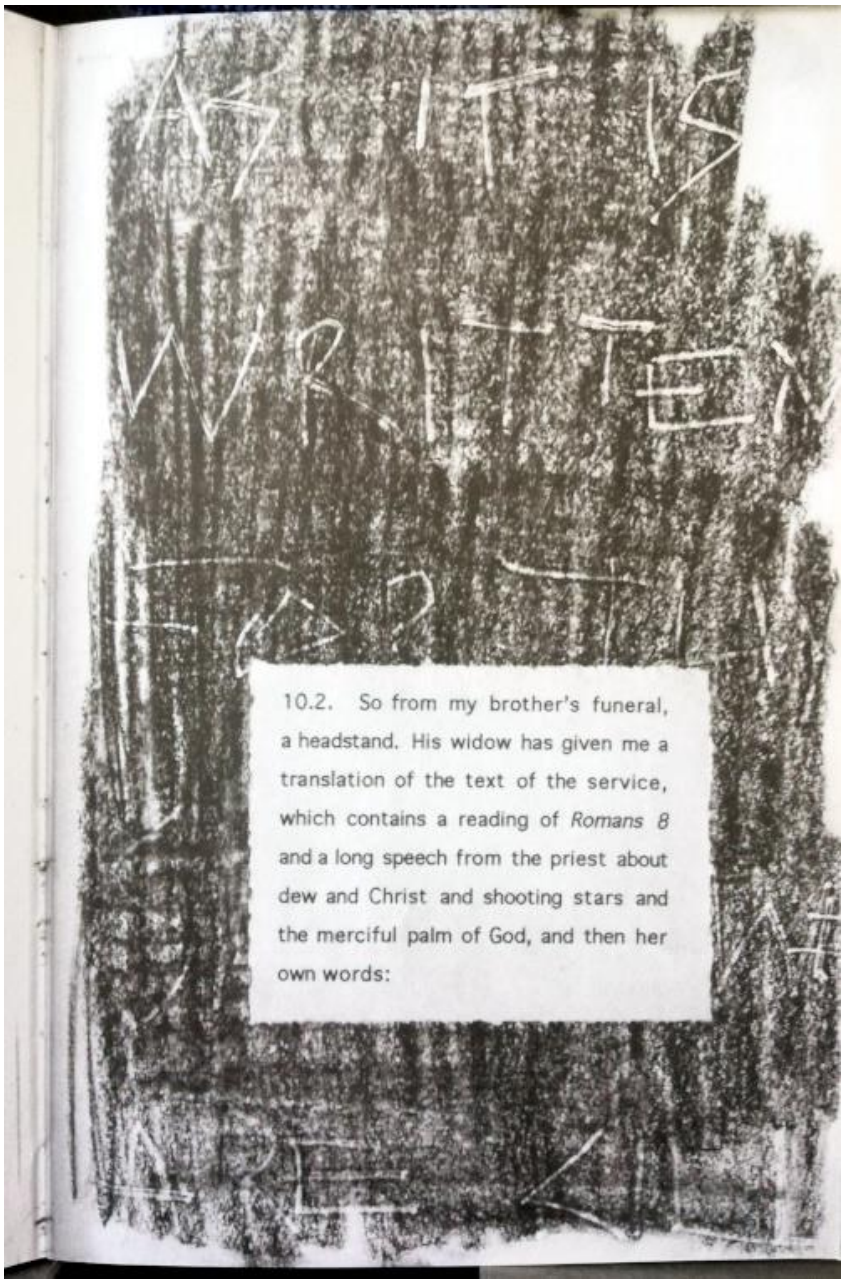

Figure 1 Page from Section 10.1 of Anne Carson's 'Nox' showing inscription and collaging techniques.

Introduction

> Working inside language is working inside a medium that everyone uses every day. It is a far different escapade than working in, say, ceramics, for people mainly don't know how to work clay. Our medium is where everyone is, what everyone uses. This is the most tremendous fact about and challenge of writing.
>
> *Rachel Blau DuPlessis*[2]

In Part Two of this thesis I ask questions and explore the issues around creative practice that are related to the production of a multi-modal work. My interest lies in the ability of multi-modal work, such as the artist's book[3], to reach beyond the confines of conventional literary forms. I have chosen the artist's book as an exemplar of a multi-modal work because it utilises elements closest to my own practice as a writer and visual artist. I give an overview of the Artist's Book, focusing on elements of materialities of language, meaning making and translation. My argument for the importance of hybridity in creative writing is demonstrated through my creative project, *God's Little Cow*[4] and through a close reading Anne Carson's multi-modal work, *Nox* [5].

I consider that the multi-modal book can be a space where reader, text and author interact and meanings may be generated in a wonderfully fluid and uncertain process. In this thesis I argue that the tension between 'stable' ideas of author, reader, and meaning which enable the work in the first place, and the instabilities, fluidities and provisionality of such identities and concepts are generated by the interactivity of multi-modal work. These ideas are made manifest in the physical transposition of text onto kite-like structures and the verbal layering of text in *Gods' Little Cow* and in the construction of *Nox.* In this sense, meanings reside and are constructed in the tensions between ideas of authorship, readership and text and the fluidity of engagement with a multi-modal modal work. In this context meanings are various. We must search, return and re-return to the work again and again in order to find them.

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[2] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Surge: Drafts 96-114* (London: Salt Publishing, 2013), p. 16.

[3] A more detailed description pf what constitutes the Artist's Book is dealt with in the opening section of Chapter One.

[4] See Part One of this thesis.

[5] *Nox* is the title of Carson's work published in 2010 which is based around based around a translation of *Catullus 101* a poem written as an elegy for a dead brother. The word *Nox,* is a noun, the Latin for 'Night'. Personified, Nox is the goddess of Night and the sister or Erebus. Lewis and Short also refer to a transferred use of the word which means 'that which takes place or is done at night, nightdoings, night-work.' (Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*)

This introductory chapter outlines both the background to, and the development of my creative project and shows how my research practice led to an engagement with concrete and visual poetry, hybrid works and to the work of Anne Carson and *Nox* in particular. It will sketch out the key questions I explore in relation to the production of a multi-modal book work and how my work is a physical manifestation of different modalities of reading. Chapter One gives an overview of the artist's book. Chapter Two outlines elements of process that are pertinent to work that deals with the materialities of language and the visual-verbal relationships, materialities of the text and the production of meanings. Chapter Three examines these through a critical analysis of Anne Carson's *Nox*. The conclusion outlines how Anne Carson informed my practice, how and shows how this critical exploration influenced my approach to the work *God's Little Cow* and articulates the ways in which the language-based installation operates as a conclusion to thinking of the book as a four dimensional phenomenological experience.

I began this PhD proposing to research ideas of place and their relationship to the production of a text and while I have not moved completely away from this idea, one notion has remained central - the notion of the text, the page and their materials as a space of discourse and occurrences, as a place of process and site of meaning making where beliefs and language dance. The creative project developed out of my interest in the book, the space of the page and the material text; in hybridity and the visual text; in writing that takes another view of the ways in which language and text work to allow the reader to construct meanings from the connections, patterns and modes used. I wanted to push my practice in order to explore the relationship between language, memory, source materials and personal history. My work relies heavily on process and addresses issues in relation to truth, beliefs, language and creativity. *God's Little Cow*[6] is a book of poetic texts produced in loose leaf and fragment with a visual and audio component. through the use of a manual typewriter, the creation of a sound piece and the creation of the 'word-kites' as part of an exploded book. It explores questions of voice and voicelessness and considers how these may be experienced through and affected by considerations of place and identity.

The place I grew up in was heavily steeped in attitudes towards religion and language which have roots in a Marian apparition that occurred the small village of

[6] The texts are available in Xeroxed A4 format as a copy of the original pages.

Knock, Co. Mayo, on the West coast of Ireland in 1879. At this time, Mayo was a place of political and social unrest. The Land Wars were beginning and extended periods of wet weather meant that there were food shortages and imminent famine in a county that had experienced devastating famine only 30 years previously. In 1879, the Land War in Ireland, Cogadh na Talún, began with a lot of the unrest and agitation centred in Co. Mayo. This period followed years of activism by Irish tenant farmers who were demanding land reform measures from the British Government. Tenants were looking for the right to a fair rent and rent reductions, the right to sell their interest in a holding to other tenants, and fixity of tenure - trying to ensure that if monies due for rents had been remitted, the tenant could not be evicted. Successive Acts of the British Parliament over the preceding years had attempted to address some of these issues. Issues facing rural Ireland in this time were affected by very inclement weather which had resulted in a series of bad harvests and mini-famines. Poor harvest meant that tenants had not been able to pay their rents. The Land League was founded in Mayo in 1879 in the months preceding the Apparition and also marked the beginning of the involvement of the Catholic Church in the movement.[7]

On a wet evening in August, in the small village of Knock, fifteen men, women and children reported that they saw an image of The Virgin Mary appear alongside her husband Joseph and St. John The Evangelist, on the gable end of the church. This was to become a huge cultural moment represented by a silent image. The images they said that they saw remained visible from approximately 7.30 until 10.30 p.m. She didn't speak to the witnesses as was typical of other Marian apparitions. The Catholic Church instituted a Commission of Inquiry, the first in October 1879 and a second years later in in 1937 in order to establish the details of the apparition and reliability of the witness statements.[8] The first cure was claimed ten days after the initial reported sighting. Within weeks of the apparition there were further reports of miraculous cures, some due to the application of cement taken from the gable wall. [9]As word spread of these alleged

[7] For an in-depth discussion of the social, religious, cultural and political causes and ramifications of The Land War see Joseph J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1918*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2008); James Camlin Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603–1923* (London: Faber, 1966); Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, Reprint edition (London: Penguin, 1990).

[8] Transcriptions of the witness statements taken from these commission of inquiry are available online at www.knockshrine.ie.

[9] For further reading on the Marian apparition see the following texts: Mary Francis Cusack, *The Nun of Kenmare: An Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 1998); Michael Walsh, *The Apparition at Knock: A Critical Analysis of Facts and Evidence* (Veritas, 2008); Paul Carpenter, 'Mimesis, Memory, and the

miracles, pilgrims thronged to Knock, putting pressure on local hostelries and within eight months of this report the 'little parish church of Knock had acquired a fame rivalling that of Lourdes, La Balette or Marpingen'.[10] This phenomenon meant that Knock became a place of pilgrimage and miracle, which has since developed into a sacred site visited by millions and is hugely valued by the local community.

In the Ordnance Survey Parish Namebooks of 1838, the Irish name for Knock is 'Cnoc', meaning 'hill'. Sometime following the apparition, this was changed to Cnoc Mhuire, 'the Hill of Mary'.[11] That is the Irish name of Knock today. When I was growing up I was taught that God was everywhere: *He* was in the land, in things, and was always watching. All of the Catholic prayers which I learned at school were taught in the Irish language. The link between Irish and God and the relationship to place and the land was implicit in this teaching. It was as if knowing the names of things in Irish, knowing God and the land in the Irish language were somehow linked to my identity as an Irish person, to my Irishness. This relationship linking prayer, land, God and language was at the basis of school life, religious life and social life. The Virgin Mary made us and the place we lived in special. God had sent her to us. The voiceless Virgin Mary was some sort of interlocutor but her silence has always interested me. As well as being silent during the alleged apparition in Knock, Mary's words are recorded on only four different occasions in the Bible.[12] Not speaking and not being allowed to speak seemed to be her domain. My poor ability with the Irish language at that time created impossibilities in understanding for me. I could not know or understand God because I couldn't name him; I didn't know the Irish names for the places God was; I couldn't pray; I couldn't be Irish. I wanted to be able to find a way to access the language that would allow me to explore these things and to find a way of actualising this language.

This was very serious to me. I continue to revisit the place and the issues it highlights in my work - how language gets twisted and moved away from its meanings; how individual histories are lost; how voicelessness becomes a practice. The Irish language, prayer and texts that are concerned with the Apparition such as witness

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Magic Lantern: What Did the Knock Witnesses See?', *New Hibernia Review*, 15.2 (2011), 102–20; Colm Kilcoyne, *Knock, And Still They Come* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2012).

[10] 'The Knock Apparitions', *The Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin, 22 May 1880), p. 3.

[11] O'Donovan, John, Ordnance Survey of Ireland: Letters, 'Cnoc Mhuire/Knock', *www.logainm.ie* <https://www.logainm.ie/ga/36077> [accessed 26 November 2019].

[12] Danielle M. Peters, 'Bible Quotes by Mary', *Www.Udayton.Edu.* <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/b/bible-quotes-by-mary.php> [accessed 26 November 2019].

statements and late nineteenth century newspaper articles along with my own notebooks, are my source materials. There was a time before the apparition that God mustn't have had such an influence. I wanted to see that place. I wanted to ask questions. I needed to consider how to give voice to the historically voiceless so that the unsaid becomes heard or is allowed to emerge. It seemed to me that simply translating the Virgin Mary's voice or apparition witness voices or any of the other voices I collected or noticed missing, to the page, was simply another instance of imposing voicelessness on them (and on me.) The voice and meanings would reveal themselves as the text moved from the page. Above all, I wanted to have fun.

My thinking, process and approach changed in response to researching writers whose work explored ideas of place, the use of source materials and approaches to the creation of texts, and to the relevant discussions with supervisors on the nature of hybrid texts, artist's books and the location of meanings in a text. During the early stages of practice as research I explored texts relating to citational poetics and collage and place and initially became immersed in work by Anne Carson, Susan Howe and Rachel Blau DuPlessis.[13] I began creating texts that explored the page as place. I was also questioning what it was I thought it meant to write and to read a poem. The importance of source materials and how to handle them in my process began to emerge as significant early on in the project and much of the early drafts were very visually based and were informed by a review of work by contemporaries working in a similar tradition to Carson and Howe. I produced a series of text-based images and handmade books and pamphlets. This early work demonstrates the importance of source material for my creative practice, but the outputs do not form part of this finished project.

Publishers of modern and contemporary Irish poetry have favoured the format of the collection of short lyrics. Writers working beyond this mode are often marginalized, or seen as working in other experimental traditions. Throughout the development of my creative project I immersed myself in such writing - concrete writing, visual poetry and various hybrid texts - compiling a basis of knowledge, from which, alongside Carson's work, I could draw. Many of these writers experiment with the book, the page and with translation. They use the body, image and appropriation and many such writers

[13] Susan Howe, *That This* (New York: New Directions Pub, 2010). Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Drafts 1-38, Toll* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Drafts : Drafts 39-57, Pledge, with Draft, Unnumbered, Précis* (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2004); Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Pitch : Drafts 77-95*; Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Surge : Drafts 96-114*; Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *The Collage Poems of Drafts* (London: Salt Publishing, 2011).

depend on small presses to publish their work. Indeed many of the authors develop the presses themselves.

John Sharkey differentiates concrete or visual poetry from traditional verse saying

> 'Traditional verse forms internalize a poem through its language so that meaning becomes clear when read and assimilated. In…concrete or visual [poetry]…the essence of a poem is inferred through a simple language pattern without necessarily having to 'read' it.'[14]

This approach to language, of creating poetry, is represented in the Scottish context by Ian Hamilton Finlay, Thomas A. Clark, Edwin Morgan.[15] Carson's experiments with language and the page share elements with their approaches. With his wife, Laurie, Clark founded Moschatel Press and who, according to Ross Hair, 'using simple formats such as postcards, folding cards, pamphlets, and chapbooks, Moschatel Press publications have explored the indivisible relationship that exists between the printed format—its design and construction—and the expressive and material conditions of text and image.'[16] Clark himself refers to the book as 'a place apart, a complex, multi-layered space to move about in and explore'[17] and shares a poetics similar to what I find in Carson's work, saying that

> poetry is itself 'a phenomenology of reading' in that it is always to some extent self-referential. Poetry is the art that draws attention to the material presence of language… Rhyme, metre, lineation, all draw attention to themselves, to function as a delay in the appropriation of a *detachable* sense. It can be done lightly, in a self-referential turn, or in a little dance or tune in the line.[18]

Interestingly, Clark also produced work that uses words on kites.[19]

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[14] John Sharkey, *Mindplay: An Anthology of British Concrete Poetry* (London: Lorrimer, 1971), p. 9.

[15] For a fuller description of the tradition of concrete/visual poetry in the Scottish context see *The Order of Things: Scottish Sound, Pattern and Concrete Poetry* by Ken Cockburn, Alec Finlay; Mary Ellen Solt: Concrete Poetry: A World View (1968, Indiana University Press) which is available online at https://ubu.com/papers/solt/index.html; and The Scottish Poetry Library at https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/tag/concrete_poetry/

[16] Ross Hair, 'Moschatel Press: Craft, Concrete, and Constructivism in the Cotswolds', *Word & Image*, 35.4 (2019), 380–402 (p. 380).

[17] Alice Tarbuck, 'In, Among, With and From: In Conversation with Thomas A Clark', *PN Review*, 42.5 (2016), 37–41 (p. 43).

[18] Tarbuck, p. 42.

[19] Stendhal's Kite is a yellow diamond nylon kite on which the words 'a promise of happiness' are printed. See THE THING Quarterly website (http://thethingquarterly.com/shop/projects/tac-kite.html)

Edwin Morgan's work provokes innovative reading strategies, encouraging a dialogue with the texts. It is the sort of work that like Carson's, *does* something. Morgan also worked extensively in translation. Another work in this experimental tradition, but in an Irish context, is Brian Coffey's translation of Mallarmé's syntactic innovations in "Un coup des dés" published by Dolmen Press[20] in 1985 and republished in 1982 by New Directions Publishing.[21]

Writers such as Maurice Scully, Maggie O'Sullivan and Caroline Bergvall have also been touchstones for my own process and work. Using collaged images and facsimile, visual rhyme, appropriated images and typographical interventions in her practice, 'O'Sullivan's visuality is most often not referential and instead seeks to inscribe something of the writer into the page, existing as an indexical trace of making.'[22] [23] In interview with Charles Bernstein, O'Sullivan suggests that 'Writing is a body-intensive activity, totally. Absolutely, totally. The whole body is engaged in the act of writing, whether it's on the computer, or with using a pen in the hands. The breath is involved in all activities.'[24]

Maurice Scully's work 'challenges the concentration of the reader at the level of the volume and of the single page, where fragmentary syntax and the absence of formal boundaries, together with the appearance of symbols or sketched images force us into new territories of reading.'[25] Rupert Loydell, reviewing Scully's *Postlude, Prelude* and *Interlude*[26] states that Scully 'makes the reader work harder, as it is often fragmented and imagistic in approach, quoting and juxtaposing language and meaning in a variety of ways, and via a number of digressions and twisting routes. It's invigorating, challenging and enjoyable stuff as it takes the reader hopping, skipping and stumbling down the page.'[27]

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[20] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Dice Thrown Never Will Annul Chance: A Poem. A Translation by Brian Coffey of Un Coup de Dés Jamais n"abolira Le Hasard*, trans. by Brian Coffey (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1965).
[21] *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Mary Caws (New York: New Directions Books, 1982).
[22] Rachel Warriner, 'Image and Witness in Maggie O'Sullivan's A Natural History in 3 Incomplete Parts and POINT.BLANK.RANGE', *Irish University Review*, 2016, p. 172
[23] Online facsimiles of the original books are available to browse on www.eclipsearchive.org
[24] Charles Bernstein, 'Writing Is a Body-Intensive Activity', *Jacket2* <https://jacket2.org/interviews/writing-body-intensive-activity> [accessed 19 November 2020].
[25] Lucy Collins, *Contemporary Irish Women Poets: Memory and Estrangement*, 66 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 172.
[26] Maurice Scully, *Livelihood by Maurice Scully* (Bray: Wild Honey Press, 2004) <http://www.wildhoneypress.com/BOOKS/livelihood.htm> [accessed 25 November 2020].
[27] Rupert Loydell, 'Review', *Orbis Quarterly*, 107, Winter (1997), 58 (p. 58).

Caroline Bergvall's interdisciplinary practice reaches across media, artform and language combining performance, visual and literary texts.[28] The method of creating the work emerges from a total engagement with the intermediality of language. Her poetics demonstrated in her work, her ideas around writing 'have increasingly to do with excavations, digs, and showing up cross-sections of language-matter.'[29] While not considering herself a translator, she takes language and texts 'look [s] at some of the methods of these texts or structures of language for my own work, and for strategies that might allow the ancient material to make a transhistorical jump into contemporaneity.'[30]

In the Irish context I sought out visually ambitious poetry such as Catherine Walsh[31]'s long poems in experimental forms, *City West*[32] and *Optic Nerve*[33]. While Walsh has published with mainstream publishers like Shearsman, much work is available through the small press, HardPressed Poetry who 'publish and distribute poetry that you won't often find in your local bookshop.'[34]

For me, the relationship between religion and language and the land is a creative whirlpool. As I researched and wrote about that relationship between place, page and source material, I began to create a series of texts reflecting on my creative development and included issues of trust, truth and voicelessness. I was curious about language, I felt that it could be revelatory by naming things, that there was a way to use and present language that would open up paths to meanings. Anne Carson's engagement with issues of translation, language and meanings have particular resonance for me and the way in which her work explored and challenged form was of particular interest. I was collecting images and texts as research for a series of text and image based pamphlets that I was developing in relation to identity and creativity. My approach to the work

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[28] Caroline Bergvall, 'Caroline Bergvall', *Caroline Bergvall* <http://carolinebergvall.com/> [accessed 25 October 2020].

[29] Eva Heisler, 'Caroline Bergvall Propelled to the Edges of a Language's Freedom, and to the Depths of Its Collective Traumas', *Asymptote Journal* <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/visual/eva-heisler-caroline-bergvall-propelled-to-the-edges-of-a-languages-freedom/> [accessed 26 November 2020].

[30] Heisler.

[31] See also 'Astonished Birds Cara, Jane, Bob and James' hardPressed poetry 2012; Pitch (Pig Press, 1994) and Idir Eatortha (Invisible Books, 1996).

[32] Catherine Walsh, *City West* (Exeter: Shearsman, 2005).

[33] Catherine Walsh, *Optic Nerve* (Exeter: Shearsman, 2009) <https://www.shearsman.com/store/search> [accessed 19 November 2020].

[34] Catherine Walsh and Billy Mills, 'Hardpressedpoetry', Http://Hardpressedpoetry.Blogspot.Com/ <http://hardpressedpoetry.blogspot.com/p/catherine-walsh-books.html> [accessed 19 October 2020].

centred around found materials and images that I made. The language and images I used were all related to facts; facts about place, experience and stories I grew up with. I wasn't able to see how these pamphlets connected to one another. Over time the texts moved between the pamphlets and I thought that I had a series of poems dealing with language and its difficulties and another about ideas of God and another exploring identity. Texts seemed to slip between all three and I was making technical discoveries and reflecting on issues of voice in the poems. There were facts in the language and in the source materials that I wasn't able to get beyond. My practice became focused on the consideration of ways to treat source materials and to a process of decision making. The sound of the voice became an integral part of the writing, as did the way in which language physically moved and is materially fixed.

I chose *Nox*[35] as an exemplar of a book that used the type of approach to language and material that would enable me in my explorations of process. It is an artist's book which relies on a multiplicity of written elements. Written language has a visceral presence in the work. In *Nox* Carson presents facts unfettered by punctuation or emotional qualification. The facts are the found texts, the source materials, and research she has undertaken. These facts dwell in their place between and as manipulated images and strange utterances that feel as if they come from her strangest wonderings. I believe that materialities of language, and the reading of what I consider are Carson's techniques of 'overtakelessness' and the 'epexegetic' all work together to create this hybrid book. The idea of 'overtakelessness' in *Nox* comes from the Heideggerian notion of *das Unumgängliche* which is used to indicate the idea of the ineluctable. Emily Dickinson also uses the word to convey the idea of something inaccessible and invincible, like death.[36] The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'epexegetic' as pertaining to, or of the nature of, an epexegesis; given as an additional explanation. 'Epexegesis' comes from the Greek, (ἐπεξήγησις, ἐπεξηγεῖσθαι, ἐπί in addition + ἐξηγεῖσθαι) meaning an explanation by means of the addition of a word or words, to convey more clearly the meaning implied, or the specific sense intended, in a preceding word or sentence; a word or words added for this purpose. Both of these terms are used by Carson in *Nox* and have become essential to my reading of the work. At its simplest,

[35] Anne Carson, *Nox* (New York: New Directions, 2010).

[36] Emily Dickinson, 'F894A-The Overtakelessness of Those', The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Variorum Edition, Franklin, 1998', *Emily Dickinson Archive*, <https://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image_sets/240597> [accessed 27 November 2019].

'overtakelessness' conveys the idea of 'that which cannot be got around' and the 'epexegetic' are the signs that we hang around the overtakelessness in order to point to it. The argument of this thesis is for the importance of hybridity in creative writing. The nature of a hybrid work constitutes a multi-modal approach, utilising found materials, personal stuff, and pushing the boundaries, in particular, of form. The critical thrust of this thesis is towards a questioning of form and the four dimensional phenomenological book. It centres around a multi-faceted close reading as a mode of meaning-making in *Nox*. I suggest that Carson uses the 'epexegetic' and the idea of 'overtakelessness' as a personal poetics, as a practice, and as meaning-making strategies. This approach allows meanings to be constructed in various ways for both the reader and the author on the page. It is a poesis. *Nox* is the result of decision–making prompted by confidence in those moments of insight experienced during the making of a language object; a desire to force language to reveal itself and above all, an expression of grief, frustration and essentially, of understanding. I read it as an imperative to acknowledge the workings of the creative process, the actual making of a text; an imperative to engage with, and an invitation to the reader and an imperative to consider that language is various. I will begin by situating *Nox* in the artist's book tradition.

Methodology

The methodology centres on developing questions around language and its material existence; the process of creating a non–traditional text; ideas of the embodied author and questions of trust and process. The main part of the methodology is the creation of a hybrid work which consists of a loose–leaf collection of typed texts, a textual installation and a sound text. It is an argument borne out of process, an argument for working in a certain way, an argument for nervelessnesses, the 'epexegetic' and 'overtakelessness' in practice.

In the critical commentary I describe and discuss an argument for hybridity in the creative literary experience for the practitioner. I consider an approach to specific materials through exploring ideas of the text and image in the book object, i.e. the artist's book, and give a brief account of the material text. I present an overview of relevant literature on the artist's book and on book–objects, and a discussion of the nature of the text and the artist's book, the embodied author and materialities of

language. I conduct a review of published critical authorship on Anne Carson's *Nox*[37] and put it at the centre of a developing practice through a close reading. This close reading addresses relevant questions that arose in the creative practice, and forms the basis for a discussion of the hybrid text, materiality, form, translation and the image/ text relationship.

The commentary is ultimately concerned with issues of language and the book form. It questions the notion of what a poem or a text can be, what the page can be and the relationship of text to voice, page and image. It also concerns itself with the notion of what process is in relation to the finished text and develops ideas towards an argument for hybridity in the creative literary experience for the reader and practitioner.

[37] The book has no conventional index or page numbering but has numbered sections from 1.0 to 10.3. I will use these section numbers to refer to locations within the text.

Chapter 1 The Art Book Tradition

There is a large range of works encompassed by the Art Book tradition which contrast the function of the book as a container of meanings with the materiality of its physical presences. Kathryn Brown, as well as focusing on the different combinations of verbal and visual elements that books represent, highlights the 'unique tangibility of books as objects'.[38] This tangibility and the forms that it can take demand a very physical engaged reading and allow for meanings to emerge in various ways. Brown acknowledges that among the various definitions that have been proposed, historians of literature have failed to effectively define the *livre d'artiste.* She goes on to suggest that having a set of criteria as a 'cluster' account of artist's books can provide the necessary parameters to 'distinguish it as an art form'.[39] Viewing artist's books in this manner allows flexibility and allows the reader or scholar to group together books that share some combination of different features.

Much of the critical writing and examination of the history of and development of the Artist's Book centres around issues of definition and the difficulties posed by trying to find a rigid list of criteria that such a work must possess in order to be classified as such. Elements to be taken into consideration in any definition are image, intermediality, textual considerations and intention. The artist's book is a term used to define three primary forms of the book: the *livre d'artiste*, the handmade artist's book[40], and the artist's book which uses offset printing techniques. The *livre d'artiste* comprises fine art limited editions which use letterpress techniques and was primarily a twentieth century European practice. These books were produced, in the main, by visual artists, although there were books produced by poets both in collaboration with artists and as solo projects. Although there are a number of *livres d'artistes* that do interrogate the book form, many of these works were more generally produced as a commercial and cultural enterprise.[41] The handmade artist's book is a small category of artist's books that are constructed by hand, bound and printed by the artist and may be considered as artistic objects. They are most often unique although have been produced in limited

[38] Kathryn Brown, *The Art Book Tradition in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 1st edn (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), p. 8.
[39] Brown, *The Art Book Tradition in Twentieth-Century Europe*, p. 12.
[40] For a description of the idea of what entails 'handmade' see Daniel Mellis, 'A Handmade Scale for Books.', *Journal of Artists Books*, Fall.24 (2008), 46–47.
[41] Brown, *The Art Book Tradition in Twentieth-Century Europe*, p. 12.

editions which is usually related to production costs.[42] The third form of artist's book generally falls into a category which has been prominent since the second half of the twentieth century. These are artist's books whose production involves offset printing techniques. These books explore the book form and the modes of its production. *Nox* falls into this category.

The focus of the definition of what constitutes an artist's book within each of these categories varies as historians and theorists differ as to the parameters that are to be taken into account when considering what aspects of the book to include. Charles Alexander points to the artist and writer pushing boundaries and breaking with tradition as the issues to be considered. The idea of a book being against definition opens up possibilities in relation to practice. Alexander explains that the Book Arts 'are specifically arguments against definition and limitation, as artists and writers strive to break the bindings of what has traditionally been considered a book'.[43] Muriel Prince refers to artist's books as 'concept-driven,' and explains how 'Book artists use, and combine, whatever means are necessary to give form to their idea, crossing all literary and artistic boundaries, refusing to compromise and settle for anything less than what is exactly right, and necessary, to give physicality to the concept.'[44] These definitions foreground the author and prioritise the creative process.

Dick Higgins further addresses the issue of classification in relation to the genre, stating that 'a firm definition, will by its nature, serve only to exclude many artist's books which one would want to include.[45] He goes on to suggest what he calls a

> " 'grey definition', which is a 'book done for its own sake and not for the information it contains. That is: it doesn't contain a lot of works, like a book of poems. It is a work. Its design and format reflect its content - they interfere, interpenetrate. It might be any art - an artist's book could be music, photography, graphics, intermedial literature.

[42] For a fuller discussion of some of the types of books that may be considered handmade see 'The Artist's Book as a rare and/or Auratic Object', in Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York City: Granary Books, 2004). Also of interest was an exhibition in 2008 of Artists' Book at The Victoria and Albert Museum. Individual book works from 38 different artists were represented. Images of these works have been reproduced in a boxed exhibition catalogue, *Blood on Paper, Books by Artist.* (Elena Foster and Rowan Watson, 'Blood on Paper, Artists & Books' (London: V&A Publishing with Ivory Press, 2008).

[43] Charles. Alexander, *Talking the Boundless Book : Art, Language, and the Book Arts*, ed. by Charles Alexander (Minneapolis: Minnesota Centre for Book Arts, 1995). p.31

[44] Muriel Prince, 'Women and Books: Contemporary Book Artists Share Their Thoughts', *The Bonefolder: An Ejournal for the Bookbinder and Book Artist*, 4.2 (2008), 3–10. p.3

[45] Joan Lyons, *Artists' Books A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook: A Special Digested Edition* (Rochester, New York: Visual Studies Workshop, 1985), p. 10.

> The experience of reading it, viewing it, framing it - that is what the artist stresses in making it."[46]

In this approach, the book is a phenomenological experience for the reader and the final form of the work should make a whole of the parts. The book, rather than its content, is the concept.

Stephen Bury discusses the book as object and the involvement of the artist in the production process. He states that 'Artists' books are books or book-like objects over the final appearance of which an artist has had a high degree of control; where the book is intended as a work of art in itself. Artists' books are made for a variety of reasons. An artist book is generally interactive, portable, movable and easily shared'. [47] As a book of intermedial literature, as an object that the reader has to interact with, can carry, can share, *Nox* sits as an Artist's Book easily in these genre categorisations.

The focus of any book is very individual and depends on the particular aesthetic of the individual practitioner. Book artists describe the focus of their art as ranging from favouring engagement with the multi-disciplinary, the structure, concepts, voice, fun to invention, symbology and a consideration of the intimate relationship with the viewer and reader.[48] Ideas of 'control', 'repurposing', texts 'disrupt, challenge and unsettle', 'tactility', the history of the book, and the need to communicate are among the variety of elements foregrounded in the work. It is clear that, although, individual artists differ in the primary intention and focus of the work, they all work with, to a greater or lesser extent, many of the elements involved in the process of the creation of an artist's book.

Book artist Heather Hunter considers that successful artist's books utilise the whole design and production process to reinforce the message of the subject matter. Shapes, folds, text patterns and materials can be used to nudge the viewer in the direction of the artist's message, producing a unified coherent statement from the outset.[49] The making of a book, the actual doing, is an important part of the process. Being involved in the production of the work in a practical way is an vital element in the production of a book. The actual making of the object is related to the working through of content. Heather Weston discusses the idea of the amount of control book art

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[46] Lyons, p. 10.
[47] Stephen Bury, *Artists' Books : The Book as a Work of Art 1963-2000*, 2nd Edition (London: Bernard Quaritch Ltd, 2015), p. 18.
[48] Prince, p. 3.
[49] Prince, p. 7.

allows in the decision making process and to the processes of creation and of reception. The implication is that the reader is an active participant in the creation of the work and brings their own experience to the reading. This dynamic of the book's reception is something that the writer considers. She visualises the reader receiving the message of the book in 'quite a small, private space'[50]

A part of the control which form offers is that of being present and engaged in its 'physical and conceptual gestation'. A book which relies on text alone attempts to deliver meanings through solely abstract signs. An artist's book offers the reader opportunity to uncover meanings through touch, visual modalities and the use of other media. Beyond the text there is form, structure, the means of production, aspects of embodiment, colour, collage the manipulated images, found materials. Bright argues for the collaborative nature of the relationship between artist and the reader in the completion of the artist's book: 'every aspect of the book—from content to materials to format—must respond to the intent of the artist and cohere into a work that is set in motion with a reader's touch.'[51] This collaboration includes the reader and refers to the idea of embodiment, to a physical engagement with the work by both reader or viewer and author. In multi-modal work the reader or viewer becomes aware of a writer who was present and making decisions during the production of the work and this awareness is part of the construction of meanings.

[50] Muriel Prince, 'Women and Books: Contemporary Book Artists Share Their Thoughts', *The Bonefolder: An Ejournal for the Bookbinder and Book Artist*, 4.2 (2008), 3–10 (p. 8).
[51] Betty. Bright, *No Longer Innocent: Book Art in America, 1960-1980*, 1st. (New York: Granary Books, 2005), p. 3.

Chapter 2 Process: The Visual Text, Language and Meanings

The key ideas that I explore in this chapter relate to materialities of language and the communication of meanings through combinations of modes. The materiality of the text usually refers to the form in which the language is received by the reader and to the process used by the writer. An examination of the material aspects of a textual work could therefore include an account of aural, physical, visual and somatic elements as a part of this reading. Signification is intensified in poetry through prosody, physical layout and multiple meanings are elicited through these different modalities. In creating *God's Little Cow*, I had to consider the presentation of writing that wanted to explore the multiple modalities and facets of language. Such considerations are firstly sound and the sonorous value of the text. Does it demand to be heard? Is it written with its verbal articulation as a central part of process? Secondly, as a result of engaging with texts that grappled with a spatial experience of language, I asked questions about how language moved from the world to the page and what the effect of this may be on how meanings emerge or are pointed to. My process was becoming one of questioning and exploring the strategies I developed to attempt to answer these questions.

As a practitioner, one of the most interesting aspects of creating work for me is in the consideration of the process of moving from the world to the material presentation of the text and how this affects intention or meanings. In an article exploring typography and the materiality of language Sheena Calvert focuses on the significance of the medium as a partner in finding meanings.[52] She shows how works created at the interface between the visual and the textual deal with issues of meaning and make of the material word a 'crucial partner in the production of meaning. In other words, where the 'printed, written, drawn, scratched material event of language' is a rich source, and 'the material *is* the content'. [53] Meanings have moved from simply being found in the written language on the page and are to be found in examining the very physical presentation of the marks. The foregrounding of the text in this way is an attempt to find sense, to get to the past of the word, to what it knew before it was written.

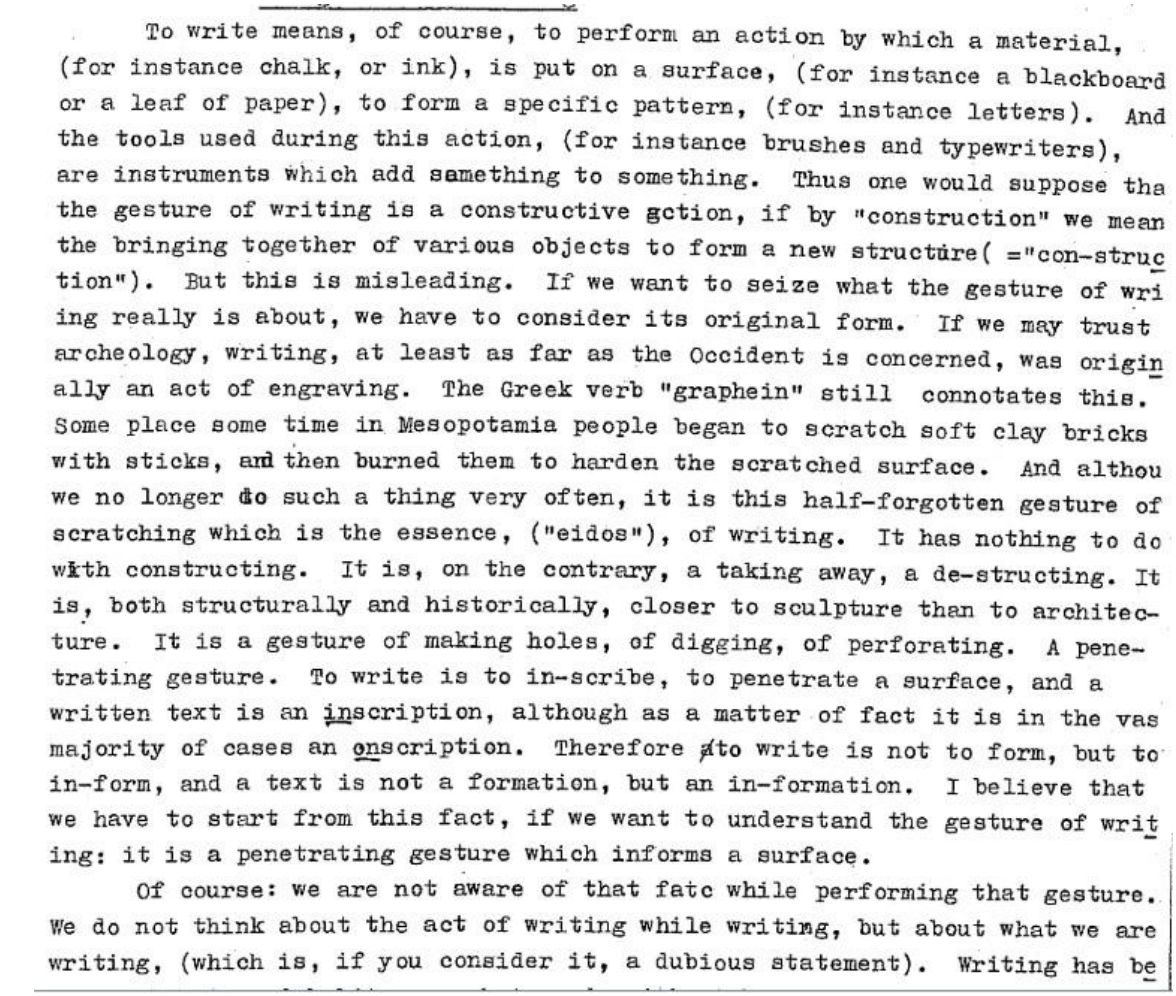
[52] Sheena Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 4.3 (2011), 309–28.
[53] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', pp. 319, 329.

Calvert's article quotes remarks by Drucker from an email interview with Tayah Barrs that discuss the importance of presentation and the visual and how meanings are in 'addition to sound and ideas'[54] amplified in the poetry of e.e. cummings. In asking what enables a poem to work successfully, she points to 'attention to visual properties'[55] and 'their capacity to inflect, shape, manipulate, semantic value'. [56] She goes on to say that 'All written poems are visual. But only some take advantage of that fact to explore the ways visuality and meaning work together'.[57] This visuality is a natural quality of the text-based artist's book and the artist's book as a poem brings the visual form very much to the foreground and can make for a much deeper reading of a text. Drucker suggests that cummings was 'scoring his work, using space and placement to create rhythms and semantic impact'. This approach to the text as music is also underscored through other visual strategies that helped to 'produce surprise. He was very playful, after all'.[58] Playful elements and strategies that allow surprise, matter, and are qualities that I consider essential to my own practice. It is necessary to think about the visual presentation in order to allow meanings to emerge. Trusting the importance of the visual accommodates the ongoing process of decision-making in relation to language and form in the work. Calvert concludes that

> visual language, or text–as–image has an obstinacy…one that refuses to relinquish its visible, or invisible, materiality in deference to either sound or meaning as the primary concern of language. Matter has a meaning that cannot be articulated outside its sensuality, residing at the level of 'things', whether ink, shape, typeface, paper, colour or screen, irreducible to concepts, substantially visible and 'there' in ways that cannot be evaded/side–lined.

For the creative writer, this idea has huge implications in relation to decision-making around the production of the text and inclusion of physical source materials. The thoughtful presentation of interference with the original text and the deliberate choice of mark-making tools, such as typewriters and pencils, brings the decision-making process of the author to the page in a way that asks the reader to consider the attributes and processes of the act of creation. This means accepting that a book, the

[54] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', p. 328.
[55] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', p. 328.
[56] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', p. 328.
[57] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', p. 328.
[58] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', p. 328.



To write means, of course, to perform an action by which a material, (for instance chalk, or ink), is put on a surface, (for instance a blackboard or a leaf of paper), to form a specific pattern, (for instance letters). And the tools used during this action, (for instance brushes and typewriters), are instruments which add something to something. Thus one would suppose tha the gesture of writing is a constructive gction, if by "construction" we mean the bringing together of various objects to form a new structure(="con-struc tion"). But this is misleading. If we want to seize what the gesture of wri ing really is about, we have to consider its original form. If we may trust archeology, writing, at least as far as the Occident is concerned, was origin ally an act of engraving. The Greek verb "graphein" still connotates this. Some place some time in Mesopotamia people began to scratch soft clay bricks with sticks, and then burned them to harden the scratched surface. And althou we no longer do such a thing very often, it is this half-forgotten gesture of scratching which is the essence, ("eidos"), of writing. It has nothing to do with constructing. It is, on the contrary, a taking away, a de-structing. It is, both structurally and historically, closer to sculpture than to architec-ture. It is a gesture of making holes, of digging, of perforating. A pene-trating gesture. To write is to in-scribe, to penetrate a surface, and a written text is an inscription, although as a matter of fact it is in the vas majority of cases an onscription. Therefore to write is not to form, but to in-form, and a text is not a formation, but an in-formation. I believe that we have to start from this fact, if we want to understand the gesture of writ ing: it is a penetrating gesture which informs a surface.

Of course: we are not aware of that fatc while performing that gesture. We do not think about the act of writing while writing, but about what we are writing, (which is, if you consider it, a dubious statement). Writing has be

object and its form, is as important as its content and there is an imperative to read with this in mind. The way in which the book is made, the manner in which the pages are

Figure 2 From 'The Gestures of Writing', Vilem Flusser (1987)

produced and how the object is visualised and put together is integral to a consideration of its materialities.

In *Diagrammatic Writing* Johanna Drucker articulates the space of the codex as a space of semantically generative relations. This pamphlet-sized work shows, via a thinking and working through of process on the page, how the placement of text on a page, its size, the space it takes up, its relationship to the other spatial elements on the page suggest, argue, and ask us to consider the material language. [59] This engagement with the material event that writing is, echoes Vilem Flusser's assertions and practical demonstrations in his typewritten manuscript within which he discusses the actual physical gesture of writing. (see **Error! Reference source not found.**)

[59] Johanna Drucker, *Diagrammatic Writing* (Santa Monica: Onomatopee, 2014).

In these paragraphs Flusser captures much of what happens in *Nox* in relation to writing. The most emotional writing occurs when Carson scratches the pages, what Flusser refers to as the 'half–forgotten gesture of scratching which is the essence, ('eidos'), of writing. He goes on to refer to writing as a process of de–structing, as if close to sculpture. This process is also reminiscent of what Carson says of her attempt to write a novel: 'Yeah, it just kept having too many words. When I get too many words, I don't feel that I'm saying anything. I'm just saying the words, not the thing. So I have to keep cutting it down, cutting it down, and it gets turned into verse. It was hopeless'.[60] It is almost as if she is talking about sculpting the words into verse and releasing the poetry from the block of prose. It is an embodied and materialist description of a process.

In *Language And The Voices Of Silence*[61], Merleau-Ponty begins with a lengthy discussion of language, starting with Saussure who tells us that signs on their own have no significance. What he is leading up to, however, is foretold in his references to 'meaning arising at the edge of signs, this immanence of the whole of the parts,'[62] and 'meaning does not actually dwell in the verbal chain [...] its meaning is entirely involved in language'.[63] In other words, meanings may be generated in blank spaces. They pass between words. The reader must open up his/her imagination to the social, cultural and historical history of the word, to its use of, and understanding by, the other. This is a terrifying thought because it has implications for our ability to communicate or our ability to achieve anything approaching truth through the written word. Each word may be considered as an object that has a verbal history, and that can also be read through its material presence and its formal properties. It is almost as if the word is on the surface and below it, in its roots are the whisperings of the experience of the word in time and all its cultural past as it becomes visible, and above it is the reader bringing to it their history, experience and social presence. The word exists on the page with the marks of its inscription and the idea of a voice above and below it.

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[60] Emma Brockes, 'Magical Thinking', *The Guardian*, 2006 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/dec/30/featuresreviews.guardianreview7> [accessed 29 October 2019].

[61] Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. by Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp. 76–120.

[62] Johnson and Smith, p. 78.

[63] Johnson and Smith, p. 79.

Discussing the poem as object and the concept of play in the visual poetry of Giulia Nicolai, Sarah Patricia Hill addresses the visual-verbal interactions. She concludes that by 'breaking down the associations of text and image, word and object into their component parts, the poet encourages her reader to delight in the creative process of reconstructing them. In this way she seeks to bring to light the revelatory wonder of human perception and thought, and also to enable her readers to recognise their own playful "inner poet"'[64] The sort of work that juxtaposes word and image, and brings visual and verbal languages together, asks the reader to examine the spaces and the relationships between them. It challenges the reader to consider the nature of language and what it is that is happening in the book object. This type of visual play demands attention to the word and the image. We read between the lines. Kendall *et al*, in an article giving an overview of critical engagement with the concept of the visual text, conclude that 'engaging with text as a visual phenomenon allows us to see how it has been used, how it is being used and how current usage may be changing us'.[65]

Willard Bohn defines visual poetry as 'poetry that is meant to be seen. Although it assumes a great many forms, it inevitably possesses a pictorial as well as a verbal aspect'.[66] *Nox* is very definitely intended to be seen, to be touched, and to be scrutinised. The pictorial aspects of it include textual scraps as well as those images which are obviously pictorial in nature: the photographs and drawings. Tearing a scrap of typed or written text from its original source and translating it into an image through layering it (pasting into) and manipulating it by occluding it through further layering with copied and opaque or transparent materials translates the text into a picture but retains its essence as language. The collaged text/image is still something which is intended to be read. The text operates visually and verbally.. Is it possible that the writer can say more about the limits and possibilities of language to convey meanings its visual nature is foregrounded? This idea possibly makes for a deeper reading experience. In fact, perhaps the ability of collage as a formal strategy and the referential nature of collage to

[64] Sarah Patricia Hill, 'Poems as Objects: The Visual Poetry of Giulia Niccolai', in *The Art Book Tradition in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. by Kathryn Brown (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), p. 199.
[65] Judy Kendall, Manuel Portela, and Glyn White, 'Introducing Visual Text', *European Journal of English Studies*, 17.1 (2013), 1–9 (p. 9).
[66] Willard Bohn, *Reading Visual Poetry*, (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), p. 1.

generate potential meanings through form makes it an 'ideal format for the consideration of challenging ideas'. [67]

The way in which a collage of disparate materials brings the author and his or her argument from the real world and into the reading experience is one of the more powerful arguments for the use of this intertextual process. There is a biographical imperative implied when using found texts and poetry can explore many discursive spaces. Most importantly, a poem can be a path for thinking through material. When the reader is presented with verbal material in its original form, she may become aware of a real author and potentially share in the experience of an emotional journey. In phenomenological terms, the author's being in the world is evident in the material presented to the reader in both form and treatment. As part of the journey of reading, the reader enters a reciprocal interaction with the author through the multi-modal work.

While developing the creative portfolio I undertook what I hoped was an objective engagement with my practice. Issues which emerged from a consideration of process led me to investigating works which dealt with similar issues. These issues related to language and were, broadly speaking, about a) the use of source materials; b) the form the work takes and the reasons for this c) the structure of the work: how written language appears on and off the page and d) how the integration of the process of creating the work, of thinking through the source material, both leads to and is a part of the final version of the text insofar as there can be a final version. One of the texts which deals with some of these issues in various ways is *Nox* by Anne Carson.

[67] Scarlett Higgins, *Collage and Literature: The Persistence of Vision* (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 239.

Chapter 3 *Nox*: A Close Reading of The Book

Anne Carson has worked most of her life as a Classics professor. The biographical note in her books consists of a short sentence: 'Anne Carson lives in Canada' or ‘Anne Carson was born in Canada and teaches ancient Greek for a living.’[68] The knowledge that is in the public domain tells that she grew up Irish Catholic in Ontario, has taught widely at universities and despite the fact that she has been considered to be reticent about the details of her personal life, her work is often deemed to be rooted in the personal.[69]

A brief overview of Carson's work shows that she writes successfully across and within many genres, having published plays, libretti, essays, poetry, prose, academic works, continually testing the boundaries of her craft and exploring other media as a natural component of her literary explorations.[70] Her work encompasses dance, visual elements and many challenges to form, allowing us to question what we consider the poem, the page or the book to be. If anything ties all of her work together, it is a deep engagement with language and with her classical roots. She writes works based on classical Greek history, writers and myth and through continual re-invention, explores ideas of beauty, love, betrayal and desire. 'Myths are stories about people who become too big for their lives temporarily, so that they crash into other lives or brush against gods. In crisis their souls are visible,' she says.[71] She is a genre-bending author, obsessive about language and aware of the visual elements of textual practice. According to Will Aitken 'Although she has always been reluctant to call herself a poet, Carson has been writing some heretic form of poetry almost all her life. Her work is insistent and ground-breaking, a blend of genres and styles that for years failed to attract

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[68] Sam Anderson, ‘The Inscrutable Brilliance of Anne Carson’, *The New York Times*, 14 March 2013, section Magazine <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/magazine/the-inscrutable-brilliance-of-anne-carson.html> [accessed 27 March 2018].

[69] Gerard, Andre, ‘Blog #107: Meeting Rebecca Solnit and Anne Carson in Stykkishólmur’s Library of Water’, *Patremoir Press*, 2019 <http://patremoirpress.com/blog/?p=1037> [accessed 16 December 2019].

[70] A partial bibliography includes Float (Jonathan Cape, 2016), *Antigonick* (New Directions, 2015), Red Doc> (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), *NOX* (New Directions, 2010), *Decreation: Poetry, Essays, Opera* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), *The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), *Men in the Off Hours* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), *Autobiography of Red* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), *Glass, Irony and God* (New York: New Directions, 1995), *Short Talks* (Brick Books, 1992), *Eros the Bittersweet* (Princeton University Press, 1986)

[71] Anne Carson, *Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2006), p. 8.

notice.'[72]As early as 2001, and before the publication of such ground-breaking hybrid works as *Float*[73] or *Nox*, according to Daphne Merkin, 'what her fellow poets would do well to ask themselves is not whether what Carson is writing can or cannot be called poetry, but how has she succeeded in making it–whatever label you give it–so thrillingly new?'[74] Assessing the work by judging its success as it causes a fervent reaction or a questioning in the reader through asking *how* it was created, rather than by successfully situating it into a particular genre calls for a different type of reading and understanding. Readers are invited to ask questions, to attend to 'its actual language, syntax, use of white space, and hypographical elements'.[75] So how does a work like *Nox* affect the act of reading? Plate considers that it defamiliarises it, that the reader 'cannot hold *Nox* in our hands, as we are wont to do with books, and the turning of pages feels and sounds different from what we are used to.' She says that Carson, through her use of a materially based process engages the reader in a sensorial way and that 'Carson's book reminds the reader that reading is a material and affective practice, as well as a cognitive skill'.[76] We have to hear the text, move with it, perhaps smell it, see it and touch it. The materiality is not simply about the object but also about the reader and the act of engagement with the text. The reader is required to be present and she is asked questions of her engagement simply by being willing to read.

In her work Carson is continually pushing the boundaries of traditional approaches to poetry, creating hybrid works and collaborating with practitioners and as such occupies a prominent position in contemporary poetics. Her status as a literary giant has grown since her early publications and in 2019 it was speculated that she was being considered for a Nobel Prize in Literature.[77] Carson does not put herself into any particular category as an author. She has referred to herself as a visual artist on occasion

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[72] Will Aitken, 'Anne Carson, The Art of Poetry No. 88', *The Paris Review*, 88.171 (2004), 22–26 (p. 23) <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5420/anne-carson-the-art-of-poetry-no-88-anne-carson> [accessed 27 March 2018].

[73] Anne Carson, *Float*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016).

[74] Daphne Merkin, 'Last Tango', *The New York Times*, 2001, p. 12 <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/30/books/last-tango.html?searchResultPosition=1> [accessed 9 November 2019].

[75] Marjorie Perloff, *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). (p.28).

[76] Liedeke Plate, 'How to Do Things with Literature in the Digital Age: Anne Carson's Nox, Multimodality, and the Ethics of Bookishness', *Contemporary Women's Writing 9*, 9.1 (2015), 93–105 (p. 105).

[77] Hibaq Cain, Sian; Flood, Alison; Lea, Richard; Farah, 'Nobel Prize in Literature: Reactions after Olga Tokarczuk and Peter Handke Win', *The Guardian* (London, 10 October 2019), p. 6.

and frequently refers to her process when she deals with language as an indicator of the type of writing that she does.[78] Carson has also said that 'making a poem is making an object. I always thought of them more as drawings than as texts, but drawings that are also physically enterable through the fact of language. It was another way to think of a book, an object that is as visually real as it is textually real.'[79] The idea that the poem is a drawing, and that there may be a seamless transition between the visual and the textual, is an exciting idea for a practitioner. It allows for a new and fresh approach to the blank page, and to the book as a receptacle for text. Indeed, in *Antigonick,*[80] in what may be perceived as a sequel to *Nox*, Carson expands and innovates further her approach to translation and collaboration. *Antigonick* is a translation from the Greek which is handwritten by Carson and has been illustrated and designed with two collaborators. She has also translated the book into performance.[81] Anne Carson's approach to translation is unorthodox[82] and especially in this elegy for her brother. Carson's approach to translation is deeply embedded in an attitude towards language and the contradictions of its plasticity and fixedness. In this tension between the contemporary and the ancient there is a basis for exciting hybrid work.[83] Carson has translated and used as the basis for new texts, Stesichoros[84], Aeschylus[85], Sophocles[86], Euripides[87] and Sappho.[88]

Nox is situated within a wide-ranging practice. It is a measure of Carson as a writer that it is difficult to write about her work, and *Nox* in particular. It is impossible to discuss any of the many elements and how they relate to one another without referring to form and process and the necessary interactions between source materials

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[78] Watchel, Eleanor, 'An Interview with Anne Carson', *Brick: A Literary Journal*, 2014 <https://brickmag.com/an-interview-with-anne-carson/> [accessed 14 December 2019].
[79] Eleanor Wachtel, 'Anne Carson on Writing from the Margins of Her Mind | CBC Radio', *Writers & Company* (CBC Radio, 2016).
[80] Anne Carson, *Antigonick* (Tarset: Bloodaxe, 2012).
[81] Carson, Anne, 'Anne Carson: Performing Antigonick', *Louisiana Channel*, 2013 <http://channel.louisiana.dk/video/anne-carson-performing-antigonick> [accessed 16 December 2019].
[82] Sam Anderson, 'The Inscrutable Brilliance of Anne Carson', 2013 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/magazine/the-inscrutable-brilliance-of-anne-carson.html> [accessed 30 October 2019].
[83] Ian Rae, 'Dazzling Hybrids: The Poetry of Anne Carson', *Canadian Literature*, 166, 2000, 17–41.
[84] Anne Carson, *Red Doc* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013); Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2010).
[85] Anne Carson, *An Oresteia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009)
[86] Anne Carson, *Antigonick* (Tarset: Bloodaxe, 2012).
[87] Anne Carson, *Grief Lessons : Four Plays by Euripides* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2006)
[88] Anne Carson, *If not, winter: fragments of Sappho* (London: Virago, 2003).

and language that occur in development of a hybrid text. In a reading of the unsayable in Carson's work, Leah Souffrant[89] considers that her work 'illustrates the centrality of formal attention in attending to ontological matters found burgeoning in art that swells with both difficult subject matter and quiet'. This juxtaposition of the difficult and the quiet is a feature of the work. In *Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre*[90], Wilkinson addresses the biographical nature of much of her work, the importance of process to the realisation of her work and the constant change and pushing at the limits of language that is central to each of her different projects.[91] These various essays highlight Carson's interests and offer proof of the usefulness of differing perspectives when reading her. Of particular interest is Eleni Sikelianos' creative piece to *Nox* which is a series of sentences describing personal reflections on engaging with the text and also includes sentences from conversation the author had with others about the book.[92] All these lines read as if they were required by the blank spaces in *Nox*, and as if the reader should insert them, for example,

> We break into the tomb by fits and starts, first at the end of all possibilities of multas (adjective, many), when the poet writes, "multa nox, late in the night, perhaps too late." In these words, something shows up for the first time. It is not the brother; it is the poet. She lets us in on night, opening an emotive door via modification, because it is perhaps too late.[93]

In *Nox* Anne Carson presents us with facts of an event and facts around her thinking about that event through the use of original source material, transcription and translation. She creates a book and within the process of making it, uses visual and verbal strategies that she then writes 'epexegetically' around. She also refers to the idea of 'overtakelessness'. I propose that in this work she uses the 'epexegetic' and

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[89] Leah Souffrant, 'LOOK AT THE WALL: Reading the Unsayable in Duras and Carson', *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, 4.1 (2012), 63–72,141.

[90] Joshua Marie Wilkinson, *Anne Carson : Ecstatic Lyre* (Ann Arbor Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 2015).

[91] In particular Wilkinson says 'I would place Anne Carson's work in that latter, freakish category, for what it's worth. In terms of content, rarely has an author so rethought gender, marriage, sexuality, family, love, death, religion, and divorce from the fragment through the drama and all the way out to comics, dance, video, performance, and back to the materiality of the codex itself with Nox. In fact, 'rethought' does not begin to describe what 'The Glass Essay' does to relationships; what *Autobiography of Red* has to say about coming of age, abuse, and falling in love; or what Carson's work on Sappho's fragments has done for desire and textuality. Carson's concept of being itself is transformed into something much more radically animal, other, peculiar, and in perpetual flux .

[92] Wilkinson, pp. 148–49.

[93] Wilkinson, p. 148.

'overtakelessness' as an artistic practice, as methods for getting around the facts of language. This is evident in her *oeuvre*. .It is not a privileging of process over meaning, but rather an approach that asks us to pay attention to the visual and the historical where they meet on the page. They are the methods of collage. The materiality and intertextuality of the text, the locus of meanings in the text and the awareness of these elements in her process and what the text teaches us about translation are fascinating ideas for consideration. The 'epexegetic' and 'overtakelessness' as they are used in *Nox* and as I understand them as applied to my own work, will be defined and explored in the following pages.

***Nox*: the book object**

In 2000 Anne Carson's brother died. Unaware of his death for two weeks and not having seen him for many years she began to collect together the details and fragments of his life that she could. She kept a notebook into which she sketched and collaged over a period of time these fragments. This material consisted of photographs, postcards, letters, fragmented image and text, scraps from the available letters, numbered sections of text, family photographs and other collaged text, including typed out subtly altered lexical entries which are based on a creative translation of Catullus' 10 line epitaph on the death of his brother, who also died a distance from home. The original Catullan text is as follows:

> Multas per gentes et multa per aequora vectus
> advenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias,
> ut te postremo donarem munere mortis
> et mutam nequiquam alloquerer cinerem.
> quandoquidem fortuna mihi tete abstulit ipsum.
> heu miser indigne frater adempte mihi,
> nunc tamen interea haec, prisco quae more parentum
> tradita sunt tristi munere and inferias,
> accipe fraterno multum manantia fletu,
> atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale.

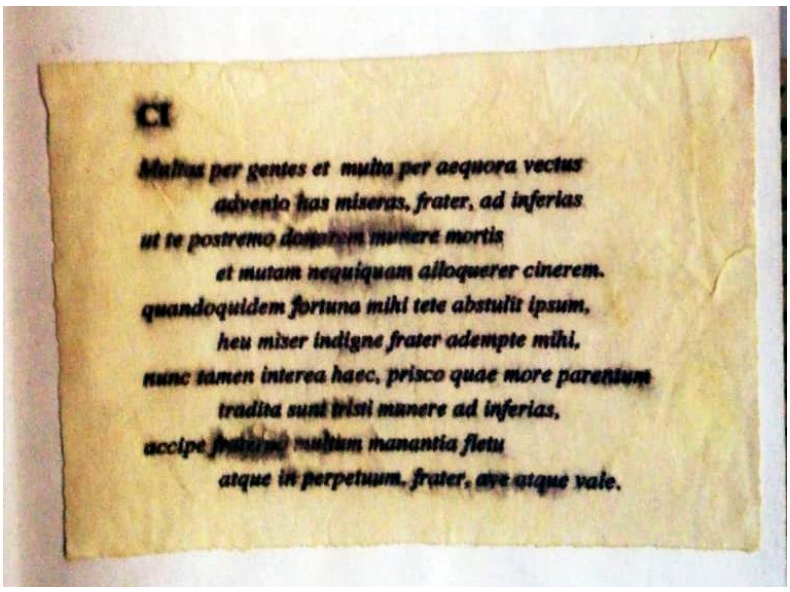

Figure 3 Catullus 101, Nox, inserted in book following title page.

The scrap of typed text containing the original Latin text as it appears in *Nox* makes it appear illegible. (See **Error! Reference source not found.**) This illegibility points towards its untranslatability that Carson mentions. That quality of it notwithstanding, *Catullus 101* has been much translated. It has been described as a monologue that is part of funerary ceremonial ritual.[94] Carson acknowledge that it is Catullus' most well-known poem and that she herself has attempted to translate it many times, a fact she alludes to in *Nox.* It is, she says, 'deceptively simple on the surface, impossible to capture underneath. The ideal poem'.[95] The poem is written in elegiac couplets that were generally used for Roman funeral inscriptions.[96] One quality of these elegiac couplets is that they are slow paced, demonstrating the seriousness and thoughtfulness of the ritual and occasion they both perform and describe. This solemnity is evident especially when the poem is enunciated aloud as Carson shows when reading from *Nox*[97]. The reading is almost prayerful, and is suggestive of funerary incantations. In the poem, Catullus addresses his brother directly, expressing his grief, and both greeting him and saying goodbye to him in the final line, '…atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale.' Carson, although, translates this final line as '…and

[94] Eleanor Cederstrom, 'Catullus' Last Gift to His Brother (c. 101)', *The Classical World*, 75.2 (1981), 117–18 (p. 117)
[95] Watchel, Eleanor, 'An Interview with Anne Carson', *Brick: A Literary Journal*, 2014, <https://brickmag.com/an-interview-with-anne-carson/> [accessed 14 December 2019].
[96] Barbara R. Pavlock, 'Frater Ave Atque Vale: Tennyson and Catullus', *Victorian Poetry*, 17.4 (1979), 365–76 (p. 371).
[97] Carson, Anne, 'Anne Carson: Reading from Nox', *Www.Channel.Louisiana.Dk*, 2013 <http://channel.louisiana.dk/video/anne-carson-reading-nox> [accessed 27 March 2018].

into forever, brother, farewell and farewell.' The greeting is turned into a second, and definite farewell, the repetition of the word haunting. When asked about her brother's repetition in his handwritten letter to his mother of 'love you, love you, Michael'[98], which comes after a series of pages and partial repetitions of the from which the text is taken, Carson replies, 'isn't that haunting, when people write things twice. Why would he write it twice? I don't know.'[99] Carson's repetition in the translation of the final line is very effective. Some translations of this final line by others include '…Hail and forever farewell.'[100] and '…and so, dear brother, rest-farewell for evermore.'[101] Carson's full translation reflects the fragmented and epexegetic way in which she dissects the poem in *Nox.* Here it is in its entirety, and below, the image of it as it appears in the text:

Catullus 101[102]

Many the peoples many the oceans I crossed --
I arrive at these poor, brother, burials
so I could give you the last gift owed to death
and talk (why?) with mute ash.
Now that Fortune tore you from me, you
oh poor (wrongly) brother (wrongly) taken from me,
now still anyway this -- what a distant mood of parents
handed down as the sad gift for burials --
accept! Soaked with tears of a brother
and into forever, brother, farewell and farewell.

[98] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 9.1.
[99] Watchel, Eleanor.
[100] Anonymous, 'FOREVER FAREWELL', *The Classical Outlook*, 23.8 (1946), 78–78 <www.jstor.org/stable/44006794> [accessed 13 December 2019].
[101] Catullus, Gaius Valerius, 'Frater Ave Atque Vale-Catullus, 101.', *The Speaker: The Liberal Review; London*, 5.112 (1901), 215–215 (p. 215).
[102]Carson, *Nox*, sec. 7.2.

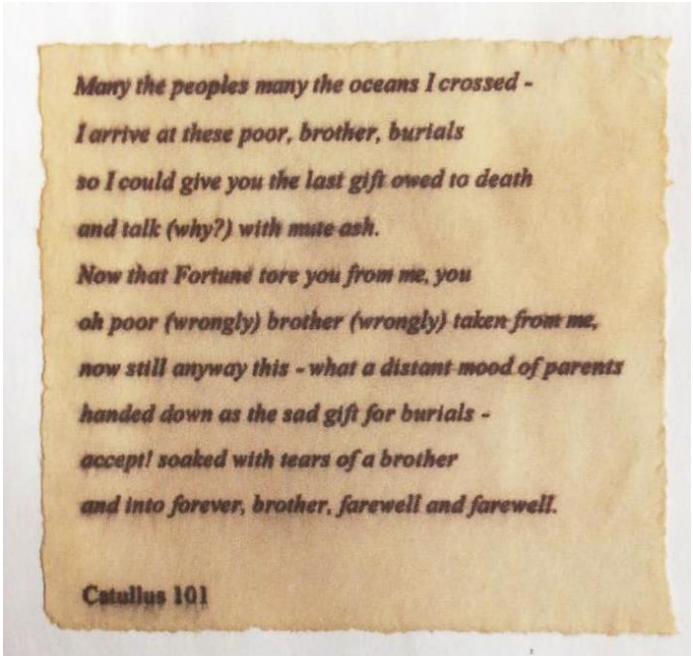

Figure 4 Catullus 101, Carson's translation, Nox, *Section 7.2*

The physical materials that were left of her brother and that she was able to gather were the postcards and letters (one) which he sent home (primarily to their mother) in the previous 21 years, the recollections of five phone calls over that time and images from a meagre family repository of photographs.[103] She also has, as source material, the information she received about her brother, Michael, from his widow and then, her own memories which she has typed on scraps of paper. These source materials, juxtaposed alongside the translation of the Catullan poem became the basis for *Nox.* The 'book' version of *Nox* is a facsimile[104] of that original handmade scrapbook which was assembled in the years following the death of her brother. It is a book made from a very creative and carefully constructed arrangement of those source materials and as such is reworking the notion of what a book is. It asks 'what is a page?' It asks 'what is a codex?' *Nox* is a hybrid object, a commodified artist's book. Like its author, it sits across genres and type.

[103] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 2.2., sec. 3.2

[104] Manfred Kramer defines a facsimile edition as 'the photo-mechanical reproduction of a unique, practically two-dimensional model; it eliminates as much as possible manual copy work, reflects to the highest degree the inner and outer aspects of the original, incorporates all possible technical means available, guarantees the protection and preservation of the original, and is suitable for both scientific and artistic interests. A facsimile must act as a true surrogate of the original for research purposes and bibliophiles.'

On what may be considered the title page are six iterations of a handwritten word in what appears to have been a fibrous dark marker. It is a name, *Michael, Michael, Michael*. The repetition reads as a keening, a lament. Placed and pasted centrally on top of these words is a strip of paper containing, in block capitals, the words:

NOX

FRATER

NOX[105]

The handwritten words of the lament are barely visible beneath this strip of paper. Literally, a glimpse of Michael is allowed to seep through, he is just visible but indistinct beyond the Latin, the brother in the middle of the night. She has mediated her own handwriting in a manner that extends the concerns of the poem. The text performs.

This 'title' page acts as a reading guide for the whole text: look underneath, for Michael. Is this an entreaty to look beneath the gesture, to try to find him in the spaces between the letters, in the unsaid, in the unsayable? Look beneath the night, look for the brother in the darkness, look for the brother in the darkness but see him and hear him. I am instantly required to go into words, to go into the depths behind them. The effect of handwriting, the visual quality of this is that I am in touch with the human, with the person behind the words. This is not an objective voice that has written these words. The mediated handwriting shows a voice that is questioning and passionate. The reader is a witness to this. Overleaf, it appears as if the handwritten words have bled through the paper and the trace of them are just visible. These words come to mind–'the ghost of him is seeping into the book'. Language in *Nox* is fixed through gesture onto the book in a way that points to its materialities. Language is alive in the published artifact..

Nox demands engagement on a very physical level from the outset. I found that this physicality even translated into the approach I took towards the close reading. I had to work on the floor and I began to fill and scribble over A3 sheets of paper as I traversed the text, in a way, creating a loose leaf close reading text as I worked. (See Appendix for images of these A3 papers.) *Nox* cannot be read as you would read a traditional book. It requires opening in a very different way, almost as if you are pulling across a door. So you open it and then you must decide what to do. Do you take it out of the box in its entirety, do you fold over one page at a time, do you use the 'door' to hold

[105] Literally translated as NIGHT | BROTHER | NIGHT

the text in place? One thing is certain, though, you have to be aware of yourself and the space you are in as you move, handle and hold it. In this work, both agents of meaning, the reader and the writer, are embodied somewhat. From the use of various people's handwriting to the obvious use of a manual typewriter and the handmade collage scraps, language is fixed through gesture onto the book in a very material way by the writer and can only be read through a thoughtful physical engagement with the work by the reader. It is like a dance between writer and reader. The original notebook and the language and gesture that fills it is somewhat mirrored in the reading. The reading is a four-dimensional phenomenological experience, a re-enactment of a dance through language and the graveyard by the author.

Language has been made, translated, obscured and revealed in various ways. *Nox* is a 'language object' that uses language to communicate ideas about language itself, about memory and history. A traditional use of or approach to language cannot bring her brother back to life, nor adequately express what she needs to express in relation to his death. The unsayable can be embodied in a materialised text. The reader must interact with the text, listen to it, be surprised by what happens when you allow language to reveal the unsayable in the space of the page, in the roots of the words, in your very physical interaction with it. *Nox* shows that the creation of a text is a living attempt to answer and ask questions.

Introducing a reading from '*Nox*' at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art[106], Carson explains that

> It's an epitaph for the brother. My brother ran away from home in 1979 and then in the year 2000 he suddenly phoned me from Copenhagen where he turned out to be living and two weeks later he died so the years between 79 and 2000 remain a bit of a mystery. However, after he died I came to Copenhagen and met his widow and his dog and tried to make some sense of how he had lived and then I made the book about him. So the book is constructed as an epitaph and I formed it around an epitaph by Roman Poet Catullus from [the] first century. He wrote an epitaph for his brother who died suddenly and that forms the spine of the book so I disassembled that poem word by word through the book on the left hand side of the pages and on the right hand side of the pages say things about my brother.

[106] Carson, Anne, 'Anne Carson: Reading from Nox', *www.channel.louisiana.dk*, 2013 <http://channel.louisiana.dk/video/anne-carson-reading-nox> [accessed 27 March 2018].

Nox is an elegy in the form of an accordion book. It is a multi–layered collage presented as a single leaf 192 page accordion book which is 'buried' in a cardboard box measuring 235 x 150 x 65 mm. Much of the language used to describe *Nox* refers to it as if it were alive which is very interesting considering that the subject matter considers bringing things (people, deeds, language) back to life. It makes noise, shivers and shines: '*Nox*' is a luminous, big, shivering, discandied, unrepentant, barking web of an elegy, which is why it evokes so effectively the felt chaos and unreality of loss'.[107] Seeing the book as a beautiful object to be held and as holding skeletal remains, the relics of something sacred, as if it has an active role in the handling of the dead is part of the way it is viewed: '…as a single accordion sheet, folded into a handsome clamshell box — a kind of reliquary, perhaps'.[108]

The cardboard box in which the text is encased is grey and the cover image shows a photograph of a young boy which appears to have been cut out from a larger photograph as a strip. It is pasted over a strip of what appears to be yellow paint. The effect of this image is that immediately I want to know what is missing, who painted the yellow and why, what is the boy's name? It is an absorbing image, and is repeated on the front cover of the enclosed folded text. There is no doubt that the book is trying to communicate something. Drucker says that '[u]ltimately an artist's book has to have some conviction, some soul, some reason to be and to be a book in order to succeed.[109] It is immediately obvious that there is a reason for the existence of this book. It opens with a question prompted by a visual fragment. Do these fragments work as text? How does the object work as a book? What implications does this work have for the reader and the creative writer? Drucker suggests that the 'compelling quality of the artist's books is the way in which they call attention to the specific character of a book identity while they embody the expressive complexity of the book as a communicative form'.[110] Variations on the book form as a creative strategy – the accordion form, books in boxes, scrapbooks – have also been used effectively by other writers.[111]

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[107] Meghan O'Rourke, 'The Unfolding', *The New Yorker* (New York, 2010), p. 1 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/07/12/the-unfolding> [accessed 16 August 2014].
[108] Michael Dirda, 'Poetry Book Review: Michael Dirda Reviews "Nox," by Anne Carson', *The Washington Post*, 2010 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/28/AR2010042804631.html> [accessed 2 December 2015].
[109] Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York City: Granary Books, 2004), p. 10.
[110] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 359.
[111] For example, Susan Howe uses collage, image and inter-textual strategies in *That This* to create a hybrid text that explores issues in relation to the sudden death of her husband. Karen Green uses collage

Nox doesn't conform to any particular genre: it is a hybrid and has a foothold in many. It is a work of visual poetry on the one hand and it is a material book and an object that in order to read, you must physically interact with, on the other. *Nox* is a translation, a collection, an assemblage, a collage, a text very much materialised. How does the reader go about extracting the mysteries in the work? Mystery is a word which governs this book. In the text Carson refers to her brother as being a mystery to her and says that she has allowed the work's form to develop from the 'shards of his story' that were available to her.[112]

In critical writings and reviews of *Nox* writers tend to initially wrestle with how to classify its structure, its actual physical presence. It inspires many differing and interesting responses. These writings seem to suffer from the same difficulties that were historically encountered in relation to developing an operable definition of an Artist's Book and attest to the difficulties of its classification in a genre. Alison Gibbons discusses *Nox*'s multi–modality, and the verbal and visual interaction in the work which she considers to be 'an unusual literary artefact'.[113] There is no doubt, however, that it is indeed a literary artefact. She further considers that the 'composite nature' of the work is important and that the elements which make it up work to 'create a sense of veracity to the book as elegiac object'.[114] On the question of veracity or truth being bestowed on a work through the use of found texts Gibbons concludes that it is the interaction between the reader and the work that 'creates literary experiences that are not only emotional, timely or enlightening'.[115] She consider that when engaging with multi-modal literature, it is the reader's quest, how they examine the book and the elements within it, how they search and the time this takes, that makes the reader 'become intimately involved in the story world'.[116] Whatever the difficulties of describing the work, it is in the engaged act and experience, in the performance of reading the object that meanings begin to be revealed. The reading is always physical. As a reader and practice-based researcher I

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and white space to articulate grief in *Bough Down*. In *The Unfortunates* B.S. Johnson uses the box form to great effect, creating a book in a box, with a reader determined reading strategy, which deals with the recreation of a dead friend through textual means.

[112] Aitken, p. 23.

[113] Alison Gibbons, 'Multimodal Metaphors in Contemporary Experimental Literature', *Metaphor in the Social World*, 3.2 (2013), 180–98 (p. 182) <https://www.academia.edu/5158093/Gibbons_A._2013_Multimodal_Metaphors_in_Contemporary_Experimental_Literature_Metaphor_in_the_Social_World_3_2_180-198> [accessed 16 December 2019].

[114] Gibbons, 'Multimodal Metaphors in Contemporary Experimental Literature', p. 186.

[115] Gibbons, 'Multimodal Metaphors in Contemporary Experimental Literature', p. 196.

[116] Gibbons, 'Multimodal Metaphors in Contemporary Experimental Literature', p. 196.

have come to see *Nox* as a text-based book object. This description may be able to encompass more of what the work is than labelling it a poem or a work in translation alone.

James Elkins discusses *Nox* in terms of writing with images. While acknowledging that there are many ways to read the book, he remains unconvinced by it. He does not consider the possibilities that questioning and interrogating language provide. Elkins objects to the way particular sections of a letter and computer printouts are used as repetitive devices in the work[117], suggesting that Carson did not think about them. I'm not sure how useful this sort of objection is. I think that it is obvious that there was thought put into the repetition and placement of source materials among the folds. The value in the repetition is that it works like a refrain - the reader must hear it and think about it and its language; then, it echoes across the folds. Elkins also objects to the manipulation by the artist of the dictionary entries suggesting that the intentional antiquing is intended to 'make everything in the book seem precious'. I suggest that the intentional antiquing alerts the reader to time and translation. With each manipulation of the text, Carson is seeing it and re–seeing it, almost as if she were wishing for meanings to emerge. Perhaps she is thinking, if I can make it seem old it will reveal its history to me or she being historian, 'collecting bits of muteness' and showing us 'the truth by allowing it to be seen hiding'.[118]

The idea of *Nox* as a book of poetry is also one that that has received critical attention with some critics comfortable with its designation as poetry and others seeing the questions around the setting of it in the genre of poetry, or indeed as a book, as part of the work's interest. The book is promoted by its publishers as poetry, as her 'first book of poetry in five years'.[119] The collection of poetry that it is, is not 'a collection in the ordinary sense'.[120] Andrew Motion takes four of five more lines to describe this extraordinariness, which is a listing of the collection of its physical attributes, the 'raw materials of elegy'.[121] It is not 50 or 60 poems presented between two covers but it is a collection. This quality it shares with a traditional book of poetry. The presentation of a

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[117] In Section 2.2 the handwritten letter that her brother write and entry 2.2 is repeated four times.
[118] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 1.3.
[119] Carson, Anne, 'Nox, Poetry by Anne Carson', *Www.Ndbooks.Com*, 2010 <https://www.ndbooks.com/book/nox/> [accessed 30 November 2019].
[120] Andrew Motion, 'Nox by Anne Carson', *The Guardian*, 2010 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/jul/03/andrew-motion-anne-carson-nox>.
[121] Motion, p. 1.

text with redactions, illegible text, creative typefaces, graphics, and images indicate that *Nox* demands to be read outside a normal linear mode since, as Axel Nesme says 'as words are bereft of directionality and their paronomastic virtualities unfold, a textual space opens up where their 'whirlwind' of poetic potentialities may 'roar'.[122] I suggest that because of our position as both viewer and reader, and the time and attention that approaching the text necessitates, this allows the unsayable to emerge from the white space. The text has been allowed to breathe. The reader brings their own experience along to the relationship with the writer. There is a received expectation when you are presented with a text that has a particular layout on a page. Take for instance opening a page that contains a left aligned, 12 point font, 14 line poem–what do you expect? You count lines, look at word endings, and identify a sonnet, a poem. Because this layout is a sonnet, the reader then expects an argument and response to be articulated in the content of the words before even a word has been read. A visual scan of the expected rhythm of work endings immediately conjures a music, a sound, again, before even a word has been read in linear fashion. There is a message and a lot of information is coming from the page even before the reader has taken the time to silently enunciate all of the text. When presented with a text that uses techniques of collage, incorporates image, found text, exploratory linearity, the reader is deprived of this immediate reading. There is a different expectation and one I consider has to come from a different practice of reading. Reading a hybrid text means that the reader must allow that empty spaces speak, that language uses these spaces to evolve and allow meanings to emerge; that the relationship between image, sound and text is slippery, moveable, plastic; that process is a living part of the language and its presentation. Image, the image of the text, and the spoken word are necessary objects in such a reading and the reader is invited to bring their own experience.

Nox is a 'language object' that uses language to communicate ideas about language itself as well as about memory and history. The text is not solely a geometrical creation or a visual text to be read. It travels time and space, goes beyond the present to the process, to its creation and to the future, in its silence where it allows (encourages? needs?) meanings to emerge. Leah Souffrant argues that in *Nox,* 'attending to silence,

[122] Axel Nesme, 'Etant Donné(e) Rachel Blau DuPlessis: Intertextuality and Intermediality in Drafts 1–38, Toll', 65.2 (2012), 202–16.

blankness, the plain things begin to yield something'.[123] The given text points to an other in language; it points to the artist and to the process of its creation. As Drucker puts it, 'an artist's book may succeed on the strengths of its formal qualities or on the compelling vision of its meaning, but the best artist's books are those which integrate production and content so dynamically that such distinctions are moot'.[124]

Process is part of the book object and in this instance, what a language based collage perhaps encapsulates more than anything is the shifting of a text, the shifting of words over time. Words and poems, texts, have something to look forward to and something to look back to. The text is never finished. There is no definitive reading or version. You have to consider that Carson does not understand her brother or his death but that the book is like how the mind works when thinking about him. Reading through and into the book is like trying to put order on thought. Part of the reading means using the translation as a scaffold but then other elements of the book interfere: images appear and ask questions of the language; it is possible to feel frustrated while grappling with the juxtapositions and spaces in which language is growing; at times the words seem to fail, the pictures seem to fail but the interaction between them both, their re–contextualisation among the spaces of the Catullan translation allow them to succeed precisely because this impels us to question. This questioning, I consider is what the book is demanding, and arriving at an understanding of this idea means that I have engaged in a satisfying reading of the book.

Nox is a book whose material nature demands the use of the sensory and affective aspects of the reading process. For Liedeke Plate, contemporary writing that encapsulates this is of an experimental multi-modal variety. Material work of this type not only draws attention to the text's visual and aural aspects but also to the ways in which the feel, touch, shape, weight, and smell of the bound paper page is part of its aesthetics, eliciting affect, emotions, and knowledge'.[125]The treatment of language in *Nox* means that we are never allowed to forget about the modes that language comes to us in or the creative process. The reader is required to acknowledge this process and to

[123] Leah Souffrant, 'LOOK AT THE WALL: Reading the Unsayable in Duras and Carson', *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, 4.1 (2012), 63 (p. 63).
[124] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 359.
[125] Liedeke Plate, 'How to Do Things with Literature in the Digital Age: Anne Carson's Nox, Multimodality, and the Ethics of Bookishness', *Contemporary Women's Writing 9*, 9.1 (2015), 93–105 (p. 95).

question their own attitude towards language and towards the idea of the text's and the book's materiality in order to appreciate the work and to find meanings.

Any reading of *Nox* must address its multi–modality: its material form, its structure, the technological issues involved in its production and the effect of these on the purpose of the text. *Nox* is a poem; it is an art object; it is an artist's book.

Language: etymology, meanings, the epexegetic and overtakelessness

In *Nox,* ideas of history and philosophy are presented as factual scraps and governed by an etymological approach. My approach to my own work in *God's Little Cow* has been influenced by a concept of the epexegetic, a term and an approach that Carson uses. *Epexegesis* (n) comes from the Greek *ἐπεξηγεῖσθαι* - *ἐπί* in addition + *ἐξηγεῖσθαι* meaning to explain. This OED definition defines epexegesis as 'the addition of a word or words to convey more clearly the meaning implied, or the specific sense intended, in a preceding word or sentence; a word or words added for this purpose'. It is also a version of a word, a work, in a different language. Further definitions refer to the epexegetic in translation, in a language other than that in which it was originally written. And thirdly, as the expression or rendering of a thing in another medium or form; the conversion or adaptation of a thing to another system, context, or use. The OED also refers to the epexegesis in the *concrete*: something created as a result of this (exegetical) process. An epexegetical approach is one where the focus is on the essential elements of language. I consider that the use of image and collage is an epexegetical device: these elements are added to the text as if they were words, instead of words. The epexegetical additions to lexical entries and the addition of source materials to the translation seem to me to be creating something else in order to deepen meanings or to ask questions of language.

Andrew Motion refers to the challenges that *Nox* poses to the reader. 'The book is totally recherché and weirdly clear, lingered over and neatly boxed, precious in the word's best sense' he writes.[126] This is interesting in terms of etymology. The idea of *recherché,* meaning obscure or literally from the French, 'carefully sought out', or according to the Cambridge dictionary, 'very unusual, not generally known about', and

[126] Ben Ratliff, 'Lamentation - Sunday Book Review', *The New York Times* (New York, 11 June 2010).[accessed via ProQuest 22 October 2015].

'chosen with great care in order to make people admire your knowledge or style' points to a relationship between reader and author and to issues of time. If something is '*recherché*, if it is chosen with great care, it demands great care in its reading. I think this is what the form of *Nox* asks us to do; to imagine the world that got it into this form. To feel the decision making process, to try to understand the questions that it asks, because that it all it is presenting to us–questions and facts, and questions about facts. The form of *Nox* directs us to this 'overtakelessness'. Carson writes that 'overtakelessness is a word told to me by a philosopher once: *das Unumgängliche*–that which cannot be got round. Cannot be avoided or seen to the back of. And about which one collects facts–it remains beyond them'.[127] It is used by Carson to describe all those things that resist understanding: her brother, the bare facts that remain of his existence, the fact of his death.[128] The root of the word in German is *Gang* which means a walk, way, course or passage.[129] It implies that in Carson's use of the word, there is a suggestion of a walk or a way that is unpassable, perhaps a stairs that cannot be climbed or that the top of it can never be reached. This is the challenge for the writer and for the reader: to write and read around the ineluctable.

'Overtakelessness' is a word also used by Emily Dickinson. She used the concept to describe feelings towards death and the mystery of the relationship between flesh and spirit as it manifests in death:

> The overtakelessness of those
> Who have accomplished Death
> Majestic is to me beyond
> The majesties of Earth.
>
> The soul her "Not at Home"
> Inscribes upon the flesh —
> And takes her fair aerial gait
> Beyond the hope of touch.[130]

Stating and accepting these mysteries, but going on to explore ways of challenging them, demonstrates trust that the process of history and the process of creating a text–based work can challenge overtakelessness. As an approach to reading

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[127] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 2.1.

[128] Patrizia Lombardo, Lars Sætre, and Sara Tanderup Linkis, *Exploring Text, Media, and Memory (Text, Action, Space)*, ed. by Patrizia Lombardo, Lars Sætre, and Sara Tanderup Linkis (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2018), p. 51.

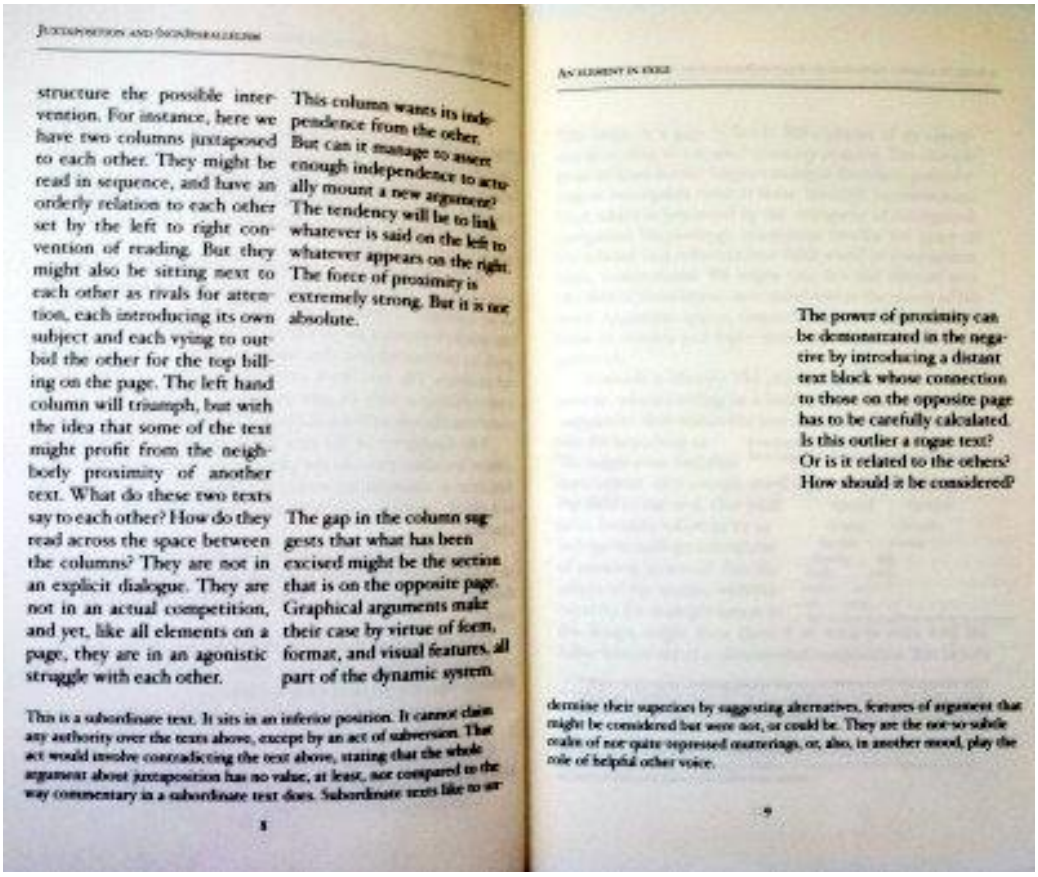
[129] *Heidegger and Cognitive Science*, ed. by Julian Kiverstein and Michael Wheeler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 268.

[130] Emily Dickinson, *F894A-The Overtakelessness of Those., Variorum Edition, Franklin, 1998* <https://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image_sets/240597> [accessed 27 November 2019].

and writing, the idea of trying to walk the unpassable ground is a profound one and one that has informed my approach to the creative project. The facts that I was unable to get around, and sought to approach with an understanding of overtakelessness in *God's Little Cow* are how without the Irish meanings of words, I am lost in the landscape and in language; how a given history can be challenged through accepting its overtakelessness and by writing above and below it; and how recontextualising the facts in relation to the Marian apparition, to the given history and from my own personal source materials is an approach towards that which cannot be got around.

Carson is telling a story about her grief, a story about the process of creating the present work. She also tells the story that she has pieced together of her brother's life, a story of the importance of and development of history and historical work, and the story of her mother's grief. She tells these by re–contextualising her source materials, by manipulating them just enough to ask the reader to think, to interpret herself. Carson's storytelling and the manner of it makes the reader do the epexegetic work. The reader not only finds herself looking for the additions of 'night' to the text but also begins to add what may be missing words. On the right hand side of its pages Carson tells the reader what she knows of her brother and includes the collaged 'facts', the ephemera, the constructed and reconstructed images. This may be read as an attempt to recreate the lost narrative of her brother's life. Carson also uses these pages to question history, its usefulness and the ability of its facts to tell us what we think we need to know. In *Nox* words *perform* across the space, asking the reader to imagine in the spaces in between, to question the word itself and its history. Carson is trying to 'invoke the starry lad' her brother was through these facts which seems to be impossible because she cannot get around the facts.[131] Simply presenting the facts is not enough. So how does Carson go beyond these facts? One of the ways is in the presentation of possibilities for each word of the translation prompting us to do the same for other words (and possibly images) in the text. We begin to ascribe possibilities to the words, based on our reading of the text, on our experience and all the other things that make us readers.

[131] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 1.0.



structure the possible intervention. For instance, here we have two columns juxtaposed to each other. They might be read in sequence, and have an orderly relation to each other set by the left to right convention of reading. But they might also be sitting next to each other as rivals for attention, each introducing its own subject and each vying to outbid the other for the top billing on the page. The left hand column will triumph, but with the idea that some of the text might profit from the neighborly proximity of another text. What do these two texts say to each other? How do they read across the space between the columns? They are not in an explicit dialogue. They are not in an actual competition, and yet, like all elements on a page, they are in an agonistic struggle with each other.

This column wants its independence from the other. But can it manage to assert enough independence to actually mount a new argument? The tendency will be to link whatever is said on the left to whatever appears on the right. The force of proximity is extremely strong. But it is not absolute.

The gap in the column suggests that what has been excised might be the section that is on the opposite page. Graphical arguments make their case by virtue of form, format, and visual features, all part of the dynamic system.

This is a subordinate text. It sits in an inferior position. It cannot claim any authority over the texts above, except by an act of subversion. That act would involve contradicting the text above, stating that the whole argument about juxtaposition has no value, at least, not compared to the way commentary in a subordinate text does. Subordinate texts like to un-

The power of proximity can be demonstrated in the negative by introducing a distant text block whose connection to those on the opposite page has to be carefully calculated. Is this outlier a rogue text? Or is it related to the others? How should it be considered?

dermine their superiors by suggesting alternatives, features of argument that might be considered but were not, or could be. They are the not-so-subtle realm of not-quite-repressed mutterings, or, also, in another mood, play the role of helpful other voice.

Figure 5 Diagrammatic Writing, Johanna Drucker, pp. 8-9

In a way, our reading of it reflects the creation of it. As it was folded into the box, we must unfold. She disassembles the words of the Catullus elegy, word by word, in a deliberate methodology and all of the ways in which process is represented brings us closer to the author and her quest. The reader has to essentially engage in an active reading. It invites us to be hermeneuts, developing our own theories of grief, language and translation as we proceed. In reading an unfamiliar text the reader searches for cues and clues to guide the reading. The reader will look for guidance in the surface of the text as an image in its own right, in the text as an embodied object and as a work of art. Where the materiality of the language is foregrounded in a text, the relationship between the text and image opens up a space where meanings are allowed to emerge. The white space, and the relationship of text and image to the white space becomes an critical and exciting part of meaning making and reading. In *Diagrammatic Writing*, Drucker demonstrates the capacity of formatting to make meaning.[132] She asks how texts on the same page, presented in columns, talk to one another, how are they linked, and suggests

[132] Drucker, *Diagrammatic Writing*, p. 8-9.

that they are in 'an agonistic struggle with each other' (see Figure 5). This rhetorical term delightfully describes some of what happens in *Nox.* It refers to polemical and combative elements, writing aimed at winning an argument and writing that is based on presenting opposing arguments.[133] This agonistic struggle is clearly encountered in Carson's work when texts argue across the pages. Is it the bare facts that are the discovery or is truth in the lexical entries and various images or is it in what happens when they 'argue' with one another across the folds. The creator of a text-based object can attempt to put across a general emotion but the nuances, the many possible readings, and the reactions, are beyond the control of the author. These are a) individual to the reader and b) evolve (in time and space) and c) they are an attempt by the author to understand the world and as such the 'meanings' of the text are not stable; it constantly questions (and answers itself). To read and write is to explore, find meanings in the crevices, in those spaces between word, thought and the world. For instance, the first lexical entry for *atque*[134] (See Figure 6) is also typed and printed as a justified column of text. There is a second iteration of it on the following page, and then a third but this third iteration has been cropped, lost across a fold in the book. The reference to night in the entry states 'just like him I was a negotiator with night'. The word *atque* is a conjunction, joining things together but it moves and gets lost in the fold, it trips on the stairs or does it become a step? Is it telling the reader that the similarities between brother and sister disappeared into the night and cannot be read, that the negotiation fails? These re-iterations are like the little whispers underneath the text, saying 'Look. Look, look beneath the work, pry among the columns of text as if you snorkelled among forests of kelp'.[135] Following the lexical entry for atque, there is a scrap of text which states 'I have to say what is said. I don't have to believe it myself'. She is reporting the facts, what was said to her by her brother's widow, by her brother, by history, and by Catullus. She does not have to believe it. She is suggesting that there is another version of the story. She can create her brother in the space between the roots, from among the moving sea of kelp. There, in between the facts and beyond them is another story. She

[133] Oxford English Dictionary, *OED Online* <http://0.www.oed.com/view/Entry/4099> [accessed 16 December 2019].

[134] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 5.1.

[135] This is a reference to my own work. Snorkelling among seaweed and being in water is a kind of overtakelessness, you cannot be anywhere else and in order to understand and translate the present moment you must attend to the above and below. This for me works as a metaphor for my understanding of language. The breathing, seeing body on the water's surface searches among the seaweed, down in the roots of the word, where the light and what you can see continually changes. It is being changed by the wind and the air over the surface.

quotes Herodotus who says 'let anyone who finds such things credible make use of them'.[136] These little pieces of wisdom, of writing around the 'overtakelessness' are presented on the page in precious little squares of typescript. The scraps are marginally justified, so then odd spaces appear between the words, awkward, waiting to be filled, waiting to be questioned for content, for meanings. The reader is in effect an epexegetic tool. We are the next adverb imaginer, we look at the facts and add or imagine, we look into the spaces between, we take benefit from the facts.

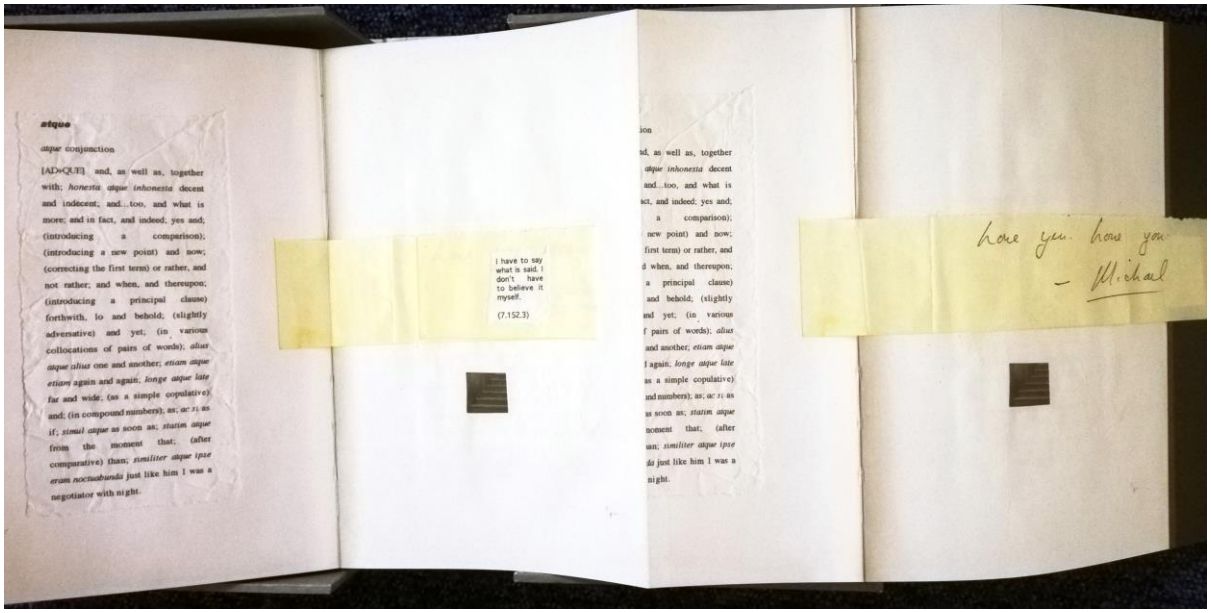


Figure 6 Nox, Section 8.1

Carson says of *Nox*, 'It's not about grief. It's about understanding other people and their histories as if we are all separate languages. That's what I was trying to explore. Exploring grief would have made it a book about me, and I didn't want that'.[137] She invokes Carl Sagan's description of the universe as “a million miles of dark empty space with nothing in it and no meaning, but there are a few places with light. 'We want to focus on the light places', she says, 'I think that's a good rubric'.”[138] The idea of identity, history and language is a powerful notion. We all have our individual relationships with words, our own associations, those we have received, those we develop through experience. Language is our way of seeing the world. Carson is telling us that she is asking language to try and see meanings, the unreachable, the other. If we

[136] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 5.1.
[137] Parul Seghal, ‘Evoking the Starry Lad Her Brother Was’, *The Irish Times* (Dublin, March 2011).
[138] Seghal, p. np

each have our own separate language then presumably this means that to fully understand the other we must become 'fluent' in their language. Is this even possible?

Opposite the page showing the lexical entry for 'et'[139], which is listed as a conjunction and adverb, is the fragment numbered 4.3. In it Carson talks about her mother losing hope and not talking about her brother. She says 'I wasn't sure new feelings were finished arr(i)ving from him yet, but there was no practical reason to say so'.[140] The 'i' in 'arriving' was missing from the printed fragment and has been typed on a different machine in different font, in a different type of paper and is pasted onto the fragment. This makes more of a collaged image of the fragment. The lexical entry includes numerous statements including the 'I', the personal pronoun, which is not usually a part of a lexical entry. Is the reader being encouraged to insert the 'I', to see from a different point of view? Is the reader being asked to hear 'And me!'? The text and image encourage us to interrogate the language, insist on it.

It is tempting to say that in *Nox*, Carson shows us how language fails. Consider instead, that what Carson in fact does achieve through the procedural creativity of translating and collaging is to open up language and to extend the life of the text, to ensure its continued unfinishedness and to show how personal both reading and writing are; the act or reading is a necessarily creative one; the act of writing is a necessarily private and personal one.

Does *Nox* use or suggest an idea of overtakelessness as a practice? Could this idea be evidenced in an examination of the treatment of source material and techniques used in the creation of the text–object? The idea of using that which can't be gotten around must essentially possess ideas of trust. In the introduction to one of the final sections of the long poem *Drafts,* Rachel DuPlessis discusses the development of the project and her process. Her thinking on her process alludes to ideas of trust and fortunate accident in the making of work. She speaks of alighting on a form which made her happy and seemed to work in an inter–textual manner, calling to works by other authors and to theory. The results of her decisions worked. 'I was just lucky' she says [141].

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[139] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 4.3.
[140] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 4.3.
[141] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Surge : Drafts 96-114*.

Being open and trusting the process of writing allows the writer to explore language and its possibilities. This is how the writer can be lucky.[142]

Carson introduces the reader to ideas of history and its facts in fragment numbered 1.1 where she states that 'History is akin to elegy' and that history is about asking.[143] Ultimately history is strange, and while she suggests that with the strange answers that history's questions receive, the muteness that surrounds the facts of history will remain forever voiceless. Carson underlines the importance of voicelessness when she notes that she was 'looking a long time into the muteness of [her] brother'.[144] Furthermore, she stresses, 'there is something that facts lack'[145]. Even by presenting the facts of her brother's life, which are all that she has, she will not be able to find his voice; this is a fact that cannot be got around.

The method of collaging interpretations of biblical and historical stories as an historian would do in order to explain something is most clear in Sections 8.3 and 8.4. Carson refers to the biblical story of Lazarus saying, 'More than one person has pointed out to me a likeness between my brother and Lazarus'.[146] These words appear under what looks like a photocopy or negative image of a hand which has been overpainted with yellow paint to resemble a face which looks surprised. In the biblical story, Lazarus was resurrected from the dead after four days. Using 'facts' from history and presenting them as they are, is an attempt to bypass overtakelessness. We are also alerted to Lazarus' muteness in gospel and other biblical stories and, crucially, throughout his supposed resurrection. It was one of his two sisters, Martha, who reprimanded Jesus for arriving too late to save him, who expressed disbelief and a lack of faith; it was she who did all the talking in the story (John 11:1-45). She is central to the story of her brother's restoration to life but Carson suggests that it may be Martha who finally contributes to the muteness in the scene. It also though, suggests, that a

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[142] As a result of engaging in a close reading on *Nox* I was becoming more open to luck and 'startle' and trust during the initial research phase for the creative work. Keeping this is mind, when I found manually typed pages of the communist manifesto as I was clearing out an old cottage, a small two-roomed building in which large families were raised, I was immediately alerted to the possibilities that this indicated. These pages were in a biscuit tin of letters and other papers pertaining to household events - death certificates, recipes, prayer leaflets, personal letters. I was struck by how personal the typed pages managed to appear- there was an instant impulse within me to search for the writer of such pages and for a possible reason in the text that would reveal why the creator chose this particular text. Other questions were provoked by the materiality -was it the keeper of the pieces that had typed them? What within the text caused them to type them?

[143] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 1.1.

[144] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 2.1.

[145] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 2.1.

[146] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 8.3.

brother can achieve a resurrection through muteness. The muteness of facts can allow this.

In the following pages, the idea of overtakelessness is again explored. 'There is no possibility I can think my way into his muteness.' she writes.[147] On the face of it these words would appear to suggest that Carson feels that her translation, the trying to get around the facts, cannot bring her brother to her in a new way but she has scribbled out the words so that they are barely legible. Its textual composition is 'lost?' Their force is being taken away. There is doubt as to their truth. She is being Martha. She is expressing doubt. There is hope.

These facts might enable her to find her brother's centre, to make 'an account that makes sense'[148] The facts that she collects might take the muteness away. She may find out something and rescue her brother from oblivion. If her account of him shows what he did, if the facts show who he was, perhaps she could understand him. But she explains when she interrogates Herodotus' first sentence of his Histories that his opening sentence contains no main verb. She adds the 'is' to the sentence and suggests that its omission perhaps shows that the presentation of facts about men, what they did, (and perhaps her brother) may not be enough to keep them from vanishing and becoming extinct. What is the action of historian? The presentation of facts is a 'doing'; that it must record the 'doing' of the deeds and works in order to preserve them in our memories is the action. Is it simply the presentation of fact?

In this collection of collage we are dealing with fact from source materials. It is fact that is discoverable and 'overtakelessness' is that which 'one collects facts about and cannot be avoided or seen to the back of' as Carson puts it.[149] Rather than being a stumbling block, overtakelessness is a method of seeing. Carson has used the idea of overtakelessness in previous work. In 'Longing, A Documentary'[150] the final poem in her work *Decreation* Carson refers to night, fact and overtakelessness. This poem is in the form of a numbered shot list for a documentary. The shot list references night, facts and the layering of materials. These ideas are built into the form: a list which unpacks itself and its philosophy as it moves forward.

[…]

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[147] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 8.5.
[148] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 3.3.
[149] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 3.1.
[150] Anne Carson, *Decreation : Poetry, Essays, Opera* (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2006), p. 242.

7. Night plucks her, she stumbles, stops.
8. She is bending beside the car, unpacking trays.
9. She drags the trays through deep reeds toward the river.
Moon unclouds itself and plunges by.
subtitle: Night is not a fact.
10. She walks into the river.
subtitle: Facts lack something, she thought. '
11. She positions the big trays on the riverbottom near the bank, just under the water, spreads photographic papers in them, adjusts it, moves back. Watches.
13. She stands by the strobe in deep reeds.
14. Flash of strobe surprises the riverbank.
15. She sits awhile in the reeds, arms on knees.
subtitle: 'Overtakelessness' (what facts lack).
[…]

Michael's own historical words, facts he wrote and which are presumably taken from the letter she mentions or postcards he has collected and sent, appear throughout the text in block capitals, unpunctuated, bold, staring out from the page, and voiceless. There is no indication with line breaks or punctuation to indicate an affect, a voice behind the words. From section 5.2, Carson writes, 'all the years and time that had passed over him came streaming into me, all that history. What is a voice?'.[151] Simply presenting the lines cannot answer this. So she must go beyond fact, through the act of creating a collage from fact, exploding language and giving the words and scraps space in which to breathe and reveal themselves to one another, hoping that a sense of her brother will emerge in this place, but ultimately this is not what happens. What happens is that we are made aware of the limits and possibilities of language. Ultimately, perhaps, the epitaph is a failure. In the extraordinary line 'God wanted to make nonsense of 'overtakelessness' itself, to rob its juice, and I believe God has succeeded' she posits that language will always fail if we only see it as referring to fact. She could have attempted a direct translation but she did not do this. Language needed to go beyond the facts of the story, to refer to that which what cannot be gotten around.

Despite this failure, Carson shows us a function of language by stating it matter of fact. Language alone fails but the web of meanings exposed by exploding it allows us to see history and the way we communicate in a different way. We become aware of the use of language to describe history and aware of the impossibility of knowing the language of the other. There is both the history of the word and personal history in these pages. The etymology of a word is the presentation of its origin and showing the ways

[151] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 5.2.

that its meaning may have or has changed through history. She searches for the etymon. An ‘etymon’, a form of the Greek word meaning true, is the original or 'true' form of a word coming from ἔτυμος (étoimos) meaning true, actual.[152] [153] It is not that the true word is locatable but that the search for it is what allows meanings to emerge, that opens up the language to the reader.

The actual facts of language which she describes in each lexical entry are its grammatical function, classification: is it an adjective, noun, interjection or adverb? We can't doubt this? Or can we? Again, the fact is compelling and she makes it necessary by simply doing it. In a normal translation of a poetic text the translator does not have to point out the grammatical function of each word used. Carson presents us with this fact but we have to look beyond the fact because of 'overtakelessness'. The effect of breaking the language down into its grammatical parts and creating a diagrammatic of the poem in translation may allow Carson to find Catullus' brother and use this key to find her own. The possibilities or discovery about the facts through the layering are endless, and necessary. For instance, the possibilities of discovery in the analysis of even the smallest of words, like *ut*.[154] (See Figure 7) Ut is an adverb and conjunction but when digging underneath, it reveals itself to be much more. It holds questions, expresses anxiety, dances around fact, introduces wishing and praying. Is this what language should be expected to do? I am not too concerned whether or not the definition she provides is true or 'real', just that it is possible. *Ut.* It is telling us something about something, making connections across the text and collage. It is a modifier, a determiner.

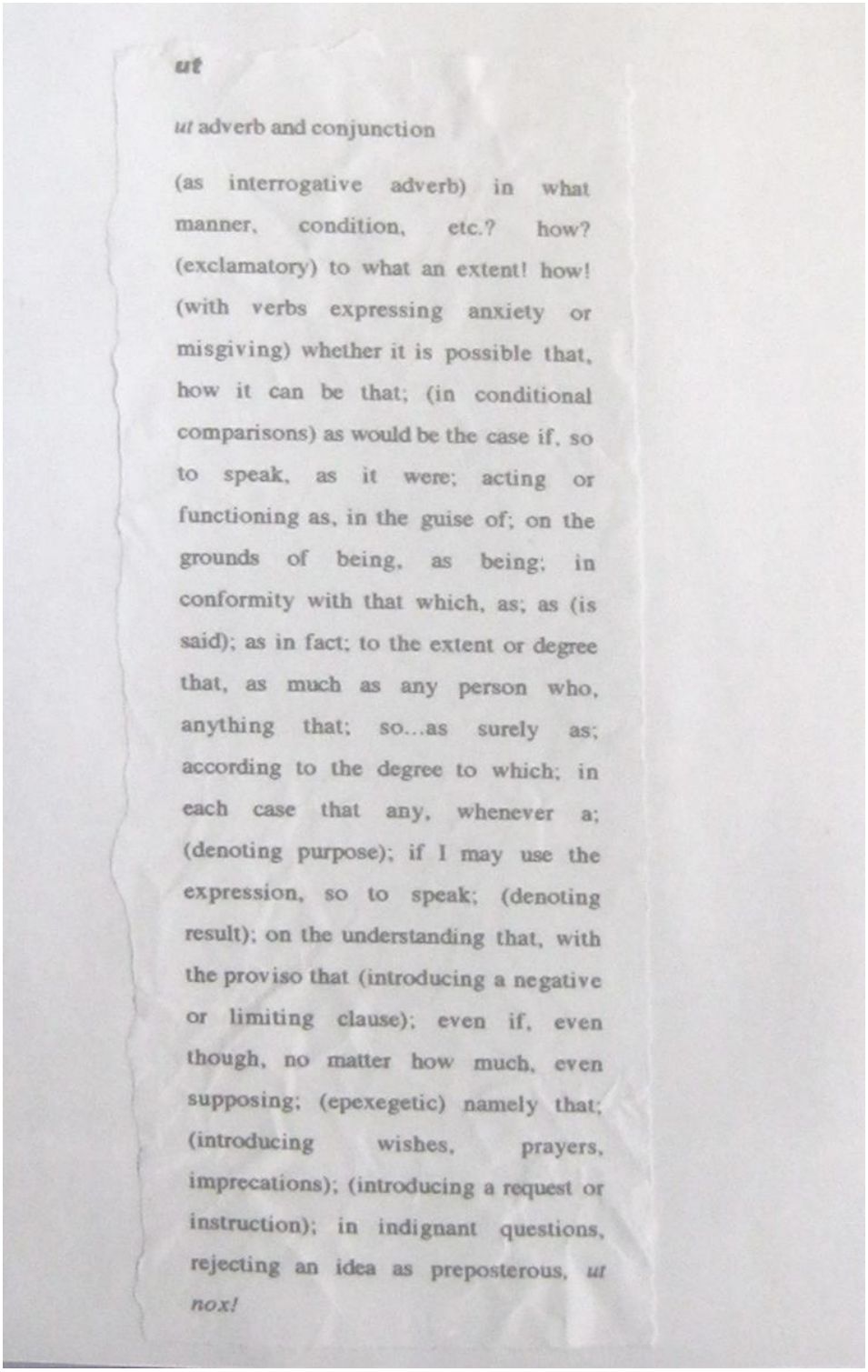
In this poem / lexical entry *Ut* I feel that as a reader I am allowed to fill in the gaps and white spaces with scraps from other pages. Carson shows, as she does in other entries, what the word can possibly do. This has huge ramifications for translation, especially across time when the original context is gone. She appears to be having fun but it is also very serious. *Ut* could ask, explain, express, denote. It is a word that may include prayers and wishes. What of these exactly is it that Catullus intended.? Did he want to also reject as preposterous ideas that occurred to him? Like the other lexical

[152] J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner, and Oxford University Press., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1989).
[153] See also https://www.oed.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/Entry/64894?redirectedFrom=etymon#eid & https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/etymon for the etymology of ‘etymon’ and its relationship to truth.
[154] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 3.3.

entries, *ut* also includes a reference to *Nox* or night, lest we forget that we are supposed to be looking for Michael in the night, in the darkness or in the lightness beneath the words. Interestingly, the only lexical entry which does not contain a reference to night or *nox*, is that for *frater*, brother.

The effect of defining each word so thoroughly, purposefully and creatively is that the text continually refers to itself. One of the best examples is when Carson uses the word 'epexegetic' itself. In the lexical entry for *ut* Carson, as well as the epexegetic addition of a reference to night, introduces the term epexegetically. Its insertion into the fragment explains and makes her process in this poem. Epexegesis[155] as the addition of words to make the sense more clear is exactly what she is doing. It is a wonderful idea for the reading of a poem. I am excited by it.

[155] Epexegesis, a noun, is the addition of words to make the sense of a text more clear. It comes from the Greek *epi* meaning in addition, and *exēgeesthai* meaning to explain. See Introduction.



ut

ut adverb and conjunction

(as interrogative adverb) in what manner, condition, etc.? how? (exclamatory) to what an extent! how! (with verbs expressing anxiety or misgiving) whether it is possible that, how it can be that; (in conditional comparisons) as would be the case if, so to speak, as it were; acting or functioning as, in the guise of; on the grounds of being, as being; in conformity with that which, as; as (is said); as in fact; to the extent or degree that, as much as any person who, anything that; so...as surely as; according to the degree to which; in each case that any, whenever a; (denoting purpose); if I may use the expression, so to speak; (denoting result); on the understanding that, with the proviso that (introducing a negative or limiting clause); even if, even though, no matter how much, even supposing; (epexegetic) namely that; (introducing wishes, prayers, imprecations); (introducing a request or instruction); in indignant questions, rejecting an idea as preposterous, *ut nox!*

Figure 7 Ut, Page from 'Nox', Section 3.2 (Carson, 2010)

The idea that meanings may emerge through the epexegetic, through the addition of word and image into the actual lexical entries, and into the space of the translation has been important for my process. I use various Irish dictionaries and collections to search for words, especially those pertaining to the sea, the Virgin Mary, ladybirds, kites and the idea of witness. Meanings may also be exposed through an acceptance of the overtakelessness of death and absence, and seeing that the dismantling of language is the process that allows this to happen. Carson is writing about language in *Nox*. It is her 'object of scrutiny' and 'her means of expression'.[156] Instead of retyping all the text that she has created and found and 'translating' them into a more traditional poetic text, Carson used a technique of cutting (or tearing out), processing through ripping and then pasting to create a collage. There may be something about her brother, about history, grief, or her brother's life that could be illuminated by looking for links which the placement of these elements on the page point to. I find myself trying to discover a relationship between the image and the text, something that will provide access to sense or meanings behind the word. This is the work of reading *Nox.* The image is actually part of the layered meanings of the word. It makes the unsayable visible.

Does this academic approach, Carson falling back on her academic background, act as a shield against the material she is considering or is it allowing the deeper, bloodier roots of the words add to understanding? Words are flexible, not fixed. In a way it is as if Carson is reminding us that language may be individual, that it evolves in a social and cultural context. Elsewhere she asks us to benefit from the facts, trawl our own memory. In my opinion, this is the best kind of writing, work which demands that you attend to language, to the materials, work that points back at the reader.

Anne Carson types out and alters the lexical entry for 'fortuna'[157] and juxtaposes it opposite an epexegetical, italicised scrap where she muses '*It is for God to fix the time who knows no time'.* 'Fortuna' involves luck, chance, the feminine. It appeals to the heavens, to favourable outcomes, and could be good or bad. 'Fortuna' is also related poetically to person's whose destiny is bound up with one's own. The juxtaposition of these ideas with the gnomic scrap about a timeless (and presumably endless) God, who has the ability to fix the time (of presumably death), impels me to consider chance. The implication would appear to be that without being 'fortune's darling'[158], that by relying

[156] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image', p. 313.
[157] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 5.3.
[158] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 5.3.

on the power of forces outside ourselves to bestow good luck or fortune on our endeavours, we can know nothing about death.

In the way that Drucker suggests, when Carson makes a decision relating to the placement of the lexical entries on one particular facing page, their font, and all other manipulations, the reader is provoked to ask the question 'How should it be considered?' The effect of the operation by cutting and folding and tearing is very powerful. We are made aware of the author and the decision making process and we are forced to question further. Why tear? What remains? What is the significance of what I can't see? If these words were not important enough to be included, what is that saying about words? That they have to be read in alternative ways in order to reveal something? In not presenting all of the available texts and by repeating and tearing, Carson is revealing something of her attitude towards the limits of the written word to tell us what we need to know. It is a requirement of the text that we look beyond it. There are some things that are unsayable, the actual fact of the written word which cannot be got around.

The collaged pieces of Michael's letter and the envelop and stamps operate as a sequence which is then picked up again in subsequent pages like a refrain. (See Figure 8) The effect of the folding and unfolding and repetition of his handwritten letter draws us to the living Michael. The handwriting and the paper which you almost feel you can touch, the ballpoint blue which is so familiar and the appearance of fragility in the aerogramme's envelope all point to a human at a reachable distance. These personal fragments which connect us to people no longer with us are very precious, keepsakes, objects that we can identify as having great significance knowing that the person who touched them is gone. Knowing this, the reader may be shocked at the decision to cut and tear up the original letter. This is an emotionally effective way of manipulating and deploying the source materials. The handwritten letter has very special significance. In section 2.1 Carson reveals that on her deathbed her mother told her that she had kept all her letters but adds that she only wants to keep one–the one Michael had written to her from France. In it he revealed the death of his then girlfriend who his widow 'calmly;' reveals, had been the love of his life. She arranges the letter as if that by re-contextualising his words, in his handwriting, will reveal some truth.

Materialities of language: collage, technology, source materials

Originally, Carson hadn't intended to publish *Nox*—'I kept it for a number of years as a book that I showed to one person at a time,' she says—but then, with the help of her friend Robert Currie, she found a way of reproducing the original collage journal so that it 'would still be as intimate, so that when you read it you still feel that you are just one person reading it, so it doesn't seem like so much a violation because a fiction of privacy is maintained'.[159] This is a text with a lot of space in it. If the blank spaces are as important as the words and if images are functioning as part of the word, the whole poem may be perceived as unified. Again, there are thematic threads tying and holding all of the pieces together as if it were in fact a collection of poems. Some of these threads are: the use of colour and image (yellow and eggs are mentioned on numerous pages); the image, both verbal and visual, of staircases; the obvious inclusion of an aspect of night in each lexical entry; the thread of historical exploration; and the blank space as punctuation and invitation. At a point in my reading and with subsequent re-readings, the images and image-based collage pieces, the blocks of texts as tombstones, obelisks, graveyard gates and the actual images of same and the collaged representations of similar imagery began to read seamlessly as a walk among the headstones, as a listening. They are necessary to one another.

Carson is no stranger to letting accident and process dictate what happens in her work. It is this faith in process that allows her to produce work that has huge emotional and literary impact and at the same time operating outside the traditional constraints of poetic construction. In email interview with Sam Anderson she speaks of *Red Doc>*, a work which was between 9 and 11 years in the making. Again, it is the process that makes the work what it is and an acknowledgement of process, the inclusion of process in the work which gives it its energy, its difference. She says that 'in the beginning *Red Doc>* was set in a hut just off Manhattan's West Side Highway.' Then for a while it was a play. Carson tells Anderson that it was terrible for years: boring, conventional, sentimental. Finally she decided to start from scratch and write the book, in pencil in a red notebook. When the notebook was full, the book was finished and after some revision and alterations, was published. The title comes from the default name the word processor assigned to it and the layout–text justified and centred in a column with large

[159] Craig Morgan Teicher, 'A Classical Poet, Redux: PW Profiles Anne Carson', *Publishers Weekly*, 2010 <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/interviews/article/42582-a-classical-poet-redux-pw-profiles-anne-carson.html> [accessed 24 April 2019].

margins on both left and right were a result of a formatting error in her typing up the document, a chance accident in process which she found instantly liberating and showed her how the book was supposed to work.[160]

From the outset *Nox* insists on its materiality. The colophon on the verso of the front cover simply states that 'Robert Currie assisted in the design and the realization of the book'.[161] It is up to us, the reader, to identify the book's materials and to examine the evidence of its production and design as integral to the reading of the text. Carson describes developing the idea of the production of the book with Currie with whom she collaborates. *Nox* is a text interrupted and disrupted by found source material that points towards not only the passage of time but also to lost time which has been fairly effectively captured in reproduction. Anne Carson worked closely with Robert Currie in the production of what became the artefact that is *Nox*. According to Carson, Currie 'thought of scanning it and then Xeroxing the scans. …The scan is a digital method of reproduction, it has no decay in it, it has no time in it, but the Xerox puts in the sense of the possibility of time'.[162] The printing and scanning techniques used, the technological techniques used in the creation of this book allows us to see what appears on the verso of the pages of the original scrapbook, allows us to see the way the materials worked We see how the inks bled, how the pasted-in scraps create a shadow overleaf, how the stains of use and process embody the author, how the white space is very loud.

Carson is working with language as a material, and meanings are hidden or locked in the substrate. She is an archaeologist, digging thoughtfully in a diagrammatic, grid-like manner, word by word, methodically, to allow meanings (in this case identity / understanding of grief) to emerge. Each word of the Catullus elegy is as if it is turned into a poem itself, addressing night and the history of language. Its history is exploded is into a set of possible meanings. (See the full text of *Ut* and of *Multas* below) Because the book focuses on materialities of language, it makes us more aware of textual language and what it signifies. Language's visibility becomes apparent and in doing so reminds us that it refers to the invisible. Each individual verbal word of the Catullan poem is translated into English, then translated materially (typed, and altered) and then

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[160] Sam Anderson, 'The Inscrutable Brilliance of Anne Carson - The New York Times', *The New York Times Magazine*, 2013 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/magazine/the-inscrutable-brilliance-of-anne-carson.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0&pagewanted=all> [accessed 27 April 2019].

[161] Carson, *Nox*. Verso.

[162] Megan Berkobien, 'An Interview with Anne Carson and Robert Currie - Asymptote' <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-anne-carson-and-robert-currie/> [accessed 24 April 2019].

translated physically (torn out and pasted into). The effect of serif type is authoritative. The effect of a sans serif type suggests familiarity and emotion. The effect of making layered textual scraps points to the possibilities of reading behind and beneath the words. With each transformation, language and ways of exploring its meanings is being expanded and deepened. In an article on which she discusses the text–as–image Sheena Calvert suggests that 'text–as–image is a process, a method, a means of interrogating language from within, not by adding another discourse on top…'[163]

Carson asks us to read the text from original source materials as both image and word. This is language that is not part of the translation: it is the retyped snippets from letters written by Michael's mother in response to his letter; words from the funeral oration by Michael's widow; quotes from, or musings on, Herodotus; Pausanias; Plutarch; Christ; the mute Lazarus. All the mute pages. There is Catullus, Catullus' dead brother, a dead language, Anne Carson, Anne Carson's dead brother. All of these components taken together become a stunning and heart-breaking exhibition of grief and wondering.

We are allowed to break down the image of text and actual images into all their constituent parts. For example, by the time we get to the images that are presented in the final few pages, we are reading them as verbal language–the section 10.2[164] is an inscribed image which has been crayoned over–the words 'as it is written for the…' and the rest of the rubbing is illegible. Pasted over this and further obscuring the rubbing are the words 'So from my brother's funeral, a headstand. His widow has given me a translation of the text of the service , which contains a reading of Romans 8 and a long speech from the priest about dew and Christ and shooting stars and the merciful palm of God, and then her own words:' The 'AS IT IS WRITTEN FOR THE…' rubbing I immediately read as the uselessness of fact. Just because it is written doesn't mean that it will be understood. Just because it is written… this subverts traditional ideas of what we expect a book or a poem to be and asks us to reassess or examine our ideas of these, our approach to language and its limits and possibilities. In many of the white spaces across the expanses of the book, Carson make references to God and prayer. Gnomic scraps of text are typed and pasted in such as: 'It is for God to fix the time who know no time'.

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[163] Calvert, 'Materia Prima, Text-as-Image'.
[164] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 10.2.

In the Section numbered 2.1 'WHO WERE YOU'[165] appears on the page inscribed in the manner of taking a tracing of an inscription from a gravestone, which is an archaeological tool. This question, WHO WERE YOU, has been written on the (presumably preceding page) with such passion that it has made an impression into, not only the material of that particular page, but into the following four pages, front and back, the effect of which is reproduced in the scan of the original. This is one of the times where the reader may experience a real desire to actually see the original and presents questions for ideas of authenticity. Even the original WHO WERE YOU has not been reproduced, unless it was inscribed on the page with an uninked object. Such is the presentation of the material and the deployment of text on the page that it allows you to, in fact, asks you to question it, to read it and re–read it. The effect of all of this is that the WHO WERE YOU–the implied question, as there is no question mark, fades away. The echo of the initial roar fades in a very heart–breaking way across the following pages, where we are told, under a photograph taken in 1953, 'I make a guess, I make a guess'. The pressure of the words fades but the passionate posing of the question is highlighted through the marks made on the page that could only have been made with force and through the rubbing of the engraved words. The rubbing and the indentation of the words on the page as if they have indeed been engraved on it suggest that the page could be seen as a gravestone. The words are an image and once again, the work, the physical work in all its complexity is the epitaph; it is telling us more than the written word can.

The technique of engraving the page occurs again, with even more passionate writing gestures, further along in the text on a page that contains six iterations of the word LIKE in oversized hand drawn lines that almost look like Greek letters. They have been etched into the page with passion - there is no need for a crayon rubbing to reveal these words. The impression of them comes through onto the back page also. 'Like' is used in the text and collage on the surrounding pages, which comes from the letter that Michael wrote to his mother which is presented as a torn scrap from the letter and typed in bold in a block that almost makes a poem of Michael's words. 'I have never known a closeness *like* that, *like* wind in your hair'. Carson pastes in another iteration of the line in bold block capitals again, Michael's voice, as if she is really trying to hear what it is that he is saying. Like, like what? Is there something outside of the text, outside of the

[165] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 2.1.

words that has similar characteristics to what he was trying to describe or what she is trying to understand that will shed a light. Can such a simile be found? This passion and the instruction to read can only occur through the reader being able to experience the physical original through this photocopy.

In Section 3.1 the fragment containing the lexical entry on the word 'has' begins on the left page and in one of few instances in the book, continues on the subsequent left page. The entry explores 'has' as indicating presence. It bears ghostly traces of the crayon which uncovers the word 'dies' on the opposite page. 'Dies' is extracted from the sentence which is pasted onto the page: 'My brother dies in Copenhagen in the year 2000 a surprise to me'. It has been etched into the page over the collaged sentence and then revealed. It is hard to imagine the colour of the crayon used but it suggests a dark red. On the fold between the pages is the evidence of a page which has been painted with ink and subsequently torn out. There are possibly words and pictures missing. There is a page that was between the 'has', between the 'person or thing present in fact or thought'[166] and the 'surprise'. The surprise may be that the death of the brother is an aspect of his presence. He is continually present. All of the elements across these pages work together and open up readings of one another across their materials and the spaces they create. This reading demands time. In the overleaf continuation of the lexical entry the epexegetic is at play. The reader is reminded that these entries are all emphasising night and what it represents, they are being 'resumptive, explanatory, elaborating'.[167] It was important to me as a writer to trust my process and to use the materials presented as they came to me. I had to constantly ask myself if I was either trying to impose something on the work or ask myself whether I trusted that the idea I was trying to implement was a good one. My decision to manually type the texts for *God's Little Cow* was governed by two ideas: the idea of trust, in a belief that the text itself pointed towards its materials needed, and the idea that a consideration of time was an element that was important to me. This raised the questions: how could I mediate the reading process in a book, honestly, in order to allow the texts to breathe in the same way that Carson opened up the lexical entries to the scraps through including references to night? As a curator of my own work, I was becoming more comfortable with the decisions I was making in relation to the needs and the materialities of the language I was using.

[166] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 3.1.
[167] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 3.1.

I agree with Anderson' view that *'Nox* is a brilliantly curated heap of scraps. It's both an elegy and a meta–elegy, a touching portrait of a dead brother and a declaration of the impossibility of creating portraits of dead brothers'.[168] The 'curator' of a piece of text can attempt to put across a general emotion but the nuances, the many possible readings, the reactions are beyond the control of the author. These are a) individual to the reader and b) evolve (in time and space) and c) they are an attempt by the author to understand the world and as such the 'meaning' of the text is not stable; it constantly questions (and answers itself). To read and write is to explore, find meanings in the crevices, in those spaces between the word, the thought and the world.

In *Nox* there is an interaction with the background behind the text and image, the depths where meanings lurk, waiting to be imagined. This is pointed to again and again in *Nox* by the use of the layering of textual material in the collages. Carson has said in interview that the numbered sections are her writing about her brother based on her own thinking and the artefacts that remain.[169] These sections or 'fragments of memory' are related to a particular lexical entry which she added to (epexegetically) in order to make it relate to the particular words about her brother if it didn't. It is reasonable to take this methodology and apply it to the pages where instead of numbered entries, there are simply images (photographs, or the actual found source materials) opposite the lexical entry. Carson has also spoken about the photographs that she uses in *Nox*. She says 'I found that the front of most of our family photos look completely banal, but the backgrounds were dreadful, terrifying, and full of content. So I cut out the backgrounds, especially the parts where shadows from the people in the front fell into the background in mysterious ways. The backgrounds are full of truth'.[170]

The reader reads the image, the black and white as if deciphering the code of the words. The columns of text and their placement on the page and the effect of the shadow of the Xeroxed scans further draws attention to the white space of the page which is in the background. Carson shows us how the limitations of the accordion book and the reproduction process imposed a decision making process on both her and her collaborator, Currie. The positioning and manipulation of source materials have to take into account physical interactions with the book and observe the limitations of the form.

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[168] Sam Anderson, 'Family Album: Anne Carson's Deeply Moving Scrap Heap', *New York* (New York, 2010) <http://nymag.com/arts/books/reviews/65592/> [accessed 10 October 2015].
[169] Aitken, p. 24.
[170] Aitken, p. 24.

Carson is making language perform across the spaces of the book and asking us to consider the whiteness and blankness of the verso. She achieves this through a considered and confident decision making. According to Drucker, the decisions made in relation to using the form and its constraints are manipulated through making decisions 'about layout, material choices concerning paper, ink, collaged or accrued elements, and binding structures'.[171] This is where a writer stretches and extends the limitations of the form. Carson uses the technique of scanning and the fold to great effect.

The image of a staircase appears in *Nox* in many guises. Carson even talks about the book interacting with a staircase. 'Do you have a long staircase,' Carson asked in interview in 2011[172] 'drop it [*Nox*] down and watch it unfold!' The image of the staircase (and by implication, the stairwell) is one of the recurring images in the work. Many of the images in the work are cut up images of a staircase and there is also a crayoned drawing of the staircase, copied from the photograph. When Michael's widow recounts meeting Michael she describes living on the streets and mentions stairwells which reminds Carson of a childhood stairwell. A photograph of the stairwell appears four pages later, and is given the same final treatment as the typed translations. The photograph has been cut into five pieces and these are collaged in a jigsaw type column. The image has taken on the structure of a poem on the page.

Finally, Carson turns back to the reader and makes us responsible for the reading of the poem. Section 10.1 refers to Herodotus–'When Herodotus has got as far as he can in explaining an historical event or situation he will stop with a remark like this: 'so much for what is said by the Egyptians: let anyone who finds such things credible make use of them'[173] This final piece is accompanied on the page by an image of three steps of a stairs. Is it only possible to see a few steps at a time? Carson uses repetition as a poetic technique. The stairwell appears three times in the following pages. A stairs is a construction which bridges a vertical distance, it connects places. The repetition of the stairwell motif in various iterations both through form, and verbal and visual representations shows confidence in the form. It reiterates the efficacy of a step by step approach to reading, but also for a reading that eschews the linearity that would seem to be imposed by steps- seeing the pages of the book as both connected and as steps, capable of folding back on themselves and meeting pages outside a straightforward

[171] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 359.
[172] Seghal.
[173] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 10.1.

linearity, means that space and juxtapositions can be read between any of the pages. This opens up the book even further. If she keeps looking, will her brother appear to her and will she discover something real of him that she did not know? Can the reader inhabit this vacant place beside, in or under a stair?

This is an art that is very much based on the reality of the source material. The reader is taken on a real quest with the author as she attempts to understand Michael's life (the life of the absent). She does not simply allow the object to appear on the page. It is treated the same way as the text, and as the lexical entries / creative translations. The objects have been altered too. They have been torn, unfolded, repeated, cut up, and written on. Anne Carson, the author, is very much present in the work and opening up her personal journey to the reader. In *A Poet's Glossary* Edward Hirsch begins his definition of the poetic fragment as 'a part broken off` something cut or detached from the whole, something imperfect.[174] Does this imply that a collection of fragments contains the whole? By fragmenting and de-fragmenting material that an 'original' can be read? Carson says that

> this is the magic of fragments, [she says,' — the way [the] poem breaks off leads into a thought that can't ever be apprehended. There is the space where a thought would be, but which you can't get hold of. I love that space. It's the reason I like to deal with fragments. Because no matter what the thought would be if it were fully worked out, it wouldn't be as good as the suggestion of a thought that the space gives you. Nothing fully worked out could be so arresting, spooky[175]

The fold is what is keeping the fragments together, from meeting one another. In order to reassemble the whole, it must happen in the mind, in the presence of the book. I like how the fragments interrupt one another, how they work as pauses. Carson has taken this reassembling and evolution of the text even further. *Nox* has been translated into the performative. It exists as a collaborative spoken word performance[176] and has evolved into a dance performance developed along with Carson. Silas Riener [177] has been researching and translating Carson's prose into dance since making *NOX* in 2010 with choreographic collaborator Rashaun Mitchell. Marjorie Perloff, in discussing

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[174] Edward Hirsch, *Essential Poet's Glossary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2017), p. 49.
[175] Aitken, p. 24.
[176] 'Anne Carson: Reading from Nox', *Louisiana Literature Festival*, 2012 <https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/anne-carson-reading-nox> [accessed 27 April 2019].
[177] Silas Mitchell, Rashaun; Riender, 'NOX — Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener', 2012 <http://www.rashaunsilasdance.com/nox/> [accessed 27 April 2019].

digital poetics, says that this ability 'to move from one medium to another and back again allows the poet to experiment with temporal and spatial frames'.[178] I think that this movement through media also allows new readings and meanings to emerge and is a necessary element of works approached with ideas of overtakelessness and the epexegetic. Each component is an attempt to get around that which cannot be gotten around and operates as both an exploration and an explanation of meanings. Again, this alternative physical manifestation of reading modalities was an idea that emerged for me in the development of *God's Little Cow*. I had been thinking a lot about process and how sound mattered to me- I was constantly reading aloud as I wrote and researched but also remembering both the sounds and lack of sounds or voices in the place I grew up. Each time I considered the texts I was writing I could hear the whisper of prayer. Simply writing these words did not seem to be enough. As important as language on the page was I felt that the language needed to be heard. I began to record my editing sessions and collaborated with a writer and sound artist in order to explore the potential of voice as an element of the book I was creating.[179]

As a work which sits across genres it is and isn't many things. '*Nox*' is as much an artefact as a piece of writing'.[180] The form of the 'object', the structure of the poem, the process of its creation are just as important as the actual text and interact with the thematic concerns in a way which allows the reader to meet the author somewhere in the space where meanings are supposed to lurk. *Nox* is a work which points to both the limits and possibilities of language through exploring its materiality and a relationship with language that attends to its deep processes. Rather than collapsing into a vortex of self-referentiality, the relationship between text and image and language and its materialities opens up a place for meanings to emerge from. This is the place where you

[178] Marjorie Perloff, 'Screening the Page/ Paging the Screen: Digital Poetics and the Differential Text', in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*, ed. by Adelaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (Cambridge and London: MIYT Press, 2006).

[179] I had lengthy conversations with singer and composer Natasha Lohan about the quality and appearance of sound and voice in the work. We discussed the technological aspects of actualising the way that I was beginning to understand the layering of voice in the book. These discussions led me to reading theories of sound and exploring sound work by Alvin Lucier. I also had the opportunity to implement the ideas of creating word-kites and a sound piece as a kind of testing ground through building a response to a book of poems by poet Geraldine Mitchell. I used her work, *Mountains for Breakfast*, a collection which is 'a voyage through memory loss, its isolating silence and, ultimately, death.' to create an installation, versions of which were exhibited in 2017 at *Cúirt Literary Festival*, Galway, Ireland and at *The Rolling Sun Book Festival* in Westport, Co. Mayo, Ireland.

[180] Motion, p. 1.

find the surprise, this is the place where metaphor forms, where response is allowed to find itself, and where contradictions and juxtapositions produce meaning.

Critics have also considered the technological aspects of the production of the work and the implications of this that ought to be considered when reading and trying to extract its mysteries. Brillenburg Wurth, through a spatial reading, examines elements of *Nox* through a consideration of how it reworks its materiality, how the material book is a reimagining of the original scrapbook that is achieved through offset methodologies of scanning, copying and simulation. One of her conclusions is that Carson's book revolves around the *image* of a paper based text. She also proposes that the work perhaps demands that readings and analysis of it consider its 'layered, altered materialities. Concluding that a literary work like *Nox* forces us to reconsider the practice of comparative literature as an inter–medial practice in an age of digitization.[181] This idea of re-seeing the original materials through making decisions in relation to the means of production asks the readers to consider it as part of a reading. Rebecca Mills[182] also considers issues of technology in her reading of *Nox*. She addresses the camera and Carson's treatment of the photograph which Mills considers a technological device. The photograph is a reminder of absences and as such works as a temporal device, bringing the past into the present. What happens then, when the author manipulates the photograph by cutting it, by tearing it, by obscuring it? The placement of photographs in the story of *Nox* in a manner within which it is difficult to find a linear narrative may be read as the past continually coming into the present but remaining unreadable.

The materiality of the text as object provokes a particular aesthetic feeling. We find it beautiful or thought-provoking or frantic perhaps. But overall, I consider that the reader knows that a particular material expression of language points to something that a traditionally presented text cannot say. The reader can understand the process and read the evidence of it in the work as it is presented. The materiality of language in *Nox* is not language that refers only to itself. The reader who finds this language credible is pointed towards the difficulty of translation, to the failure of words to capture what is in the space. Of *Nox*'s 192 pages, there are 21 which are blank. These pages act as punctuation, as pause, as breath, as space to parse. They could be inscribed or filled

[181] Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, 'Revision as Remedation: Hypermediacy as Translation in Anne Carson's Nox', *Image [&] Narrative,* 14.4 (2013), 20–28.
[182] Rebecca Mills, 'Stop All The Clocks: Elegy and Uncanny Technology : Revenant', *Revenant Journal*, Winter (2015), 35–37.

with scraps that delve into the layers of the images. By showing us scanned copies of the original blank pages we are encouraged to parse them down, to diagrammatise them into possibilities because that is what history is: possibility. It is limited only by what we assume. The reader comes to this text with aesthetic assumptions and what *Nox* does is invite the reader to examine very closely what is understood by language and poetry and poet and historian. This is a book full of people who are meeting on the page in the imagination of the poet and her materials. The process and presentation of the work invites the reader to become phenomenologically involved with the creation and evolution of the material text. Carson has spoken of the blank spaces in *Nox*, encouraging the reader to use, appropriate and personalise the pages, thus continuing the evolution of the text.[183] Rosmarie Waldrop writes that 'the blank page is not blank. No text has one single author. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we always write on top of a palimpsest [...] the slate is never clean'.[184] She also refers to composition as process, stating that 'the transcendence is not upward, but horizontal, contextual. It is the transcendence of language with its infinite possibilities, infinite connections, and its charge of the past. In other words, no split between spirit and matter'. [185] I think that Carson has achieved this unity between spirit and matter. The reader is being asked to, directed towards, signalled, prompted, instructed, trusted to see the material word, the history in the word, the depth, the layers that allows the word to excavate meanings. The use of the original source material exposes a space on the page where the text is allowed to find its genealogy, to go back through its history and find what will illuminate the present. The text is being given space to become a time traveller and the reader is being asked to free his reading imagination.

Somewhere there exists the 'real' unknowable original scrapbook document. This original document is only available to us in a copy as close as Carson and Currie could get through experimentation, and only through the availability of printing and digital technology. Technology lets the writer create text and image objects that are accessible and affordable and also allows the writer to experiment.[186] *Nox* is an affordable, printed copy of a facsimile of an original notebook. It has been through many mechanical,

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[183] Seghal, p. np.

[184] Rosmarie Waldrop, 'Form and Discontent', *Diacritics*, 26.3–4 (1996), 54–62 (p. 55).

[185] Waldrop, p. 59.

[186] Alison Gibbons, 'Multimodal Literature and Experimentation.', in *Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature.*, ed. by B. Bray, J., Gibbons, A. and McHale (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 420–434 (p. 420)

physical and technological translations. The original notebook which at some stage was available to the author as a blank notebook with traditionally stitched pages has been translated. This translation and the reproduction of the processes by which it got to us in the form we receive it are part of the object's visual and textual meanings. This facsimile though, points us to the original at every juncture. This is achieved through the techniques of its production, through its thematic concerns (grief, history) and through the source material and techniques deployed (hand writing; the obvious marks of a previous physical integration with the text). Marjorie Perloff proposes that 'appropriation, citation, copying, reproduction' have been 'central to the visual arts for decades. Naming Duchamp as a key figure 'whose entire oeuvre consists of 'copies' and found materials', Perloff argues that we expect poets to 'produce words, phrases, images, and ironic locutions that we have never done before'. [187] *Nox* is a facsimile of appropriations and citation and reproductions. Through the use of material that directly references the people in her exploration, we are never allowed to forget the original grief and the reason for the creation of the notebook. Carson's unknown dead brother and the blanks/gaps/muteness which surround him are immediately apprehensible.

The inclusion of found materials in a work of creative writing can be very affective. Annie Dillard has said that turning a found text into a poem doubles that poem's context. 'The original meaning remains intact,' she writes, 'but now it swings between two poles'.[188] What collage perhaps encapsulates more than anything is the shifting of a text, the shifting of words over time. Being able to feel or at least to have a feeling for the original material because of the way that it is reproduced, also means that we can never read the text in the absence of the author or her subject matter. The re-contextualisation of 'found text' and source material with interference by the author allows a deeper understanding of the emotional values of the language.

With *Nox,* Carson has taken normally private historical documents and situated them in a creative translation of a poem about unresolved grief in relation to the death of a brother. She has invited the reader in to view the decision making process in the choosing of these material scraps and in the presentation of them - why was this word, phrase, image chosen to go here? The words / text and image are placed or arranged in space, and signal that meanings may be produced in ways beyond a simple surface

[187] Marjorie. Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius : Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (Chicago Ill.; Bristol: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[188] Annie. Dillard, *Mornings like This: Found Poems* (Harper Perennial, 1996). p.9

textual effect - by seeing the white space, by playing with linearity, by asking a reader to engage, the language itself is interrogated. It is still language, but it is more tangible, emotional and energetic.

Translation: across language, material, time, and history

The book, *Nox*, is a poetic text, secondly it is a private document made public and thirdly, it is a translation and as such deals with language and communication. It is an attitude towards language which foregrounds the history of the word and its possibilities and limitations.

In Section 7.1 Carson says that she wants to explain about the Catullus poem and also tells us that she has never arrived at the translation of it that she would have liked to but that over years of translating it she has come to think of translating as a room 'where one groped for the light switch'. She also suggests that translation never ends. Even with the publication of this poem, *Nox* is simply at a point in its development. She uses the verb prowl and talks about prowling the word's meanings, and a person's history but suggests that this will not illuminate the necessary as 'human words have no main switch. But all those little kidnaps in the dark. And then the luminous, big, shivering, discandied, unrepentant, barking web of them that hangs in your mind when you turn back to the page you were trying to translate'.[189] Translation is a constant letting in of the light and a continual refocusing, where the history of the word and all its referents jostle to become a part of the translation or recede into the shadows.

Nox uses the translation of Latin to English, not as a constraint, but as the spine on which the rest of the book's text grows from. The reader is shown the inner workings of Carson's approach to translation for this project and is privy to its possibilities. Each Latin word is re-contextualised, explored and reassembled (which both the reader and Carson try to do) but it becomes obvious that the text will continually shift, that language will not settle and show us Michael (or Catullus his brother). That time does not alter this impossibility means that the best we can hope for in translation, in using another's art, is to face its limits. But in doing this we have been exposed to the possibilities, to the layers of meanings, to the infinite number of text based journeys that

[189] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 7.1.

the fragmentary, de-construction and assemblage has allowed. That perhaps, is the point.

How did this prowling idea develop for Carson? She actually tells us about the generative idea for the scrapbook as part of the scrapbook. More than halfway through the text, she asks 'what if you made a collection of lexical entries, as someone who is asked to come up with a number for the population of the Skythians might point to the bowl at Exampalos,'[190]

It is an attitude towards language which foregrounds the history of the word and its possibilities and limitations. All of these elements taken together become a stunning and heart-breaking exhibition of grief and wondering. The way in which she presents the translation is as a recontextualisation of the word and is a necessary intertextual document in the current context. As well as attempting the translation, Carson is re-contextualising the lament, the grief and bewilderment that Catullus experienced across time and is trying to use it to make sense of another unknown life, her brother's. It is a search for the identity of the unknown.

In fact, Carson reminds the reader all throughout the book that one of its central concerns is translation and that this translation isn't simply from Latin to English, but from memory to meanings, from text to image. In Section 8.1[191] she refers to the few conversations she had with her brother over a 22 year time span saying that she studies those conversations that she remembers as if she'd been asked to translate them. Overleaf she presents some of these sentences in bold type.:

Lots of crime in Copenhagen.
Danes are hard–working.
I am painting the flat.
Yes he barks in Danish.
Don't go back to the farm alone don't go alone.
We have a dog and that's him barking.
What will you do sit on bald rock and look down at the graves.
Put the past away you have to.

The words are emphasised. They are to be looked at, and she tells us how to look at them. The sentences are seemingly mundane lines about everyday actions, a list of humdrum activities to do with daily life in Copenhagen, words about her brother's dog and a couple of lines that seem to encompass a deeper conversation that has been

[190] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 5.3.
[191] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 8.1.

forgotten. 'Don't go back to the farm don't go alone'. she remembers him saying. Is it that the materials for the translation are the words themselves. This is an intriguing idea. If this is the case, she has shown us how to do this translation of the everyday poetry of memory. These references to the everyday, these pieces of text 'found' in memory, feel as if they are the real voice in the book. How do you study words as if you had been asked to translate them? You look beneath, you add to them, you give them space to allow the images they are attached to move into your view. They are intimate words. The section ends with Carson's memory of her brother saying 'put the past away you have to'. The unreliable facts of memory are very affective. Overleaf, on the page which contains the lexical entry for *parentum,* Carson in childish capitals has scratched the words I HAD TO into the page of her notebook and revealed these words by scribbling over the indented page with a dark crayon. She responds to her brother's voice, telling him that yes, she had to put the past away. And here it is. The past ever present in the tomb of presence, always evolving, the blanknesses and silences and muteness becoming filled. The letters fill the page in three lines and are revealed as if they are a gravestone rubbing. It is as if she is finally allowing herself to see that she had to put away the past as her brother told her. Carson reproduces these mostly unpunctuated memories and studies then as if asked to translate them. We must too.

Translation from one's own life into the work is part of the essential make-up of this poem but above all it remains an exploration of translation and language. The translation from life is easy to see through the use of personal found materials and although Elena Theodorakopoulos[192] points out Carson's use of herself in her work and how she makes Catullus 101 a part of her own story, it is way more than a story about Carson and her life. 'The book is unashamedly autobiographical…'[193] she says. Joan Fleming focuses on the biographical aspects as well, describing and arguing for *Nox* to be read as a 'therapeutic biography'. She considers that the ' text and the materiality of *Nox*'s form blur the boundary between keeping Michael alive in memory and releasing him into the next world'.[194] While I do think that the text may preserve something in memory, I feel it is not the question of how to mourn that the book is addressing but more a belief in the ability of the methods of history and the depths of language to

[192] Elena Theodorakopoulos, 'Women's Writing and the Classical Tradition', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 4.2 (2012), 149–62.
[193] Theodorakopoulos, p. 155.
[194] Joan Fleming, 'Talk (Why?) With Mute Ash: Anne Carson's Nox as Therapeutic Biography', *Biography*, 39.1 (2016), 64–78.

reveal a brother, and to be able to say goodbye to a 'starry lad'. When you have gone as far as you can explaining an historical event you just have to say what is said. [195] The facts of a life and the facts of a death translated into text and image are the revelation.

Carson's full translation of *Catullus 101* appears three times in *Nox*, the first occurrence being a little over half way through and almost as if the translation itself is incidental to the whole process.[196] The translation has been typed on computer in italics and printed on a paper that appears crumpled, aged, and stained. The letters are beginning to bleed into the paper, as if they are about to melt away and disappear. The words of the translation give the impression of being unstable and old, like the past or history is unstable and old. Carson says: 'In surfaces, perfection is less interesting. For instance, a page with a poem on it is less attractive than a page with a poem on it and some tea stains. Because the tea stains add a bit of history.[197] It is tempting to see the stains as tears. Unless I am a Latin scholar I don't know where to go from here, I need to be shown how to read, to be pointed in a direction and this is precisely what Anne Carson does. In the fragment numbered 1.3, Carson says 'Herodotus is an historian who trains you as you read'.[198] This is precisely what she is doing in *Nox*. She is training us as we read, to read, and acting as an instruction on to how to read on what would appear to be the third page of the main text, in Latin is Poem 101, Catullus CI. Each word of the poem points us to a place in the work. There is no conventional index. Traditional elements of a book are being translated into a creative translation, being used as the source material demands it.

The second appearance of Carson's full translation of the *Catullus 101* appears nineteen pages after the first.[199] In this iteration, the translation is printed on the same yellowed (tea–stained) paper that makes it appear as if it has been around for a long time but the translation has also been printed over this translation, this time unblurred. Yet, it remains illegible and unstable: the crayoned and scratched double image of the translation has been deliberately torn into three strips. This presentation of the translation, in a multi-layered collage over what may be perhaps earlier versions of the attempted translation reveals a frustration but also an acknowledgement of the process of trying to access something definitive. . The light crayoning reveals the unintelligible

[195] Carson, *Nox*, p. 10.1.
[196] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 7.2.
[197] Anderson, 'Family Album: Anne Carson's Deeply Moving Scrap Heap'. p. np
[198] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 1.3.
[199] Carson, *Nox*, sec. 8.4.

impressions that have been scratched onto the printed words and onto the page of the notebook, gestures perhaps of defeat. The strips of the collage lay over one another obscuring and revealing at the same time. May they be reassembled like a jigsaw? As they are they are indecipherable or perhaps they are signalling that the only way to translate grief into language, the only way to translate language, is to explode it, re-write, re-write, re-write. Carson is aware that traditional language cannot bring her brother back to life nor adequately express what she needs to express in relation to his death. But she is showing us that the unsayable can be embodied in a materialised text. The final appearance of her translation is also the last page in the book. This presentation of the 10 line poem is illegible, blurry, as if we were looking at it through tear filled eyes. It is also stained - the ink is tear-stained, the edges appear to be burned. It is a fitting image as last line.

Carson quotes Herodotus 'I have to say what is said. I don't have to believe it myself.' This from the father of history, of the practice of writing down what happened, gives us a platform from which to gaze back on what we've read and the story we've gleaned. Carson presents the reader with what is said by her brother, her mother, her brother's widow, and what she herself said in the past. It is a ghost-driven narrative, delivered as forensic or archaeological evidence. Carson expresses some carefully thought out suppositions about the few 'said' episodes in Michael's life and the memories of which she is a part. She leaves it to us to draw conclusions. And as we traverse the folds, the book reveals its story by accrual, through a curated experience of the artist's personal narrative placed in the context of the classical tradition in poetry, and the subjects of death and family, loss and remembrance.[200]

Alongside the story of her brother and the attempt to evoke him, the development of philosophical ideas in *Nox* are part of the process. Carson follows through and ties up various ideas of history, of translation, of procedure. The translation in the book provides a space for the images and words to pass through, to have light spilled on them. We ask the memories, the recalled lines, the letters, the images to offer more than they do on the surface. Folding and unfolding, it is possible that each time the light flashes through the moving kelp of the lexical entries we see them differently. There is no still picture of her brother; there is no definitive reading; there is no finished text. The past is unfinished and that perhaps is the greatest hope, that the past lives in

[200] Lorraine Martiniuk, 'A Careful Assemblage', *Jacket 2* (Jacket2.org, 2011) <https://jacket2.org/reviews/careful-assemblage> [accessed 27 April 2019].

the present, changing and revealing itself all the time. We are endlessly translating the past into the present which drives the creative reading process.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

This thesis has been presented in two parts - the creative project, *God's Little Cow* and a close reading of *Nox* as an exemplar of a hybrid work. The close reading has demonstrated both the breadth and the limits of what Carson achieves in *Nox* and has put forward questions that I attempted to answer through producing an argument for hybridity in the creative process. I am asking the reader to experience and read *God's Little Cow* according to the practical ideas of the epexegetic and overtakelessness as described in my close reading of *Nox*.

Carson takes the reader through the creation of this language event by a disassembling and reconstructing. Each lexical entry, each numbered section, each image and other scrap of found text is an act of disassembling which achieves a number of things. It allowed Carson to provide the reader with a way of reading; it allowed her to explore her grief and to expound on the difficulty of translation. The disassembling asks us to look at the history of each word through the creative lexicography. The reader is obliged to imagine the original process, to imagine the original document and its creation in a way you do not have to do with another text. This is an attribute of the hybrid work that sets it apart from other texts.

In Carson's text words were typed on a screen, printed out, written and then torn into scraps at some stage. The scraps are obviously hand torn, but they are also wrinkled which suggest use, handling, re-reading as part of a painstaking mediation. This is significant. It suggests a breaking down of a broken language, a language that isn't sufficient to identify her brother. In a similar way, I wanted the language of *God's Little Cow* to appear as closely as possible to its source- to me as the writer, and to history. Through the use of a typewriter in the mark-making, and using sound and a hands-on making, I felt that the remediating distance was shortened. The four dimensional phenomenological experience of the book is a direct response to disassembling language and allowing its parts to argue in space. I had witness statements, words which themselves were translated from the Irish in some cases, already two steps removed from the speaker. I also had a voiceless Mary who had such a huge influence on a community. What would she want to experience and say if she could? What was being lost in the witness statements as they journeyed from witness to priest, to page, to translator, to commission of enquiry, to word of mouth, to page again. The sounds, the whispers of the voices faded, were torn up, lost, and fragmented. This was in some way

related to my experience of learning to read and in discovering identity. I felt that there were deeper meanings to be found that could be best expressed by a multi-modal hybrid approach to material. I believe that this has changed the way I think about that which cannot be got around - voicelessness and how the history of language affects identity. The research into and the close reading of *Nox* has been an effective tool for the development of my creative work.

Carson's approach to the exploration of an idea through manipulating not only the form of the book, but the language in it, is an ambitious and boundary crossing one. My understanding of language and form is expressed best in practice and in the consideration of possibility. This has involved developing trust in the practice and forms the questions which provoked the practice as argument for hybridity. There are elements of *God's Little Cow* that came about directly because of an epexegetic response to the voicelessness of the story of the apparition. Carson deals with a subject that she considers bound by overtakelessness and in the same way I feel that reflecting on the apparition at Knock is bound by overtakelessness. *God's Little Cow* takes the voicelessness and applies to it the epexegetic in order to try and give it voice. It is something that Carson uses to great effect.

I identified these elements of Carson's approach towards language and translation in *Nox* as being governed by the 'epexegetic' and an understanding of 'overtakelessness'. My understanding of these terms has allowed me to take my work beyond the page, informing my approach to my own source materials and to the thinking process. The practice that is enshrined in *God's Little Cow* transformed the way I thought about the text and language. There was something that was unrecoverable in the language of the witnesses, something unrecoverable in the voice of the Virgin Mary but if I saw the words and gave voice that attempted to take into account the whispers underneath the words, and the future of the words above the page, I felt that I was achieving something.

In *Nox* the reader is privy to the development of thought and process. Carson says that 'you know I loved making that book, despite the context. I gave myself the task of trying to do something different on each page than I had done on any page previous, mechanically, physically, it was just a joy.' The making of *God's Little Cow* and all of its book elements gave me the same joy. As my thinking about language and how I was seeing through kites and kelp and apparitions developed, I became confident in challenging myself to find a mode of expression that best encapsulated what I was

trying to do. Carson says that she writes in order to discover what it is that she thinks about something.[201] Writing is a process of discovery. In *God's Little Cow* I wanted the text to show the process and to show its need for a lifting away from the page.

Discovering and using a manual typewriter to create the final versions of the text was liberating. I had worked and edited and played with many layouts, adding and excising words and changing line breaks as the aural and visual editing suggested. Many of these edits were done using typewriters, but also using handwritten texts and computer generated texts. I felt that the manually typed text had more authority and was closer to my voice and the imagined voices that I was attempting to write. It also included more of me as a practitioner and my process in it. It dictated its final layout.

It was as if language itself demanded this from me as I considered the influence of language on identity. The process mattered, and this is something that I identified in Carson's work. Speaking about writing and the process, she says

> we're talking about the struggle to drag a thought over from the mush of the unconscious into some kind of grammar, syntax, human sense; every attempt means starting over with language, starting over with *accuracy*. I mean, every thought starts over, so every expression of a thought has to do the same, every accuracy has to be invented…I feel I am blundering in concepts too fine for me.[202]

The concept of beginning with language in each new work is the concept being explored in the work, through the process. The process is the work.

I am pointing to a way of reading this kind of work. The argument for hybridity in the creative practice is that the process itself is central to an understanding of the text. The process and a creative description of process forms part of the texts and points to their necessary existence as sound and physical structures. As Carson uses the facts of steps and the staircase, the texts of *God's Little Cow* refer backwards and forward to one another. There is no prescribed linear reading. Indeed, the work demands a multiplicity of readings.

The disparate materials which are used in a poetic work like *Nox,* and which are juxtaposed in relation to one another in a pattern require the development of a reading tactic. Carson has settled a translation alongside her scraps, writings and poetic musings and set it in juxtaposition to these materials. This visual arrangement leaves the work

[201] Aitken, p. 25.

[202] Anderson, 'The Inscrutable Brilliance of Anne Carson - The New York Times'.

open to surprise, to readings and ideas that a simple straightforward presentation of a translation would not allow. This intertextual nature of the scrapbook and the physical immediacy of material foregrounded visually opens up readings and modes of communication to the reader. These 'inter-textual' materials can refer to other familiar texts but may also refer to personal texts and found texts accessed and used by the author. McCreary notes that collage 'uses a lot of citation and materials from the 'real world' imbedded, and it features oblique angles and edges, a sense of startle at the relations of the elements'.[203] It is this 'sense of startle' which I find in the work of Anne Carson that informed the inclusion of the word-kite-objects in *God's Little Cow*. This aspect of the materiality is, itself, epexegetic.

Carson's is an extraordinarily physical approach to the work, requiring that as readers we do more than simply hold the book in our hand: we move it, manipulate it, flip it back and forth the finished piece, that 'box' that we as reader are presented with, takes on a life of its own as soon as we engage with it. It moves in a way that a traditional book won't. This movement allows the reader to look at more than one page at a time, something that is impossible in a traditional book. Looking at each page requires an back and forthness which creates spaces and gaps in the underneath: the pages are constantly pulling at one another, insisting on being revealed. *Nox* continues to evolve as a text through interaction with the person holding it, looking at it and the qualities that they brings to their reading and their physical interaction with the object as it continues to evolve as a book, as a text, as an exploration of the limits and possibilities of language. The reader plays the book as an instrument, looking for a refrain. The refrain in *God's Little Cow* is in the kite lifting from the page, in the elements of learning to write and to listen, and in the pointing back and over across form. I consider the idea that the text on the page is like moving through a kelp forest or flying a kite. The kelp or kite moving through the air or water is like the movement of the page, the way in which the surfaces of the pages can be in contact with one another, the manner in which light catches and highlights differently with each handling; we can see anew. Relationships that weren't evident before emerge, the unsaid and unseen makes itself visible.

[203] Chris McCreary, 'The Serial as Portal: An Interview with Rachel Blau DuPlessis', *Cross Connect*, 2003 <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/xconnect/i20/t/contents.html> [accessed 9 November 2019].

Appendix A

'God's Little Cow': some ideas and repetitions…

I began this creative project with the idea of exploring place as the primary creative mover. The place of childhood, the landscape of childhood and religion and the intricate relationship between them – these are my crucial influences. I began collecting and making material – literally. Photos, paintings, recordings, scraps from newspapers, old notebooks. I was researching the apparition at Knock in 1879 and trawled through newspapers of the time – of the time before the alleged apparition and after – of the Ireland of my ancestors – a bilingual place. A hungry place. There was a time before the apparition that God mustn't have had such an influence. I wanted to see that place.

'God's Little Cow' is a multi-modal language-based work that has emerged from a deep engagement with material text, its sources and the means of its production. 'God's Little Cow' explore ideas of voiclessness and a way of seeing partly through a very loose re-imagining of the voice of The Virgin Mary. The texts are created using found material, translations of words from the Irish language, found texts relating to the supposed Marian Apparition in Knock Co. Mayo in 1879 (including witness statements, newspaper clippings and other writings created around the same time). The texts are typewritten on a Royal Litton Typewriter c. 1950s which was given to me by my mother. I chose to see this as a validation of my voice and creativity, a giving of the means to create. It is the voice of inheritance rather than a breaking away, the discovery of individuality. Language and text for me are the media of my creative work. I use text and language with a belief that the history of the word whispers constantly underneath what is presented, that that history and all its relationships are available to the reader (and the writer) and that this history is what helps or allows meanings to emerge on the page or in the text in all of its presentations. I read all my work aloud as I write and want that aural aspect of the text to be included in the final work. To this end, I consulted with a sound artist and made recordings of what I consider central excerpts from the work. The words also lift off the page into kites.

I was brought up in a rural community that was dominated by the church. The first prayers I learned were in Irish but English was my first language and I had difficulty speaking Irish. The learning of Irish as a language to communicate has well-documented difficulties. I was repeating sounds, not using language to communicate or to name things. Growing up in Knock, Co. Mayo, the site of a supposed Marian apparition in 1879, my identity as an Irish person became all tied up with the Church, God, and the Land. Prayer was in Irish; God was everywhere (in the land!); people needed the land – just look at the history. If I can't speak the language, I don't understand the mystery of God and suddenly I'm not Irish. I became more of an outsider. This passion that people had for a language and a culture that I had no access to, for a religion and a God I couldn't translate and had no way into, isolated me - from language, from the land and from my identity as an Irish person.

I was attracted to the idea of giving a voice to the unspeakable, to the unspoken. The Virgin Mary has a particular kind of voicelessness that I felt sorry for and frightened by. It was the idea of Mary who guided the way that language, Irish and the land, my Irishness was presented to me. She has four lines to say in the Bible. She didn't speak at Knock and the more I read and thought the more I wanted to free her from voicelessness and use her to see what I wasn't shown. Some of the texts in the series were variously manifestoes, inscribing language onto a landscape, hearing what the land might say rather than imposing a language in it.

Time: I continued to collect and to write texts using found materials, dictionary definitions, imagination and my own notebooks. There is a point when material I have written in my notebooks is distant enough from me so as to appear as if it were written by another. It becomes found. I then find it anew. It is a strategy.

Mary's words in the Bible. 1. The Annunciation, when she speaks with the angel: 'Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' (Luke 1:34 and 38); 2. Her visit to her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, when she sings the canticle known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55); 3. The time that her son, Jesus, is lost in the Temple and Mary reprimands him (Luke 2:48). 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.' 4. At the Wedding at Cana, Mary tells Jesus that 'They have no more wine.' (John 2:3) and then tells the servers, 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2:5).

I'm sure she said much more. I'm sure she had questions. I'm sure she had an inquisitive voice.

A woman searching for an identity. A woman trying to create an identity, to learn her own language and her own way of seeing unhampered by history and need.. A woman who wants to have fun.

The place I grew up in was heavily steeped in religion and apparition, the stuff of magic (I see now). It was stifling at the time but that I continue to revisit the place and the issues it highlights in my work – how language gets twisted and moved away from its meanings; how individual histories are lost; how voicelessness is a practice. The place and my understanding of it and the relationship between religion and language and the land is a creative whirlpool. What happens when language is allowed to live outside the traditional codex? Why would a writer choose to present language in such a way? What is the impact of this on the reader? What are the elements or approach in the process which meanings to emerge? What is the relationship between form, the artist and process?

A text / poem is like a graph of the mind moving over a landscape whether that landscape be a physical place, god / religion, the imagination, the page or home. Ideas of these places influence how I question language and the life, shape and the content of the poem. These poems / texts have their beginnings in the phenomenological experience of place and attempt to trace how a particular experience of place affects the relationship with language, its deployment and the development of identity. Each piece has its roots in a dialogue with object and naming; in collecting word and object and being excited by process – the found word and image, the re-appropriated word becomes important. The poem and its drafts aim to make the world familiar again by un-naming, by loosening experience from specific words. If a poem is a place to pose a question, could a poem in process be a place to refine the questions?

Appendix B

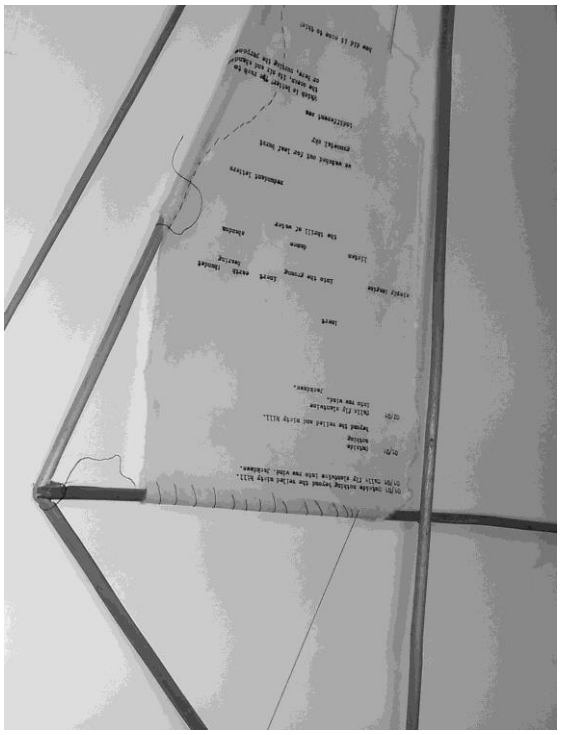

Figure 8 Word Kites (Aoife Casby), Cúirt Literary Festival, 2017

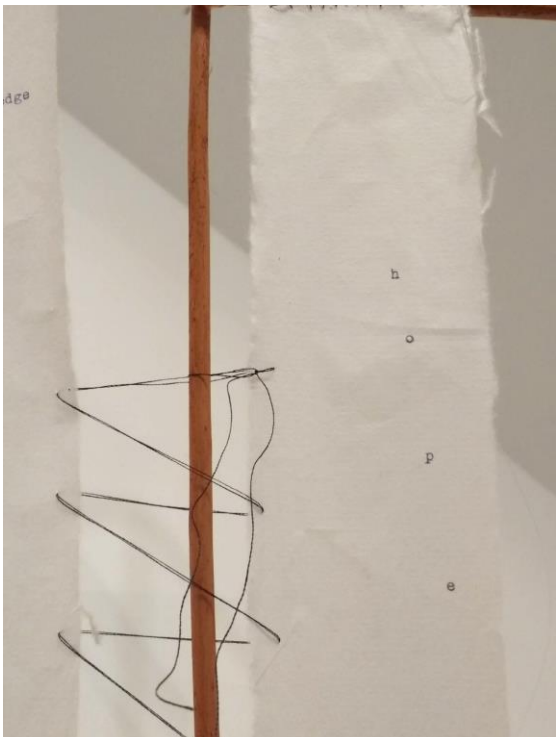

Figure 9 Word Kites (Aoife Casby), Cúirt Literary Festival, 2017

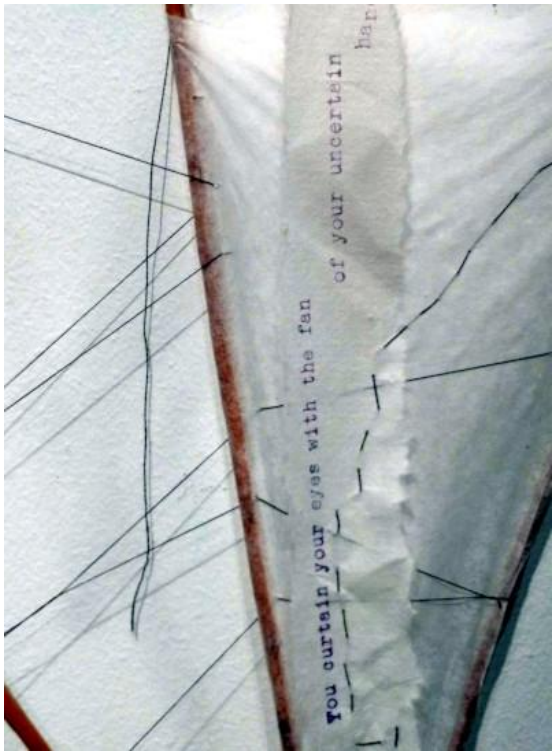

Figure 11 Word Kites (Aoife Casby), The Rolling Sun Book Festival, 2017

Figure 10 Word Kites (Aoife Casby), Cúirt Literary Festival, 2017

Appendix C

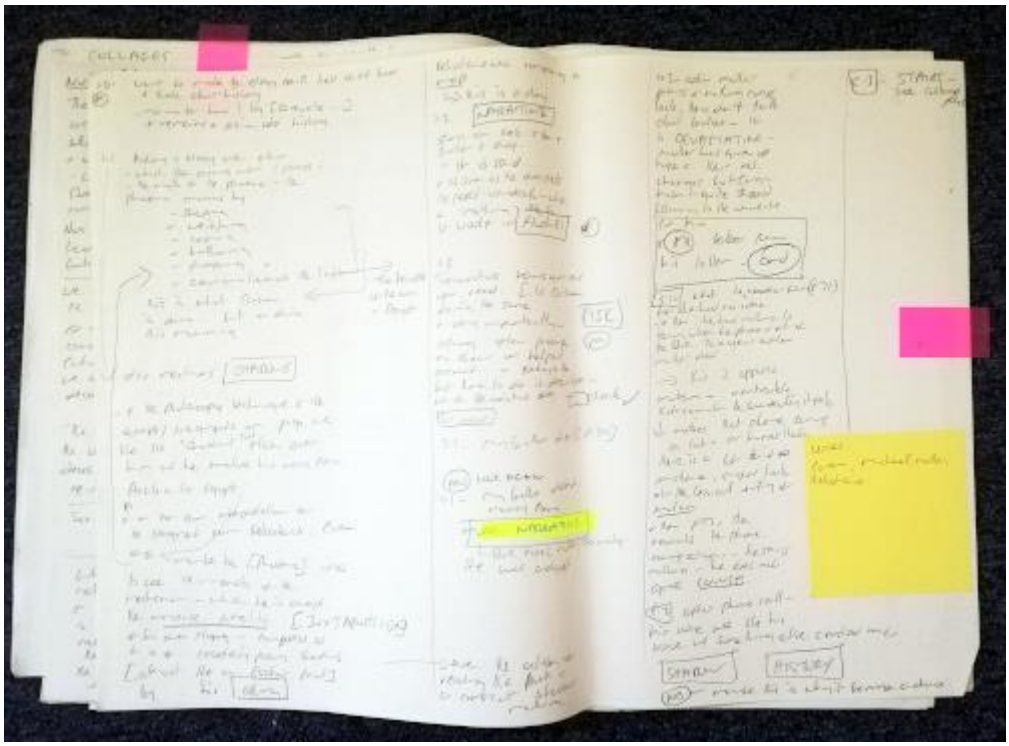

Figure 12 A3 Close reading document, Aoife Casby

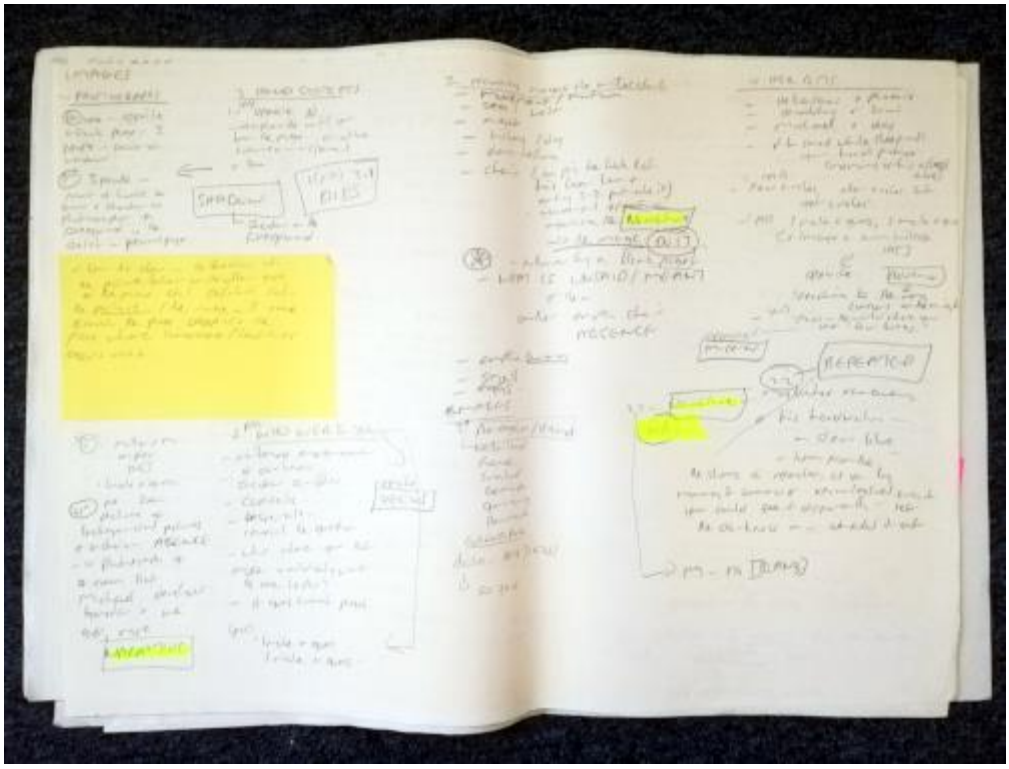

Figure 13 A3 Close reading document, Aoife Casby

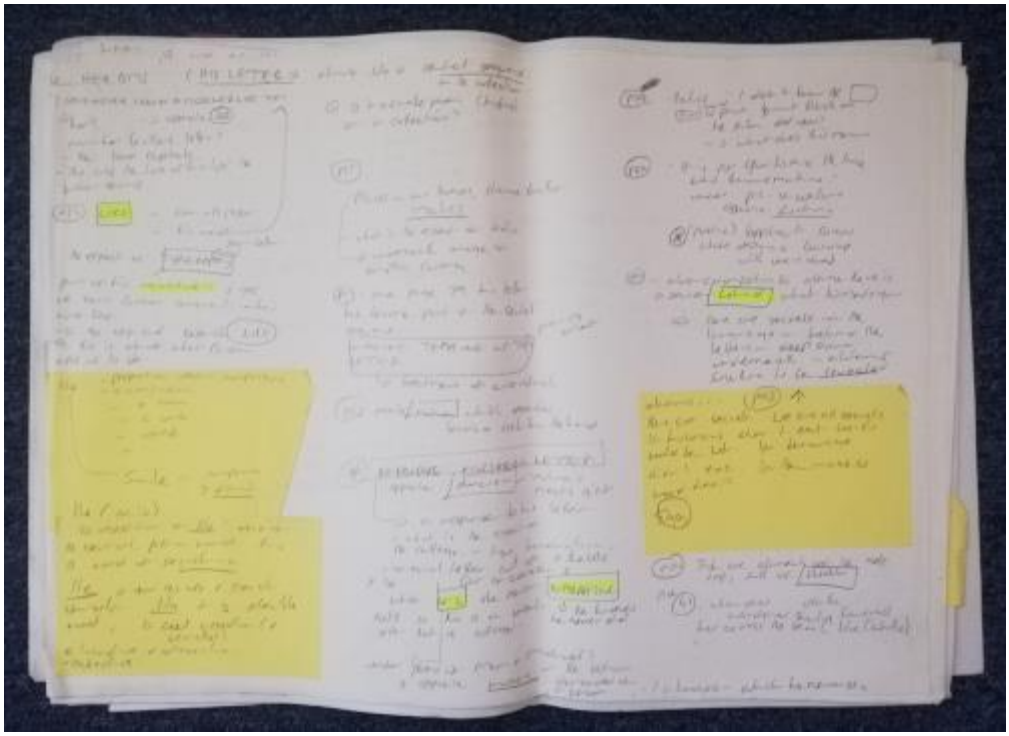

Figure 14 A3 Close reading document, Aoife Casby

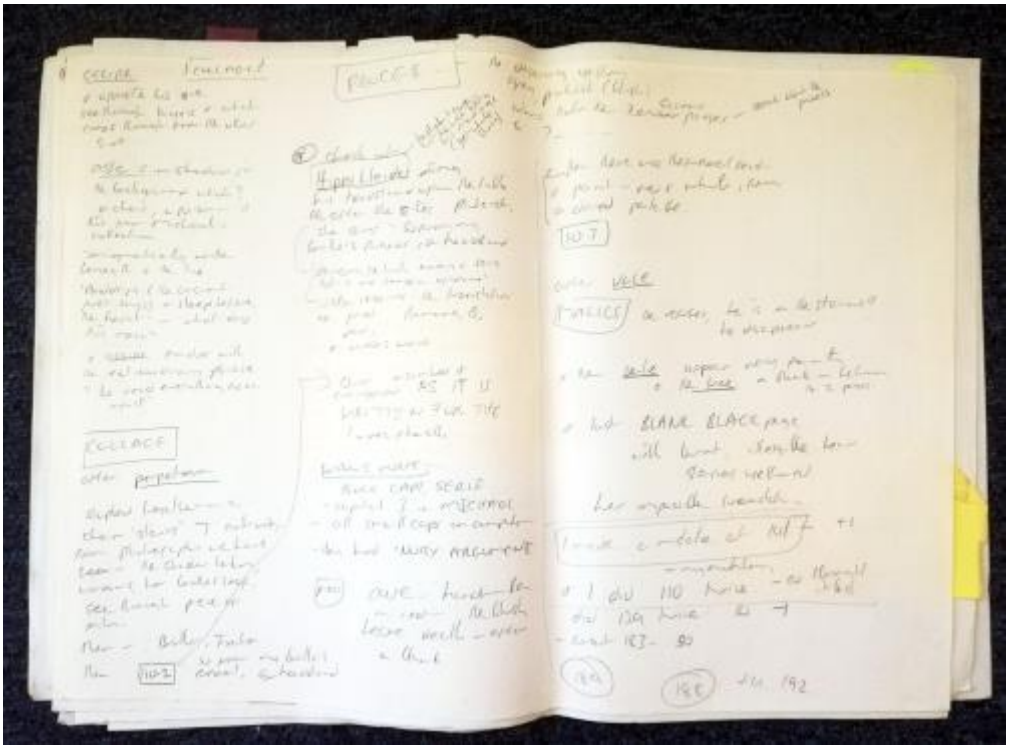

Figure 15 A3 Close reading document, Aoife Casby

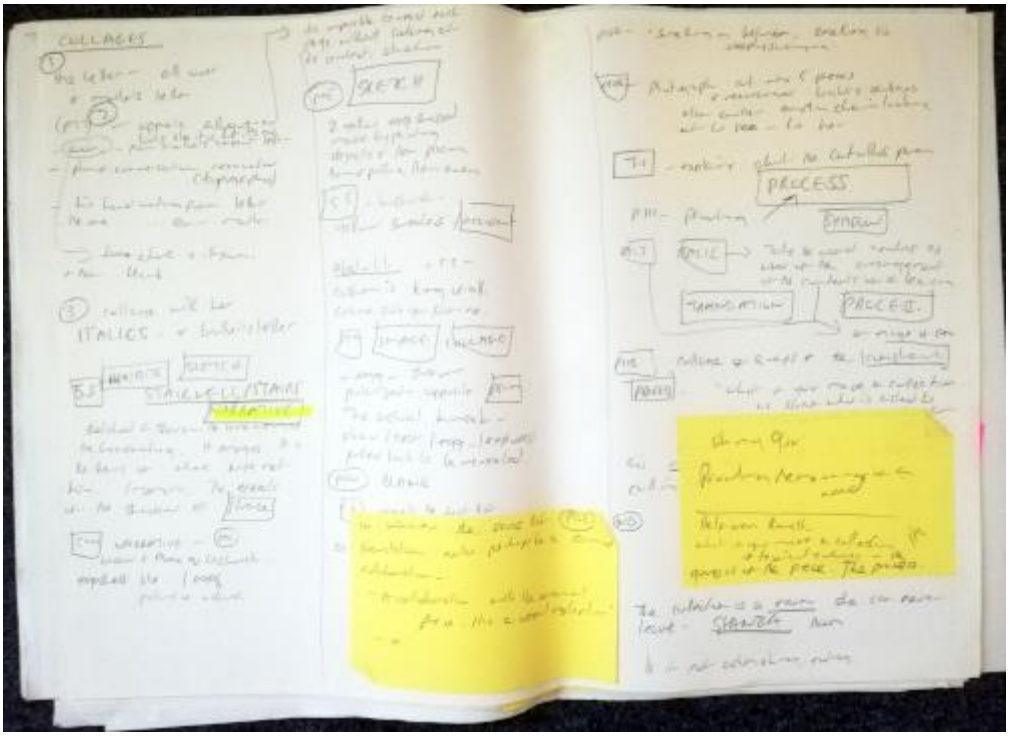

Figure 16 A3 Close reading document, Aoife Casby

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