James Whittle

nothing new

text for solo bass clarinet
Performance Note

The aim for a performance of this piece should be to convey a persona that is an interpretation of the selected text, one example of an imaginary speaker reciting the text in a particular way and notated as such.

The performer should first imagine and experiment with finding a natural tempo and pacing for a recitation of the whole text, and so find a natural, comfortable tempo for and pacing of the music. Rhythms are written to imitate speech, the words and their phrasing, but not always as one would read normally (silently or aloud). The piece is notated conventionally to facilitate the learning of a natural pace, which should incorporate the performer’s choices of rubato that characterise the text and its interpretation (the performer should add in as much as possible).

The performer should then imagine this natural pace exaggerated and intensified to the maximum extent: the overall tempo changes should be as different as possible, the nuances of rubato become events that occur far quicker in time and change more dramatically.

It is therefore likely that on balance, some faster passages will go at a speed that would be impossible to speak or read: this effect is desired. While it is easier to speak or read any text at an unusually slow pace, the effect is again desired conversely so that slower passages are played unnaturally slowly compared to the natural reading pace.

The opening note features a notehead that signals a breath noise: where this notehead occurs the performer should make an audible breath, in the notated rhythm. These breaths are part of the imagined persona's interpretation and characterisation, so must be performed and should be accentuated accordingly. They are notated with relative subdivisions of a crochet beat to show where they should be longer or shorter. The performer may also breathe naturally and silently (inconspicuously) at other moments, such as in the pauses at the end of sentences.

Duration: c.12 minutes
nothing new

for Sarah Watts,

[Tempo should always be flexibly in flux, given the player's delivery of the text.]

GIVE UP, but it's all given up, it's nothing new, I'm nothing new. Ah so there was some-thing once, I had some-thing once.

It may be thought there was, so long as it's known there was not, never an-thing, but giving up. But let us sup-pose there was not, that is to say, let us sup-pose there was some-thing once, this is most re-assu-ring, after such a fright, and embol-dens me to go on once again.
But there is not silence. No, there is utterance, someplace someone is uttering. Inanities, agreed, but is that enough, is that enough, to make sense?

I see what it is, the head has fallen behind, all the rest has gone on, the head and its anus the mouth, or else it has gone on alone, all alone on its accel.

old prowls, slobbering its shit and lapping it back off the lips like in the days when it fancied itself. But the heart's not in it any more, nor is the appetite what it was.
So home to roost it comes among my other as-sets, home yet again, and no trick-ery involved, that old past ever new, ever ending, ever ended, with all its hid-den trea-sures of pro-mise for to-mor-row, and of con-so-la-tion for to-day. And I'm in good hands again, they hold my head from be-hind, in-trigu-ing de-tail, as at the hair-dress'er's, the fore-fin-gers close my eyes, the middle fin-gers my nos-trils, the thumbs stop up my ears, but im-per-fect-ly, to en-a-ble me to hear, but im-per-fect-ly, while the four re-main-ing make mer-ry with my jaws and tongue, to en-a-ble me to suf-fo-cate, but im-per-fect-ly, and to ut-ter, for my good, what I must ut-ter, for my fu-ture good, well known dit-ty, and in par-ti-cu-lar ob-serve with-out de-lay, speak-ing of the pre-sent mo-ment, that worse have been known to pass, that it will pass in time, a mere mo-ment of res-pite which but for this first aid might have proved fa-tal.
and that one day I shall know again that I once was, and roughly who, and how to go on, and speak unaided, nicely, about number one and his palimpsestions. And it is possible, just, for I must not be too facets...

This is awful, awful, at least there’s that to be thankful for. And perhaps beside me, and all around, other souls are being licked into shape, sentimental, obtuse, grievous, optimistic.

souls swooned away, or sick with overuse, or because no use could be found for them, but still fit for use, or fit only to be cast away, pale imitations of mine.
tempo should always be flexibly in flux, given the player's delivery of the text.

pitch is free and should be based on the implications of the notated contours, and the performer's interpretation of the text.

suddenly angered

[Tempo should always be flexibly in flux, given the player's delivery of the text.

Pitch is free and should be based on the implications of the notated contours, and the performer's interpretation of the text.]

sff f

or has it knelled here at last for our com-mit-tal to flesh, as the dead are com-mitted to the ground, in the ho-ur of their death at last, and at the place where they die, to keep the ex-pen-ses down or for our re-as-sign-ment

grim

sff mf

 souls of the still-born, or dead be-fore the bo-dy, or still young in the midst of the ru-ins, or nev-er come to life through in-ca-pa-ci-ty or for some o-ther rea-son, or the im-mor-tal type, there must be a few of them too, whose bod-ies were

ff p

always wrong but pa-tience there's a true one in pick-le, a-mong the un-born hordes, the true se-pul-chral bo-dy, for the liv-ing have no room for a se-cond.

lament

sff mp

no, no souls, or bod-ies, or birth, or life, or death, you've got to go on with-out an-y of that junk, that's all dead with-words, with ex-cess of words, they can say no-thing else, they say there is no-thing

mocking

ff mp

eas-ter nal-ly, they'll find some o-ther non-sense, no mat-ter what, and i'll be a-ble to go on, no, i'll be a-ble to stop, or

scathing

ff

else, that here it's that and no-thing else, but they won't say it e-ter nal-ly, they'll find some o-ther non-sense, no mat-ter what, and i'll be a-ble to go on, no, i'll be a-ble to stop, or

scathing

sff

start, a-noth-er guzz-le of lies but pip-ing hot, it will last my time, it will last my time and place, my voice and si-lence, a voice and si-lence, the voice of my si-lence.
It's with such prospects they exhort you to have patience, whereas you are patient, and calm, somehow calm, what calm here, ah that's an idea, say how calm it is here, and how fine I feel, and how silent I am, I'll start right away, I'll say what calm and silence, which nothing has ever broken, nothing will ever break, which saying I don't break, or saying I'll be saying, yes, I'll say all that tomorrow, yes, tomorrow evening, some other evening, not this evening, this evening it's too late, too late to get things right, I'll go to sleep, so that I may say, hear myself say, a little later, I've slept, he's slept, but he won't have slept, or else he's sleeping now, he'll have done nothing, nothing but go on, doing what, doing what he does, that is to say, I don't know, giving up, that's it, I'll have gone on giving up, having had nothing, not being there.