

## CHAPTER 5

### *ON SECOND THOUGHTS:*

### REWRITING CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

*His impatience with the world, as it goes,  
is reflected in breathlessed, rapid-fire,  
densd push-pulled languaged makings.  
In almost every utterance, (each appearing  
as if a supremely compressed narrative),  
some fo-cussed issue gets a black eye, and  
then, (usually), is followed by a 'What's the  
big deal?'*

*(Gaburo on Mann, 1990)*

Chris Mann has made a significant contribution to experimental art in Australia since the 1960s. His work, including *On Second Thoughts*, is characterised by densely written texts, which have a distinctive style of parenthetical embedding that gives the work a rambling feel. Mann rewrites philosophical theory in popular form, using colloquial

language to imitate Australian vernacular speech forms. He says of Australian culture: 'Yarns, intonation-games, skip-rope songs, jokes, nonsense words...I think that's the tradition we slot into. I think it's a popular culture. I don't think it's a bourgeois culture'.<sup>6</sup> The nuances and colloquialisms of Australian speech are exaggerated to subvert dominant views of epistemology and challenge accepted truths.

Mann has always been interested in grammar and words. In the early 1960s he worked with Joyce's texts in a similar tradition to John Cage. These explorations of avant-garde texts and of the Chinese language have made his work attractive to Stockhausen and Cage. He has also maintained his fascination for systems and models. In an early work entitled *The Box*<sup>7</sup>, his text appears printed on the outside of a small cardboard box. Inside the box is a glass, a napkin and a box of matches. More text is on each object. The concept forwarded is that texts keep unfolding. Mann also exploits the principle that words and phrases may have multiple meanings within their context or operating system. In the performance of *On Second Thoughts*<sup>8</sup>, he produced a word list to accompany the text. Each word was numbered in order of appearance, then listed alphabetically. By giving each word a numerical equivalent he emphasised the relationship between words and systems.

Mann has also used multimedia. In the 1980s his interest in radio led to the *Blue Moon* project which included 100 versions of the Rogers and Hart song, played at 7.55a.m. every week day, including versions by local and overseas composers commissioned for the programme. Mann has also used chance in his compositions. In a piece entitled *Anyway, you can always put language down to experience*, Mann collaborated with Warren Burt to organise the performance so it was conducted by a goldfish called Willy. Willy was aligned with sensors connected to a computer so that when he swam through certain spaces the computer received instruction which affected the performance.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Chris Mann was interviewed by Roberta Bonnin during an ABC radio feature on the ANZART Festival of Sound and Audio Art, broadcast 25 July, 1983. This quotation is cited in Zurbrugg, 1989: 27.

<sup>7</sup> A small number of boxes were made. The text appears in *Chris Mann and Grammar*, 1990: 43-50.

<sup>8</sup> *On Second Thoughts* was performed at *The Surrealists* exhibition in Canberra, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> This performance was held at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, July 1989. The text appears in *Chris Mann and Grammar*, 1990: 1-15

Mann is often considered a musician because of his involvement in sound experimentation and his association with composers such as Stockhausen and Cage. He actually works at the interface between sound and language, using text or multimedia to do so. When speaking of his philosophy he says: 'I failed to make a distinction between language and music' (Burt, 1985: 12). It is not surprising then that critics have had trouble placing his work. Much of the commentary on Mann's work has appeared in interviews where he speaks generally about sound, (Thomas, 1990; Chopin, 1994), modelling systems, (Cole, 1992: 2) and his aims (Burt, 1985). He has been associated with a subset of experimental poetry called 'compositional linguistics' a term borrowed from Kenneth Gaburo (Cole, 1992: 2). It includes similar notions of text and sound as Smith's term 'Sonic Writing' (Smith, 1984: 224). Gaburo proposes that in this art-form neither words nor music are the primary focus of attention, but it rather evolves through a continuing exploration between the two. The term emphasises the interplay between the entire vocal, linguistic and textual world of words and the entire sonorous, compositional world of music. Mann and the tradition of Compositional Linguistics have their origins in the works of Henri Chopin, Warren Burt, John Cage, Kenneth Gaburo and David Antin.

The diversity of Mann's work and its complex constitution means it has been claimed by both music and literary critics, such that it has been included both in ITO's *Off the Record: An Anthology of Performance Poetry* and in John Jenkins's *22 Contemporary Australian Composers*. He is treated as a composer by Warren Burt in an article that appears in the literary journal *Meanjin*. Burt says 'Chris is not here composing notes; instead, he is composing a situation in such a way as to invite the contributions of others' (Burt, 1986: 132-133). These contributions are found in the interactive relationship between other performers and the relationship built with the audience. As he works in both disciplines of language and sound, Mann has had varying responses to his work. David Dunn comments on how to read Mann: 'While reading Chris Mann I cannot manage a linear walk from beginning to end. The frustration mounts until midphrase I jump to a new locale and hope that some kernel up ahead will burst its seams more easily to release some retrospective sense' (Mann, 1990: ii). Such a comment suggests the text can fold back and forth to reveal meaning. More importantly it reveals the need to read the systems working in the text and how the words relate. Kenneth Gaburo offers further

description of Mann's style: 'His impatience with the world, as it goes, is reflected in breathlessed, rapid-fired, densed, push-pulled languaged makings. In almost every utterance, (each appearing as if a supremely compressed narrative), some focussed issue gets a black eye, and then, (usually), is followed by 'What's the big deal?' (Mann, 1990: ix). It is this treatment of important philosophical ideas that both intrigues and exasperates the reader.

### ***On Second Thoughts***

*On Second Thoughts* (1993) is a reflexive text, in that it examines and interrogates the theories of language and culture which inform and enable its own structure. Such reflexivity is not unusual in contemporary art, which often embodies a critique of social practices while at the same time incorporating an argument that regards how the artwork interrelates with the practices it is confronting. This situation poses a complex problem for an analyst who wishes to view the text from a perspective that both engages with and allows a theoretical position separate from the structure and the theories informing it. In this case, the chaotic grammar of *On Second Thoughts* is derived from a model of language based on spoken rather than written discourse, as might be expected of a performance text, and the application of speech forms to theories of knowledge results in a discourse which is a unique product of popular language forms. The text is not only a spoken text, but consists of an accumulation of variously chained and embedded propositional clause structures, with the effect that meaning seems elusive and ambiguous. Mann aims to demonstrate the multiplicity of language and thereby undermine imperial colonial history. He sets up Australian culture and language as a challenge to the colonial centre that dominates the production of knowledge and identity. His unique use of the English language seeks an alternative to the canon. He speaks of philosophy in colloquial terms, appropriating it for Australian culture: a culture sceptical of universal truths that embraces multiplicity.

In order to elucidate grammatical relationships and hierarchies within Mann's discourse and thence lay a ground for interpretation, I have grounded my analysis in

particular aspects of Systemic Functional Grammar which are pertinent to Mann's text and offer especially appropriate strategies for analysing such language. Systemic Functional Grammar, as developed by Threadgold, embraces language as a place of rewriting human experience. Once the recurring and interwoven patterns of the text are unravelled, a number of potential meanings are revealed. The fields of language and epistemology are refashioned in the experimental poetry genre which forges new constructions of reality. Systemic Functional Grammar is most compatible with Mann's philosophy as it embraces linguistic systems and the way language represents our society and culture. It also embraces multiplicity within this system. The work uses a model that encompasses all systems as the clause structure produces itself in one discourse and reproduces itself in others: the *ideal expert system*. The suggestion is that culture is constituted of one ideal expert system but this system can be renewed and recreated. Systems and structures do not necessarily perpetuate the dominant discourses but they can be used to challenge, subvert and offer a place of renewal for the marginalised subject and the epistemological system acting upon that subject. Mann here participates in the creation and articulation of 'structures of feeling' in Williams' terms (Williams, 1977: 128-135). Reading the grammar of his text enables his subversive position to be understood.

The text demonstrates how human identity within culture is made up of the systems of language, economics and philosophy. The application of Systemic Functional Grammar to the text reveals many things. First, the experiential level contains the representational matter of the clause where the complexity of the embedding can be unravelled to reveal a modelling system of language imitating Saussure's Token-Value relationship. Within this structure intertextual references are revealed. Secondly, at the textual level of the clause, matters of collocation and cohesion are revealed. This involves collocation of terms from common discourses pointing to the probabilistic forming of meaning from repeating patterns. Thirdly, the interpersonal function of language reveals the modality of Mann's tone which is ironically positive and works in conflict with his colloquial language and extemporary style. Through modality he tends to trivialise the theories he discusses and creates tension for the reader. This is where his presence is felt as he speaks to us. In the performance, which will be discussed in the next chapter, his

intonation suggests he is sceptical of theory and he further exaggerates the irony of his position through Australian accent.

It is the relational processes, listing of values and use of expansion and collocation that maps Mann's voice onto the lexicogrammar. Reading the grammar allows me to demonstrate the way the position of enunciation (authorship) is folded into the enounced. This enfolded corporeality debates intertextually with theory and the way this debate proceeds is marked by clear grammatical patterns in the text. Understanding the grammatical patterns in the text as always metonymically related to bodies and therefore contexts, recognises the relevance of grammar in the generic strategy adopted by the speaker in formulating his position of enunciation. The corporeal traces disclosed by linguistic analysis map the speaker's scepticism of truths as he describes the failings of most theoretical discourses. Mann is able to remake identity and reality-constructing discourses by re-contextualising them within a new genre of experimentation and artistic voicing. His rewriting and repositioning fosters multiplicity and demonstrates the futility of single all-encompassing or totalising frameworks. For him, texts and contexts are moveable.

### **Mann, grammar and signification**

Language, as a system of chain and choice, functions as a multifunctional network of interlocking options. Mann's text embodies this idea of choice and takes it to the extreme as the clause structures accommodate the enormous expanse of semiotic systems. The clause can be a way of representing patterns of experience or functions as it embodies a general principle for modelling experience: that of reality being made up of *processes*. Our impression of experience consists of happening, doing, sensing, meaning, being and becoming. The clause places order on the endless flows of events. This is achieved by the grammatical system of transitivity. The transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types. Transitivity is concerned with construing one particular domain of our experience: that of our experience of flux and goings-on, as configurations of a process (of some general type: material, mental, relational), the participants involved in this experience and the circumstances attendant

on it. Transitivity offers a network of inter-related options for representing different types of experience.

The clause as representation at the experiential level is forefronted in *On Second Thoughts*. Mann uses the *Relational Process* which allows relations between one fragment of experience and another through identifying similarities between objects or words and classifying them (Halliday, 1985: 107). The clause imposes order on the endless variation and flow of systems that occur in our culture. Relational clauses, expressing relational processes of being, consist of two parts because something is being said to *be* something else. A relationship is being set up between two separate entities where the act of communication is emphasised. A specific aspect of the grammar can be applied to Mann’s text: that of the *intensive* construction. Halliday uses the example of ‘x is a’ to show this relationship. Mann uses both modes of intensive relationship, defined as *attributive*: for example ‘a is an attribute of x’; and *identifying* which is structured ‘a is the identity of x’ (Halliday, 1985: 119). In the attributive mode, an entity has some quality ascribed or attributed to it, while the identifying mode equates objects. Halliday’s table of relational clauses is as follows:

	<i>Attributive</i>	<i>Identifying</i>
<i>Intensive</i>	Sarah is wise	Tom is the leader; The leader is Tom.
<i>Circumstantial</i>	The fair is on a Tuesday	Tomorrow is the 10th; The 10th is tomorrow
<i>Possessive</i>	Peter has a piano	The piano is Peter’s; Peter’s is the piano.
		(Halliday, 1994: 119)

The same table can be constructed using Mann’s text. He employs a subset of Halliday’s schema, restricting his grammar to intensive processes. This enables him to play with token-value relationships:

	<i>Attributive</i>	<i>Identifying</i>
<i>Intensive</i>	time is a rentable pathology (line 112)	Price is that structural violence; that structural violence is price (lines 1-2)
<i>Circumstantial</i>	n/a	n/a
<i>Possessive</i>	One...retains it’s rights	n/a

The difference between the *identifying* and *attributive* mode is that *identifying* clauses are reversible. The identifying mode is most obvious in Mann's text which uses this clausal structure to give many Values (identities) to the one Token (subject). By doing so the text adopts a structure which implies a process of redefinition, resulting in a chaotic deluge of signifiers and a limitless source of information or signification. It is from here that the text analysis will attempt to explicate the effect of the choices made and where the resulting intertextual elements occur. By framing the text through clausal processes, the particular multi-functionality of the textuality is revealed. Mann seems to make deliberate use of relational processes in an attempt to give theoretical concepts and terminology an identity by personifying them. The colloquial expression tends to make this more pronounced.

Another clause type frequently used by Mann is the *material process*. It is the process of *doing* which expresses the notion that some entity or Actor does something which may be done to some other entity or Goal (Halliday, 1985: 110). For example: *it takes out shares in the economy* (line 9). This is fundamental to the transitivity system where the material process now contains both the transitive and intransitive verb.

Mann lists values for each Token, Carrier and Actor. This structure emerges through the three types of expansion identified by Halliday: *elaborating*, *extending* and *enhancing* which give the clause its multiple function. Elaboration occurs when one clause elaborates on the meaning of another by further specifying or describing it (Halliday, 1985: 225). Mann favours elaboration as it draws out chains of equivalences. Clarification is a type of elaboration in which the secondary clause is in apposition to the first and clarifies the thesis of the primary clause (Halliday, 1985: 226). Extension can also be found in Mann's text as one clause extends the meaning of another by adding something new to it. The addition may be a replacement or an alternative or indeed just an addition (Halliday, 1985: 230). Mann uses this technique to expand the frames of experience within his hypothesis and play with links between colloquial and formal expression.

Saussure played a fundamental role in establishing 'the model' and Halliday's adoption of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations owes much to him. Of particular



relevance to *On second Thoughts* is Saussure's notion of value (Saussure, 1966: 110), which identifies the way signs can be exchanged according to context. Mann adopts the Saussurean structure of token-value in a poetic structure as his text constantly lists new values through a process of redefinition, exchange and comparison. Saussure's theory is both demonstrated and spoken of in the text, creating a reflexive demonstration of its own intertextual sources. Mann's demonstration of token-value relations is marked by frequent use of negative values that position him against most dominant discourses or totalising structures.

A further aspect of Systemic Functional Grammar pertinent to an analysis of *On Second Thoughts* is lexical cohesion which is found at the textual level and is possible by repetition, synonymy and collocation operating within the clause. As a text is an ongoing process of meaning, textual cohesion enables this meaning to be channelled into a traceable current of discourse (Halliday, 1985: 311). Repetition of a word or substitute of a pronoun creates lexical chains which refer back and forth. Synonymy joins related items with the same or a higher level of generality (Halliday, 1985: 331). Collocation depends less on general semantic relationships between items than on their tendency to co-occur. Collocation creates strong cohesive effects as it is an aspect of the text on which the reader builds an expectation of meaning (Halliday, 1985: 333). Because of the specific registers of economics, linguistics and philosophy used by Mann in *On Second Thoughts*, the tendency for terms to collocate is frequent. Poetic and entertainment interest is naturally heightened when collocative semantics are broken or undermined.

### **Language : A Model of Social Construction**

A dialogic relationship between the speaker and numerous semiotic resources intertextually linked to philosophical discourses drives the arguments of *On Second Thoughts*. The text comments on the nature of words and their role in constructing meaning and more significantly the way they are context driven fluid entities. It is therefore appropriate to break down the semiotic structure in order to demonstrate the system being used and a possible reading of the texts.

Mann explores the value of words:

*Words, a mechanism for distinguishing thought from other practices, a relative interval (in something of a state (a psychology of reference (subs))) waited on experience hand and glove (lines 29-31).*

Here the principal clause reads *Words...waited on experience hand and glove* emphasising the material process that shows how words 'do' things and therefore reflect the actions happening in reality. The framing material process points to the ability of words to 'act' rather than 'be'. Inside this principal clause are a series of definitions for *words* where the implied equative verbal group of 'being' unifies the processes. The text demonstrates how words can 'be' many things.

Words are signs, series, complex signs or systems of mutually adapted parts working together. Words are systems for bringing forth the real world into the clause structure. Mann uses relative intensive identifying processes, emphasising the multi-faceted role of words. The clause structure models the real world and emphasises the semantic relationships which represent traces in the text. The structure of equivalences uses elaboration to expand the primary clause which places the subsequent values in apposition with some internal clarification on 2 where 2.1 and 2.2 redefine the meaning.

1

*Words*            *a mechanism for distinguishing thought from other practices*  
                         2  
                         *a relative interval in something of a state*  
                                 2.1  
                                 *a psychology of reference*  
                                 2.2  
                                 *subs*

*waited on experience hand and glove*  
  
*(lines 29-31)*

The word *mechanism* suggests that words are part of a system that distinguishes consciousness or *thought* from actions or *practices*. Here, it is suggested that words or language are what distinguish the conscious being. Words are also *relative* as they can be used differently, according to their context or *state*, and operate within the spaces of the systems. The phrase *in something of a state* is a deliberately familiar one marking Mann's presence with his colloquial style. It is ambiguous to us as it could mean 'in a problematic *state*' as words are definitely arbitrary, or *state* as in 'situation' as words

change in meaning according to context. What lends specificity or identity to each particular signifier is its differential relation to the other signifiers in the greater set. The value, *a psychology of reference* clarifies this state, referring to the conscious referentiality of signs and the way the mind makes connections between words and things. The referential view is that words mean by standing for things or substituting, (*subs*) for the actual object. The suggestion that words *wait on experience hand and glove* possibly means that language fits the model of experience as a glove fits a hand. The speaker's enunciative position is marked by such colloquial phrases, recontextualising linguistic theory in Australian vernacular that tends to undermine the importance of theory.

The clause structure allows for the multi-definition of token words which happen to allow for a full range of structuralist theories concerning the philosophy of language. The words *mechanism, relative, state, reference* and *subs* collocate in linguistic discourse, enhancing the lexical cohesion and contributing to the meaning of *words* as signifiers of the real world. Mann recontextualises structuralist notions of language by making it the subject of his art. His rewriting of theory in a humorous or colloquial manner trivialises it and his reflexivity is ironic as he seems to subscribe to structural theory in the structure of his work and speaks of it in his content while simultaneously mocking it. His subversion comes from within.

Furthering the discussion of words is:

*words, being the (ideal) sum of earlier words, recall the proxy (an itchy limbo (things I would like to have said))*: (lines 226-227)

Words are defined and redefined by using a model of language which reflexively demonstrates the very phenomenon of defining. The first clause, *Words, being the (ideal) sum of earlier words* is equative in its textual function.

Words	<sup>1</sup> <i>being the (ideal) sum of earlier words</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>recall the proxy</i> <sup>2.1</sup> <i>an itchy limbo</i> <sup>2.2</sup> <i>things I would like to have said</i>	(lines 226-227)
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The clausal structure that follows uses the material process *words...recall the proxy*. The verbal group *recalls* is a creative type of material process as it brings about something. In this case, it recalls the *proxy* or 'substitute' for the real. Within this structure redefining values are given for *words* in 1 and *proxy* in 2.1 and 2.2 which are both intensive identifying processes. This process of redefinition creates a chain of signifiers that undermine the stability of word meanings.

The idea that words are signs, which hold the history and context of all possible traces, refers to post-structuralist theory. Words are *the sum of earlier words*. This also alludes to Wittgenstein's *the sum total of reality is the world* (Wittgenstein, 1922: 2.063) where a network of systems and layers interconnect, balancing each other to create a picture of our reality. The word *proxy* is further expanded by *itchy limbo* and *things I would like to have said* which refers to the post-structuralist notion of deferral. The word *limbo* is appropriately used to redefine *proxy* as words often have precarious positions between possible meanings. *itchy* however is that niggling sensation, not often associated with words. Such a break in the collocation serves to surprise the reader, as does describing proxies ironically as *things I would like to have said*. The notion of words recalling the act of a proxy is pushed further as the speaker ponders over the manner in which what is present in a statement evokes what is absent. The absent person votes via proxy which substitutes for presence in the same way words operate. By giving values to *proxy*, the text demonstrates its claims in a reflexive manner. Mann creates a dialogue with the reader and with the intertextual discourses he engages. The reader is positioned by his view that words cannot be trusted.

*On Second Thoughts* also explores the various ways language operates as performative. It subverts philosophical theories by conflating typical examples of the practical application of language and words. This is Mann's way of rewriting intertextual resources and inscribing them with his unique artistry and humour.

*And doing things with words, in a manner of speaking, mining (wife's) identity to do a yellow form of knowing, a semantic perjury, pads the determinists with, you know, (indifferent) model rules. I do. (lines 157-160).*

The structure of the first clause here is bound by *And doing things with words...pads the determinists with (indifferent) model rules* which has two meanings and also presents layers of meaning within. A material process is evident in the clause which is appropriate for the subject matter of 'doing'. *And doing things with words* alludes to Austin's book *How To Do Things With Words* (Austin, 1962: 6) concerning the performative nature of language where the uttering of a sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action, which would not normally be described as saying something. Mann suggests that Austin's theory of language, being both cause and effect, is treated with *indifference* by the determinists. His irony here mocks the well-accepted theory of determinism and causal laws. *In a manner of speaking* is also ironic as the performative depends on the act of speaking for its realisation. *I do* as uttered at a marriage ceremony is the example given by Austin as *to utter* the sentence is not to describe the act, but to perform the act itself (Austin, 1962: 6). It is not reporting on the marriage but participating in it. Performatives have the grammatical make up of statements, but are not deemed true or false. They are used to achieve the same mental state of knowledge. That is, both bride and groom say *I do* and both marry. Austin used the performative to challenge the notion that language's primary use is to make statements. The words *wife's* and *I do* collocate with earlier allusion to *Monty Python's Flying Circus* where *nudge nudge say no more* (line 151) represented the secret of men who asked *Is your wife a goer?* Mann speaks here of sexual 'performance'. Such a vaudeville style humour adds to Mann's stand-up comic routine where no theory is to be taken seriously.

Mann conflates the performative and functionalism. The allusion *to do a yellow form of knowing* is another typical example used in philosophy which may refer to the functionalist notion that if two people seeing a ripe banana are in states with the same causes and effects, then by functionalist definition, they are in the same mental state of having a sensation of yellow. Their states can still be qualitatively different if their eye capacity is different, but the functionalist does not allow for differences (Audi, 1995:289). A *semantic perjury* suggests that in this state one might be swearing to a false statement. Functionalism assumes that what makes a state mental is not an intrinsic property of the state, but rather its relations to sensory stimulation, both input or output to other inner states, or to behaviour (Audi, 1995: 288). In linguistic terms, functional

theory is concerned with showing how language works within the larger systems of human society. Like the two marrying by saying *I do*, people achieve the same state of knowledge regularly, but as the speaker suggests this is only *mining identity* or extracting isolated examples to show a possibility. Functionalism, although humorously portrayed here and elsewhere as having *two versions of backward causation: local optimums and yea and nea, a consolation* (lines 156-157) seems to fit most favourably with the speaker's preference for subversion of dominant discourses. It is a theory which allows for dialogism and processes rather than objects. Mann's conflation of linguistic theory and cognitive science rewrites the mind/body debate and demonstrates how philosophical theories are conceptually interwoven.

Grammar is important in *On Second Thoughts* and although the piece appears to be nonsense, much of what is said would mean nothing if we did not have a sense of grammar and language structure. From within the poetry emerges a pattern of procedures for composition and construction. The text comments on grammar and the positions of subject and object, suggesting this structure is a European way of making meaning. The most important aim of Mann's subversive use of language is to write against such dominating dualities of meaning making and explode the myths they create.

*The object experiences the first person singular as expression, the third person as information (less than one percent of the world's languages are european.) Is the object therefore wrong? (lines 55-57)*

The common use of words and their grammatical use are often quite different. Words really only mean when they are in context and often it is difficult to define them in general terms without text. Mann mocks the nature of words with: *only in dictionaries is object not a measure of objection* (lines 115-116) as he suggests words have greater value than their definitions reveal. His structure constantly reinforces this notion.

Mann considers the social function of language and his use of black English evokes the ideas of Labov. The final lines of the piece subvert standard English and recognise non-standard English or dialect as valid expression. Labov argues that black English has its own system which operates well within the cultural framework in which it is used (Labov, 1972: 6). Labov uses a functional model to demonstrate how variation in the linguistic system express variations in the social status and roles. Halliday identified

these variations in language as dialect which expresses the diversity of social structure and register which expresses the diversity of social processes (Halliday, 1978: 2). The text subscribes to three main systems throughout: language, economics and philosophy and shows the relationship between these. Mann demonstrates how dialects are systems which operate within systems and although they serve their users well, they are marginalised systems because the mainstream is not prepared to see their validity. The text here is written in transliteration representing the particular nuances of the pronunciation. The speaker emphasises it as an oral language which is highly articulate and structured.

*Testing testing one two one two: coz no was short arm long back, pullm tail watchm crack, two ones giggles in the pee, three be home so lookin telly - them all lot wanten same lot, sugar in tea whn teas in pot. (lines 241 - 243)*

The opening *testing testing* suggests a performance is imminent, as if the preceding 31 sections had only been a warm-up. There is a typical black American form of colloquial expression here with *sumpns up* and *whatja gunna buy?* The status of such English systems has been reduced as the dominant culture has appropriated the marginalised. Labov argues that such systems are sophisticated and we have to learn them in order to learn about the constitution of our society (Labov, 1972: 75). The text perhaps ends with this system as just one example of many systems we do not fully understand and one which operates in a very sophisticated manner within contemporary society. Systems are constantly evolving and refining within our culture and therefore the model must be used to consider the processes involved in order to locate and understand all members of our society. The model sought is dependent on human interaction and allows freedom within its linguistic framework. The linguistic model subscribed to here is reproduced to describe other systems of the text. The expression of mood is always declarative, using positive finite verbs. This relates his propositions to the context of the speech event and makes them something that can be argued about, affirmed or denied, doubted or contradicted. Statements have an exchange role in this way and create a dialogue between the speaker and the intertextual resources drawn upon, and between the speaker and reader.

## Epistemology

The epistemology of social semiotics and the foundations of Systemic Functional Grammar are based in dynamic open systems that are radically socially constructionist in orientation. Mann's text embraces such foundations as he explores the construction of identity. The text reads like a philosophy textbook, but it does have an argument in its scepticism of absolute knowledge or truth and in its embrace of Marxist economic theory and the modelling of systems. Mann's text is an example of original contemporary thought as it seeks to cater for all possible hypotheses while structured by one model. Mann takes the human sciences of philosophy and psychology and links them to economics and language. The chaos and indeterminacy of our culture is captured and controlled by his inclusive model which allows for the semiology of values. Mann's text is not a philosophical jungle thrown together at a whim.

Mann discusses logic and knowledge and the manner in which we acquire and retain truth. The poem begins with *On that which is required for definition*: a standard sub-heading in philosophical discourses, suggesting that what follows is necessary for the meaning or conceptual content of an expression. This is appropriate as the whole work relies on philosophical explanations for the various hypotheses put forward. Many of the statements, as previously discussed, are structured like propositions. Mann addresses these arguments of logic as it is the arena of philosophy essential to epistemology, revealing features of language by drawing conclusions from premises. An argument is valid provided its conclusion is true in every possible world or model in which its premises are true. Logic is essential to epistemology as it judges inferences as good or bad and tries to justify those that are good. Philosophers such as Wittgenstein hold that the structure of language reflects the structure of the world and it would seem the text conforms to this idea.

*Logic - prosthetic action, a formal not-yet - explains description. It is jealous of the attempt. (lines 64-65)*

There is no ultimate reality that governs logical thought and representation. It is incomplete. So although the model of logic would consider many systems within systems, it is difficult to define as it is an emerging process. This demonstrates that



inferences have elements that are themselves linguistic and expressible in language. In the text, logic is an artificial remedy which is a model or *not-yet*, but not an actual. It is an incomplete system. The way logical arguments are structured resembles a framework for a solution through language. Metalogic is the study of syntax and semantics of formal languages and this relates to the way the language works in the text. Identity and thinking are explored alongside logic.

*As a category on it's last legs, identity is sorely tried and means the general (off of) is only right: work is what's not logic, and though thinking be a (bit) pious act, the idea itself is not that good. (lines 172-175)*

*On Second Thoughts* is concerned with how knowledge is acquired and it relates to other discourses such as economics and power, language and naming. Knowledge is first described as *a system in a state of self replacement* which produces itself and replaces itself (lines 1-3). Therefore the text comments upon itself as a model for culture and epistemologies. It relies heavily on propositional knowledge which is linked to a priori and a posteriori epistemological states which in turn are related to belief, truth and justification conditions. Although sceptical of knowledge, the speaker does concede:

*(knowledge (a relational category) may of course be real) - and though a thought or state may be self-conscious, self-consciousness is not a theory, nor theory yet a status quo. (Knowledge modifies those states for which it is synonymous. Reason sees to it.) (lines 70-74)*

Knowledge is a *relational category* which exists in relation to other processes. The speaker makes allowances with *may of course be real*, ironically mocking theories which refuse to acknowledge the existence of any meaning. Information is acquired through relationships in context. The text then seeks to break the collocations which usually enhance our ability to make meaning. This is demonstrated in the clause structure as the text comments on its own processes reflecting reality. From the structure and content of the text, one can see that hypotheses are favoured. According to Mann, thinking is a self-conscious state which is not a theory, theories are generalisations which explain something but they are not accepted as the existing state of things and reason makes sure that knowledge modifies those states which have the same characteristics as it. Mann's text seeks a new knowledge, diverse and dialogic, offering possibilities rather than absolutes.

The text, being sceptical of knowledge, points out the short-comings of too much knowledge as more knowledge leads to less truth. This is due to the multiple interpretations and philosophies which weave and contradict in the layers of experience.

*Thought never knows how long to look: knowledge is bad karma, a substitute dimension, hex. It answers to Hey you (the echo, a reductionist, of ain't). And this, a sceptical noun-to-be, recommends the idea of self to explanation: (lines 79-82)*

*thought* does not have enough knowledge to know how long to look. This statement is circular as looking is searching for knowledge.

Knowledge lacks identity as it answers to *hey you* and it is a reductionist of *is nots*. We can only say what is not. Therefore knowledge is repetitive, occurring in multiple ideas which are essentially the same. This happens as a result of us imitating rather than thinking and discovering. Mann writes against accepted epistemology. He dialogues with Althusser's notion of interpellation (Althusser, 1971: 118) where subjects are hailed by the ideology of their environment as they are organised into socially formed subjects of consciousness who regard themselves as having an identity, or a role, or a part to play within the process. Here, the speaker literally hails the subject with *Hey You*. It refers to *thought* from the beginning of the first clause as *thought* can be determined by circumstances.

To suggest the various ways knowledge can be described, the text uses relational intensive identifying processes:

	1	
Knowledge	is bad karma	
	2	
	a substitute dimension	
	3	
	hex	
	4	
It	answers to hey you	(lines 79-82)

The use of direct equivalents and positive finite verbs emphasises the negative values. The elaboration clarifies *knowledge* as a curse to truth as it does not have an identity and will bring bad luck. The reference to Eastern religious philosophy is an ironic description, suggesting the search for truth/knowledge has led to a wave of new age ideologies. The

collocation of negative values avoids typical positive definitions of knowledge as ‘consciousness of something’ and ‘information gained from study’. Instead the text invokes particular cultural domains. *Knowledge* decides our destiny and it *substitutes* (perhaps for reality and truth). Such negativity leaves us with very little hope to capture truth or knowledge. What can be achieved is an acceptance of our culture as an organic whole of possibilities and potential.

A certain scepticism about truth and those who believe in it is explored in the text. It is therefore most appropriate to consider its place in the system along side all other philosophical theories.

*(Truth – is a context-free anecdote (the outskirts of collateral) – is that semiotic euphemism (a resistance) that agrees. It takes shares out in the economy. A plastic fractal tax. Of standards. It domesticates a practice as an a theory, a little the (where one is that transparent number that owns up. (lines 7-11)*

*Truth* is a displaced story which merely stands in for reality. It is first described as a *context-free anecdote* and a *semiotic euphemism* (lines 7-9). The reason that truth cannot be trusted is linguistically represented in the structure of the text by the numerous ways in which Mann constantly elaborates and embeds meaning. This foregrounds the inadequacy of words which require further explanation of their explanations. The speaker changes our expectation of the meaning of words, thereby changing their value and our sense of the semiotic which makes meaning familiar to us. Breaks in collocation alter our perspective and force us to make new associations which, given time and thought, can also have meaning for us.

<i>Truth</i>	<i>a context free anecdote</i>	
		} Token
	<i>the outskirts of collateral</i>	
	1	
	<i>is that semiotic euphemism</i>	
	2	} Value
	<i>a resistance that agrees</i>	
	3	
<i>It</i>	<i>takes shares out in the economy</i>	
	4	
	<i>a plastic fractal tax. Of standards</i>	
	5	
<i>It</i>	<i>domesticates practice as an a theory</i>	
	6	
	<i>(is) a little the where one is that transparent number that owns up</i>	
	<i>(Lines 7 - 11)</i>	

Truth is a *semiotic euphemism* according to Mann. The break in collocation at *semiotic euphemism* suggests truth, as a word, is already a substitute for reality. Negative definitions subvert our usual understanding. Truth is a *resistance* which is another negative view of truth as truth usually prescribes - it does not hold back. Truth on the *outskirts of collateral* crosses into the economic discourse and suggests truth is not only a poor guarantee, but that it is tied up with economics and controlled by those with money. Therefore it is a subversive notion in itself and cannot be trusted. Mann uses a tautologous statement to suggest that truth is on the outside of an already subordinate source. All the positions of the speaker are negative and the terms collocate in negative and subversive positions, emphasising the dubiety of the status of truth. There is also disparity in the connotations realised such as *outskirts*, meaning 'marginalised' and *collateral* meaning 'security'.

Truth continues its association with economic discourse. It *takes out shares in the economy* which is a *plastic fractal tax*. *fractal* involves the unfolding of mathematical equating and patterning. It is used here to describe the constant unfolding of truth as a repetitive act with no ultimate definition. Again although the discourse collocates on one level, the defining values are contradictory. The processes model various forms of experience, particularly new forms of experience. *Truth* is both an entity which buys for itself and also a tax for someone else. It is a malleable, moveable value. It is active as it does things in both economic and epistemological disciplines. The consequences or result of mixing discourses reveals language as a context determined system. It seems the knowledge we should have is that there is no absolute truth and that signs are arbitrary and determined by context. The content and form of the text demonstrates this very phenomenon where the relative intensive identifying clauses 1, 2 and 5 and the material processes of clauses 3 and 4 demonstrate the diverse behaviour and identity of truth. Mann rewrites the ready-made semiotic sources of philosophy to make us see truth in new ways.

Another aspect of epistemology is learning. The text criticises the way we learn and teach as the speaker reiterates his scepticism of absolute truth and knowledge.

*I mean I'm not just saying I don't understand - learning (what is not the case (form (a communicated caricature of thinking (and when I say Understand you'd bloody well better)))) (lines 34-36)*

The voice changes here from mimicry of the child who cannot understand, to the speaker who cannot understand the idea of learning, to imitation of the teacher who uses humiliation to make the child understand. *I mean I'm not just saying I don't understand* marks a distinction between words and meaning and how not understanding is part of learning. *Learning what is not the case* echoes Wittgenstein who begins *Tractatus* with *The world is everything that is not the case* (Wittgenstein, 1922: 31). The context shifts by using relational processes to demonstrate the various definitions of learning which is *what is not the case*. This is a contradictory definition as learning should be the act of acquiring knowledge. Instead Mann suggests learning only provokes more possibilities and fewer truths. Learning is also described as *form* as opposed to content that could mean a formula rather than adjusted to the individual's needs. It is also *a communicated caricature of thinking* which suggests teaching does not encourage thinking and students do not think, they merely reproduce old ideas or the ideas of others by rote. The words *understand*, *learning* and *thinking* all collocate as members of epistemological discourse, but between these words, the speaker positions negatively with *what is not the case* and *I don't understand*, further subverting the substance of knowledge.

The process of teaching and learning is criticised again with:

*(this mechanism doubts but then again it doesn't work), a symptom of expects (if not of action) where purpose is a particular experience (lines 36-38).*

The system of education doubts itself, but fails again because the purpose or reason for acquiring knowledge is now an experience in itself. Texts are a means to knowledge, but also of criticising. Again the use of negative terms allows for fluidity in meaning and no commitment to a position.

The text becomes more explicit in its criticism of any pedagogical methodology which condemns dialectical interaction in classrooms:

*Learning only looks like thinking from the front. ( In red. ( An empirical expression.)) It anticipates the real. (It is a minimal condition of sense that it be arbitrarily produced. An example (false phenomena) who whats etceteras. ) I say I say. ( lines 46-50)*

Learning only appears to be thinking. It merely *anticipates the real* rather than experiencing it. Assumptions of reality are condemned as learning is an *empirical*

*expression*, or merely the verbalising of others' experiences. The idea that the *minimal condition of sense* is that it be derived randomly from opinion is also stated as further criticism of making meaning and knowledge from an ignorant position. The text suggests our ideas of truth are formulated in the classroom and a way to developing society could be found in developmental pedagogy. This idea is linked to the black vernacular used to finish the piece, as Labov argued (Labov, 1972: 74) that in order to cut through social marginalisation, teachers must understand the linguistic system their students are using. The speaker uses Australian vernacular with *learning only looks like*, suggesting something is missing or wrong about the way people learn. The identifying processes point to many aspects of pedagogy.

	1	
Learning	only looks like thinking from the front	
	2	
	in red	
	3	
	an empirical expression	
	4	
it	anticipates the real	
	1	
It is a minimal	condition of sense that it be arbitrarily produced	
	2	
	An example, false phenomena	
	3	
	who	
	4	
	whats	
	5	
	etceteras	

*I say I say*

(lines 46-50)

Collocation is broken with *sense*, *arbitrarily produced* and *false phenomena* which suggest sense is a dubious prospect and the vaudeville, slapstick style *I say I say* confirms this by alluding to a routine of language games dependent on mis-logic. There is no lament or regret; the speaker just declares what we can never have. Another example: *Behaviour models memory, passive therapy. Knowledge, attending to a bank thatedness, only imitates experience* (lines 58-59) demonstrates that the nature of knowledge is only

an imitation and the list or *bank* of propositions *that...* cannot always be considered actual knowledge. It depends on the individual and their previous experiences. Wittgenstein suggests memory is a knowledge back up which controls future meanings and behaviour. Memory enables us to use past experiences of systems and apply them in the future. This cannot be confused with truth or fact.

Mann implies that knowledge is a fallacy which has been promoted by imperial powers. He says *the word myth, proceeds as though exclusively intended for knowledge (lines 107-108)*. The stories we tell merge into myth. Our language is fluid and how we represent truth and knowledge as well as how we interpret them creates layers of subjective intent. The speaker acknowledges that our culture is made up of shared knowledge, but that we must be aware of the multiple layers of knowledge and be sceptical of one truth, recognising where layers overlap. The line: *Greek ain't much chop* (line 97) criticises ancient Greek philosophy which promotes an explanation of reality. Plato believed the observable world was an imperfect image of a realm of unobservable and unchanging forms or ideas (Audi, 1995: 620). The dominant position of *On Second Thoughts* rejects such notions.

The text acknowledges that there is no absolute truth or meaning and is suspicious of any attempts by dominant discourses to establish such a position. Mann places his argument within a colloquial context which is purposely convoluted and ambiguous. Underlying this however are the relational and material processes which reveal the relationships and actions operating within the grammar. These represent a model of possibilities rather than absolutes.

### **Economics and the Value of Exchange**

In his representations of economic theory, particularly the ideas of Karl Marx, Mann employs the same linguistic modelling pattern used for his discussion of language. He dialogues intertextually with economic discourses to rewrite them into a text favouring multiple positions. Economic systems are a defining element of our culture. They influence information, communication, knowledge and power. Economics is linked to language by way of Marx's distinction between society's essentially economic base and

its superstructure of ideas, beliefs, art and so on which is constructed by social position (Marx, 1930: 110). Systemic Functional Grammar is able to show how patterns of value emerge and therefore how our structures of culture, language, economics and philosophy are modelled on a system of Token and Value.

*On Second Thoughts* suggests that economics is the underlying system of all culture. The text begins in the economic discourse, as the essential feature of all exchange systems with many linguistic values or meanings for the token word *price*.

*Price (an example) is that structural violence where a system in a state of self-replacement (knowledge) is equivalent to one. (lines 1-3)*

*Price* is identified as the cause of economic rift or a *structural violence* (lines 1-2) which is self-perpetuating or in a *state of self-replacement*. The reference here is to expert systems which firstly produce themselves, then reproduce. The factory is a good economic example of this as the first thing the factory worker does is produce him or herself. Marx's economic theory (Marx, 1930: 63) postulated that the class structures of societies, their political systems and their culture are determined by the way in which societies produce their goods and services. Society is based on an economic system which affects every other identity. The shifting state of the economy returns to and always equals this *one* system as it adjusts and adapts to the variables which act upon it. This shifting state resists the effect of entropy most of the time as it can adapt to changes. *Knowledge* in parentheses suggests the acute relationship between economic power and knowledge.

*Price* is like language as it tells us about the position of an item in relation to other items within a system. It does not resemble the nature of the items, nor do words resemble the objects they represent. *Words* and *prices* are abstract and only useful for showing relationships. *Price* reduces things to one numerical unit by treating everything the same. It is a repeating system.

Mann's economic discourse is modelled using a structure of clausal relations, identified as tokens which are given various linguistic values. Words are commodities that can be exchanged like objects. Halliday (Halliday, 1994: 68) identifies this function where both language and goods can be exchanged: one verbal, the other physical. Marx's



theory of exchange (Marx, 1930: 16) is enacted here within the economic discourse as words or values are present in the noun groups which define the economic terms. The processes of the economic system are represented in these relational processes of the language, which communicate and describe the complexity of the real world by modelling experience. The intensive attributive process is used.

1  
*Price (an example) is that structural violence*  
 1. 2  
*where a system in a state of self-replacement*  
 1.2.a  
*knowledge*  
 2  
*is equivalent to one*

(lines 1 – 3)

*Price* has three identities: it is *structural violence*, the embedded definition *a system in a state of self-replacement* or *knowledge* and also *equivalent to one*. The clause structure reveals the embedding and complexity of the values given where *structural violence* is both *a system in a state of self-replacement* and *knowledge*. These clauses embody a general principle for modelling experience, namely the principle that reality is made up of relational processes; in this case intensive identifying processes. Such processes are reversible and therefore identifier and identified can appear in any order. The identifying process is also used by Mann to demonstrate the multiple definitions or values of *price* and its many forms. The active voice is chosen here to emphasise the speaker's assertions by placing the subject or token first. From here, the values change semiotic address, realising multiple semiosis. The Token changes from *price* to the pivot word *knowledge* with deliberate displacement and overlapping of contexts to demonstrate that the terms belong to both discourses of philosophy and economics. By unpacking the layers in the text, a model to encompass all aspects of culture is revealed. The notion of exchange value is reflected in the structure and content of the work. In this case choices have been made, drawing parallels between words and economics.

Semiotic relations contribute to the coherence and incoherence of the text through expected and broken collocations. The collocation is broken as *price* is given the physical action of *structural violence*. The speaker positions the subject negatively with emotive

adjectives such as *violence* which tends to exaggerate the nature of *price* and its actions. His exaggeration is critical of controlling economic systems and he makes us see this. At this textual level of language his word choice positions him against consumerism. Collocation of the words *knowledge* and *system* with *price* signifies that the power of knowledge is determined by the power of markets or prices. *One*, meaning 'one model', suggests the same model can be used to demonstrate economics and knowledge in a self-perpetuating relationship. The text favours Marxist notions that the environment determines the individual.

The text goes on to give other linguistic values for the word *price*. This heightens the awareness of the complex uses of words in context. It also emphasises the multiple definitions and processes which make up the meaning of discourses determined by cultural context.

*It entertains a contradiction, a factored surplus (price outnumbers process), a non-viable luxury (a composite first commodity (value (a ratio which satisfies the conditions of production)), capital) where any variables can only exceed their possible equations thereby enabling said systems to move. (lines 3-7)*

*Price* is contradictory in nature as it plans for an excess in revenue: *a factored surplus*. This comment possibly relates to the way prices are always in excess of the cost of labour production. According to Marx, the value of the labourer to the capitalist who uses him/her is greater than the value the capitalist paid in exchange for his/her services. This difference is *surplus value* or *a factored surplus* (Marx, 1930: chapter 7). Therefore although the workers are a necessary aspect of the system, they are exploited as the charge for the goods or *price outnumbers the process* or cost of production. The value of a commodity *satisfies the conditions of production*, or consumer demand, and the quality of the good demanded varies according to its price. The value is also determined by 'inputs' which themselves have been produced. Consumption is a major factor in cultural definition. Markets are determined by sacrificing current consumption in exchange for future, uncertain consumption. Therefore *variables* can only exceed present possibilities because they are constantly shifting. The quantity of a good demanded will vary according to its price and the price of goods will vary according to their demand. One price eventually settles in each market until some disturbance in costs or demand occurs when *said systems move*.

The text reveals itself as a model for culture, where systems initially produce themselves and then reproduce. It does so by equating values to the subject through the linguistic structures. The text favours relational processes, particularly those which through elaboration, demonstrate and clarify the token. The exchange value of words emerges in the clause structure as the use of economic discourse is exposed as the core of all cultural systems. The number of values presented for *surplus value* would suggest the speaker sees the wider implication of this term and process on the structure of society.

1

*It (price)*    *entertains a contradiction*

2

*a factored surplus*

2.1

*price outnumbers process*

2.2

*a non-viable luxury*

2.3

*a composite first commodity*

2.3a

*value*

2.3b

*a ratio which satisfies the conditions of production*

2.4

*capital*

2.5

*where any variables can only exceed their possible*  
*equations thereby enabling said systems to move*    (lines 3-7)

The first clause *It entertains a contradiction* is given many meanings for the process of *price*. *Entertains* could refer to 'give admittance to', 'maintains', 'welcomes or receives', 'agreeable', 'is mindful of' or 'considers'. In each case the material process represents the cynical act of *price*. The second clause describing price as entertaining *a factored surplus where any variables can only exceed their possible equations thereby enabling said systems to move*, is another material clause but this time the five values for *factored surplus* and two embedded values for *a composite first commodity* serve to summarise the main aspects of Marxist theory on *surplus value*. The five elaborations clarify the primary

clause with the third elaboration using embedding to reveal two more layers of meaning. Such embedding shows a relationship between Saussure's theory of language and value as exchange and Marx's theory of exchange and use, as words or noun groups operate in the same way as goods in society, via processes realised in the verbs. Language and economics are semiotically woven in our culture. Marx points out that an object can be regarded in two ways: first, as something to be used and second, as something to be exchanged. He says about commodities 'Their exchange brings them into relation with one another as values, and realises them as values (Marx, 1930: 60). Such a notion determines the economic structure and consequently the language which affects every system constituting our culture. If two objects with different use-value are to be exchanged, some way must be found to render them equivalent. For purposes of exchange, we must be able to perceive the ideal value of x in the material object which is y. Since x and y are different, the equivalence can only be figurative. That is, we impose an alien and ideal representation or form of value on material objects. We therefore no longer see the thing in itself, but only the commodity form - our own idea or concept which we have imposed on it. We no longer see the real thing but only its form of appearance. To see something as a commodity is to view it as what it is not: to perceive the ideal representation of some other thing within the material body of the object.

In order to exchange one object for another, we must conceive of it as equivalent in value. The value of an object becomes objectified by exchanging it for another object. Value thus takes on an existence which is independent of the objects being exchanged and this objectified value is represented in the form of money. The same occurs in language. Saussure theorises that words have exchange value and comparison value which can be related to Marx's exchange value and, eventually, use-value. The intersection of these theories, where words become used, relates directly to process and the function of language as it represents experience. Mann both comments on and demonstrates these processes of culture, revealing intersections between theory and practice as his model for language is the same as that for economics and both are vital to our culture.

*Price* is a *factored surplus* as the price of something constitutes the price of production plus the capitalist's profit. In turn there are many values for the word 'price'

which collocate through the vocabulary of economic discourse. A *factored surplus* is a *non-viable luxury*, a *composite first commodity*, a *ratio which satisfies the conditions of production and capital*. These words, although belonging to the same discourse, are here used to represent the contradictory uses of the signified. Therefore one word placed in a discourse can be understood in many ways. The subject matter of production draws on Marxist theory and demonstrates, in its semiotic make up, the theories it endorses. The text demonstrates an intrinsic link between language and the economy as people have a social and economic relationship with *price*. Elsewhere the speaker says:

*Economics was a controlled experiment introducing chaos into natural language (lines 93-94)*

This indicates how those in power have created confused states in society by imposing dominant structures. The word *controlled* against *chaos* emphasises this deliberate act.

It is obvious once again that philosophy, language and economics cannot be separated. They essentially coexist because they share the same model and overlapping functional structures. Mann dialogues with Marxist theory and rewrites it into a repetitive linguistic structure

### **Modelling : Culture on the Move**

Mann both demonstrates the modelling process and speaks of it. The text considers the notion of models and the possible problems of communication in its subject matter. Entropy or progressive chaos results from closed systems that do not have any interchange with their environment. These influences diminish the integrity of the communication and possibly distort the message for the receiver.

The text describes the nature of entropy and how it might undermine the model:

*True enough. Entropy, the moralist's not yet, always intended to do the dishes - only in one dimension is a model called a demonstration (I mean like death is more than an argument against mutation). But not all variations are to be understood as fractals of doubt - paranoia is the ideal expert system. (lines 89-93)*

Mann's colloquial discussion of complex issues of information theory tends to confuse the issues. Models must take into account the possible levels of entropy and other variables. Entropy is *the moralist's not-yet*, which suggests entropy and indefinite deferral coalesce and that systems left to run without intervention will inevitably collapse. Entropy is caused by very small changes which can lead to large changes and therefore an unpredictable outcome, making accurate long-term forecasting impossible and undermining our sense of control. It refers to what either remains unavailable or is lost in the transfer of information. Moralists are concerned with upholding correct behaviour. Entropy is their sense of correction in the process of becoming. Mann is sceptical of moralism that upholds truths. He believes attention towards not-yets, possibilities or variations from the model are also important.

Entropy in communication systems is concerned with the amount of information not received by a person either deliberately or otherwise. Systems which cannot accommodate variables such as closed systems can result in chaos. But as Mann says, *not all variations are fractals of doubt* or uncertain repeating patterns. Matters of variation may come, for example, from our human interpretations and use of words as demonstrated in Mann's Token-Value structure. The model is valuable as a framework, suggested by *only in one dimension is a model called a demonstration*. The language of communication theories collocate here with *entropy*, *fractal* and *expert system*. The suggestion is that without models we cannot account for or plan for any movement in our culture.

*Expert systems* are akin to knowledge-based systems which apply to problems usually reserved for human experts. They are expected to be able to explain their own reasoning and include a form of self-knowledge that allows them to trace their own decision-making processes. These systems encode high-level representations of expertise for problem solving in a given domain. Once the human knowledge has been captured, it can easily be transferred. Automated systems, once developed, are very inexpensive, but they are not creative and they cannot understand the lessons of experience. Therefore the speaker favours human systems. *Paranoia* is compatible with this explanation of an expert system as it often perpetuates without reason and can therefore be used by those in

power against the marginalised. The speaker subscribes to the use of models for encompassing systems and as a means to discovery.

## Conclusion

*On Second Thoughts* is a fragmented bundle of hypotheses which are coloured by the speaker's need to challenge all discourse. The grammatical processes that make up the text determine this. All objects either do something or are defined as something, or both. The rewriting of discourses attempts to orient us with the way we live and the conflicts and tensions which constitute our culture. Mann's text appears to be nonsense, but this analysis has shown where choices have been made to bring forth a particular argument. The text avoids making linear meaning, rather providing us with the layers to show that culture is multi-dimensional. The breaking down of these processes by using Systemic Functional Grammar at the experiential, textual and interpersonal level of the clause has provided a better understanding of the ideas within the text and shown how the model of language dominates the cultural model. Systemic Functional Grammar is most compatible with the theories of context and social construction and also the positions that might occur as subversive forces against dominant discourses. Mann dialogues with the intertextual resources of philosophical theory by mocking truth, knowledge, definitions and capitalism, showing how multiplicity is possible. By rewriting these centrally occupying discourses into an Australian idiom, colloquial phrasing and modality, he creates a resonating subversive voice. The following chapter explores how phonological verbalising of the text and addition of other performers adds further meaning potential to the work.

## CHAPTER 6

### PERFORMING *ON SECOND THOUGHTS*

***Contemporary art... has to be reflexive, yes. It has to have a position, it has to have an analysis. It has to have an analysis before it takes a position, obviously. And then there are various propositions which must be advanced, and which then take the form of an argument.***

***Chris Mann***

*On Second Thoughts* was first performed at the Surrealism exhibition at the Australian National Gallery in Canberra, in 1993. This analysis has been taken from information compiled at that performance and the CD produced in 1994.

Mann's delivery of the text, in combination with other instruments and technicians, serves to emphasise the sonic and intonational elements of speech. The focus of my analysis will be on Chris Mann's speech and its sonorous qualities, the contribution of Amanda Stewart and her vocal line as a counter-subject and the



contribution of other instrumentalists in *Machine for Making Sense*. The analysis applies the principles of multimodal theory to realise the meaning potential of the work. This involves identifying the formal structural properties of the semiotic resources and discovering how they relate to each other in a coherent meaningful way and how they relate to the external world. Identifying the way modes interact with each other multiplies the complexity of meaning. The structural properties of the work in performance (what Halliday calls the textual level (Halliday, 1994: 106ff)), interact with the levels of representation, where indexical entailment of sounds have culturally and emotionally learnt associations, and the interpersonal level where dialogic qualities are revealed in the intonation of the speaker. The analysis shows how the ready-made intertextual sources of philosophical theory might be rewritten and recontextualised through text and sound to create new ways of perceiving our world. Such works constitute subversive resonances that make small but relevant marks on the dominant power structures. Before proceeding to the analysis, I provide here some background to Chris Mann in performance.

Chris Mann, through performance, demonstrates his interest in how words speak as opposed to how they read. Meaning is not abandoned but rather its possibilities are enhanced by the semiotic exchange of word and sound. In Mann's performance, the quality of his speaking emphasises the breathiness of speech, making us aware of the fact that speech depends on air and vibrations. The audience notices the texture and complexity of those vibrations which are recognised as words, even though we cannot distinguish all of them. His performance is that of the great Aussie yarn. He operates on the threshold between speech and writing, reading in a hurried self-mocking fashion in an impatient present tense that undermines past and future. Humour is apparent in his delivery, tending to trivialise what we thought was important. He talks quickly, stretching some of his syllables in a song-like fashion and pitching at a high nasal tone quality. He captures the nuances of Australian speech by emphasising the popular aspects of its intonation. In doing so he dissolves class hegemony, appropriating the scholarly English of philosophical discourses and their universal concepts to an experimental genre that privileges no discourses and speaks in the voice of the 'common man'. Traditional notions of grammar are excluded, allowing the audience to appreciate the energy and rhythm of the words. The regular grammatical structure of re-definition becomes familiar

to us more for its rhythm and accent than semantic linking. Mann's approach is that the real questions are philosophical and by nature they are irresolvable because posing philosophical questions is a way of speaking without committing to any position. They open up dialogue by assuming listeners while never having to supply answers. Mann's writing assumes that poetry and music can be whatever the listener is capable of producing. His performance exists on the border of language, somewhere between English and abstraction, but it is within English and because of English that the slippages, ruptures, puns, ambiguities and ironies are able to occur.

Mann enjoys the respect of his fellow experimental artists. Henri Chopin has focused on the music of Mann's sound and the virtuosity of his performance. He comments in *Electronic Arts in Australia*:

Veracity, velocity, voice, declamation, animation, sharp sounds, yodelled sounds. Vocalic waves flowing one after the other in greater or lesser torrents, verbal magic which sets words tumbling, sliding, marrying meaning and the true music of the mouth, transforming writing into a succession of 'audible' diamonds, this is the voice of Chris Mann, reconciling the Oral with the Verbal which, for so long since its origin, has forgotten that it is essentially speech (Zurbrugg: 1994,129).

John Cage has also commented on Mann's work in a mesostic:

The surfaCe  
of tHis  
poetRy's  
music  
itS body's talk

a fast Mix  
of vulgArity  
aNd  
elegaNce

(Mann, 1990: 1)

Mann and *Machine for Making Sense* are a challenge for the listener and reviewer. Peter McCallum described his experience of *Machine for Making Sense* performing *Changing the subject* in Sydney saying 'This is scary stuff to review' (McCallum, 1992: 21). Stuart Hille of *The West Australian* commented on his experience of the same piece performed in Perth:

What I couldn't understand, what didn't seem to make sense, was that this poetic response to a common human dilemma could only be caught in snatches of a phrase or a word here and there – and yet the audience was given the full text (in microscopic print) prior to the performance. Surely, if you had something to say then you shouldn't cross reference

your audience. The statement should be presented as a totality, something that speaks for itself and doesn't need recourse to hand-outs or a post-performance question time (Hille, 1992:66).

Hille was obviously expecting that given there is text, it should be heard as text and the words should be comprehensible like conventional poetry readings. Experimental poetry subverts content and form and forces audiences to listen differently.

### **Mechanics of Performance**

Mann is usually seated at a table throughout the performance. His eyes are fixed on his page or cards (when recording) while he marks the time with a stopwatch. Hand movements resemble the agitation of a very active gesticulator with open palms signifying questioning, hands together in a knitted fidgeting gesture, shoulder shrugging to indicate his uncertainty and a hand to the forehead in contemplation. He genuinely acts the part of a frustrated intellectual with this variety of body language. A knotted brow is typically used to represent his concerns. He beats his fingers to the rhythm of the text and flicks his hand dismissively to indicate his flippancy towards certain theoretical positions. He also raises his arm and hands as his voice rises, as if conducting his own speech. All of this is fascinating to watch as we see the actual performer acting out his text with the full extensions of emotion, allowing the body to connect with the rhythm of speech. This physical gesture also defines Mann's performance space as he creates his own philosophising world.

Mann's reading gives the group its cues. He acts as stopwatch and metronome. The rhythms of his speech determine the timing of the other performers who have freedom to enter when they like. Mann as the timekeeper can come in when he likes but only with his next paragraph and he must do so within two minutes of his last words. If the two minutes pass he must come in whether it is artistically pleasing or not. This way the performance keeps moving and is of predictable duration. Timing is a facet of improvisation, as is anticipation. Mann performs close to the microphone so sounds of breathing, teeth hitting the tongue, mouth opening and saliva spits are heard.

Mann's pieces are conversations where language is used to ask questions of itself. Therefore they are feedback loops which naturally leave traces on the text, the performers

and the audience. The process of listening to words is different from the process of listening to musical notes or dissociated phonemes. Listeners have an important role in inscribing definitions and self-definitions on to the speaker in the moment that the word occurs. This places language at the centre of the work, rather than the poet. The text is provided for the audience in tiny writing, on poor quality paper that looks impermanent, physically demonstrating his point about words and meaning. The resonance of his performance forces the listener not to study the text, but to form associations. The voice departs from the linear and thereby exposes complex systems at play where distinctions between text and speech are blurred. Mann's collaboration with other texts and acoustic artists in *Machine For Making Sense* means speech and music, as well as improvisation and composition, may be blurred. In such a space the audience has to make many decisions as to where they will focus their attention.

Although my focus is on Chris Mann's performance, this piece depends on other performers for its distinctive sound. When *Machine For Making Sense* perform, the members react to and against the sounds and syntax of each other, while maintaining their own identity within the group. Mann's voice offers a distinctive resonance to the sound-scape but while he breaks, there are many other interesting instrumental and vocal sections where the other performers including Amanda Stewart, Jim Denley, Rik Rue and Stevie Wishart explore the improvisatory space. They react to and against each other and Mann's text while maintaining their own very unique sound. Using the full potential of their instruments enables them to explore contemporary constructions of culture through imitation and chaotic noise.

In the multimodal work, each performer has his or her own system and each is vastly different. For example, Chris Mann's linguistic system and delivery style is very different to that of Amanda Stewart's. Rik Rue in his role as electronic and computer artist is never concerned with functional tonality whereas Stevie Wishart, as a musician on violin and hurdy-gurdy, is very concerned with traditional harmony. Naturally this diversity of philosophies results in a combination of very different systems coexisting in the same space. The performers have to be democratic about the acoustical space and the transparency. The members of *Machine For Making Sense* have been able to intuitively develop an understanding of each other's space and system, while at the same time

maintaining their own individuality. When Bob Evans asked the members of *Machine for Making Sense* how the group wanted the audience to respond to their musical innovations, Stevie Wishart said that 'Machine is interested in the way that people differentiate between speech and song and musical instruments. The process is interactive rather than reactive' (Evans, 1994: 19) while Chris Mann said 'What we are about is making problems for the audience and for one another' (Evans, 1994: 19). Both Mann and Wishart comment on the way the collaboration depends on the interactive process between performers. The implications for the listener are enormous. They might have winds, strings, voice and tape manipulations, computerised and acoustic sound juxtaposed in polyphony or monophony, constantly changing timbre, texture and mood as the performers improvise. The audience may choose to follow one particular line, make meaning out of the text or react emotionally to a particular sound. The audience explores the potential of this acoustical space as it unfolds.

Stewart delivers the other text in this performance so it is interesting to contrast her style to Mann's. The other performers often interrupt her as she explores the relationship between speech, electronics and writing. Mann starts with written words and uses electronics to impede their translation into speech while Stewart uses the audiotape as another performer. The text, the voice and the technology become the grammatical structure for her work. She opens up the inside of words with an ear for etymology and semiotics, and Stewart plays more deliberately with the vocal dynamics within words. She uses her full vocalic range to rupture words and moves towards linguistic abstraction. Her text appears and disappears more unpredictably than Mann's. She is also more purposeful than Mann about what she wants to say even when using abstract sounds. Her text is moralistic as she uses rage as inspiration by working from the rhythm, force and energy of anger to create impact. Mann is generally not as aggressive as Stewart in performance. He states theory ironically rather than with cutting sarcasm. She is precise and clear whereas his mumblings are indefinite. Everything she says has an agenda whereas Mann raises contradictory theories, calling the validity of each into question. In performance, Mann's text seems mostly unrelated to the mood of Stewart's but their common scepticism of dominant discourses is evident.

The other performers create a musical sound-scape. Denley experiments with woodwinds, not just blowing through at pitch but using key sounds and over-blowing to buzz and squeak in appropriate places. Wishart on violin and hurdy-gurdy uses live electronics and makes voice and mouth sounds by inventively playing her instruments. Rue is positioned in the audience, selecting from a library of pre-recorded sounds. All the performers respond to each other in dialogic relations while maintaining the overall sense of structure. Each is independent, yet the overall sound is inter-dependent.

The overall effect relies on the five members. For both live performances and the recorded version, a variety of pre-recorded noises is allowed to intrude at random. A disk set on shuffle play becomes the sixth member. These pre-recorded noises are mostly sound samples taken from the group members during rehearsal. These sounds create a new layer of chance and self-reflexivity, making it difficult to hear whether a grunt from Stewart is sampled or live. Shuffle play undermines the idea of a controlling identity as composer. Each performer, including the machine, makes independent decisions within a corporate set of rules, although the machine is not interested in self-expression.

In the following analysis I will consider the prosodic features of Mann's text and the sonorous qualities of his talk. I will also consider Stewart as a counter-subject and the dialogic qualities of the performing instrumentalists.

### **Chris Mann and the Sonority of Australian Talk**

Mann's performance has a distinctive sound because he plays on the prosodic features of intonation and the rhythm in Australian speech. He positions himself by his accent against class hegemony, and seeks to subvert the tradition of Australia's white settler colonial history and the bourgeois values inherited from it. Aiming to rewrite dominant discourses by dissolving their status, he posits a theory of knowledge from the 'ordinary man's' perspective. The sound of the Australian speech-scape is both musical and philosophical, incorporating an intelligent sense of comic timing. Mann believes the Australian voice has great potential as art and communication. He says in *Chris Mann and Grammar* 'Australian English is based on Irish. It's an aural language. In Australia there's a popular art form called 'timing'. It pervades everything from horse racing to

bushfires. The only other culture of 'timing' is the Yiddish stand-up comic. Yiddish is to German as Australian is to English' (Mann, 1990: 2).

Mann emphasises the dialogic colloquial nature of creating meaning while his mocking delivery and constant embedding demonstrates his scepticism of universal truths. He self-consciously exaggerates the corporeal in his accent, capturing phrasing and nuances of the Australian use of sound patterning, inflection and pause. Often the words are not distinguishable as separate semantic entities but rather their sonic qualities are emphasised. His speed varies between fast streams of propositions or statements where audibility for listeners is difficult, to slower elongated phrases marked by pause and disjuncture, often syntactically misplaced to confuse. This contrast relies on a musical sense of sound and timing so as to engage with the other performers in a dialogue. The new discourses that result at the interface of text and sound and the intersection of philosophical theory and the Australian character create a new space for challenging those discourses that are normally given respect and taken seriously. Intonational variety operates at both interpersonal and experiential levels of meaning-making, indicating both a relationship with the audience and expressing attitudes towards the spoken material.

The prosodic features of intonation, stress, pace, disjuncture and key enhance the sense of dialogue with the audience and other instruments. The constant shifting in sound patterns resembles the pattern of colloquial speech where often words are grouped according to their sound effect. When Mann first enters in *section 1*, his voice is distinctive for its use of intonation which captures the rise and fall of the Australian accent. The use of disjuncture calls attention to the words and their function at the interpersonal level, enhancing the suspense for listeners who engage with Mann in a dialogical relationship. These pauses call attention to his words while the high key on certain words and phrases gives an effect of mocking disbelief. Mann's facial and arm gestures imitate the rise and fall of his intonation. He raises his eyebrows and shrugs his shoulders in disbelief. The propositional clause structure is incongruous with the colloquial delivery of the words. Mann establishes this tension between tone and context to further undermine his own position and relay his message that language cannot be trusted.

**High key** / On that

**Mid key** which is required for definition//

**Low key**

price// an example//

**High** /  
**Mid** is that//

self replacement

**Low** structural violence where a system in a state of

**High** knowledge/  
**Mid**

**Low** is equivalent to one

(lines 1-3)

The fall-rise intonation on *price* is a way of establishing common ground with the listener. The vowel sound *i* /oy/ stretched out and sounding more like /proy/ /is/, plays on the diphthong which the Australian accent tends to exaggerate to become a triphthong. Mann nods his head as if trying to attract our attention here. His persona is reminiscent of a stand-up comic, not far from the Australian tradition of 'yarn telling', but his topic is complex. Prosody can therefore identify the particular features of his voice that are indexically entailed with this typical Australian character. Mann's male vocal timbre also inscribes certain expectations of the dominant gender on the performance. His use of colloquial intonation undermines this expectation as the material is not treated with typical reverence. His colloquial presentation of philosophical theory blends disparate form with content, creating a sense in us that we should be able to engage easily. This false impression is soon realised when his speed increases to incomprehensibility and intonational cues are depended upon.

Mann reverses our expectation of key as his important values are delivered in low key which usually indicates less important, even parenthetical, information. The token *price an example* and its values *structural violence where a system in a state of* and *is equivalent to one* are delivered in low key while the embedded definition of structural violence, *self replacement* and *knowledge* are in mid and high key. This is Mann's way of



subverting the dominant discourse by bringing 'second thoughts' into prominence. He then increases pace without a pause. His voice becomes higher and thinner in tone colour and he seems to extend himself in the chair to indicate the strain as he lists all the values with an urgent need to impart their presence simultaneously. Again there is incongruity between the high key, usually an indicator of having something important to say, and the tremendous speed that diminishes comprehension. The musicality of the words is emphasised here where they cannot be distinguished for their pure semantic value or context, yet there is meaning in the sonic entailment. Therefore performance delivery both undermines the content, which talks of semantic values, and demonstrates it by proving the slipperiness of words. Through incomplete clausal embedding and rising intonational contours, the speaker makes it clear that he has not finished.

*It entertains a contradiction, a factored surplus (price outnumbers process), a non-viable luxury (a composite first commodity (value (a ration which satisfies the conditions of production)), capital) where any variables can only exceed their possible equations thereby enabling said systems to move (lines 3-7)*

Mann's tone is exhilarated by his self-inflicted inability to move forward with statements of theory without defining the terms and re-defining the definition to its very last point, creating a sense of indefinite deferral. He tries to impart the whole concept of language and knowledge, knowing full well that by doing so he merely perpetuates his own failure. Mann proceeds again quickly until the word *move* (line 7) which is punctuated by staccato and high key using a mocking tone. At such moments his intonation indicates modality. In this case he undermines his own position by suggesting his scepticism.

The breathless manner in which Mann delivers the embedded definitions is exhausting for listeners. Questioning how such embedding fits within the textual context is not necessary. It fits musically and structurally with the colloquial rhythms of the voice. Mann sustains the listener's attention through such prosodic cues where the disjuncture serves to emphasise the following word by acting as a planning pause.

The speed at which Mann speaks means the audience must follow his text to distinguish the words. He articulates each word but they are often said too quickly for us to make semantic connections. It is as if once he has thought of an idea, it no longer

needs attention. The delivery becomes a mad stream of words that gives the effect of simultaneity as the sound of the text becomes a mode in itself appreciated for its sonic potential. Words that stay ringing in the air or ears are the higher pitched *price* and *move*. The jumble of words we hear in between does not need to be distinguishable as they are more like musical notes, depending on rhythm, speed, intensity and rising pitch for their interest and evoking the conflicting emotions of amusement and nervousness. The prosodic notation is important for showing how such vocal sounds might express meaning.

The incongruity of high key, as if having something important to say, and tremendous speed, diminishing any chance of comprehension, is typical of Mann's ambiguous relationship with words. Words are necessary but more for their possibilities than their stability. The hurdy-gurdy plays high repetitive notes to enhance the vocal tension. A pause between *where any* and *variables* (line 6) occurs at the peak of the phrase where Rue inserts a popgun shot sound and grunt. The result is unexpected and humorous, breaking the sense-group boundaries with unusually placed disjuncture. The gun-shot offers some relief in the tension of attempting the impossible task of providing definitions for all possible contexts.

Mann's next section is slower and therefore clearer. Like *price*, Mann pauses after *truth* with a serious facial expression as if he will now philosophise it. He also uses low key for delivering his Tokens to exaggerate their seriousness. He cannot define truth, merely present possible values for it and enter it into discourse. Often the key or pitch change corresponds with the new value or definition for the given Token. This drives the rhythm and tone colour of the performance, enhancing its musicality and colloquial style. Again the high key for the embedded Token on *outskirts of collateral* emphasises the relationship between truth and money but also highlights Mann's tautology. His raised eye brow and use of key serves as modality as he presents that what he is saying is highly improbable.

High

/ / \ /  
the outskirts of collateral / is that/

Mid

semiotic

/ \ / \ / \ /  
Low Truth // a context free anecdote/

High

/ \ / \ / \ /  
Mid euphemism

Low

(a resistance) that agrees

(lines 7-9)

Some of the high tone is quite harsh sounding, especially on *outskirts* (line 8) which makes the listening difficult. The exaggerated strain on the voice, sounding hoarse with laryngitis adds to Mann's persona as a man desperate to express himself despite the exhausting possibilities of language. His delivery of the philosophical discourses is marked by his irreverence and refusal to give dominant philosophical thinking the weight we expect. At the interpersonal level, the familiar colloquial dialogue continues with the audience as if they are the silent receivers engaged in conversation but not responding verbally.

The use of pause calls for our response and consideration, particularly after *is that* which stresses the definitions that follow. Such pausing makes the ideas sound extemporaneous but provide the listener with a momentary reference point. The delivery lacks the typical disjunctures of a planned text that mark sense-group boundaries. Instead the frequency of disjuncture often severs the semantic disjuncture by drawing attention to the continuously embedded clauses and values. This enhances the dialogic properties of the voice as key, disjuncture and intonation are used with great variety, often in an unfamiliar manner. Mann conducts with his hand throughout, beating to the words and pausing to emphasise unnatural disjuncture.

As Mann's onslaught on *truth* continues, a pause before *standards* (line 10) gives the impression he is thinking or otherwise pausing for attention in a conversation. His use of low key on *Truth // a context free anecdote* makes the comment sound like an aside. Another pause between *It domesticates a practice* and *as an a theory* has a similar effect.

A pause after *where one*, followed by its definition, gives some relief from the constant embedding. The word *per* seems oddly placed, punctuated by the pause before and after it. This is complemented by the same effect on *oh* (line 14) exclaimed in a rise-fall intonation. Such intonational contours create a knowing tone as if he has finally discovered the answer. This is ironic given the multiple values posited for *truth*. Some syntactic forking is evident with *that transparent number that owns up. To* where Mann joins the clauses, rising on *To*. In this way the text is left open-ended and orients itself towards an expectant listener.

As Mann and Stewart continue on in unison, Mann's pace is slower with evident disjunctures on *A loop// that mimes// forgets, tough* as if he has something serious to say. This sort of mood change occurs frequently to maintain our attention. Stretching out the phoneme /u/ in *loop* and *i* in *mimes* as a triphthong /oy/, reminds us of Mann's persona as he exaggerates the Australian accent and emphasises how philosophy is founded in ordinary situations by ordinary people. He even whistles comically on the *s* of *mimes* like an old man with ill fitting dentures or emphasising the Australian drawl. He emphasises the accent as if to prove that the common Australian's talk is a colloquial style philosophy. On *change* Mann's rising intonation uses a high sustained whisper. He is then joined by Rue's long electronic echo which seems to be Mann's cue to proceed with values for *change* in his typical low rambling manner with:

*is that ethics of understanding that requires a cost, a negative industry (as an instrument of credit, labour of course fails to be an economy – a repetition is intolerably expensive. It distributes forms.)*  
(lines 16-19)

Little is decipherable in Mann's delivery here against Stewart's breathing sounds. The words *there fore* and *(He did it) please* use high key to a climax at the end of the phrase. The crescendo sound effects heard in conflict with the voice are rather like the brakes of a skidding racing car, giving more meaning to the earlier gun-shot which might connote a starter's pistol, a car chase or Mann's race against time to say as much as he can. The relieved gasping of Stewart reflects the audience's relief as Mann ends this first section. Mann continues in this manner throughout the performance. His inventive delivery adds much to the already textually subverted presentation of philosophical theory.

## A Diverse Sonic Vocabulary

A variety of moods are created by the performers of *Machine for Making Sense*, from the serenity of oriental music to the chaos and pace of exhilarating and diverse tone colours. On a structural level, these recurring sounds create a sense of coherence, not predictable, but familiar. They also come indexically entailed with prior contexts. Their recontextualisation here demonstrates the unique way sound might interact with text and contribute to the rewriting of discourses. The instrumental and vocal polyphony created by the performers involves direct sensory response. Listeners engage with these sounds by identifying the emotive conventions, recognising their context and constructing narratives to draw the fragments into a meaningful scenario. The effect is the creation of an original aural experience which although mostly unpredictable becomes satisfying when sounds are recognised and narratives constructed. Many sounds carry indexical entailment that is culturally recognised by the listener. As the performance proceeds, the listener's sonic vocabulary increases and they engage with the performers dialogically and through unifying elements, recognising the prior contexts of the sounds and recontextualising them. Other auditive signifiers adopt the same features of speech, emphasising the materiality and corporeality of speech as sound. The sound effects are not attempts to be realistic and therefore the modality tends towards an emotively heightened unrealistic choice for increased tension. As representation, the sounds interact with each other and the voices engage in dialogue and polyphonic texture.

Certain sounds recur throughout the instrumental sections, giving the audience a brief reference point. Repetitive breathing is a feature that draws attention to the source of speech. It often seems disparate to the words surrounding it. Stewart breathes in sharply and shivers with fear (section 1a, 5a)<sup>10</sup> and whimpers (5a, 9a) indicating her vulnerability. Her screams (13a) draw the attention of the audience by placing the listener in a horror scene. This contrasts to Mann's textual delivery which remains extemporary in style. Stewart adds a sense of urgency to the overall work that becomes structurally important for contrast. Denley also uses breathing for its rhythmic potential (1a). Other

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<sup>10</sup> Each instrumental section has been labelled according to its place after Mann's text.

vocal gestures such as Denley's yelling *hey* and *ah* (introduction, 1a, 21) as well as low grunting (sections 11a, 26a) and yelling *oy* (introduction, 13a) draw the audience in as they are called on to pay attention. All of these vocal sound effects are understood by the audience through indexical entailment as certain feelings and meanings are associated with the learnt conventions of speech and sound.

The urban environment is evoked by a variety of sound-effects. The work begins with the sound of tins dropping. The sound of crockery and glass breaking recurs throughout. This repetition represents chaos and serves to evoke our curiosity (introduction, 1a, 2a, 3a, 15a, 16a, 31). The chaos is increased and multiplied by Rue's sound samples. In *section 7a* he combines with other instrumentalists to create a cacophony of the urban sound-scape. Screaming, animal sounds, percussive beats, sounds that resemble a snippet of radio as the dial is turned and the frequency of an untuned radio are heard. People talking are also added to acoustic instruments tuning up. These sounds engage the senses as the listener places them into a number of conflicting contexts.

An oriental flavour drives the melodic patterns of the hurdy-gurdy (intro). This tends to evoke a mystical resonance and sense of eeriness in the piece. As listeners, we become familiar with the tone colours and tonality as they immediately suggest a cultural context and an alternative to Western philosophy. The violin also plays in oriental tonality (8a, 9a, 16a, 21a). This theme is later adopted by the samples from Rue where an Asian (Japanese) voice interjects (8, 14a, 16, 20a, 23a). Mann is no more comprehensible than this foreign voice. Allusion to martial arts is heard with whipping sounds imitating the fast movement of arms (13a). The droning of strings and humming voice (15, 15a 19a) imitate Eastern meditation. *The Machine* bombards the audience with Eastern alternatives to Western ideology intertextually dialoguing with Mann by offering another way of thinking about those philosophical discourses already treated artistically by him.

Other sounds carry with them culturally learnt meanings and responses. The gun shot (1, 11a, 12a, 16a) evokes a scene of criminals, a cop show or Western. Carnival music (12a, 15a) juxtaposed with other urban sounds creates contrast by evoking feelings of pleasure rather than the edgy sensation evoked by the rest of the sonic interplay. The 'thinking music' of a quiz show (8, 16a) evokes a popular pastime and the newsreader's

voice (15a) is familiar, perhaps pointing to how much we trust in the voice of commercial television.

Some rather unorthodox use of instruments creates interesting tone colours that come to increase the listener's sonic vocabulary. Denley uses his instrument as a percussion instrument by playing the keypads (6a, 9a, 26a). This creates a hollow rhythmic sound. At other times he can be very expressive with jazz-like riffs. Similarly the diversity of the violin is heard where, tuned flat by half a semitone, the eerie feeling of intensity resonates with atonality (6a). At other times, Wishart strums the strings like a ukelele, thereby evoking a folk flavour. The inventiveness of such sonic signifiers might at first seem confusing, but as the sonic vocabulary of the listener develops they come to appreciate the performance and its unifying elements. This coherence might come through the recurring sound, the blending of timbres or the dialogic relationship between the indexical entailment of sounds and the text.

### **Instrumental Narratives in Dialogue**

Listeners build a vocabulary of sounds that, when combined in dialogue, create a thrilling collage of sonic semiotics. The combination of voice (text and vocal gesture), acoustic instruments (saxophone, flute, hurdy-gurdy and violin) and electronic sound effects creates an intertext of multiple inscriptions generating its own unique structure. The listener must engage with the various strata of discourse as each alters and reshapes the other in a collective discourse. Listening to such a work employs what Stanger calls a mediated reading (Stanger, 1992: 201), functioning between different kinds of discourse, allowing all discourses to refer to each other. Much of the sonic material is described formalistically here as it relies on typical features of texture, dynamics and tempo for effect. On stage with Mann are Stewart (voice), Denley (flute, saxophone and voice) and Wishart (hurdy-gurdy and violin). They all stand around him and are better positioned to gesture to each other for entry cues. They are also physically more active as their whole bodies move as they perform. The creative improvisatory process evolving through the interaction of performers is recognised. Each element is unpredictable but looks towards the future and overall emerging whole. In this case, the emergent is predicted by both the

timbre of the sounds as well as the indexical entailment of cultural signifiers. It is obvious that although the performers are improvising, they have a sense of what will emerge because they respond to what they have heard, and create the present simultaneously. At the experiential level the voices speak of and represent the over-determined nature of language and the instruments represent this in noise. Many of the sounds are indexically entailed to represent culturally identifiable signifiants. At the interpersonal level they respond to each other's timbre, rhythm and dynamics in dialogue and at the textual function the return of certain patterns and sounds creates unity. The following examples demonstrate the multifunctioning network of sounds used to explore contemporary culture. Each instrumentalist explores the potential of his or her instrument to make meaning by cultural reference or structural unity. The unique soundscape and its high modality exaggerates culture as a construct, taking Mann's point to an aggressive, chaotic extreme.

*On Second Thoughts* begins with an instrumental introduction that introduces us to many of the sounds and the style of juxtaposing sonic fragments. The audience hears percussive drum sounds, a mellow saxophone played softly and the sound of a glass breaking. The blending of acoustic and electronic imitates an urban setting. When the strings enter, we hear an unusual melody reminiscent of oriental tonality. Against this the sound effects continue with a cymbal crashing, Denley yelling out *hey* for our attention and *ah* and *oy* as if he is struggling or choking. This provokes our interest as the incongruity of the tranquil Asian melody and man in need of help confuse our understanding of the scene, giving it multiple dimensions. Some glass shattering, percussive sticks and drumming, static and electric sounds are also heard. This sets the scene of confusion and edginess that proceeds throughout the piece. The hurdy-gurdy melody becomes repetitive with a descending interval while the saxophone enters with breathy inverted repetition of these notes, resembling the timbre of a slow siren. The texture reaches a climax with a cacophony of piercing electronic static sounds and then returns to the sparsity of the opening before Stewart enters.

The improvisatory quality means the performers respond to each other's tone colour. Strings with beating ascending intervals from high to low continue. Stewart and Denley sing a canonic melody chanting the words *in* or *it* while snorting and grunting is



heard from Rue. Then there is another build-up of tension and texture with strings continuing in a similar manner until one sustained electronic note is heard and fades. The performers rely on the thickening then thinning of texture and dynamic variation to create contrast and interest. The conflation of moods occurs because of the contrast between the passive and repetitive chant, the grotesque and grunting sounds and the tension of the high pitched strings. The audience finds themselves caught among a number of possible scenarios. This chaos mirrors the conflicting relationship Mann has in defining culture.

In *section 4a* the sonic diversity involves text and sound. Stewart enters with resonance on the word *real* sung in high key. Other wind sounds are heard underneath her low solemn words complementing her in tone colour and mood:

*repeat the mark the ritual returning it it i d*  
*notation permutation dimension binary opposition*  
*definition structural variation*  
*the i x it heeee it (sung)*

Sounds of angry growling are heard from Denley against high electronic sounds which become louder. Denley and Stewart are opposite each other on stage and appear to feed off each other's aggression. The vocal gestures reflect the anger provoked by Stewart's words and the jerking head movements of Stewart and Denley emphasise their anger.

*the the subject that the object subject*  
*a symmetry of things a syntax of its its*  
*in difference much the same*

As Stewart punches out her angry statements, the intensity of the other sounds increases with screeching sounds as if about to reach breaking point. Denley's high saxophone becomes a trill, complementing the tension of Stewart's voice. We hear the return of broken glass and spitting phonetic sounds as if unable to achieve expression. The constant switching from meaningful statements to emotional vocal outbursts maintains the listener's interest in her voice. Electronic sounds of the same pitch and tone quality are then inserted along with whispering, high flute riffs, bubbling, popping, breaking crockery and snippets of mouth sounds until Mann re-enters. By now the listener is familiar with the bombardment of random sound fragments. The sound of

breaking glass has recurred a number of times, signifying disorder and making the audience shudder from its piercing tone quality. These chaotic sounds are much more aggressively relayed than Mann's delivery. The instrumentalists balance his rather passive scepticism of philosophies that would construct and order contemporary culture.

*Section 6a* demonstrates a cacophony of instrumental and vocal sounds. It is a cross between a music rehearsal where everyone is tuning up and an industrial site. A repetitive *da* is heard from Stewart which is her signature enactment of Freud's fort-da infant babble also used in *≠*. It is heard along with a mellow flute melody and violin with intense tone colours, electronic rhythms and high pitched sounds, grunts and engines running. Denley also blows through the key-holes of his instrument making a hollow breathy atonality that creates an effect of eeriness. The violin melody is rather expressionistic with sustained high vibrato, repetitive bowing and glissandos. The tuning is flat by half a semitone which creates an unnerving resonance. Rue adds to the violin tension with high sustained electronic sounds to which Denley adds rhythm by playing the key pads of his saxophone or creating a slow warbling effect on a single low note. The sound then crescendos with a twanging vocal resonance. Struggling, grunting and choking are mixed with rhythmic scratching sounds. Among this chaos there is a certain sense of mystery evoked from the sonic narrative as performers enter and fade out, continually adding new textures and tone colours. As listeners, we try to attach a series of scenarios to the sounds and what we achieve is a collage of genres from action, thriller, horror and scenes from a jungle environment. The associations we make are culturally learnt and the exaggeration of them increases the modality, prompting us to imagine a piece of fiction. Although seeming incongruous to the content of Mann's text, these sonic narratives are intertextually linked to his exploration of over-determined systems. This type of listening takes us on a journey through multiple sonic experiences. It is both engaging and exhausting.

In *section 15a* the meaning of Rue's sound sampling is more obvious. The resonating voice continues and is joined by sampled sounds of newsreaders saying *Good Evening* to their viewers. Brian Henderson's voice from Channel 9 is distinguishable. This is an appropriate complement to Mann's text about truth as the media perpetuates beliefs through bias. The use of a familiar television channel and a newsreader that has

been reading for over 20 years demonstrates how we place our trust in those who appear credible to deliver us the truth. The ready-made intertextual resources are constantly being recontextualised to persuade the listener that what we accept as given might be challenged. Rue comments on Henderson as a cultural product sold to us for consumption while Stewart continues her tirade about subjectivity as a matter of exchange:

*outside subject out of context  
used exchanged it defined  
exchanged use*

This is followed by silence, then broken glass. Breaking glass has become a recurrent motif and is perhaps a symbol of violence and the material form of shattering which is happening to the words here. Stewart continues with:

*the mere surface  
in sized outwards to enable  
enter split in desire away from  
the touching here there emerge*

During her morbid recitation a high buzzing continues to resonate and a voice sings long sustained notes. Stewart complements Mann by discussion of *the real* and binary oppositions. Her artistic presentation of the word *real* is developed by the same tone colours of the other performers, transforming the word into sound. Here there is sonic representation of Lacan's idea of *the real* (Lacan, 1968: 21) or that aspect of the unconscious that is impossible to grasp in words. Stewart seems to use the intertextual reference to suggest sound as an alternative to the signifiers that construct us. Throughout the work, the semiotic systems of sound and text dialogue with each other to create a multimodal discourse. The sounds come to represent the textual material as the performers sonically represent the chaos of contemporary culture.

## Conclusion

I have included here sections representative of the diverse sonic and textual discourses that make the performance of *Machine for Making Sense* challenging yet rewarding for

the audience. The continuous interplay between sonic and semantic elements of sound and word engage the listener who makes meaning from indexically charged sounds and prosodic features. The interpersonal function of the written text is enhanced by the experiential function in delivery and this is further enhanced by the experiential and interpersonal functions of the instrumentation. Familiarity is built as the audience's sonic vocabulary grows.

Mann's voice is a feature of the performance as his exaggerated Australian accent and colloquialisms create humour and familiarity for the audience throughout. He opens up the possibilities of rewriting dominant discourses by critiquing them in colloquial tone and expressing these discourses through conflation with sound. His experimental poetry, part in collaboration with other performers, offers a new experience of emerging resonances that make small, but evident, cracks in the credibility of dominant discourses. The other performers also create a diverse sound that engages all functions of semiotic meaning potential to allow the systems of word and sound to refer to one another. The sonic exploration of cultural construction complements Mann's intentions to subvert our expectations of form and discourse. By the end of the work, the listener's sonic vocabulary is expanded and a completely original listening position has been experienced.

## CHAPTER 7

### DIALOGIC VOICES: AMANDA STEWART AND ≠

*I'm more interested in oral grammars,  
the mesh of complex systems at work  
within Australian speech and associated  
utterance and nonverbal forms...*

*Amanda Stewart*

Amanda Stewart is a Sydney based poet who experiments with sound and word to subvert dominant philosophical positions. Her early works such as *Forked Lands* (1982) and *The War Poem* (1982) were more conventional in their treatment of sound, pun and collage. Recent work, including ≠ (1998), operates at the interface of music and poetry, rewriting subjectivity through intertextuality and a combination of linguistic and sonic devices. She is a feminist semiotician participating in the re-working of established

patriarchal conceptions of female experience to transform their implicit misogyny and create a potential position for women as speaking subjects. Her work critiques established views of subjectivity and by doing so reclaims a positive space for women's expression. Stewart subverts the dominant epistemological positions by recognising the ever-changing nature of selves. She acknowledges that gender and feminist concerns cannot be separated from class and race and that every stage of this construction of difference, experience, and the ability to articulate it, is marked by language. She acknowledges the power of language but also the ability to create and write new experiences with language. Her work provides an emerging subversive voice that explores, in its structure and content, the dialogic construction of subjectivity. The effects of Stewart's dialogic construction are realised in the performance but it is important to consider the intertextual sources used by Stewart before she subverts them. Her performance score is divided into two texts representing the subject and object. These texts complement and comment on each other. Through her performance, she also reconceptualises subjectivity in a dialogic dispersion of multiple enunciative positions to incorporate women's experience. She embraces multiple speaking voices while retaining the importance of cultural contexts and the presence of the body.

Stewart's feminist position challenges mainstream philosophy as it has been developed and perpetuated from the point of view of white Western middle class males. Her position of enunciation questions the knowledge base which underlies the mainstream understandings of self-identity. She acknowledges the construction of subjects according to phallogentric theories and then, through performance, disperses and rewrites this position in dialogic structure.

Her work is also informed by feminist psychoanalysis and she uses linguistic distortions such as babble and verbal outbursts to enact a new form of expression. The grammar of the text reveals a body marked by oppression whose enunciative position shifts between statements of feminist theory punctuated by eruptions into hysterical speech. Linguistic distortions like babble, emotive outbursts and stutters play with language and its inability to express feminine experience, preferring the sonic elements of words to communicate. Both her poetic play with statements of theory and appropriation of psychotic states enable her to rewrite a position for women. Her corporeality is also

enfolded into the text as she positions the reader against patriarchal constructions of the subject by condemning patriarchal discourses. She does this from within existing structures. She works from the premise that language creates the subject but is also created by the subject and our subjectivity might always be rewritten and revised. I apply Threadgold's use of the interpersonal and textual levels of language to reveal how this rewriting occurs.

Bakhtin's theory of utterance as implicitly dialogical is developed by Halliday and Threadgold who understand an utterance as always speaking against the background of what others have said or written in other times and places. Threadgold promotes Systemic Functional Grammar as a tool able to identify the way the rewriting of intertextual sources might occur at the multi-functioning levels of language. I use Systemic Functional Grammar in this study as a way of mapping the epistemological challenge posited by Stewart, while it is simultaneously compatible with Stewart's position that subjects are socially constructed and can therefore be rewritten dialogically and operate as emerging processes. Her favouring of dialogism as a place for rewriting existing forms is akin to Threadgold's favouring of the interpersonal (dialogic) and textual functions of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as a place where the subject might be located.

Threadgold views 'register' as the place of intertextual sources or dialogism and 'genre' as a place where these intertextual sources might be re-made. Threadgold's work, using functional grammar, has been able to show how race and the relations of power inherent in it, form a stable assemblage of linguistic practises. She uses Keneally's text *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* to show how texts are resistant to attempts to rewrite race in non-racist ways as the generic strategies are often unconsciously adopted in rewriting (Threadgold, 1997: 110). By contrast, analysis of Stewart's text reveals the features of experimental poetry that emerge in generic terms, to prove it a genre able to subvert dominant discourses. Consideration of register shows the probability of various grammatical and semantic features of particular genres. Her text is characterised by frequency of relation verbs as she explores the construction of subjectivity. Stewart's statements are characterised by embedded definitions realised at the ideational function and a dialogic structure that represents an interpersonal exchange and continuing

emergence of ideas. These functions reveal her assertively feminist position. The frequency of interrogative tenor in Stewart's vocal gestures establishes the dialogic interpersonal relations between the subject and object positions of the text. Within the tenor, the interpersonal subject position of enunciation and this subject's relation to the intertextual resources borrowed from other discourses are revealed. Positions of enunciation and the constitution of the enounced are read in the multifunctioning clause grammar. The clause is also the place where feminist discourses are reactivated in the experimental poetry genre. For example, the ironic use of simple polar verbs in the modality is used to illuminate the oppression of women. The complex reflexive interaction of the speaker in both a participatory and observational role means information is highlighted or backgrounded through cohesion.

In Stewart's efforts to position herself in the epistemological debate over subjectivity, she points to the theories of Lacan, Irigaray and Kristeva. By using these theories, she creates an intertextual heteroglossia as she rewrites them with her poetic devices. She acknowledges these positions and uses them as material for her work while magnifying their inadequacies in theorising women.

### **Rewriting the Feminine**

Stewart's position of enunciation is marked by feminist positions. What is enounced contains the intertextual resources of various positions of feminist subjectivity and traces of the register patterns from which they are derived in other texts and contexts. These intertextual markings are deliberately rewritten into a position that embraces multiple positions. She uses the experimental genre to refashion the 'ready-made stuff of intertextuality' (Threadgold, 1997: 97). Experimental poetry as a genre is a poesis, constantly subject to change and able to incorporate change. The foundations of Systemic Functional Grammar are compatible with the genre of experimental poetry as both look to the way new genres might rewrite subjectivity. Hence the application of a linguistic metalanguage to feminist poetics offers a new way of conceptualising and theorising textuality while contributing to the way new meanings might be sought in such texts. Far from participating in the oppression of the feminine, a functional approach to language is able to recognise the way language rewrites feminine subjectivity.



Through her work, Stewart furthers the feminist project of exploring the formation of the subject. Here I discuss the numerous feminist positions of subjectivity that are found in the text. Stewart participates in the articulation of a structure of feeling (Williams, 1977: 132) from within male defined structures of knowledge. This knowledge base is also Western, white and middle class. Her statements of female oppression are pessimistic but her dialogising of the construction of the subject enables renewal and re-construction.

Stewart's work is informed by psychoanalysis and the theory of subjectivity posited by Lacan. Through her tenor, the interpersonal function of her enunciative position is revealed to be exploring the use of language in the forming of subjects. Stewart here considers the loss that takes place when entering the symbolic. She draws on Lacan's notion that the ability to say 'I' means the child has given up claims to imaginary identity with the mother (Lacan, 1977: 2).

*powerlack and powerlack and the fear*

*i*

*of an itless shape where  
may disappear through the loss  
of ritual its the its real  
to make i*

*a other in other in d*

*other in*

*other in opposed sites*

*presupposing opposites*

*opposing opposites supposing*

*opposites proposing one/another O2*

The child represses the desires for a lost mother and becomes a speaking subject and therefore enters a state of lack. The child turns to the father while the mother remains powerless. Therefore the condition under which patriarchy is produced is the constitution of women's bodies as lacking. Lacan makes clear that the body is written on, inscribed by desire and signification. Grosz suggests that this means:

The body is in no sense naturally or innately psychical, sexual or sexed. It is indeterminate and indeterminable outside its social constitution as a body of a particular type. This implies the body which it presumes and helps to explain is an open-ended pliable set of significations, capable of being rewritten, reconstituted, in quite other terms than those which mark it...(Grosz, 1994: 60).

Stewart takes on the project of rewriting the feminine as a positive rather than a lack by reframing the social representation of women's concerns. Against the object part of O2 and the position that women are *the other in opposed sites* is an ironic chant of *coz coz coz because S2*, which suggests patriarchy only exists because it promotes itself and that its logic is flawed. Stewart favours Grosz's interpretation of Lacan. She rejects the assumption that the female body must remain forever defined by patriarchy and seeks to subvert the theoretical genre into poetry. She uses the echolalias of a repetitive child's chant to undermine Lacan's theory of subjectivity. According to Irigaray, the phallocentrism of psychoanalysis means woman 'does not exist owing to the fact that language - a language - rules as master, and that she threatens - as a sort of 'prediscursive reality' - to disrupt its order' (Irigaray, 1985: 89). Stewart does not go as far as Irigaray to suggest the meaning of 'feminine syntax' (Irigaray, 1985: 132) remains to be found. Instead Stewart brings the feminine to the place of enunciation. She multiplies her positions of enunciation as woman by dialoguing with patriarchal discourses as both a commentator and participant. She is then able to rewrite psychoanalytic discourse and subvert its negative positioning of female subjectivity by reflexively playing with the functions of language.

Theories of feminine oppression are compressed into aphoristic statements:

wo  
*men were the first objects*  
*subjects out of context*  
   it  
*used exchanged    defined*  
*by exchanged use    her ing ing*  
  
*lower caste lower caste*  
*lower race*  
*colour status shape*  
*objectified    they the it*  
*d the the they the it*  
*it it it it it it it*  
*it it it it it it it S5*

Like words, women are exchanged by having a value. Here ten values are equated to women, all with negative connotations that culminate at the textual level. Use of relational identifying processes confirms the work as a study of identity. Clauses 1, 2, 6,

7, 8 and 10 identify negative qualities for women. Material processes are used in 3, 4 and 5, revealing the way women are treated.

<i>Women were</i>	1 <i>the first objects</i>	
	2 <i>subjects out of context</i>	
	3 <i>used</i>	
	4 <i>exchanged</i>	
	5 <i>defined by exchange use</i>	
	6 <i>lower caste</i>	
	7 <i>lower class</i>	
	8 <i>lower race, colour, status, shape</i>	
	9 <i>objectified</i>	
<i>they (are)</i>	10 <i>the it it it it ...</i>	<i>S5</i>

Here Stewart draws on Irigaray's theory of exchange which projects a Marxist theory of commodity production onto Levi-Strauss' understanding of the patriarchal exchange of women (Irigaray, 1985: 174-183). Marx's analysis of commodities as the elementary form of capitalist wealth can be understood as an interpretation of the status of women in patriarchal societies. The symbolic system is based on the Name of the Father where submission of nature to labour on the part of men will constitute nature as use value and exchange value. Irigaray puts forward the theory that all the social regimes of the past and present are based upon the exploitation of one class of producers: women. Women's reproductive use value and constitution as exchange value underwrite the symbolic order without any compensation in kind going to them for such work. A woman's price is not determined by the properties of her body, but when exchanged her body becomes abstraction. Exchange can only occur 'when two objects are in equal relation with a third term that is neither one nor the other' (Irigaray, 1985: 175). Therefore they are not exchanged as women, but a common feature such as gold. Woman

has value by being the product of man's labour (Irigaray, 1985: 175). This economy of exchange is men's business as it takes place between men. According to Irigaray, the possibility of our social life and of our culture depends on a homo-social monopoly (Irigaray, 1985: 171). Society is based on the exchange of women. All the systems of exchange that organise patriarchal societies and all the modalities of productive work that are recognised, valued and rewarded in these societies are men's business. Irigaray suggests women should refuse to participate in this exchange. She says:

Commodities can only enter into relationships under their watchful 'guardians'. It is out of the question for them to go to 'market' on their own, enjoy their own worth among themselves, speak to each other, desire each other, free from the control of the sell-buyer-consumer subjects... But what if these 'commodities' refused to go to the 'market'? What if they maintained 'another' kind of commerce among themselves? (Irigaray, 1985: 196).

Renegotiating this exchange relation means subverting the foundation of equivalence and unleashing the full force of the heterogeneity of meaning. This would displace the cycle of reproduction and production. Stewart appears to be reconfirming the situation of exchange by structuring her work according to equivalent values of women but by taking on the theory of female exchange as an intertextual resource, Stewart is able to rewrite it. She does this through her position of enunciation which opposes the dominant discourses at the lexicogrammar through aggressive use of positive finite verbs. The dialogic structure also ensures theories of subjectivity are still under debate.

The text presents a series of values for women that collocate at the textual level of the clause in their common theme of powerlessness and difference. This is emphasised by repetition of *lower* and *exchange* which suggest feminine commodity value. Women are *subjects out of context* because they cannot express themselves adequately within the symbolic. They are therefore left with no positive place of expression. Women are identified with other oppressed groups such as those which the dominant perceives to be *lower caste, colour and race*. The notion of oppression is mocked by positing *shape* as a difference alongside those of a political nature. This would suggest that the speaker does not conform to evolutionary and biological views that oppression is inevitable. In fact oppressive forces are motivated by power and greed as people become valuable or *used* and *exchanged*. The shape of women raises the matter of female bodies as constructs and

the way women's bodies are enscribed by cultural values. Their bodies are marked to make them amenable to the prevailing exigencies of power. Like language, women's bodies can only be 'read' within a social system of shared values. Elizabeth Grosz comments 'that if the body is the strategic target of systems of codification, supervision and constraint, it is also because the body and its energies and capacities exert an uncontrollable, unpredictable threat to a regular, systematic mode of organisation' (Grosz, 1990: 64). The notion that the body has the potential to disrupt dominant power structures posited by Grosz is shared by Stewart who rewrites the feminine experience in a dialogic corporeal discourse. A constant tension exists in Stewart's work between the declarative statements of female oppression and the dispersing of these through dialogism. Intertextuality is inscribed in Stewart's corporeal discourse. Systemic Functional Grammar recognises the way texts act on bodies and bodies are enscribed in texts. Stewart subverts the way female bodies can be made to signify as 'other'. Her work as corporeal discourse shows how bodies and therefore texts might be made differently. Rewriting texts means the reconstituting of bodies and in turn the experiences that might write texts. Repetition of *it* suggests the lack of identity of the oppressed feminine position. Stewart's stutter effects on this word represent the inability of women to articulate their experiences. The pronoun *it* returns throughout the work as Stewart plays with grammatical function. It is used for its subversive potential because of its non-gendered status as both subject and object.

Complementing this poetic representation of women's experience in the parallel part is:

*her/i*  
*lower lower lower*  
*as if she was himself projected in*  
*in difference upon her*  
*tuned tongued*  
*function shape*  
*known            chaos O5*

Here *her/i* represents the way women are constituted as the other of the male. The repetition of *lower* indicates the status of women and the values collocate as words of oppression. *Tuned tongued* suggests the way women enter the symbolic and therefore their experiences are taken from them. *Known* suggests women are only identified

through patriarchy and *chaos* indicates the position occupied by women who try to escape patriarchal male order. The two speaking positions are in agreement about the status of women.

Stewart's words - *lower lower lower as if she was himself projected in in difference upon her* O5 - subscribe to Irigaray's deconstruction of Lacan as Irigaray sees psychoanalysis as insisting on denying a place for women. According to Lacan's notion of the Mirror Stage, there is a moment or period of development when the young child, first recognising himself in the mirror, is thrilled to identify with an image of what looks to be an integral controlled person. The infant who does not have control over its own actions is still fragmented. Therefore the child is seduced by this unity it cannot have. For Lacan, the true source of the sense of unified self is ironically a false self, founded on integration and illusion (Lacan, 1968: 160). Irigaray's project is to traverse the mirror stage of Lacan. She believes Lacan's mirror confirms women in a position of man's specular double or alter-ego, a mirror that can only reflect the masculine subject for whom it functions as a form of self-internalisation. Irigaray substitutes the speculum, the curved distorted medium of women's self-observation and self-representation. This is the point at which the mirror, in being held up to itself, folds in on itself. It becomes the unreal speculum, a composite enigmatic feminine figure, the mysteric, both commodity and enigma (Irigaray, 1985a: 191). Irigaray's mirror, the speculum, surrounds and is mirrored by the contours and specificity of the man's other, or *lower caste lower class lower race colour status shape objectified they the it* S5. Stewart plays with the debates over psychoanalysis and feminism by using her text as a dialogue between the various positions.

Stewart believes women are objects used out of context, exchanged and stripped of language and identity. The passage continues:

*it was all going to change at the  
turn of the twentieth the de de de  
de decay of the object the western  
body b b ob obj object the  
but  
things will be things  
a particle on a stick a cold war a  
picture of a wave a vocabulary of  
artifacts a privatisation of genes*

*space and information rats in kafka*  
*psychological management systems*  
*rats in kafka buying a duchamp* S5

The equating of disparate items of varying degrees of importance demonstrates how war has become as accepted as information. The text laments the slow change in the status of women, a Western object, and the acceleration of male values in science and world politics which have determined Western identity. The values given for the colloquial phrase *things will be things* shows the apathy in which we accept the states of oppression in our world. The acceptance of the cold war equates to *a particle on a stick* and the privatisation of genes with *buying a Duchamp*. The speaker shows her disgust by equating the material with the moral, suggesting we do not distinguish between them anymore.

Stewart here examines feminine constructions according to Christian doctrine and the way patriarchal power is reflected in religious power and authority. The semantic field reveals collocating Christian terms. The immaculate conception refers to Mary's preservation from all stains of original sin, making her a worthy mother of Jesus Christ. Stewart suggests such notions plague women and their constant failure to reach such perfection.

*immaculate conceptions of*  
*sacrificed its it its its it's*  
*the one the way the white the master*  
*the leader the judge the king the*  
*father the law the one the word the*  
*way the rrrrr r r* REAL  
S6

The other terms refer to the structure of the church and doctrine that maintains male dominance.

immaculate conceptions (woman)  
of sacrificed its (woman)  
the one (unified being)  
the way (law)  
the white (power)  
the master (ruler)  
the leader (ruler)  
the judge (law)  
the king (ruler)  
the father (ruler)  
the word (symbolic)

the way (leadership)  
the real (the truth)

Lexical cohesion compounds the positive roles of men. A similar chain complements the subject in the parallel part:

*the other is none other than  
himself  
sh*

*of owning of knowing of  
meaning of being of owning of  
knowing the its as of being the r r r  
REAL O6*

The verbs or processes in the continuous present tense, *owning, knowing, meaning, being* suggest patriarchy will continue to dominate female subjectivity. The words collocate to demonstrate that patriarchal systems exist through the power of the symbolic, so that men are the possessor of knowledge and meaning and therefore determine being and existence. Through dialogue with the patriarchal discourse, feminine positions come to know what is real through these terms. The self comes to take on the values of a dominant other which has come to represent what is real.

In the object part Stewart speaks of 'the real' in Lacanian terms as a positive place for women to escape the symbolic. Lacan's real is not the same as reality. It comes before any signification. 'The Real is not synonymous with external reality, but rather with what is real for the subject' (Lacan, 1968: 161). What is real for the subject is found finally only in the unconscious, which, however is 'that chapter of my history which is marked by a blank and occupied by a falsehood' (Lacan, 1968: 21). Hence the real creates a fundamental lack. The Real is that which resists symbolisation absolutely. To explain the real would be to fall into symbolisation. So while Stewart cannot obtain this state she makes us aware of it by attempting to dissolve the binary relationship of self and other.

Stewart considers masculine activities such as science and economics as corrupt self-perpetuating systems:



*you too can be  
white and equal  
decentralised domination  
four dimensional vertical  
integration  
biological justification  
for economic determinism  
economic justifications for  
biological determinism S6*

Both the biological and economic situations of women are justified by the determinist operations put in place by the patriarchy that perpetuate the oppression of women. The collocation of words associated with power is obvious and the sarcasm of *you too can be white and equal* suggests the speaker's resentment of white supremacy in the world and the economic rationalism that has produced suffering for marginalised groups. This is complemented in the parallel part which emphasises the cycle of events as history repeats itself with no effective break in the order and no place for the other.

*the work of the left does the work  
of the right does the work of the left  
to do to be to work to buy  
to be to do to buy to work O6*

Her work consistently dialogues with such positions in order to open them up for rewriting. Stewart recognises that identity is obtained in patriarchal positions through entering the symbolic order of language and accepting the Law of the Father. Her work then subverts this notion in performance as she revels in the place of multiplicity and the possibilities that exist there by distorting the syntax with sounds. The sounds have various logics to them which are coupled with improvisation of four layers of vocals, both electronic and live, creating a new space for listening and understanding.

### **Linguistic distortions**

Stewart's work is informed by psychoanalysis in the interjections of babble and emotive outbursts reminiscent of hysterical speech. She adopts the notion of hysteria founded by Freud and Breuer (Freud & Breuer, 2000: 39) and appropriated by Irigaray where repressed desires are voiced in linguistic distortions. Her use of hysterical speech operates within the symbolic but as a corporeal function that forefronts the semiotic

qualities of speech and creates a positive state for woman protesting against patriarchal law. Her mimicry of hysterical speech also creates semantic fields used to play with etymology and the way language constructs identity. She gives voice to extremes of emotive utterance which are normally repressed by the dominant order.

Stewart's enactment of hysteria is in response to a social, not familial phenomenon. It is therefore more compatible with Irigaray's notion of the socially constructed hysteric than Freud's sexually derived hysteric. Irigaray understands hysteria as a form of protest against patriarchal law. Stewart responds to the inability of language to fully articulate feminine experience. Instead of embracing Irigaray's position that the hysteric 'senses something remains to be said that resists all speech' (Irigaray, 1985: 193), Stewart uses linguistic distortion to celebrate emotive response and female expression. She does this by performing the outbursts with dynamic and key variations and giving them a function within the symbolic. Using hysterical speech as an intertextual resource, Stewart remains committed to dialogism as a means of constructing the subject as a process. She avoids the destructive pathology of the hysteric by writing it into a position of semantic function. The interpersonal and textual levels of language are able to reveal meanings for these functions as well as explain the way corporeality marks the text through the grammar.

Stewart inserts sudden outbursts throughout the work. Her writing therefore performs what it announces in a reflexive manner. Outbursts of pronouns *i/it*, *i/you*, *sh e* *it* and *i/her* celebrate the fragmented identity of female subjects. For Lacan the mirror-stage is the first process of subjectivity. Prior to the mirror stage, the child is subjectless and has no identity or unity, distinct from the other (Lacan, 1977: 2). This recognition or misrecognition of wholeness is necessary for further subjective development or entry into the symbolic. The mirror stage constitutes a split between the 'I' that perceives and the 'I' that is perceived. On entering language, the child perceives between the 'I' who is spoken and the 'I' who speaks. The child must differentiate between 'I' and 'you'. Stewart plays with Lacan's notion of female subjectivity by writing it into the work as an emotive utterance that protests against the order that would create it.

Stewart's enactment of hysterical speech is able to rewrite female expression. She enacts a poet caught between language and sound as she searches for new ways to make

meaning. Mouth sounds represented as morphs such as *owgh*, /aw/ expressing pain and *oow a* /u/ expressing surprise are culturally determined expressions which have become necessary in circumstances where language is inadequate. Other examples are scattered throughout the piece such as: grunting: *mn*; contemplation: *hmn*; surprise: *ah*; and abrupt questioning: *huh?* These speech gestures emphasise the interpersonal tenor of the work.

Broken words are used to demonstrate the fragility of words, which are material and can be broken into fragments or morphemes. These fragments are often combined with repetitive stuttering, representing the inadequacy of words to express feminine experience:

*s ubj ect t t t to S2*

Through the experimental poetry genre, Stewart is able to reflexively use language where the genre gestures towards its own repressed conditions in ways normally unavailable to more convention bound signifiers.

At other times Stewart plays with pre-oedipal babble enacting the semiotic in Kristevan terms. As hysterical speech this regression is relayed as a positive place where the feminine subject immerses herself in sound. Stewart invokes the desire to return to the mother but through her intonations, emotive gestures are meaningful. Stewart's vocal gestures create a subversion, not of the kind Kristeva describes as a poetic revolution where the musicality of words escapes the symbolic, but of an emerging voice that provides an alternative form of communication to semantics and syntax through intonation. Stewart returns us to the pre-oedipal phase where the child does not yet have access to language, but we can imagine its body as a criss-cross flow of pulsions or drives which are organised. She appropriates these drives by entailing them with meaning.

Use of phonemes and morphs resemble pre-Oedipal babble which has not entered the symbolic Law of the Father, still existing in close connection with the Mother. This form of communication is outside the Father's syntax and realm of meaning, yet these sounds do have meaning, creating for the listener an experience of structured sonic units. Stewart uses all the features of vocal and other mouth capabilities to create conflicting sound qualities. Morphs are used as mouth sounds and spitting as if suggesting a struggle

with communication. These then evolve into words. The sounds of both subject and object are in dialogue. The subject part:

*a oa i eh a a a ah oh air*  
*a e o a a pah oi a um pa d S1*

is juxtaposed against the object part with:

*a ooo e aaa o eee*  
*o o o a air eh a a d t O1*

Both parts are emphasising the vowel sounds in a desperate attempt to make meaning. The word *air* in both parts represents the physical act of making sound and the need to communicate. Babble represents regression to a place before the infant is conditioned by its socio-cultural environment. In this place, possibilities still exist and Stewart uses it as a place to explore feminine subjectivity. At other times Stewart plays with babble dialogically through rhythm and phonemic similarity. A short dotted rhythm in the subject part is juxtaposed against stretched sounds in the object part:

*Huh ha*  
*huh*  
*ha*  
*huh*  
*ha*  
*huh*  
*ha a*  
*huh e*  
*ha*  
*huh*  
*huh huh S2*

*oohhh*  
*hoooooh*  
*mnnnn*  
*hoooooooooh*  
*hoooooooooh*  
*a*  
*e*  
*hooooooooooo*  
*neh O2*

The texture of the sound sections is dialogic in the same way as the words, but unity occurs through sound as well.

Semantic word play is another way of subverting language while remaining in the symbolic. Stewart plays with the notion of pre-oedipal babble by giving it semantic and sonic sense. She plays with babble, informed by Freud and Breuer's case studies of Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim) who often spoke a cacophony of different languages or a gibberish babble (Breuer & Freud, 2000: 39). Unlike Anna O., Stewart does not surrender or withdraw into the semiotic. She emphasises the sonic qualities important to the semiotic, but then uses these for the interpersonal and textual functions that transform them into sonic messages. These child-like echolalias become meaningful but Stewart does not risk leaving the symbolic intact. She subverts it from within. The words *know* and *noun* collocate, linking the semantic groups of knowledge with names. The lexical synonymy is emphasised for the purpose of sound unity and demonstrates how meanings of words are linked.

*you know what I know what I know  
what I known's a known's a known's  
a noun is a noun is a noun is a  
noun is I know what I know what I  
known whatcha mean. S3*

Against this is the chant of the other:

*know what I know what I know what I  
know what I know what I know that I  
know what I know what I know what I  
nomen nomen nomen nomen nomen nomen  
nomen nomen nomen nomen nomen nomen O3*

The play here is on the Latin *nomen* which means *name* or *noun* and the question of knowledge. Stewart revives the debate over nominalism of the Middle Ages as to the existence of universals. For the nominalist, general ideas are only names serving as labels of a collection of things. This issue is relevant for feminist concerns as if there is no reality then woman is easily constructed and reconstructed, having no power within the thing named. The chant-like phonetic connection emphasises the sound *no* including *no men* which adds a feminist edge to the debate of knowledge and power.

The formation of semantic fields at the textual level of language creates new ways of conceptualising language and the construction of women. Stewart furthers this play by setting up ways in which the reader can experience the sensation of sound and semantics in the relationship between the signifier and signified. Sonic play on the alliterative *m* connects the words in aural/oral perception and the different languages form the etymological shifts between the words. The semantic fields suggest woman is constructed in a variety of contexts.

*ma mater matrix matter materia*  
*mater measure*  
*metre mere la mer*  
*matiere matin maternal mutter*  
*mud muck mesurer martyr matrix*  
*messen mother material mer la mere S4*

and

*ma misura matter martyr material*  
*matrix mere la mer mesurer metre*  
*mater meter ma ma matrix matriarch*  
*madre mess mutter mud muck messen*  
*mater mater materia mer mere mere O4*

The three semantic nodes for *mother* (*maternal, mater, ma, matriarch, martyr, matrix, mere, mutter*), *measure* (*meter, mesurer, metre, messen*) and *material* (*mattiere, matter, material, material*) reveal etymological games and imply other etymological connections. The three words *mother, measure* and *material* are incongruous as *measure* and *material* tend to subvert the role of *mothers*. Words collocating with *mother, measure* and *material* cross over semantic fields, leading the field in new directions. For example, mothers are recontextualised by association with the sea: *mud, muck, la mer* and *mere* ('a lake' in English and 'mother' in French). Stewart demonstrates the fluidity of words in cultural contexts.

Stewart also playfully comments on the creation of subjectivity by crossing over discourses of the social development and function of dialects with Freud's notion of language acquisition. Further play with the interpersonal and textual functions reveals how sounds become syntax, demonstrating how easily associations between sound and syntax can fall into symbolic literal communication. The overlapping creates a confusion

of punctuated sound qualities. The *da* reminds one of the first sounds a baby makes, representing the way in which language is learnt and the way infants enter the symbolic. Freud used the forte-da to experiment with child acquisition of language. Da or 'here' represents restoration of the object after loss. Freud identified fort, (gone) and da (here) as a binary pair of phonemes through which the child symbolically represents the perceived loss of the mother (Freud, 1958: 32-36). Stewart rewrites this moment of entering subjectivity in a sonic interplay.

*Da Do Da Do*  
*Da do Don dyou do dat*  
*Da da Don dyou do dat*  
           *Don dyou do dat*  
*da d d don dyou do dat*  
*d d d d td didn didn didn*  
*d d Don dyou do dat*  
*d d d d d d d*  
*d dd d dd*  
*d d d d d S3*

The parody using non-standard English shows how certain dialects emerge through the sound or materiality of our words. This accusative chant in the self is answered by the denial of the object part:

*Do do*  
*Don*  
       *Don't*  
*dng dididn didn*  
*didn didn didn dng dn didn didn*  
*d d d didnd*  
*dd d Dd d d*  
*Dd d d d*  
*Don't do dat d O3*

Stewart's own use of dialogic resources suggests the subject might have many voices as she rewrites psychoanalytic and linguistic discourses by conflating them in an experimental genre. Such reflexivity takes intertextual resources and rewrites them in a place that makes small but relevant disruptions in the patriarchal order that would define women in its terms.

## **Conclusion**

To use language in different ways is to create a place in society and a point of view other than the dominant one. ≠ broadens the semantic field and transgresses limitations by opening up possibilities and exploring the voice and its multiple means of communication. Stewart's work is informed by feminist and psychoanalytic theory which is used as an intertextual resource for the rewriting of a feminine place which operates in a dialogic space. The nature of the work fosters positions of multiplicity and sensory provocation creating a new place for feminine expression. This rewriting through sound, word and word-sound creates a place for embodied women subjects that might escape exchange. She contributes to the project of feminist semiotics to fulfil a non-verbal semiosis and heterogeneity that critiques the mind/body dichotomy that excludes women's differentiated experiences of the social.

Consideration of the interpersonal and textual levels of language offers a way of thinking about how Stewart uses the experimental genre to rewrite existing discourses. A functional approach to her work best explains the way her position of enunciation opens up debates about feminine subjectivity, using traces of these existing discourses in her own rewriting of them. The strategies she employs create a positive place for women.



## CHAPTER 8

### PERFORMING ≠

*She's excellent at shifting emotional gear in mid-sentence, turning passivity into anger into disgust into sarcasm so quickly you can hardly follow.*

*(Marley on Stewart, 1999)*

Stewart's work is grounded in poetry while extending the traditional realm of association and metaphor to sound. She describes her work as having two directions: 'one exploring nonverbal vocal sounds and their potential listening environments through improvisation and electronic manipulation and the other exploring issues of language, syntax and power in composed, verbally derived pieces' (Wendt, 1993: 75). Stewart's work is testimony to her interest in the acoustical properties of language as she attempts to incorporate musical devices and strategies into poetry and performance. She says of her work: 'My strength and my weakness seems to be that my work is half way between poetry and music...'

(Stewart, 1995: 27). The merging of word and sound is evident as she attempts to conflate the codes of music and language leading to an original exploration of musico-linguistic interrelationships and the way they might be used to relocate and rewrite feminine subjectivity. This analysis will consider the interface of acoustic and linguistic elements of the voice by taking a functional approach to the subject and object positions dialoguing between speaking positions. It also considers the semantic and sonic qualities of the vocal line. I focus on Stewart's performance from *The Palimpsest Festival* (1996) and rely heavily on the CD for close analysis.

Stewart's performance is an intense experience. She uses a full range of mouth sounds such as tongue sucking, kissing, abrupt popping noises, humming, crying, whispering and breathing. Mumbled discourse might come under attack from spitting and spluttering, recitation might become melody, jumbled phonemes will be punctuated by barely decipherable words, theory is superimposed over chanting and humming, and a single voice multiplies into polyphony. Phonemes and gestures are indexically entailed to increase the semantic possibilities of sound while words heard as sounds or in polyphony have increased their sonic effect. Both words and sounds operate at the interface of the two disciplines, developing the aural vocabulary of the listener. Listeners are constantly switching between different fields of shape, suggestion and meaning. Mutterings and repetition of vowel sounds and words are heard. Shivering sounds, blowing sounds and tongue rolling also add to the sound-scape. Splinters of sound and non-verbal gestures complicate the points of reference as the voice becomes a site of enunciation, bending the parameters of listening. Stewart's work subverts gender norms. She performs a new feminine subjectivity that challenges hegemony. Recognising, like Judith Butler, the complexity of performing an entirely new gender position, Stewart rewrites the existing patriarchal discourses in sound. She performs a new corporeal discourse that emphasises the sonic qualities of feminist discourse. This enables her to highlight and understate concepts, create ambiguities or speak in parodic hysterical vocal gestures.

The application of a multimodal theory of communication to ≠ concentrates on the way semiotic resources are used by the poet and rewritten in text and sound. Multimodal theory as a functional theory is able to realise relationships that are formed between voices. It is therefore able to explain the new assemblages of the experimental

poetry genre. It takes into consideration the way sonic and textual elements of the work operate internally to create unity and how they might refer to outside contexts. Stewart's concern is with gender difference and the constructionist paradigm that social realities and bodies/subjects are constituted in discourse. In performance she deconstructs the way intertextuality, genre, discourse and corporeality work and rewrites them to reproduce new experiences. The question of whether Stewart, through the genre of experimental poetry, realises a subversive act or not and whether her 'resignifying' of the iteration processes is enough to effect a change, is answered by reading through a functional model which realises the meaning potential of text and sound as a way of reconstituting subjects and rewriting intertextual resources. Understanding the interface between sound and word is crucial to the enunciative position and corporeal discourse developed by Stewart. Prosodic notation is able to map the pitch and intonation to show how the sounds of her performed words have a function within the work and reference to emotive expressions. At the textual function, certain sounds or text sounds are forefronted in performance to create unity. They also often have a representational function.

It is important to understand how Stewart's vocal technique is used to perform a new genre that engages feminist and psychoanalytic theory in a dialogical sonic rewriting of patriarchal discourse. The new context of her new performed genre enables the speaker to play with her enunciative position. There is great meaning potential in Stewart's speaking position at the interpersonal function which is marked by corporeal traces of her attitudes to patriarchal discourses. Her enunciative position is also marked by intonation of the voice and the dialogic relationship between the speaker and the intertextual resources she draws upon, between the subject and the object parts and between the speaker and listener. Vocal gestures representing hysterical speech are indexically entailed with meaning, stunning the listener as dynamic outbursts. The result is a poesis or process that deconstructs patriarchal discourse and establishes a place from which women might speak. This is a place where voices are multiplied, layered and overlapped simultaneously. It is where female bodies might be rewritten. Stewart forges a female self-understanding by producing a new genre that is a new form of representational practice. She recognises that women's bodies have been structured and lived in subordination and differentiation to men's. What she attempts is a way of transforming

the structure of power relations between the sexes by rewriting feminine construction. She does this by writing against the universalising assumptions of humanism where women's positions are rendered irrelevant. She also writes against dualism which splits subjectivity into two mutually exclusive domains.

The analysis I engage here can do more than just realise the meaning potential in these texts. It also shows how experimental poetry as a genre can write and speak subjects differently. The resonance of experimental poetry makes us see the world from a place beyond the dominance of patriarchal (oppressive) constructions of the subject. A functional approach to language, discourses and genres, both in the writing and rewriting of text/bodies, reveals the presence of the multiple voices of intertextuality and dialogism.

### **Mechanics of Performance**

The title of the work ≠ refers to its content and construction. It suggests that things do not add up evenly and succinctly in the way those in power would like us to believe. In the text Stewart presents us with supposed 'truths' that dominate our lives. The structure of these 'truths' is then dispersed through performance as Stewart recites them against each other in polyphony. This makes it difficult at times for the listener to follow a single vocal line. She oscillates between roles of subject and object, exchanging statements about language and women between the two. The result emphasises how language constructs our views of the world. When the two voices interact in performance, the simultaneity in both space and time disperses this dualism and rewrites the subject into multiple positions. Her position is inscribed in the work as through her reiteration of philosophical theories we recognise her contempt for power structures. Her arguments about constructing the subject are compatible with the argument of Systemic Functional Grammar where the interpersonal function allows for dialogic possibilities and the formation of subjects. Dialogue is the means language gives us for expressing interpersonal meanings about roles and attitudes. Stewart is in dialogue with the intertextual sources informing the work. The dialogical process also creates an exchange between the writer/performer and the listener which constitutes new constructions of

reality. This new reality embraces multiple positions and is most evident in performance. Our attention is drawn constantly to the act of enunciating: how the words are delivered and from what position. By forefronting the mode of production, Stewart accentuates the act of enunciating as part of the actual content where the audience is invited to explore her use of critical and linguistic theory as well as question its validity.

≠ is made up of four layers of commentary and interjection. The word order is set in a composed text, but the performance of these words and sounds is spontaneously manipulated by voice in real-time improvisation. The first performance is pre-recorded onto the left channel, then the second text onto the right channel which overhears, comments on and interjects over the first. The third and fourth layers are stereo vocal improvisations that make occasional comments on the first. If one listens to the left and right speakers in isolation one can hear the two texts overhearing and commenting on each other, emphasising their semantic dimensions.

Stewart's performance is dynamic as she reacts to and against the text which she reads from the page and the pre-recorded text coming through the headphones she wears. Technology is used as a tool in her process rather than it being overtly dominant or obvious. The use of two microphones and headphones means she is completely part of the performance, immersing herself physically between the binary oppositions of subject and object or self and other, deconstructing them by folding one into another. Stewart divides the text into two columns representing binary oppositions: the left side represents the subject and the right side the object. As discussed in the textual analysis of ≠, the subject and object parts work in a dialogic relationship. She uses memory and spontaneous reaction to respond to what she hears and what she sees on the page. She reads from one side of the page to the other, speaking each text into different microphones. The text on the page is not fixed and if she finds that her memory of previous performances is inhibiting originality of the present performance she will change some words, phonemes or sound indications on the page to maintain freshness and originality. Her position within the artwork is important and it is necessary to divert the brain as much as possible so nothing is pre-ordained. Once she has learnt the text, the point of performance is lost.

Employment of an improvisatory method such as spontaneously responding to pre-recorded material closes the gap between the performer and composer. Stewart effectively creates the piece in live composition. The listener can sense the excitement and spontaneity even from the compact disk, while watching Stewart's live performance is an even more an invigorating experience.

Visually, Stewart displays her enthusiasm of expression and physicality with jerking head and sweeping body movements. Indeterminacy is important in the performance, as it increases the sensitive involvement of the performer in musical decisions and removes the power of the score. Stewart's score is mostly a prompt with some prosodic notation indicating pitch and the text to be read. Sound relationships are emphasised as the act of enunciation becomes the subject matter. The subject is constantly condensed and dispersed, never fully unified or present. Stewart's poetry enacts a deconstruction of the text, seeking to expose the inadequacies of syntax by promoting the value of sound. The pragmatic level of improvisation creates a strata of discourses, both sonic and semantic, where feminist and psychoanalytic theory is drawn on and demonstrated in pre-oedipal babble and other vocal sounds. She is able to break down the power structure of language and expand the sonic linguistic vocabulary of her audience. Ironically, while the pre-oedipal babble of the phonemes operates outside the symbolic, the vocal gesture invokes a sense of it.

A relationship between word and sound develops where words create meanings that are often complex and ambiguous. Stewart's work explores the intersection between sound and language as the two systems combine to expand meaning. The combined verbal and non-verbal systems result in vocal inflection used alongside musical inflection where the musical and literary intersect. Vocal inflection can work with or against the meanings of words, as a way of sustaining ambiguity or reducing it. Vocal sounds might also connote emotional states and thereby add another level of complexity to the relationship between the signifier and signified. The voice and its delivery is crucial to the act of expression, moving what is internal, private, undifferentiated and in the case of hysterical speech, unconscious, into an external public environment. Each utterance is marked by the speaker's emotional tone of voice. The intonational contours and accent

create lexical prominence in certain words. Her key range is exaggerated beyond the normal range of speaking to defamiliarise the philosophical discourse and write it anew.

The audience cannot negotiate which sound is original and which is recorded. The result is a chaotic bombardment of sound where distinctions between music and sound are muddled and the noises contain various logics. The audience is invited to explore this space and find a new way of listening. The listener may focus on the sonic textures of the piece, the semantic arguments that order many of the sounds, the relationship between the two, or perhaps hear something totally other and unrelated to these distinctions.

As a way into the performance, I have considered what the audience might hear and see and then what they might interpret. This will of course encompass all the elements of musical and textual analysis, creating a new discourse that combines the two. For purposes of this analysis, I have divided the work into what seemed natural structural breaks in the piece. These sections were unified by thematic content in the text and foregrounded by pause in the performance. The principles of functionalism developed by multimodal theory are used to describe the sound and dialogical features of the voice.

### **Polyphonic Voices**

Much of Stewart's piece is constituted of words that draw on intertextual resources of feminist and psychoanalytic theory. In performance the two voices, subject and object, overlap polyphonically. In the text analysis it was possible to discuss each part as the subject and the object or the self and the other. The performance enables these two binary oppositions to disperse into multiple positions and create simultaneity as the two positions collide to form a new position in sound and word. Stewart dialogues with both parts simultaneously, locating herself between the two. Through her enunciative positions, she succeeds in breaking down the binary structure that consistently reduces women to 'the other' by creating multiple positions. These voices are enscribed with the nuances and intonation of female vocal timbre. The resulting discourse is charged with musical resonances creating and expressing a feminine subjectivity. Stewart transposes text sounds onto the feminist and psychoanalytic discourses of the text creating a new way of enunciating the feminine subject that undermines the patriarchal assumptions of

the discourses with which she dialogues. Her enunciation is marked by intonational contours that play with the prosodic cues at the interface of music and word to emphasise certain arguments or sustain ambiguity. Considering the performance according to the functional meaning potential of text and sound offers a new way of reading or hearing this enunciative position. The potential of sound to rewrite female experience serves the feminist cause. Stewart's text embraces multimodal discourses and their elevation of sonic modes.

In the performance of *≠* where the emotional gears shift quickly and constantly, prosodic cues are one of the ways of appreciating the performance where sound and text semantics intersect. The serious tone of *section 9* begins with a chant in the subject voice of *coz coz coz because*. This rhythmic play on both the sound and word of *cause* is an answer to the object voice which describes why the patriarchy continues to dominate identity. Low key, rhythmic chant and accents on each *coz* and *cause* punctuate the mimicry of a childish chant. The object voice enters over the top with a clear deep speaking tone as Stewart dialogues with Lacanian theory in a poetic and articulate manner. The words are emphasised by the accented rhythm of repeated plosives such as the /p/ in *powerlack and powerlack and the fear of an itless shape where i may disappear through the loss of ritual*. The prosodic low key and regularity of the rhythm here reduces the semantic importance of the words and emphasises their sound and rhythm. Stewart's rewriting engages sonic intonational contours when she wishes to reduce textual semantics and increase sonic unity. The emphasis on sonic character and enunciation allows Stewart to mark the text with an emphasis that forefronts issues of feminine subjectivity. Crescendo and higher register are heard as tension rises and Stewart's frustration with the subjectivity of women as lack is felt. In performance, Stewart subverts the notion of lack by showing how a form of communication can exist that is beyond the phallogentric possession.

Stewart's performance makes us hear discourses in a non-linear manner that is physically enacted against the law of the father. Her delivery of the words *its the its real* in a fast dotted rhythmic pattern emphasises the ambiguity of grammar. *Real* and *i* are also punctuated and paused upon. Crescendo to *i may disappear* and *real to make i* promotes the message of *I* and how identity is made by reflecting the other in the self.



The subject voice chants as a secondary voice while the object voice becomes stronger and more determined as the power of *i* is emphasised with high key and extended body gesture. Stewart uses sound to emphasise the features of theoretical discourse she feels are important. A softer tone is used on *a other* as it dissolves into the subject. The subject voice then recites text about the self against the object voice with text continuing about the other. The two parts operate equally as the polyphony disperses them. This new position is dominated by the spitting fricative /s/ and vowel o /ɒ/ maintaining the listener's attention to the vocal sounds as expressions of aggression and frustration. *Opposed sites* is rhythmic where *sites* continues to be pronounced as such even in the word *opposites* to show a sonic relationship between words. *Sites* is pronounced in higher register as the voice slides up to punctuate it. In the subject voice the *self* (raised on the page) is at a higher pitch. The *s* sound and pitch unifies *self* and *site* as they appear to pop in and out of the monotonal recitation of the rest of the sequence. Stewart expands the use of words by emphasising their sonic traits and attributing musical characteristics to them. High key is frequent on words she wishes to emphasise in her argument. This allows her to express through sound. Throughout the words relate by sound and syntax, making them part of several semiotic systems and thereby increasing the meaning potential.

There is a definite tone of humour and scepticism driven by the colloquial nature of the text and ironic expressive gestures. Here the voices have displayed simultaneous arguments about the nature of the subject and object while demonstrating the actual dialogic process. The following words: *supposing that* are ironic, having just demonstrated the nature of the self as requiring opposition and other. Such transforming of theory into poetry has a double action of defamiliarising philosophical discourse from technical jargon to poetic rhythm and timbre, while demonstrating the play of dialogical language and the semantic value of the words.

*Section 14* also uses texts in polyphony, but now with more key and intonational variety. Both voices deliver poetic renditions of philosophical texts. *i* in *i was an individual* is sung with a tentative high key which is heard above the monotonal statements. Other statements are muttered while *i* is forefronted by a dominant one stress, dynamic and high key. It is a memorable sound for the listener who retains few of the other words. The object voice is incoherent with *i huh ing it exchanged* which becomes a

statement of cultural theory working here against the subject voice which has statements about linguistic theory. This is a moody section where sudden jolting interjections and head movements break the monotonal statements which mutter along. Stated theory has an ironic tone becoming morbid on *things* as if lamenting the state of identity.

<sup>1</sup>  
i 2 3 ^  
**Subject** was an individual i and an attempt at generalisation

**Object** i huh ing it exchanged

<sup>1</sup> i <sup>2</sup> was <sup>1</sup> a you <sup>3</sup> despite <sup>2</sup> what  
/  
<sup>1</sup> culture <sup>3</sup> found its <sup>2</sup> self absent in nature

<sup>1</sup>  
i 2 2 3/  
**Subject** says object of to is relation through  
/  
**Object** thereby so then about within himself

<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>  
it and self and you i  
**Subject** ishly pluralistic  
/  
**Object** as a wild psych tech unconscious

/ \  
**Subject** lipsurface on the face of things things things  
**Object** phenomenon of things things things

The intonational curves are shared between the voices, marked by high key on individual words such as *i* in the subject voice and *west*, *self*, *wild*, *psych* and *tech* in the object voice. With both lines in polyphony we hear:

*(i) was an individual and an attempt at generalisation (i) culture (west) was a you, found itself despite what i says, object of to is relation through it and self and you (i) as a wild (ishly) pluralistic (psych) unconscious (tech) lipsurface phenomenon (of) on the face of things.*

The identity of *i* and the *individual* merge with the nature of culture as they dissolve into each other. Stewart demonstrates the dialogic nature of existence as the subject and object, *i* and *you* are continually moving between positions. The voices operate in dialogue by blending the subject and object into one another to create a new discourse. The listener appreciates the intonational contours that operate between the voices at the interpersonal level, not the whole structure which is too complex for memory. Prosodic notation shows how the mark of the body is inscribed onto the performance to write feminist experience in a new way. Continuing on, certain rhythmic features merge with pitched melodies to write:

^  
Subject *holes*                      *full of bright blue absence*

Object *use use use*                                      *mad owing*

^  
Subject *Why*                      *is a straight line*

Object *Yes yes yes*

*Holes/use use use* and *why/yes yes yes* are sung in harmony. This way the voices engage in a dialogue while maintaining independent lines. For the listener, the extra challenge is to make connections both vertically and horizontally. We ask ourselves why *holes* and *use* are sung together when *use* might prompt the notion of *a word is its use* and *holes* seems to fit more appropriately with *full of bright blue absence*. Vertically, the words have to be understood by *use* because of the *gaps, holes* or *absence* they possess. *Why* is sung against *yes yes yes* in another vertical relationship which seems incongruous as a question is being asked which would need explanation of *why* to which Stewart gives the answer *yes*. She subverts expectations by sonically playing with grammar and dialogue. The words become more important for their sonic expression.

Short faster and sharper statements interject individually in contrast to the melancholy slow pace of that preceding. These statements seem to be finishing the question *why is a straight line?* Stewart's words are audible here.

Subject <sup>^</sup> a plurality of thes and I the father the one  
Object artifacts in space

Subject the subject icons of spatial  
Object geometries of cultured noise

The voices operate in conversation allowing turn-taking rather than polyphony. Even in turn-taking each voice continues with its own logic so while the listener is not confused by the simultaneous lines, the fragmentation here undermines any semantic meaning.

In section 23 the text deconstructs the notion of women as objects for exchange use by dispersing the subject through the position of enunciation and the variety of stress, dynamic and pitch variation.

Subject <sup>wo</sup> men were the first objects  
Object w men agh

Subject subjects out of context  
Object agh

Subject used exchanged <sup>/</sup> it defined by exchanged use <sup>/ /</sup> ing ing  
Object <sup>/</sup> sh <sup>e</sup> was himself projected on <sup>n</sup>

**Subject** --- -- -- -- --  
*lower caste lower caste lower caste*

**Object** <sup>i</sup>  
*her*

**Subject** lower lower lower

**Object** colour status shape

**Subject** ob <sup>/</sup>ject <sup>/</sup>ified *they the* <sup>/</sup>it

**Object** *as if she was himself projected in*

**Subject** <sup>/</sup>  
*d the the the the*

**Object** *in difference upon her*

**Subject** *it it it it it it*

**Object** *tuned tongued*

**Subject** *it it it it it it*

**Object** *function shape*

The prosodic notation here reveals patterns in the intonation and pitch functions as the subject and object parts overlap to disperse meaning. The text of the subject voice maintains a level mid key most of the time but interruptions of high key on *it*, *ing*, *(sh)e* and *n* emphasise the status of pronouns and split subjects, undermining the serious discourse of feminism. The voices begin in dialogue where the object voice makes grunts of *agh* commenting on the subject's statements of women as objects of exchange. They continue to dialogue when overlapping. The low key on *lower* (subject) and *colour*

(object) creates unity of timbre, rhythm and the idea. Low key creates a serious, intense yet detached tone before the sharp punctuation of high key on *it* in the subject part. New associations are formed through the polyphonic dialogues where word sounds like *it* are highlighted for contrast with the structure of the work while representing important issues about the nature of language and identity. The semiotic system operates horizontally and vertically as phrases such as *they the it* referring to women and their lack of positive identity are deconstructed by high key on *it* making it important. Repeating *the it* gives the phrase structural importance at the interpersonal level and superimposing it over *as if she was himself projected in* in mid key creates a dialogical relationship where the object recites the theory while the subject voice deconstructs it. Use of mid key in the object voice also reduces the importance of the psychoanalytical principles recited. Again, the voice is used to rewrite feminist discourses. This mark of the body is mapped by prosodic notation.

The dialogical principles common to the experimental poetry genre are exploited by Stewart for her cause. She takes the intertextual resources of feminism and psychoanalytical theory and deconstructs the concepts by using prosodic features to forefront her arguments. The result is a positive space driven by a corporeal emotive discourse that highlights sonic expression, word meaning, text-sound meaning and polyphonic vocal relationships, functioning through structural cohesion, interpersonal positions and representations that create a space of internal relations and refers to a place where feminine subjectivity might escape construction in patriarchal terms. The experimental poetry genre enables such a place.

### Phonemes and Vocal Gestures

Throughout *≠* the voice communicates a powerful and forceful emotion, demonstrating how vocal gesture can communicate semantically. Non-lexical phonemes imitating pre-oedipal babble invoke a concept of the symbolic because of the intonation and dynamic used. They are emotive outbursts of hysterical speech erupting into consciousness. They represent a dialogical place outside the symbolic such as the semiotic but also suggest

meanings to the listener because they are indexically entailed with our shared sense of cultural conventions. The dialogic situation enhances the interplay of emotive gestures by often creating humour through exaggerated expressions of emotion and combining different sounds. The improvisatory quality of the work means Stewart evaluates her own pre-recorded voice where indexical representation affects her emotional response in a continuing emergent. Meaning is created by the way Stewart expresses herself and the emotional cues interpreted by the audience. These sounds are important as textual functions because they create unity and coherence by their repetition. At the experiential level they are indexically entailed to represent a positive rewriting of the feminine and this is tied to their potential dialogic relation to each other at the interpersonal level. The use of fragmented phonemes interjecting hysterically come to develop structural unity in the work. They almost become predictable as they occur as highly charged emotive interruptions with loud dynamics, high key and rising intonation, usually after lower keyed recitations of words.

In *section 2* the voice spits out sounds from the back of the throat, lips, teeth and tongue. Dialogic interaction between plosives creates a harsh spitting quality imitating pre-oedipal states outside the symbolic order with an unrepressed flow of liberating energy. The expressions begin with brief but complete blockage of airflow occurring at the lips for /p/ and hard palate for /d/ and /t/. /p/, /t/ and /k/ are voiceless plosives in contrast to the voiced plosive /d/ and voiceless fricative /s/. The overlapping of these consonants requires much mouth activity as the facility of the mouth and its role in creating language is also evident. The voiced stop consonant /d/ is characterised by vocal cord vibration during the actual block, while the /p/, /k/ and /t/ involve a noise, due to lack of cord vibration, during and following the block. The fricative /s/, where the tongue position constricts the back of the mouth, forces air forward and makes a louder hissing sound. The physical energy required to make these sounds is displayed through Stewart's jerking head movements. The polyphony of such self-reflexive acoustic elements draws the audience's ear to the percussive qualities of the sounds. It is difficult to distinguish the two voices that overlap in a conflicting spitting match. The audience hears a staccato rhythm of pulses, sensing the performer's frustration with language while experiencing

this frustration themselves. Stewart plays with Lacan's theory of phoneme acquisition in infants who are in scrambled pre-oedipal states.

Sound gestures have some cultural meaning for the listener. In *section 2* *o d dbp a* and *owgh /aw/* is emphasised between the light spits of other sounds. The rising intonation on /o/ and /d/ sounds like a plea while the fall on *bdp* and rise-fall on /a/ sounds like the resignation of a performer who realises the difficulty of using the sound source to communicate. After a short pause, as if to take a breath, the performer tries again to express herself in *section 3*. The subject voice maintains singular sounds with disjunctures between *o e oa i* while the object voice has shorter repeated vowel sounds *ooo e aaa*. The disjunctures are indicated by the spaces between the letters. We hear numerous mouth sounds: /i/ from the high front, /ε/ front middle, /ae/ front low and /a/ back low. *Oow a /uʌ/*, *o /ɒ/*, *eh /ε/* and *air /εə/* represent Stewart's struggle to breathe as she tries to express herself. The use of intonation shows us where prosody can indicate the intersection between sound and sense as the individually intonated sounds are charged with emotion. Disjuncture in the rhythm creates this effect. The sounds are made with an extremely narrow pitch range and level intonation, typical of anxiety and desperation sensed in the speaker whose desires erupt into consciousness.

In *section 5*, mouth sounds of teeth sucking, sighing and chattering represent Stewart's communication through gesture. The teeth chattering and shivering is perhaps Stewart indicating the cold and fearful place of being out of context. Sighing and sucking teeth indicates the disappointment. A sharp breath in is Stewart's usual oral sign for not being able to express. This also shows the importance of vocal cues in making meaning. Stewart begins to create her own language by relying on the familiar conventions of vocal gesture to relay her feelings. Because these sounds are defamiliarised and juxtaposed we not only hear their semantic loading in an unusual context but we hear the percussive elements of speech. This draws attention to the physical way meaning is communicated by the voice and mouth.

In *section 10*, the prosodic nature of the vocal gesture is exaggerated by the mournful dialogue played out between the voices. The resonating long sounds of the object voice are pitched quite high with rising inflection on each by pushing air through the nose which makes them sound like long pleading moans followed by a sigh. This also



gives a feeling of uncertainty and nervousness as the performer's own reservations about language are relayed to the listener. Disjunctures after these sighs create expectation in the listener as the speaker retains the audience's attention. I have mapped the polyphonic movement between the voices to show the overlapping of sounds and key:

subject mid      huh /      ha / huh /      ha / huh /  
low

high      oooooh //      hoooh//  
object mid  
low      mnnnn //

high      /  
subject mid huh / huh /      huh / huh / e      // huh huh  
low      a

high      /  
object mid      e      // hooo      neh //  
low      hoooh //      a

Maintenance of middle key on most level stressed sounds in the subject voice creates neutrality while the emotive high pitch inflections are heard from the object voice. Rhythm contrasts the voices as the object voice has a short-long *huh huh* against long moans interjecting from the subject voice. The cries *e a* are sung at pitch in unison sounding like a lament for the nature of language or the self. The sound *huh* is made at the back of the throat with open mouth and *ooooh* with lips tensely rounded. Stewart has taken the speech sounds of *huh* and *oohh* and exaggerated their sonic and culturally determined meaning to create a duet of breathy sighing, demonstrating the musicality of our vocal gestures. The corporeality of Stewart's discourse suggests vocal gesture has much to offer feminine expression. The use of prosodic notation shows how the voices relate to each other at the interpersonal level suggesting vocal gestures might dialogue like words. The value of vocal gesture as emotive bodily expression is that it escapes markings of patriarchal discourses as sound is its primary mode of expression.

Motif gives this work some unity among its rapidly changing colours and contours. It has a textual function of creating coherence within the work. A unifying feature of the performance is the recurring motif *e a* usually sung with a melancholy rising interval. First heard in *section 4*, it seems all the more unusual to the listener because the vowel form falls from high front vowel *e* to low medium vowel sound *a* but Stewart's pitch rises. Stewart subverts the listener's familiarity with typical intonation contours creating a rather unnerving effect. The first time we hear *e a* it imitates the sound of a pleading tone with rising interval as if speaking to the audience:

*objects are like*  
*there are one e a*  
*subject to like*  
*there is e a*

The familiar motif is heard again in *section 6* with the return of *e a* sung by the subject voice in a resonating rising interval. A sense of floating vowels freed from words is heard. The result is a sound like *here ya a* complemented by *yha?* As in *ya here?* Other motifs are made from the punctuating, fragmenting or conflating of pronouns *she*, *he*, *her*, *I*, *you* and *it*. The performance opens with *i/it* in the subject voice and *i/you* in the object voice as Stewart points to 'the Real' by folding the self into the other. The audience cannot distinguish between the self and other and the use of dialogic texts continues to perpetuate this struggle as Stewart dissolves binaries.

*Sections 18* and *21* fragment the pronouns in an attempt to displace gender identities. *she* is sung with a rich tone quality, truncating the *sh e it* with lower pitch on *e* and higher staccato on *it* as indicated on the score. This has the effect of breaking *she* and *it* into */sh/* as in 'to be quiet', *he* and *it*. Stewart conflates the personal pronouns to dismantle gender oppositions. The fall-rise within the groups usually suggests a sonic form of agreement with the listener so again an unnerving effect is created as we are fooled by the intonation into a familiar contour by a very irregular deconstruction. The sound */sh/*, signifying the silencing of women also instantiates gender oppositions, yet Stewart's creative re-working of the pronoun *she* subverts the notion of women as silent subjects. Her aim is to defamiliarise as a means of forefronting her aims to find a place for feminine expression outside dominant modes of expression.

*I* is frequently sung at high pitch above the other words and sounds. It is emphasised as the symbol of identity able to be passed from speaker to speaker. *it* is also scattered throughout at high pitch representing the object or other. This reflexive nature of the performance, where Stewart's own linguistic strategies become her subject matter, creates an original listening experience as the listener is forced to formulate meanings from unfamiliar combinations, gaining more of an impression of possible meanings rather than an absolute. Such an emphasis involves a different type of listening that requires attention to the musicality of sound and verbal gesture and its conventional meaning while maintaining a preparedness for the unexpected use of these sounds in an experimental manner.

### Vocal Indices

The work employs the use of recognisable words for their musical possibilities to further dialogue with psychoanalytic terms and language acquisition to represent reflexively in sound. The rhythm of the words removes them from conversational prosodic patterns while the polyphony enhances their dialogic nature and sonic interest. They also evoke, through indexical entailment, culturally learnt meanings in the listener. Stewart transforms these sounds by exaggerating the rhythm and timbre of an everyday expression into an energetic interplay which thereby increases the sonic potential of the words. The sound semiotics of Stewart's vocal gestures opens up a space of meaning potential for words as sounds and sounds for their semantic value. It is the semiotic exchange that takes place at the interface of word and sound that is crucial for realising Stewart's new place of feminine subjectivity. The value of this interface is in the way words might be read for their semantic value or for their rhythmic, timbral values within the structure of the work.

In *section 12*, we are reminded of a jazz scat singer as Stewart punches out her deconstruction of infant babble and non-standard English. Stewart's deconstruction of Freud into a non-standard English dialect demonstrates how identities are not stable and might be constantly reconstituted. The rhythm and vocal timbres of *don't dyou do dat* are

percussive as the voices interact in a dialogue. The *do* and *d* are articulated aggressively, stressing the onset consonant with heavy accent. In context the listener might hear the exchange as a response to the whining and *oohing* of the previous two sections or as a breaking down of a dominant voice into fragments. Such deconstructing of the word into sound relinquishes its power and renders it dislocated from the symbolic order of meaning. This forefronts intonation as a dominant feature occurring at the interface of semantics and sound.

The two voices are in a war of words. The subject voice begins the section and is joined by the object voice on *do*:

*Subject* *Da Do Da Do*  
*Object*     *Do Do*

The prosodic key and stress emphasises *Don* in high key over the others, attaching greater significance to this negative instruction. Even tone allows the key to form the intonation contour.

1\_  
*Don*  
   2\_ 2\_  
  *dyou do*  
      3\_  
      *dat*

Further on the subject voice rises in key to stress the final *dat*:

          1^  
          *dat*  
2\_ 2\_ 2\_  
*Don dyou do*

The rise-fall indicates wariness while the final is more certain in the object voice:

Don't

*dō dat*

A deep subject voice builds in speed and dynamic while high key *didn* sounds are heard in contrast over the top, denying the accusations. Repetition of the plosive /d/ is forceful but the stuttered rhythm, broken by disjunctures of varying length, neutralises any certainty. The listener uses the pitch and temporal differences to accentuate the lines as well as the syntax and semantics to disentangle the messages about how our language use determines our identity.

Another example where words are manipulated into rhythmic sound is in *section 16* which is all about *knowing* and its sonic relation to the word *noun*. It is also semantically linked as 'knowledge' and 'noun' are associated with power and identity. This symbolic meaning is somewhat diminished by the chanting circularity of the text:

*you know what i know  
a known's a known's (a known is)  
a noun is a noun  
i know what I know*

A mumbled voice reciting a mantra or chanting in a meditation is heard. This seems to represent the way patriarchal society perpetuates its own propaganda of 'knowing' or 'being' the power holders of knowledge through their ability to name and control knowledge. The nasal /n/, produced by closing the soft palate so that sound resonates in the nasal chamber, creates a resonating continuum in unstressed low key. A breath in at the end indicates the relief of Stewart who has finally released herself from this vicious cycle. The theme of breathing threads throughout the performance, representing the suffocation of language for women who need to breathe or find freedom from its constraints. Stewart again takes the rhythm of speech to its extreme by repetition and exaggeration to forefront its potential as sound. By presenting the words as sounds, Stewart's text-sound models her sentiments by demonstrating how language is a trap. It also shows how this trap can be exploited for its sound qualities as a means to remove us from it.

## **Conclusion**

Stewart's piece is diverse in its use of linguistic and sonic devices. It varies in mood by rapidly changing pace, dynamics, tone colour and intonation. This gives the performance an energy which invigorates the listener. She calls on us, through her delivery, to think about the issues of power and knowledge implicit in the text and structure of the work. She reduces philosophical discourse to sound, undermining its potential to dominate. Stewart plays with the experiential function by sarcastically listing negative semantic values for women in the subject and object parts of her text. She then engages the interpersonal level to disperse these values in dialogic polyphony. The two voices operate dialogically and simultaneously as they connect vertically and horizontally through semantic content, challenging the listener to make sense. This contrasts to the use of sounds that rely on prosodic intonation for communication about the speaker's frustration with a culture defined by symbolic language. Words are also used for their musical possibilities as Stewart operates between the symbolic and semiotic to create a new place for expressing the feminine. This new multimodal discourse cannot be appreciated at once in its entirety. It must be heard as fragments.

Sections involving polyphonic texts are either mumbled recitations in low key or emotionally charged aggressive exchanges of diverse key and stress. In both cases Stewart uses the layering of voices to create a dialogue where the prosodic features of the performed word and fragmentation of theories indicate her scepticism of the supposed truths of identity and culture. The subject, although bodily marked by its gender, class and race, might change the existing space of the privileged discourses by rewriting them in sound. Stewart does this by telling many stories at once and telling them in new ways. This rewriting through sound, word and word sound makes a place for embodied women subjects that might escape exchange. She contributes to the project of feminist semiotics to fulfil a non-verbal semiosis and heterogeneity that critiques the mind/body dichotomy that excludes women's differentiated experiences of the social.