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*Old Man:*  
*If only I could put things into inevitable-sounding words.*

*Old Woman:*  
*Once you've started it'll sound inevitable enough – like living and dying. The decision is everything. Speaking itself brings words and ideas into existence – and maybe you and I, through our words, can rediscover the city, and the garden, and not be orphans any more.*

(Eugène Ionesco: *The Chairs*)

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## BEGINNING

This paper evaluates the realisation of *What it Was When it Happened*, a body of research that stems from an ongoing series of audio recordings with individuals, eliciting descriptions of a time of personal change. Throughout my research process, I have worked with the source material; the recordings have been edited, redacted, and presented in a variety of forms, in a range of media<sup>1</sup>, with the intention to explore their content, meaning and implications and to use Felix Guattari's term, their potential for 'production of new subjectivities' (used frequently in Guattari 1995). These multiple forms track the journey of the material and lead to this final body of work.

There has been an expanding and development of key ideas; the voice and language as a conveyors of memory; the processes of fragmentation and removal that are at play in the work; the notion of conversation and its relation to performance; and the staging of the voice in space. The development of a final work for public exhibition allows for opportunity to resolve these ideas with closer consideration of the relationship with the audience and the spatial arrangement of elements. This has allowed for deeper delving into notions of performance and presence in relation to the voice, which has been a crucial concept in the resolution of the work.

**I suppose wave,  
a wave,  
a big wave. Like an  
ocean wave, just being  
on that.**

**And on a surfboard  
riding that wave.**

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## ANAMNESIS

My material is the voice, recorded voice from constructed, one-to-one scenarios, between the individual 'participant' and myself; eliciting a personal narrative of change, of life story and often intimate disclosure of feeling. Ideas of affect, sensation and emotion are the verbal content of these staged dialogues or interviews. The recordings hold memories, personal histories, recollections of experience; all expressed through voice. They also contain silences, stutters and hesitations; vocal utterances adrift on an axis on signification.

Employing the voice as a medium for externalising memory and experience brings me to encounter other territories – including documentary, oral history, and most importantly, psychoanalysis – the 'talking cure'. The voice is employed within psychoanalysis as a tool to "fill the gaps in the patient's memory" (Freud 2003:34), and as a means of externalising unconscious drives.

"Whether it sees itself as an instrument of healing, of training or of exploration in depth, psychoanalysis has only a single medium: the patient's speech"  
(Lacan 1992: 40)

By focusing the one-to-one dialogues on past experience and sensations of metamorphoses, I have elicited descriptions of emotional intensities, of immaterial forces. This concept of immateriality is pertinent, both in its relationship to the immateriality of the voice itself and to the subjective and fleeting nature of phenomenological experience and memory and our

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resulting attempts to give this form. The works created have attempted to present our grappling with this immateriality, and the range of modes through which we do this; with language at the helm.

“I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object.” (Lacan 1992:86)

Psychotherapy’s employment of language as its principle medium shows us of our trust in words as keyholders to the interior worlds of memory, experience and emotion. Conversely, Freud identified that silence can speak just as loudly with his concept of ‘screen memories’<sup>2</sup>, which lays fertile ground for exploring the fragility of spoken memory as a conveyer of historical truth.

Part of my process has been to explore this vehicle of spoken memory through language, to embrace it and also to disrupt it, to convey ideas of both the inefficacy of language as well as its power to generate new meaning and to give life to latent ideas. Examples of this can be seen in the images included within this paper (on pages 6,9,11,16,19 and 22), which present extracted text from the one-to-one dialogues<sup>3</sup>. These extractions employ the language of comparison and metaphor as attempts to describe intangible sensation and experience – our attempts to contend with the ephemeral nature of phenomenological experience.

Samuel Raphael’s writings explore the fragility of memory and the various layers of subjectivity and ‘re-writing’ that historical



**Yeah, now it's kind of more in the air. It was, I don't know, more like a wood. Now it's more like air. Much lighter, yes. And you can't take it. Like, you can't, err, physically take it. But it's there.**

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reality and memory filter through, stating that: “however jealously we protect the integrity of our subject matter, we cannot insulate it from ourselves” (Samuel 2012:430). We are continually re-forming our histories through words and, as we do so, incorporating the context of present experience.

“History involves a series of erasures, emendations and amalgamations quite similar to those which Freud sets out in his account of ‘screen memories’, where the unconscious mind, splitting, telescoping, displacing and projecting, transposes incidents from one time register to another.” (Samuel 2012:xxiii)

These ‘erasures, emendations and amalgamations’; the ‘splitting, telescoping and displacing’ that Samuel conjures; are core terms and processes within this realised body of work. They echo the edited, fractured speech I am working with, the vocal stutters, the repetitions that form this speech of memory, emotion and personal narrative. They echo the new assemblages that occur when the material is re-ordered, repeated, displaced, to open up new subjectivities and “fields of virtuality” (Guattari 1995:18). They work to open up perspectives of experience that deviate from the linear timeline of representation and resonate with Samuel Beckett’s representations of the inner self<sup>4</sup>.

**Dropping a pebble...  
it's, in the,  
in the water or  
whatever and then  
the water sort of... the  
ripples kind of go out.**

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## DURATION

“It is language which introduces the succession or chronology of one after the other and thus betrays the experiential indissociability of the one in the other” (Cariou 1999:111)

Language is a driver of narrative: the ordering and sequencing of events to present as a coherent and intelligible representation of elements – through words. We equate with this that experience happens and can be depicted in such a way.

“we give ordered sequence, with a beginning middle and an end, to events which to the participants themselves may have seemed quite random” (Samuel 2012:435)

Henri Bergson’s theories of duration have been influential within my research, in their de-mystification of experience composed of a series of sequential, isolated events. His idea of duration allows to us to consider the role of present perception in relation to memory:

“to replace ourselves in the pure duration, of which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another: a continuity which is really lived, but artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge” (Bergson 1991:186)

The editing processes I have employed in working with the recorded narratives allow for a re-ordering of temporal elements.

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They initiate a 'breaking apart' as a reflection of duration, flow and one experiential state flowing from and infiltrating another; moving towards a resemblance of lived experience.

“this continuity of becoming, which is the living reality, a discontinuous multiplicity of elements, inert and juxtaposed” (Bergson 1991:134)

From the recordings, I have extracted references to concrete events and detail, removed 'keyframes', names, significant times and markers to leave behind descriptions of internal process, of sensation of metamorphosis, of single words and non-verbal utterance; in order to explore these 'in-betweens', the sensation, feeling, experience of the 'main event'. And from this we are left with allusions, suggestions of grand narrative and epic life story, without being led tidily to the resolution of finale. These residues speak of “transitions between states” (Guattari in Bertelsen & Murphie 2010:145) a kind of coming into being that is nevertheless always in transition (Massumi in Bertelsen & Murphie 2010:145). This works to generate a de-centering through removal of subject and core narrative elements, to enable new “flows of connection” for the audience.

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## POLYPHONY

The audio recordings stem from encounters with over 20 individuals; my process has been that of an assembling of multiple subjectivities. These voices each bring with them their own vocal nuances and this texture of multiplicity of voice is a fundamental aspect of the work. This multiplicity evokes a new conversation, a reconfigured relationship between numerous voices – between numerous selves or even suggesting the profusion of selves within one individual, resembling the inner voice of the Beckettian subject.

“The idea of a singular self is an illusion”.... “he (Samuel Beckett) acknowledges that the self is not a stable subject but rather that the ‘individual is a succession of individuals’” (Boutler 2008:16)

The concept of multiple voice has been extended further by using the intrinsic directional quality of sound to separate layers of audio within space; to use space and directionality as mediums in themselves. In practical terms this has involved the extension from single channel audio to working on 8 separate channels, played through 8 separate speakers.

The polyphonic arrangement connects and develops the concept of conversation, fragmentation and multiple viewpoints, further accentuating “a “subjective pluralism” engaging with the complexity of affective events” (Bertelson and Murphie 2010:141).

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Extending the process of fragmentation to into multiple directions, I have allowed increased opportunity to experiment with processes of assemblage within space; of unison, echoing, concurrence and delay. This extension allows for further planes of connection and mirrors “processes of communication and mutual contamination of states of experience.” (Braidotti 2002:9). We are perhaps getting closer to the reality of lived experience.

Within this there is potential to generate a kind of orchestration, with possibility for new relational aspects between these different voices. They take on a presence in space, and with that - a performative quality. There is potential for new dialogues, for voices to feel closer or further away, to connect with differing elements depending on where you are located. This extension of auditive elements in space implicates the audience as co-habitators of that space, and this is something I have intended to exploit, developing through aspects of mise-end-scene.

**For me, is, is... is actually a very industrial, heavy, mechanical, like.... handle... that literally just shifts gear. Like it's very.... it's, it's a very, in my head, you know physically, and emotionally and mentally or whatever.. It feels like.... A very literal..... action of shifting a gear.**



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## DESIRE

“**Melody** is the figure of confused multiplicity, the figure of duration. We are dealing with a succession of qualities and nuances of feeling, but “a succession without distinction” (EDI 75 [101]). Elements overlap and interpenetrate in a peculiar solidarity.” (Guerlac 2006:66)

This layering of different voices brings forward the prosody of voice to generate a kind of instrumentation, and a revealing of the idiosyncratic nature of utterance, the relationship of the voice with the individual; and hence - subjectivity. It explores the tonality and music of individual voices and the contribution of this ‘music’ to conveyance of meaning; it is the voice outside of language.

“there is a speech which makes sense, and in that horizon of sense-making there is suddenly a disturbance, the intrusion of the voice, the sound, which functions as a disruption of which we cannot make sense” (Dolar 2006:141)

Mladen Dolar presents Lacan’s concept of *lalange* as an exploration of this opposition, which caters for these disparate elements in speech: the voice as a carrier of language (sense), entwined with the indescribable intensities of vocal sonority:

“*lalangue* is not language taken as the signifier, but neither is it conceiving language simply under the auspices of sound echoes. It is, rather, *the concept of*

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*their very difference, the difference of the two logics, their split and their union in that very divergence” (Dolar 2006: 143)*

This contradiction outlined by Dolar is crucial within this final body of work: these descriptions of sensation, their emotive content are driven through language and yet also contain more than language – they contain the ineffable, the immaterial prosody of the voice. They cradle the Lacanian concept of desire - that drives our articulations; which demands the response of the ‘other’ and insinuates the idea of connectivity:

“what I seek in speech is the response of the other. What constitutes me as a subject is my question.” (Lacan 1992:86)

This integral deliverance of desire within the voice, the entanglement with the ‘other’ gives potential for exploring new expressions of subjectivity outside of the signifying element. It allows us to enter murky terrain, to accommodate moments of uncertainty, elements of our experience that fall beyond words. This desire, this aura of the voice, is a projection of something vital; it generates a presence. This desire also shows that our expressions are not isolated objects, that we speak with the ‘other’ in mind. I have been seeking to assemble the work with this notion of connection, of relationship - in relation to performance. The voice’s integral relationship with the ‘other’ and with desire generates a dynamic that fuels, that drives speech and draws it into the realms of ‘liveness’ and of performativity.

**It's kind of... very exciting, urm, the object of the sea... urm, so the pull, and, you know, the pull and the crashing. Cos it was kind of... so you are kind of like the sea, a sort of, a little bit in turmoil as well.**

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## PERFORMANCE

The voice occurs in “a unique present, where memory plays its tricks” (Bal 2002:177) and like performance, “becomes itself through disappearance” (Phelan 1993:146). I have been keen to explore this ‘liveness’ of the voice and to look at the act of speech as an immersion in a present, as a moment-by-moment construction. The dynamics of conversation, of interaction between two or more people, induce established “sequences of behaviour” (Goffman 1972:1), which resonate with ideas of performance. These include certain gestures and social ritual including “turn-taking, openings and closings, adjacency pairs, topic management and topic shift, agreement and disagreement” (Jaworski & Coupland 1999:20). In fact the rhetoric of discourse analysis is a revealing marker of the relationship of conversational speech to a performative concept. Speakers in a conversation are described as ‘actors’, ‘participants’ or ‘co-interactants’ (Jaworski & Coupland 1999:22) and the context of discourse between two people as a ‘frame’, and an ‘agreement’:

“A *frame* comes to be placed around the actions and utterances of the participants” (Kendon 1999:367)

Erving Goffman explicitly relates these everyday actions to a performance, describing individuals as ‘performers’ and describing a ‘line’ as “a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts” (Goffman 1972:5). Psychoanalysis too, employs similar ideas, outlining that a patient ‘acts out’ their neurosis in the occurrence of screen memories, which occlude access to conscious understanding:

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“He produces it not as a memory, but as an action; he repeats it,” (Freud:36)

These ideas of the performative nature of dialogue, conversation and of participation in psychoanalysis, can be reflected, in turn, back to the idea of our memories and narratives – how these themselves are constructions and performances.

“As such, memories are not ‘things’ that could be conserved in the brain as in a drawer, but ‘acts’ which can be facilitated or inhibited by the established mechanisms of habit” (Cariou 1999:108)

We continually renew our sense of self and our identity through acting out our aspects of narrative in each present moment. We do this in the context of presenting our inner, private self to a public-facing ‘audience’; we do so in relation to the ‘other’. I have intended to construct a stage for these performances, these fractured re-assemblings of memory, of uncertainty. I am framing the work with this idea of presentation of self and narrative in mind.

**Urm, the moving of a black velvet curtain. Would be what I would say is the sort of... like the curtains you have in cinemas, the old fashioned cinemas, sort of those deep purple curtains. They way they are.... as being one side of the curtain at one point and then I was the other side.**

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## STAGE

The extension of the voice into space has been an important process in developing key concepts within the work. The origin of the dialogues as encounters with multiple individuals (who are other than myself - the artist), bring a relational aspect to the work which I have wanted to extend within its staging, taking "the visual discourse from third person story into first-/second-person interaction" (BAL 2002: 103)

The spatial arrangement of these voices through multiple speakers has generated a sense of presence. The aura of the voice occupies a territory, and the audience's potential to interact with those territories is important. The spatialisation of sound provides a stage within which the audience may enter into, and bring their own presence into the presentation of multiple subjectivities, engaging with "the inevitable projection of the self into space and with it all the mirror-games which offer their traps." (Cariou 1999:105)

I have been keen to relate the idea of presence with the performativity of the voice, the performativity of memory and construction of narrative in relation to this staging. There is a sensation of presence of voice, and with that a crucifying absence. There are no humans within this constructed stage, only the absent presence of their voices, which disappear and re-appear from moment to moment. The empty chairs speak both of this presence and this absence and provide a platform through which the audience can sit within the work, and experience it from one of many viewpoints.

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I am inviting the audience to spend time within this stage, to sit and be present with the absent voices configured in space. I am inviting them to experience the in-betweens, the moments of uncertainty; to hear, to not-quite-hear the words, the ideas removed from their original context. I am inviting them to let these utterances, the polyphonic subjectivity linger within their own consciousness and to “enter into the thickness of duration where our memories are forged.” (Cariou 1999:102)



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## NOTES

1 These include text-based works, photographic interventions and configurations of the audio recordings themselves

2 The concept of 'screen memories' was developed by Freud and describe an internal process of screening out memories which proved unacceptable to the ego. Freud states "The forgetting of impressions, scenes, experiences comes down in most cases to a process of 'shutting out' such things." (Freud 2003:34)

3 These extracted pieces of text originate from specific questions within the recorded dialogues that asked the participant to relate the sensation they were describing to something concrete, tangible or physical. This was intended to explore our use of language in describing abstract concepts and ideas of feeling, emotion and sensation. How this employment of comparative and metaphorical description can be used to describe these 'indescribable' experiences.

4 Samuel Beckett disrupted conventional language structure, employing repetition and often disregarding grammar, to produce texts that act almost like a stream of consciousness. The texts that have been formative for this current body of research include: *Not I*, *How It Is*, and *The Unnamable*.

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