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(Un)Spoken

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(UN)SPOKEN

by

Vanessa Barraco

A Creative Writing Project

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

through the Department of English Language, Literature, and Creative Writing

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Masters of Arts at the

University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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(UN)SPOKEN

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ABSTRACT

(Un)Spoken is a collection of experimental poems that explore various compositional techniques to express types of silence. Language is embedded with silence, for there are things or experiences that Language cannot say. When Language fails to communicate, silence speaks. This thesis finds what is possible in language, fragmenting and distorting Language so it can express unspoken experiences. The interplays between silence and language suggests inexpressibility, resisting structure and order so deeply rooted in Language. This thesis aims to give voice to what should be said, while also revealing the compulsoriness of silence to communicate what cannot be said.

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ISAY “I”

Hours

fingers dance on

pennies

for hours

print

penny ridges

into

fingers

prints

bumps and bruises

are ridges on pennies

remind

of skin

if

fingers

keep riding pennies

then

fingers

prints

could bleed

too

fingers

dance with pennies

because a ridge

rhymes with

every memory in

head

every ridge is a ridge is a ridge is a ridge is a ridge

and i

inch closer

to the surface

thoughts of

fingers

tips

friction heads and tails

stroking two pennies

the leaves

remind

you

of your hands

covering

hands over

heads and faces

fingers

prints

over hands and faces

they say if

a mosquito

bites

and

see it sucking

blood

pinch it

if only i

could pinch

a penny

Non-Disclosure Agreement I

i live in

document

backspace

enter

insert me in

pages

pushing me

in spaces where

words

squeeze me in

words

push me

to the borders

spread me

on paper

but I can't

find me

anywhere

Non-Disclosure Agreement II

address me as

party

i am

part

trace

ink on paper

like goose bumps

on my skin

write every inch

of me

and thumb

keep

thumbing me

like a child playing with

an Etch a Sketch

knob knob

knobbing me

as the stylus finger

scratches

aluminum powder

from under

the screen

to edge solid lines

the mole on my back

the kp on my elbows and

the callus on my big toe

onto the screen

the knobs knob knobbing hands knobble and knobble

make me a lineographic image

Save as

what

and title

me

2.doc

file

i

in

files

If Mouths Could Move

my tongue chews on words

flapping,

batting the muscle

the stretches

out

to say

because

words fly

sticking

to the insides

of my mouth

words cloud

my voice

and

word clouds

smother

me

my tongue

tracing the language

of word clouds

in my

mouth

signing

our

words

on my palate

but

swallow

them

for me

You &

tell me to write

myself in

where

say

Signature

I

am not anywhere

so I

take an ant

running for my lamp

and place

it on the line where

want me

squish it

between

pages

like ink

blot

so

cannot

find me

anywhere

& I

you

tell to write

in

where

you

say

Signature

am not anywhere

so my

take an ant

running for lamp

and place

it on the line where

you

want

squish it

between

your

pages

like ink

blot

so

you

cannot

find

anywhere

Tattooed

i

put you

on me

today

wrapped

around

my wrist

so when i

eat

i see you

and all i

taste

is you

and when

i

wash the dishes

you scrub

plates

with me

but soap

won't run

you

down the
drain
ink
needs to
cover me
with you
so my arm
is painted
every colour
of you
you always asked
me
to shave
my arms
i let you
run
under my skin
so i turn
my blood
turquoise
your favourite
colour
pigmented

my lymph

nodes

like a dart

on the map

i feel you

heavy in

spaces

asking me to

go there

in the insides

of my skin

but

they do not

give

maps for tattoos

you always asked

me to shave my

arms

so

I grew them out

THIS IS (NOT) WHAT THEY SAID

ma Bod

is
Re is

he ... ate ... sations,
women. ... minded ... of ... women

articles ... devoted several pages and ... March
not ... in, ... pages on

... a ful woman ... to
+ ... picture of women's

... pants ...
shocking

form art ne t

own bodies

erent Geti search
Documenting
phem al Art,
for men p artists, art.

Women

rea r s
deemed
provocative, inappropriate, and disgusting,
stab
visual culture
and art history.

eat *The Nude Stud*

erned

imeters for

nakedness

male artist's genius

cut

pen

sign

female

body.

undarie

female form

con

nature

ltime, female "nude." |

p in

recise

standing

female body.

kin i t

the eye

off the canvas and into the

cents of

men

i

se e
you

In all of them,

a

vagina,

I read it out loud.
pull a scroll out of my vagina and

read it

)

organ a voice,

iron

Morph *Fresh Blood,*

install

images of

Vagina

squatting on the floor

womanhood,

...

cracked 740

(chicken) eggs

create

male

body,

female

bodies

d

ance

on

art

ship

rights to their very own

bodies.

I

text into my work. I was six foot four, looked
down at I he said,

art:

still.

Notes

weight,

A Stud of ' Art

“The Triumph of Shit,” in

Art” sure of birth. Lip Pains
-----,

say

I never thought I was shocking’.

'silence **ear** **ours**

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Time **named** **men**
and men

... move ... close ... MeToo
 sprung up a legal ...
 Hollywood producer ... /einstein.
 But Time says
 the fastest-moving social change we've seen in decades,"

women -
 stories"
iquit
ass **showcasing women**

bottom. | grab | her

strawberry

engineer

are identified as

' women

races, i
of the globe."

silence .
all corners

the magazine explains, that the "mould was broken"

user-generated internet

content.

'he

'Named
'O

einstein, sparked

women coming forward.

“Today”

: complaints soon followed.

THE REPLY

Ant

Meeting

Faneuil Hall, April 28, 1914.



On taking the chair Mr. Guild said: fitted by nature to monkey pulling a sledge or a dog climbing trees. The power

man

pee

is

I am delighted to note that Women's Suffrage was undisturbed

hysterical

The

It was the curse of Athens that caused downfall

position of the husband

Now

woman is the

by dec-

lamation from a soap

exercise of love and

guardianship and caution

State in action

not merely in body but

man do best for

in brain

man, that

country. If George Washington probably had more influence on

THE REPLY

the history of

fashion

Women are

strict truth more observant of the

The great masses of intelligent women

greater respect for an oath
excels in conducting public
meetings and elections with order and
decorum?

fighting with
man weakness,

so today

over would have prevailed
Israel the male champion of

woman

saw Victor,
struck by a woman with a huge
crucifix he was carrying
for Bryan's

Debt.

taking the sandwiches
out of the mouths of men!

STICKS AND STONES AND WORDS HAVE BONES

Bared

y•ou • sp(l(i)•t)

m•e • l(i)•ke a

w(i•sh)•b•one

i s(a•id) • i co•ul•d

f•ly • y•ou

pl•uc•ked

h•(a(i)r) f•rom

m•y • ar•ms

do•nt gr•ow t(h(e•re)

i grow every•(w•h•ere)

Choked

y•ou put

r(u)b•ber i•n

my

th•ro(at)

you

f(il)l•e•d

with air

p•u(sh)ed) y•(o(ur)

th•(um)bs

d•o(wn)

and

l(is)(t•en)ed

to me

sq•ueak

y•o(ur)

dog•'•s

to•y

for

h•o(urs)

Tie

you

b(r(a(i•ded)

(me (t)•o y)ou

(so w)e•(•)(re)

t•(ied) to•(ge(t)•he)r)

i am t•(her)e)

p(l•e(as)e)

b•r(u(sh) me

h(a•r)d

and b•reak

t•he k•not

that (h•ol)ds

me

you p•l(a)y

with h•a(i)r

(too o)f•ten

g(r•(e•(•as)e)

s•(in)king in

f(ill)•ing) my

str•(an)ds with

you can keep

grow•ing

but i

do•n(°)t

Sculpted

you

ca(n(')t) d•raw

you

say

wr•(is)t

w(o(n)•'t) t•(ur)n

like an

(ar)t•(is)t(')s c•an

so

you

m•ake me

(p(a•p)er) ma•(ch)e

so you

(w•r(it)e all over me

i(')m g(l•ued)

to w(or)•ds

i am

he(ad)•(in)gs

Trudeau Liberals Trod

and

(b(od)•ie)s

c•(ov)er their

f•e(e)t on my

b•r(east)

but wh•(ere)

am i

my right

(s(hould)•er

says

on t•hurs•day

it was

f•(our)teen deg•(r(e)es)

i

d•id n•ot k•now

The Hears

You
 kept a jar
 of p(en)•n(i)es
 on the (t(a)b•(le)
 scratching your fingernails
 into the
 wood
 under
 a lamp
 (• ••)
 your fingers
 (sc•at)•tered with
 s•(liv(e)rs)
 your jar of
 smiling Elizabeths
 press cheek
 to (ch)•e(ek)
 listening
 on c(op)•p(er)
 leaves
 (tell me • how do they sound)
 and she

ever sees

(au(d)i•(e)nce) with

the Q•(ue)en

(l•(is)(t)en) to what

she (h•e)(ars)

you like

that she

does not

••

anything

Mostly Water

Salt

dev•oured

my mouth

all I ever

tasted

was my

body

(r•(im)med

like

glass

Caesar's drink

my

fingers

because

I can

swallow them

(w•h(o)le)

and salty

i•'s

crawl

down

my face

sw•(all)ow)

all of them

so no bruises

of me on the (ce•m(en)t)

floor

i keep all of

me •

WRAPPING MY MOUTH AROUND GRIEF

“I used your toothbrush today.”

t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t

to rush

teeth

too u

toothbrush too u

too too u

to ush

teeth to ush

ee

tush iy teeth

iy bush to brush iy teeth

your toothbrush

iy teeth

iy bush

ush

th

your

toothbrush tush ush ee

tush iy teeth

not just th th th th th th th th th th th

y

our your or I

tooth brush

rush ush

your brush say

did i ush

brush your way

did your toothbrush say

I us ed your our

toothbrush today

to sooth the rush

i i ushed

is ushed

i tot

your toothbrush today

“I just broke what you gave me.”

you at me

i at you

jam

you

je

je am

you

im me

im time im time

i be

broke

you r just im time

time me time me

i broke

ti me ti me

to the broke

im broke

the gave is broke

is the grave broke

I broke it too

I am gave

you at the gave

the grave

r u

u

at the gave

the grave

i gave u the grave

i broke what u gave me

i same me

is the sum ov me

i the sum of me

or sum of me u

gave sum of me too

u gave sum of u

i rok my arm

rok my arm

u gave me

rok arm

to give you

to me

i rok my arm

to be you

to be ar

u

rok u im

my arm

to be ar u

im my arm

u are im my arm

whem i

rok

u roke im me

my arm

whem I rok

my arm

r u im my arm

u knot im my arm

r a know im my arm

knot u im ar

me

a knot im me

u r u it

u kno me whem u r a knot

u knot u everywhere

everywhere

i rok every

everywhere

r u

to u

ok at u

everwhere

more u

i rok ever were

vor u

veer u to me

i rok more u more u

i rok more of u im me

i rok

what u

g ave me ave me

i

m

e

u knot

u r a e

am e

r u a m e

r u

u r a

e

u b e a e

i b a r k a t o k e

a t r e e

i t b a r k a t m e

w h e m

a m i

y o u y e t

i r o k t a t r e e

k n o t i n a t r e e

u w e r e

t e r e a t a t r e e

e r e u i h e r e u

r o k t i t a k a n

i k a n

b a r k a t a a

a t m e

i am the gave

it barkd at me

to rok im to you

r u not a knot

a oke a tree

r u

a every

a were

ever were

or

r u just a

gave

“I paint these purple too.”

the ips

the ips

o

pur

pur oo ips

the ips are purple

i oo

oo i i

too purple

to se oo

i purple too

oo pur pur pur pur pur

the ips

ps i

se purple to

in oo

oo purple

pain purple in purple

pin purple in oo

i pin purple

n i

pur purple

on the ips

i pin oo

pin ur pain

in purple on

oo in purple i se

on the ips the ips

ur ple

pese ples

ur ples

se ples oo see the ples

i a i

an i s purple

t o o

u is purple too

an i is i

see oo

ants pur

in purple too

purple the oor

the oor the oor

paint purple

sour on

the oor

the oor

sors purple

oos purple

purple sors

in oo

se in

in the purple

these oo

tor the purple

oo tor the purple

hoo tor

tor the purple in oo

ur oo in the

the poothe oo

se in poo r

oo i se purple al

oo rple

ple

rple oo ur paint rple

too

oo rple

ple too pain

pin i in oo

pain rple in

i oo

paint rple in oo

tin oo

tint purple in oo

in oo i see purple

purple is oo

ese purple i

i ese purple

ese i purple too

in the oor

i ot to paint

oo

in the oor

hese oor i oor hur oor

oor is i

purple too

oo ot to rot in purple too

“With deepest sympathy.”

How deep des it

so

sympathy

sews

yew

sews im yew

sews yew

how deep des it

sew

yew

my thiyh

yer thiyh

sympathy

pits

pees

spits

i spat in the dishes

sits

paths

pits in yer thiyhs

a hym

deep in my

thiyhs

how dew yew say

hi

in sympathy

say hi

in sympathy

say hi

i

the path to sympathy

is y

emd im y

is the emd to sympathy

y

say y

im

sympathy

pee sympathy

I am heaps

im happy

seeds

I am the est

in sympathy

the sympathy map

is deep in pape a

add sympathy

in pape a

with

wet pape a

pat it and wite

to send sympathy

with deepest

sympathy ad

sympathy math

add est to it

to the est of it

the est of sympathy

the pest ow it

is

mewsh

pape a

and heavy thiyhs

deep im sympathy

I miss

tastes

I taste

sympathy pie

tew mewsh

sympathy pie

dies taste

tew taste You in sympathy pie

send sympathy

deep past my thiyhs

the pest ow it is tew mewsh

tew mewsh yeses

yes

pat yes im me

sympathy yeses

met sympathy eyes

yet sympathy yeses

tew mewsh

I am tew

yew

tew yew with sympathy

tew mewsh

I am

tew mewsh

“Mar. 1986 – July 2014
Loving Wife
of tender heart and generous spirit”

u lie

u lay

u lie

near us
in our dirt

the dirt Wrote

rot

Wrote u in

said u Were

here

here is hoMe

near us

Wif ur

Wife

she is

Winging
in the dirt

she is

inging
hoMe

eat ur heart

i eat hearts

eat 6 a dae

so ur full

full i nefer
8 hearts

i 8 hearts

full i nefer

i aM 1

i aM

100 per sent

liguid

spit in My

ear i aM

open

find a hole liguid

and fill Me

liguid

hoW Mush liguid do u need in a day

1S0 ML

i aM 1 98th solid

is that the it of u

u are an oven

soMeWhere in the pit of Me

they say u go to ovens When u die

hoMe is Where oven is

i eat death

loud of ligorish

i eat air

it tastes live u

i aM glouds of u

i
put u in Jar of glouds

pour soMe on My

pangates

for u are

.

u are

..

so
When I talk
When I

aM u

aM I only getting –

of u

SILENCE'S EPILOGUE

They Say

il is .
 i i o .
 Si nce i .
 Silence go .
 i go .
 Silence is .
 i .
 i is .
 i n.
 Silence go .
 o n.
 Si nce i .
 Si nce is old .
 le is .
 Silence is old n.
 i is .
 Silence .
 ence .
 ence is .
 i .
 old .
 Sil .

Sil is .

Sil i .

S old .

Silence .

Silence is .

l o d .

i .

S old .

i .

Silence i .

n n.

i .

is .

S o .

il en.

Silence .

n i .

ce .

Silence .

is .

i .

S ence is golden.

gold n.

Silence .

Artist's Statement

While writing my thesis entitled *(Un)Spoken*, I have found value in Julia Kristeva's work, specifically, her book *Revolution in Poetic Language*. As I read through *Revolution in Poetic Language* and gathered points of Kristeva's theories I wish to discuss, I was struck by in the first few pages of the book, which will help to introduce the complex subject matter I have decided to undertake in my thesis. Margaret Waller writes in the opening lines of the "Translator's Preface," a section of a book habitually overlooked, "the Translator's preface usually begins by assessing what is 'lost' in translation and this preface will be no exception" (Kristeva vii).

Waller's statement addresses how meaning is lost when translating Kristeva's original work from French to English. Translating a text from one language to another means that words are rearranged, replaced, and go missing. A piece of the original text is lost or silenced in order to accommodate the new text. As a writer, I find it useful to think of myself as a translator, especially with regard to this thesis. My thesis attempts to translate messages that are unspoken or unsaid with poetry. I sound what is silenced because Language fails to say it. But my thesis is not simply about silence. It is about searching for possibility in language (poetry), not Language, so that voices have space and opportunity to express their unspoken, even if that means silence overtakes and fragments Language. My thesis consists of four sections, each generated by a different compositional procedure. Each compositional procedure is meant to show varied silences. Some of the issues that my thesis takes up are: silencing, attempting to speak through that silencing by bringing forward my own voice, traumatic experiences that are too difficult to express, and communicating gestures or somatic violence through non-phonemic typography. By exploring different compositional procedures, I search for ways to grasp onto language when language is out of reach for the unspoken.

The Genesis of (Un)Spoken

During the process of writing this project, I was provoked to go back to the reason that spurred me to begin writing. I have carried this with me for the past twelve years. Before I explain the reason, though, I think it's important to note that it will be difficult to explain the impact this event had on me, for I am using ordinary Language to write this story. In order to get closer to writing these unsayable things, I would prefer to turn to the body of my thesis and my exploration of poetic language as I believe this language can say things that Language cannot. But I will attempt to explain the event using Language. When I was eleven years old, I found out my classmate and friend had passed away. It was the Summer of 2005 and my family was having a garage sale. Now thinking back on it, the images of me sentimentally looming over a sales table filled with my old clothes seems ridiculous. My grandmother, who lived on the same street of my friend, told me that there had been an ambulance at my friend's house the night before. I remember standing in my white kitchen listening to my mother talk on the phone and saying "so she's gone." An autopsy was done and no results came back. To this day, I do not know how my friend died. The question of "what happened?" is still unanswered, leaving pieces of this story, in many aspects, an unspeakable one. Over the years, I found myself redirecting conversations or leaving rooms so I could remain silent about the event. Talking about it seemed unbearable.

My interest in this project stems from my experience and makes me connect with others' experiences as well. During the preliminary research of this project in summer of 2017, I came across an historical event that resonated with me. In August 1914 Germany invaded Belgium. Belgium was a neutral country during World War I, signed under the Treaty of London, but this neutrality was violated by The German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg claiming that the document was just a "scrap of paper" (Zuckerman 167). The German troops burned

down homes and executed civilians. Women, in particular, were raped and horribly mutilated. This event became known as the Rape of Belgium. In the United States, the Rape of Belgium was used as propaganda materials, showing women's mutilated bodies on these documents. Because the Rape of Belgium was used as such, people began to dismiss this event as mere propaganda (Zuckerman 74-76). This makes this event difficult to talk about. Are we talking about reality or is it all made up? A treaty, meant to protect the rights and responsibilities of people, failed Belgium. A traumatic event that has been silenced in our history.

Kristeva's Symbolic and Semiotic

Kristeva's theory about the symbolic and semiotic orders is integral to her description of poetic language. Kristeva begins *Revolution in Poetic Language* problematizing how Language has been encoded for us, produced by a capitalist society that privileges formalizing and standardizing our culture (Kristeva 13). The problem that Kristeva has with Language is that it denies individual experience and refutes the body. A capitalist society relies on the body for production, consumption, and reproduction to continue the hegemonic chain of capitalist society. Under that system, the body is a lived thing devoid of individuality and experiences (Lowe 173). As a part of the social mechanism, Language must encompass all the values of capitalism by turning language into "self-contained, isolated islands:" static and impermeable (Kristeva 13). Kristeva argues that poetic language breaks from Language, allowing the body to release its direct experiences and desires (Kristeva 13).

What is Kristeva's poetic language? Poetic language is propelled by the interrelation between the symbolic and semiotic that generates significance (Kennedy and Kennedy 42). The symbolic represses the drives of the body and opposes pleasure (Kristeva 149). The symbolic is formal Language — "one that involves syntax or mathematicization" (Kristeva 21). Logic,

reason, and ‘truth’ encompass the definition of the symbolic. Kristeva’s problem is that the symbolic, or Language, fails to provide truth because it does not tell the whole truths regarding bodily experiences. The symbolic can fail us. My thesis, specifically the section on erasure, seeks to uncover hidden truths within Language. In silencing fragments of Language, I break my silence and write a whole new text that elucidates what has been silenced in contemporary and historical literature.

In opposition to the symbolic is the semiotic. The semiotic takes place in what Kristeva calls the *chora* (Kristeva 149). Kristeva describes the *chora* in *Revolution*, “as ruptures and articulations (rhythms), preced[ing] evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality...analogous only to vocal and kinetic rhythm” (Kristeva 26). The semiotic is the energy of the body — sonic materials and gestures — that are not articulated in Language but are hidden in Language. The semiotic is fragmented and incomplete, making it difficult to read on its own as Language because it is inaccessible. When we read the semiotic, we struggle to ascertain meaning from it because we have learned that meaning derives from Language. We sense something when we read the semiotic, and our awareness of the semiotic heightens when we read poetic language.

Kristeva’s Symbolic and Semiotic in Sina Queyras’ MxT

Sina Queyras’s *MxT* represents and measures grief in a myriad of ways. In one of the final poems in her book, “Two Elegies for Grief as Jackson Pollock,” Queyras translates Pollock’s abstract expressionist painting style into a poem. One biographer describes Pollock’s painting style, what he called “veiled images,” similarly to how Kristeva describes the semiotic: “It gives the sense of a stampede, of a particularly sinuous, dance-like kind. It is all swirling, pulsating motion, with no geometry to it—no rectangles or straight lines or slashing diagonals”

(Toynton 35). Pollock's painting style resists confining his works to conventional realism.

Pollock resists logic and order and structure, freeing his lines, just as experimental poetics resist poetic margins. Queyras writes the poem on two separate pages with a large blank space on the bottom of each page. On the first page of the poem, words are scattered across the page, seeming random, resisting the syntactical order of Language. In the last couple lines, she writes:

copse of bodies a portrait
of bone meaning red

(Queyras 76)

The blankness among the words, "copse of bodies a portrait" registers the inexpressibility of grieving. When reading this poem, one can't help but feel the material loss for the deceased and also the loss of words. Adjacent to "bodies," the word "copse" is readily misread as "corpse" (Queyras 76). Spurring this slip of the tongue invites the readers into an interventive relationship with text, and invites them, too, to sense loss. The words in the poem do not align vertically, except for "copse" and "of" (Queyras 76). The varied alignment of the words heightens the chaos of grappling with and understanding grief.

On the following page, Queyras takes the same words from the first page and rearranges the letters within the words, taking the chaos further. The last lines of the second page appear as:

pecso fo seoidbd a irtoptra
fo nobe igenamn

(Queyras 77)

The poem rests on the final word, “igenamn,” letting it hang there in the midst of the white space at the bottom of the page. The word “meaning” becomes distorted but recognizable with the help of the more accessible poetry of the first page. The tangled “igenamn” resists clarity and understanding, and leaves the meaning of “igenamn” open-ended but still full in signifying. Queyras’ creative choice to end the poem on “igenamn” instead of “red,” which appears at the beginning of the poem, invites the reader to explain the inexpressibility of grief. Next to “igenamn” is “nobe” which can be read as “no be,” speaking to identity (Queyras 77). Is identity lost for the speaker? For the deceased? The ambiguity of the poem brings the unspokenness of grief to the forefront.

Queyras’ poem “Two Elegies for Grief as Jackson Pollock” exemplifies the symbolic and the semiotic working together. The symbolic lives in the completeness of the words Queyras chooses to use. The semiotic lives in the spaces where the body electrifies the page with crisis. Knowledge of what is sensed, felt, known when grieving is a “tangled mess” (Souffrant 54). There is no ‘logical’ expression/explanation for grief and Queyras makes the reader feel this while painting Pollock’s artistic style into poetry.

Similarly to Queyras, I have dedicated a section of my thesis to confining myself to certain words and using the letters from those words to write a poem. My procedure, however, is a little different. I begin a poem with a statement using the symbolic; it is clear and coherent, yet vague because nouns and subjects are unidentified. For example, the first poem begins with the statement, “I used your toothbrush today” (Barraco 51). Another poem in this section states, “I paint these purple too” (Barraco 62). The statements are placed in the middle of the page and stand alone. Information is scarce in these statements. Who is the speaker speaking with? The

reader does not know the answer to this question until they reach the fifth and last poem of this series and the statement reads:

Mar. 1986 – July 2014

Loving Wife

of tender heart and generous spirit

(Barraco 74)

This series of poems is about a widower and how he copes with grieving the loss of his wife. In all of the opening statements, the widower attempts to connect with his wife by resurrecting objects that belong to her and interacting with them to feel the presence of memory. Leah Souffrant describes this dynamic: “Seeing here is not a matter of the eyes taking in stimuli through the visual cortex, but rather the more complex operations of consciousness and memory and emotion that mix together to form what we might call ontological knowledge as triggered by art” (Souffrant 77-78). Not being able to see the primary-person stimulus or feel that stimulus, makes the widower rely on memory, and by performing memories, the widower can attempt to “see” and “find,” metaphorically, what is lost. Other gaps in information are missing within these statements, such as what are “these” that she painted purple and when and what time “today?” (Barraco 62). The reader is left outside of the poem asking for clarity when they will never know the complete truth of the widower’s experiences because the pain of grief makes it difficult to convey this information.

The poems go on to work through the Language of the opening statements and find possibility for expressions of grief on the page. For example, I use fragments of words to create misspelled words, which are nevertheless discernable phonetically. In attempting to recognize and pronounce words, the reader is encouraged to speak and to listen, to speak through the

silence of grieving themselves. In addition, by misspelling words, I open up possibility for words to have multiple meanings. For example, in the second poem, “I paint these purple too,” I write:

i ot to paint
 oo
 in the oor
 hese oor i oor hur oor
 oor is i

(Barraco 67)

In this poem, “oo” performs a wordless vocalization of anguish, but can also represent “you,” or render the dead body abject by signifying “ew” (Barraco 67). “Oor” can be read as “door” or “or.” The reader is aware of this indeterminacy as the language constantly questions but never answers. Definitively, in the last line, I write, “oor is i” (Barraco 67). The speaker questions self-identity because of their loss but also questions if the “door is i,” trying to reach out to what the door signifies: the “you” in this poem. The emotion at the loss of the person is so excessive, that the speaker wants to become the deceased so that they feel closer to “you” and do not have to feel the trauma of grief. Silence through death is a haven for the speaker’s excessive grief.

The Body

Kristeva’s theory of the symbolic and the semiotic is rooted in the body and how the body is ejected from or derived in Language or language. Other than the body’s importance in Kristeva’s theory, what value does it have specifically to my thesis (Un)Spoken. Peter A Levine writes in his book *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* that “what [we] do physically-whether experience pain, pleasure, success or failure- is registered by [our] bodies... [Our] knowing about the world, as [we] interact with it, comes from

the totality of [our] sensations, both external and internal” (Levine 134). From the beginning of our lives, we learn to understand our body and make meaning out of what we sense from it.

When we are born, we do not have ordinary Language to communicate, since language acquisition does not begin until we are about two years old, so we use sounds, such as crying, to communicate our desires (Ryan and Singleton 33). As we grow and learn about Language, we communicate through it; however, as I have problematized, Language limits the ways our bodies can express our desires. Language does not encompass everything that our bodies feel and want to say. Our bodies feel. Our bodies react. And the question is: how do we communicate or translate that? What language can do this? This project aims to find a language that can write the body’s drives, and by using different compositional technique, I investigate language, searching for how poetic language can map the body.

The body is not simply a thing that we use to function in society, but we have a relationship between our “[bodies] and the ontological experience of the body as felt”, as Leah Souffrant describes (Souffrant 82-83). Souffrant explains that writing about the unsayable means acknowledging the “body’s urgent perceptions and language’s limitations” are connected (Souffrant 3). I attempt to articulate the urgency Souffrant describes through repetition, short lines, and gaps and spaces between words, creating a kinetic rhythm for the body to find words to say what it wants to say. While my poetry attempts to embody the body on the page, it is also important to note that I disembody the body, disconnecting the body from ordinary Language and letting silence fill in the gaps when Language cannot speak, when Language fails to communicate. An example of how I use form and language to translate the body’s urgency is in the poem, “I just broke what you gave me:”

I am gave

you at the gave
 the grave
 r u
 u
 at the gave
 the grave
 i gave u the grave
 i broke what u gave me

(Barraco 56-57)

Another way I represent the body in my project is exploring the ways we identify ourselves through our bodies and how outside forces, society, can make us think about our bodies. Nourbese M. Philip writes how women are taught to think about the female body as, “severely circumscribed in its interaction with the physical surrounding space and place...How then does this affect the making of poetry, the making of words, the making of i-mages if poetry, as I happen to believe, begins in the body and ends in the body” (Kinnahan 80). For women in poetry, it is about “mage” or managing the I, meaning that I work to identify myself through myself. Poetry “engages, undoes, and remakes” the body, simultaneously engaging and undoing language by distorting language (Kinnahan 8). In “This is (Not) What They Said,” I raise issues regarding the female body by mocking stereotypes surrounding women and their bodies. Society often views women’s bodies as disgusting and incomplete. The erasure technique allows me to erase what has been said and for more white space in the poems, the page appearing physically open and free for women’s bodies.

While this project deals with feminism, it looks at the issue of silence across the entire thesis. Another issue that I discuss in this project is the grieving process. Judith Butler writes about the body and identity in her essay “Violence, Mourning and Politics.” Butler is known for her theories on gender and body politics, but to find this essay shows the range of silencing that Butler theorizes, tying in the scope of my thesis about the unspoken. A question that Butler raises that seems to occur during the grieving process is, “who ‘am’ I, without you?” (Butler 22). When we lose these ties to each other, we do not know who we are or what we do. We lose a part of ourselves when we lose the other person and that is manifested on the page in my thesis through the fragmentation. In the poem on the previous page, “I just broke what you gave me,” the speaker repeats the “I” and “you” or “u” to find answers or search for who they are without their loved one. Questions regarding the deceased’s identity and the body are also raised. How do we think of our loved ones once they are gone? How do we view them, their soul and their body, now that their body is no longer a living thing? I use fragmentation in this section “Wrapping My Mouth Around Grief” to show this alienation from our bodies, whether it is the lived body or dead body.

What Silence Says

A provocative notion that I have presented in this thesis is that silence has the ability to say what Language cannot. I turn to Adrienne Rich, one of the most influential poets of the 20th century. Her essays and poetry are grounded in feminism but also engage many other social issues of the 20th century, such as Marxism, racism, and sexuality (Stein 1). Her poem, “Planetarium,” resonates Kristeva’s theory. She writes of, “an instrument in the shape of a woman/ trying to translate pulsations,” recalling Kristeva’s theory of the semiotic (Rich 303). In terms of silence, she profoundly states in her poem “Cartographies of Silence” an issue that I am

constantly working out in my thesis, that “[Language] cannot do everything” (Rich 19).

Language can do most things. See. Right here. Right now. I am using Language in this “Artist’s Statement” to discuss what I am doing in my thesis, but there are things that Language cannot do that silence can. Even in this essay, silence is present. Cheryl Glenn explains that this idea is possible because “silence is everywhere” (Glenn xii). Silence lies between words, letters, and in the margins of this essay but we generally do not consciously read silence in such a text.

Language controls the message rather than silence playing a visibly integral role in communicating that message. In contrast, Rachel Zolf’s *Janey’s Arcadia* addresses Colonial settlement in Canada and the displaced Indigenous peoples. On some pages appear a list of approximately five women’s names, boldly written in large handwritten font. The names are likely unknown to most readers; they are missing and murdered Indigenous women. What stands out, along with the individual typography, is the way the silence echoes around the words. Silence somehow says something. The silence speaks for them, for there has been little said publicly about each of those women except for names. While Zolf tries to give a voice to the names, she also shows the way that silence surrounds them and their histories and identity are lost. Who are they? What happened to them? Are they real? These types of questions are raised but silenced by histories that lack truth. In the poem’s elusiveness, “when the poet fails to give knowledge...there persists still the absorption of experience” (Souffrant 28).

Canadian writer Louise Bernice Halfe writes about what silence can say in her poetry book, *Burning in This Midnight’s Dream*. Halfe writes about the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, reflecting on the abuse that Indigenous peoples experienced while in the school system. In one of her last poems in the book, “Owners of Themselves,” Halfe writes:

I have encountered so much silence.

Even when people came before the TRC
 their over-arching silence
 to me
 overwhelmed the tidbits they were capable of offering.
 I kept waiting for their dams to break –
 and hoping
 that they wouldn't,
 not right then
 not so alone

(Halfe 78)

Halfe witnesses silence and writes about its value. Silence says suffering. Silence protects. In front of the TRC, the people that came to testify are not protected there. Silence says what feels impossible to say. And for Halfe, silence is where justice can be found, for the silence says so much more about traumatic experiences than Language can. What is interesting in placing Zolf's and Halfe's poems in conversation with one another, is that I can imagine a person on the stand reading Zolf's poem and Halfe bearing witness and remarking upon the poem in this poem, "Owners of Themselves." There is so much lost in the silence and yet so much is said; "silence has a sound" (Picoult 46).

Because "[Language] cannot do everything," I turn to poetry to reveal both silence and speech; I give a voice when silence is lost and also show when silence is compulsory. The first section of my thesis is a series of lyric poems. This section talks about silencing. Cheryl Glenn explains that silencing is not simply about white space on the page but about power dynamics between the written word and space: "The unspoken is a rhetorical art that can be as powerful as

the spoken or written word. Like speech, the meaning of silence depends on power differential that exists in every rhetorical situation: who can speak, who must remain silent, and what those listeners can do” (Glenn 9). On October 5, 2017 *The New York Times* published an article that accused Harvey Weinstein, Hollywood producer, of sexual harassment. Actresses, like Rose McGowan and Ashely Judd, came forward with these accusations, breaking the silence of their experiences. The article from *The New York Times* entitled, “Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades,” says Weinstein forced women to sign non-disclosure agreements: documents that forced the victims to remain silent about what Weinstein had done. In my poem, “Non-disclosure Agreement,” I write:

i live in

document

backspace

enter

insert me in

pages

pushing me

in spaces where

(Barraco 6)

When I wrote this series of poems, I included large gaps in between lines that are spaces for the words “you” and “your.” The speaker silences the controlling “you,” the abuser in this case, to

show resistance to them. Refusing to acknowledge the abuser, the speaker resists the abuser's control. On the other hand, I also negate the "you" to show the speaker's silencing of the "you" with regard to the bind of the non-disclosure agreement. Although this concept may seem slippery, I want my speaker to feel powerful like they have a voice in this particular space of poetry even though they lack power. The spaces in the poem do not only lie between the lines but horizontally across the page after each line. The lines in this poem are very short, only containing one to three words. The body of the poem stays close to the left margin of the page, leaving less than a quarter of the page for the speaker to have a voice, showing the limited power of the speaker. The readers feel the speaker's restricted voice. In this passage, the speaker constantly tries to explain where they are: "i live in," "insert me in," and "in spaces where" (Barraco 6). Echoing these lines, the substantial amount of blank space on the page explains that the speaker is in the material pages of a non-disclosure agreement. The speaker gives away their power by signing the agreement, as though they do not belong to themselves anymore but to the abuser and document.

Plunderverse

In his essay, "Plunderverse: A Cartographic Manifesto," Gregory Betts explains that Language originates from culture and not from the individual. All people are born into Language or "thrust" into it, meaning that we are forced to use Language to function in society (Betts). From an early age, the individual is taught to speak Language. Language acquisition is a difficult process but a necessary one that allows the individual to begin to understand the world. Using Language restricts individual expression because words are shared and rules about Language that people subject themselves to are shared. Language, hampering complete individuality, is "a broadly cultural phenomenon: formed outside the control of individuals, but felt and experienced

by the individual members of the culture” (Betts). We all engage ourselves with the Language system. We immerse ourselves into society by learning to speak Language; we cannot function in society without learning Language.

Betts defines plunderverse as the practice that “makes use of the wealth and waste of [Language] by exploiting the unattended information in a source text. It makes connections and variations of a previous author’s words to create a different poem from the original piece” (Betts). During the process of Language acquisition, we learn Language by using other people’s words. Plunderverse exaggerates this idea by using a source text and finding possibility in it. The waste of [Language] is language that creates possibility and multiplicity. For example, puns are wasteful because they resist the logic within Language. The poet finds possibility in wasteful language because it creates possibility for different readings of a text. Plunderverse capitalizes on the wastefulness of Language by creating possibility of what has already been said: “Plunderverse limits its own expression to the source text, but attempts a genuine, divergent expression through the selection, deletion or contortion of it” (Betts).

Betts’ 150 plunderverse poems in *The Others Raised in Me* rewrite Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 150.” Betts reveals the wealth in wasteful language by constantly creating and recreating poems from the same original text. The title of Betts’ book, *The Others Raised in Me*, can refer to the poems that Betts creates that are raised out of the original text of Shakespeare’s sonnet. Betts’ twentieth poem plays on traditional love poetry:

will we
 ever me
 again?

(Betts 28)

The reader wants to say a verb, possibly “meet,” following the adverb “ever.” Betts does not permit the reader to follow the rules of grammar. Betts replaces the verb with the pronoun “me.” Betts, speaking back to Shakespeare’s romantic sonnet by playing on this cliché, instead decides to talk about the individual and pain. The cliché “will we ever meet again?” is not lost; the meaning is still in the poem even though it is not explicably said. The poem appears fragmented, especially in comparison to Shakespeare’s iambic pentameter sonnet. The fragmentation and the question of “me” suggests a fragmented identity; an identity that lacks clarity because the speaker cannot grapple with his heartbreak. Will the speaker ever be himself again after losing his significant other? It also plays on traditional love poetry and the feelings of the subject “me.” The vain speaker of Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 150” expresses his love for a woman unworthy of receiving his love. The speaker questions his love throughout the poem and the power the woman has over him. Shakespeare’s sonnet makes a spectacle of the speaker’s feeling and Betts gestures toward this with the “me.”

Canadian author Jordan Abel uses plunderverse as a technique for his book *The Place of Scraps*. In the title of his book, Abel suggests that his poetry is a collection of fragments of another text, and something that is leftover or discarded. Abel’s book contains a series of erasure poems and collages, using as source texts Quebecois anthropologist and salvage ethnographer Marius Barbeau's canonical *Totem Poles*. Abel's manipulation of the texts found in *Totem Poles* makes us rethink the myth of the Indigenous body as a vanishing body. Barbeau, fearing the loss of Indigenous culture, purchased totem poles and sold them to museums. Barbeau’s attempt to protect Indigenous culture actually caused harm to the culture’s survival. The totem poles were markers of these people’s land and told stories about their ancestors and their people. They were a stamp on the lands, celebrating the culture of Indigenous people. Through the technique of

plunderverse, also called erasure, Abel revives and gives subjectivity to the Indigenous subject (Karpinski 23). Abel erases words, letters, and punctuation in his poems creating visual images of the totem poles. For example, in one poem Abel writes that:

this clan

covered the ground

covered

time

with

smoke

and

shadows

(Abel 71)

Abel writes the poem starting from the right margin and slanting each line to the left-hand bottom corner, wishing to revert time and retell the Indigenous story by writing the poem backward. Surrounding the poem, punctuation speckles the page like ashes of smoke. The punctuation, as marks of silence, also speak through the silencing of the Indigenous culture. Abel's poems are not simply about the visual effect.

In another poem, Abel writes about the complexity of ownership with regard to Indigenous peoples:

his

his

their s h is

Collingwood later described as an “Act of Defiance.”

Upon the *Zong*'s arrival in Jamaica, James Gregson, the ship's owner, filed an insurance claim for their loss. Gregson argued that the *Zong* did not have enough water to sustain both crew and the “human commodities.” The insurance underwriter, Thomas Gilbert, disputed the claim citing that the *Zong* had 420 gallons of water aboard when she was inventoried in Jamaica. Despite this, the Jamaican court in 1782 found in favour of the owners. The insurers appealed the case in 1783 and in the process provoked a great deal of public interest and the attention of Great Britain's abolitionists. The leading abolitionist at the time, Granville Sharp, used the deaths of the enslaved Africans to increase public awareness about the slave trade in order to further the anti-slavery cause.

Philip uses as her source text the only public document for this legal case “*Gregson v. Gilbert*.” Philip describes *Zong!* as a “story that cannot be told” (Philip 199). The story of the *Zong* ship cannot be told because there is no information about the event other than the legal document. There are no names that can be traced as the literature of this case truly treats the enslaved Africans as cargo; they have no identity. The legal document is encoded with justice but fails to perform it. Philip erases the legal document to give voice to the enslaved Africans. She gives voice those murdered in the massacre through semiotic language. Sounds and utterances translate the silence but also speak through the silence. Philip asks herself in her journal, “What am I doing? Giving voice-crying out?” (Philip 194). Philip is both giving a voice and showing in that voice the trauma and silencing of the Africans. Philip's poetry is the “sound of possibility, the sound of impossibility too” (Philip 55). Philip's poetry creates the possibility for voices to be heard and stories to be told but also underscores the impossibility for voices to be heard and stories to be told because the legal document did not identify any of the enslaved

Africans. Philip invokes suffering through pauses and breaks in clauses, phrases and sometimes words. Through these textual ruptures, she is able to create acoustic scenes that echo the sufferings of the Africans. For example, in “Zong #1” Philip writes traces of the word “water” repeating “w” and “wa” across the page (Philip 3). Philip embodies the feeling of dehydration through incessant repetition, translating engines of the body.

I use plunderverse technique to speak for those who have been silenced, working with source texts that deal with feminism. American writer Audre Lorde talks about silence as a condition that women perform but that fails women: “I write for those women who do not speak, for those who do not have a voice because they were so terrified, because we are taught to respect fear more than ourselves. We've been taught that silence would save us, but it won't” (Biggs 135). In my thesis, I dedicate a section to rewriting women’s histories and perceptions of women in art, Language, politics, and media. For example, in the erasure poem “ear ours silence,” I take a newspaper article that talks about Time’s “Person of the Year:” “The Silence Breakers” (31). Barraco This original text supports women’s voices but conveys it using the symbolic. Poetic language offers another dimension of conveying that the symbolic cannot. This poem shows the way women have been silenced through sexual harassment but also as “Persons of the Year.” This poem shows the ways “women” have been talked about publicly, diminishing women’s capacity for intelligence as objects of the gaze. The poem also speaks through negativity surrounding women, highlighting the original text and its positive message. “ear ours silence” is a back and forth, a conversation between what has been negatively said and perceived and showcasing a newspaper article that writes positively about women.

Non- Phonemic Typography

I use non-phonemic typography (parentheses and bullet points) to illustrate silence. Parentheses and bullet points are silences because they are not heard in speech but are used in Language. I use non-phonemic typography to translate the body onto the page. The poems in this section deal with murder and domestic abuse. The speaker's pain is felt in these poems through the typography. The non-phonemic typographies attempt to show the chaos of trying to access Language when Language is inaccessible. I create multiplicities of meaning by finding words within words, by breaking apart Language through interruptions of bullets and parentheses.

I have already discussed Rachel Zolf's *Janey's Arcadia* but the text is working in another way that is similar to my thesis. Rachel Zolf communicates suffering by literally translating a .pdf document using Optical Character Recognition software. This software reads the character of a document and turns the document into an editable document. The software, though, does not create completely accurate transcription. The software often misspells words, such as "was" translating to "coas." Some of the the misspelled words are recognizable phonetically, such as "coas." Other words are not as recognizable phonetically, so the reader must read the words around the misspelled words. In addition to misspelling words, the software inputs symbols similar to the non-phonemic typographies I use in my poems. In one poem, the software translates the original text to:

She coas a stupid
 girl: she went and offered herself }QiokiarcH>y
 to someone ujbo didn't cuant her

(Zolf 55)

Interestingly, the software fails to communicate when the text is given a piece of truth or evidence. Most of the other misspelled words are recognizable. “Who” translates to “jjbo” and “want” translates to “cuant.” The rest of this passage is ambiguous: who is she? Who is someone? When the reader comes close to finding an answer, they cannot retrieve it. In addition, the text suggests that whatever she offered, “QiorkiarcH>y,” is an unspeakable thing. Was it her virginity? Something unspeakable for women to talk about. The symbol “>” points to the letter “y” punctuating the crying and question of “why.” Through the symbols, the reader is asked to reread the text in order to decipher what language is trying to say but cannot say.

In my poem, “mostly water” I write about domestic abuse. The opening lines read:

Salt

dev•oured

my mouth

(Barraco 47)

The bullet point works to break apart the word so that words within the word can be found and read together. The word “devoured” can be read as “our,” and phonetically “hour” “red,” and “read.” The words can be read in isolation or together. For example, “read our” could signify the speaker misreading her relationship with the abuser; “red hour” could be translated to “the hour of/for blood,” meaning that that speaker recalls a time when she was attacked and bled. The multiplicity of meanings that can be found within the poem provides some information for the readers but resists clarity. The reader tries to find meaning in the poem, formulating messages from the words within words, as I have shown above. The erratic puzzle-piecing the reader

experiences, trying to find messages within words, mirrors the speaker's erratic mindset trying to deal with pain and suffering from the abuser. The lack of clarity, specifically in this poem, "allows the resonance of 'screaming' to be heightened. One's own voice becomes estranged in this moment of pain" (Souffrant 63). The non-phonemic typographies I use, such as the bullet points, are similar to the "o's" in Zucker's poem "Here Happy is No Part Love," a poem that Souffrant analyzes in her dissertation. Souffrant reads the semiotic "o's" as screams during childbirth (Souffrant 63). The bullet points in my poems, silent in Language because they are not spoken in speech, loudly articulate the pains and screams of the speaker. In addition, the bullet points symbolize marks of somatic trauma, such as cuts and bruises. This series of poems embodies violence and suffering by breaking apart words with non-phonemic typographies.

Ending Notes

My thesis, *(Un)Spoken*, attempts to show the interplay of language and silence in various ways. I adopt Kristeva's theory of poetic language, which argues that the symbolic (Language) and the semiotic (the desires and drives of the body) must work together to create poetry. Through the interplay between the symbolic and the semiotic, I explore the possibilities for language to write what cannot be said through Language. I explore power dynamics in silence, who is silenced, who enforces silences, and who listens, and Language's resistance to articulating suffering and trauma. What can I translate onto the page that Language fails to? This thesis searches for possibilities to answer this question.

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NOTES

“ma bod Re is”: based on the online essay by Anya Foerschner,. “Crossing the Line: The ‘Disgusting’ Female Body as Artistic Medium of Resistance.” Found on the blog *The Getty Iris*.

“ear ours silence”: based on the newspaper article “Person of the Year: Time honours abuse ‘silence breakers.’”

“he named o”: based on the the newspaper article ““The Silence Breakers’ Named Time’s Person of the Year for 2017.”

“Ant Meeting”: based on the 1914 original text source “Ex-Governor Curtis Guild at Anti Suffrage Meeting.”

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Vanessa Barraco was born in 1994 in Windsor, Ontario. She graduated from St. Joseph's Catholic High School in 2012. From there, she went on to the University of Windsor where she attained a Bachelor's in English Literature and Creative Writing in 2016. She is currently a candidate for the Master's degree in Creative Writing at the University of Windsor and hopes to graduate in Spring 2018.