Reflection Statement

Language, as an essential avenue for communication and articulation, is strikingly lacking when one considers the laboriousness of human expression. If words, as the basis for all communication, are so vital for expression, why is it that there is no name for '*the convoluted process of recognising the limitations of existence[3]*'? Why is there no exact word to describe '*moments of unexpected intimacy, often experienced with a stranger[4]*'? If language is how we communicate, why are we so often at a loss for words?

It is this fundamental concern that is presented within my major work, aptly titled *speaking when speechless,* as I aim to fill a gap within the current English lexicon via a collection of poems founded upon exploring and expressing the invented definitions of pseudo-words.

Initially inspired by the *Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows[5],* a site on which John Koenig defines words of his own genesis, I began my composition with the intent of appropriating Koenig's work by constructing poems based upon words sourced from this site. However, as my work progressed, I found that a more genuine (and personal) fulfilment of my purpose could be achieved through the construction of my own words. This eventuated in the final product - a collection of poems based on words of my own creation, founded upon Koenig's ideas.

The primary thematic concern of my work is an exploration of emotional growth and verbalisation, underpinned by a consideration of the relationship between language and communication. It is these fundamental ideas that I have attempted to convey in order to give my work a wide, universal appeal, enhanced by the inclusion of the phonetic pronunciation of each

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[3] speaking when speechless, Procevita Limites, p16

[4] speaking when speechless, Advenalis, p6

[5] Koenig, J. *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, Tumblr, (n.d)*

latin-based[6] pseudo-word, shown in *Omnevis / |ohm-nee-vis|*[7]. This is to ensure that when reading the terms, the concepts associated with each of the words are able to truly resonate with a broad range of readers. By engaging with specific aspects of the human condition (such as intimacy, loss, connection, grief, and purpose) and simultaneously exploring the role of language in the articulation of these abstractions, it was my intention to capture the audience of a young adult readership. The tribulations inherent to the experience of 'life' are revealed through the paradox '*childlike awe / meets adult fear*[8]', exemplifying the versatility of emotion explored in the work. By segmenting the work into four sections that correlate with the four meteorological seasons, the cyclical yet fluid nature of the human experience is symbolically conveyed, effectively guaranteeing that the validity of and motive for the work transpires strongly with my audience.

Consequently, *speaking when speechless* is well suited for publication in the literary magazine *Voiceworks,* a quarterly release curated for and by youth, to sincerely connect to a group familiar with the experiences depicted in my work. My aim to connect with my audience by emphasising the universality of the work, is revealed through the use of second person - '*you think / you know*[9] and collective pronouns -'*we spread / our roots*[10]'. By exposing audiences to an array of 'invented' words, I aim to develop a shared understanding of contradictory, complicated experiences. Through this, my underlying intent becomes clear, as I have attempted to produce a composition that aids in the expression of that which is inexpressible. Thus, *Voiceworks* exposes my work directly to my target audience, as well as a wider literary readership, and by engaging with the fluidity of human emotion and examining multifaceted aspects of universal experiences, my purpose in relation to my audience becomes clear.

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[6] Simpson, D. "Cassell's Latin Dictionary", John Wiley and Sons LTD, 1977

[7] speaking when speehcless, Omnevis, p8

[8] speaking when speechless, Vastus Qui, p36

[9] speaking when speechless, Inritavit, p23

[10] speaking when speechless, p13

The investigative process was vital throughout the composition of my major work. Initial research focused on form, as I built upon my existing knowledge of poets encountered in Advanced English, such as Emily Dickinson (Preliminary Course) and Elizabeth Barett-Browning (HSC Course), who both engage heavily with the expression of emotion and skilfully manipulate language to connect their own experiences to a wider audience. The paradoxical nature of many of Barrett-Browning's sonnets was of notable significance in aiding my own exploration of contradictory ideas and engaging with the versatility of emotion.

Antithetical ideas of death and love, central to Sonnet 1, are also examined within my final poem '*Resanesco…to heal and be healed[11]*'. The notion of healing from loss and managing grief presented in '*tender wounds / and tenuous hearts*' contrasts with the hopeful intonation of '*try to pick up the pieces*', highlighting the gravity of the experience through the intimate, revelatory tone, and thus the dualistic themes explored both by Barrett-Browning, and within my major work, are revealed.

As part of my research, I joined *'Poem-A-Day…the original and only daily digital poetry series[12]'* which exposed me to both modern unpublished poets and classic writers. Matthew Siegel's poem *At the Metropolitan Museum* displays the significance of place, and specifically action, in creating a sense of poignancy, which is reflected in my work through the abstract representations of otherwise commonplace events, such as waiting in line - '*impatience trickles down the queue[13]*' - and car rides - '*pressing my cheek against the window, / watching raindrops / race each other down the glass[14]*'. This also serves to ensure my work is relevant for, and familiar to, an extensive audience of young adults while also reflecting the multidimensional nature of the human experience.

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[11] speaking when speechless, resanesco, p39

[12] poem-a-day, poetry.org (n.d.) < https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem-day>

[13] speaking when speechless, advenalis, p7

[14] speaking when speechless, Procevita Limites, p16

Despite a thorough investigation into form, a deeper understanding of the nuances of poetry was essential before I began the writing process, and accordingly my research took on a greater academic focus. Charles Molesworth's essay *'With Your Own Face On: The Origins and Consequences of Confessional Poetry'*[15] further solidified my understanding of and appreciation for confessional poetry, while also consolidating my eventual choice to loosely emulate this style. I was also influenced by my reading of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* and Charles Bukowski's *The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over The Hills,* as both writers captivate audience attention through developing a sense of ambiguity and abstruseness, reflected in the visual aspects of my poetry. The use of parentheses in *Inritavit[16],* alongside spacing for words such as 'shatter' emphasises the way that manipulating structure and composition can aid in the conveyance of meaning. According to Molesworth, confessional poets are 'very successful at creating a private language out of cultural confusion[17]', a notion that aligns impeccably with the underlying concerns of my work and directly correlates to my audience.

In addition, the influence of Romanticism, studied during the HSC English Extension 1 course, has been of great significance. Through my exploration of Romantic ways of thinking in the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Mary Shelley, I have developed a renewed understanding of the relationship between nature and individuals. In particular, the way that the expression of (and value for) emotion and the individual was revolutionised during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Within Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, the role of the natural world as a catalyst for evoking organic thought processes and emotive articulation is revealed. The aforementioned poem epitomises this idea through the personification of night, which is

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[15] Molesworth, C. (1976). *"With Your Own Face On": The Origins and Consequences of Confessional Poetry.* Twentieth Century Literature.

[16] speaking when speechless, p23

[17]Molesworth, C. (1976). *"With Your Own Face On": The Origins and Consequences of Confessional Poetry.* Twentieth Century Literature.

paradoxically represented within my own work via the motif of sunlight. Lines such as '*the sun /*

pokes his head between the venetians[18]' and '*just as the sun / splits open the heavens[19]*' parallel

these ideas through personification and display commonalities with the metonymy of weather

presented throughout *Frankenstein*. As stated by Molesworth, 'Confessional poetry can be seen as

one degraded branch of Romanticism, placing the sensitivity of the poet at the centre of concern[20]'

and it is this indispensable link that encapsulates the relationship between my work and the English

Extension course.

Further investigation into poetic expression was essential, and through an avid reading of

both traditional and contemporary poets, I came across Rupi Kaur's *milk and honey[21]* which has

been vastly impactful upon my composition. Kaur's stylistic decision to omit the use of capital

letters throughout her poetry is critical in order to enhance meaning, as by altering the holistic tone

and flow of the poems, the sense of harshness often created through formal grammar is removed.

Subsequently, this is reflective of my own choice to emulate this style, which I found to be highly

influential in fulfilling my intentions to create an intimate work, reflected specifically in 'after all,

even the colosseum is crumbling'[22] . Thus, the use of non-formal grammar allows me to effectively

capture the complexity of the words I have invented.

In summation, my overarching intent was to explore the function of language in the articulation of

emotion, and I believe I have successfully accomplished this throughout *speaking when speechless*.

Overall, the process of composition has been simultaneously demanding and rewarding, and as a

result I have matured both as a writer and a responder.

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[18] speaking when speechless, Miserius, p30

[19] speaking when speechless, Cor Vitus Intima, p5

[20] Molesworth, C. (1976). *"With Your Own Face On": The Origins and Consequences of Confessional Poetry.* Twentieth Century Literature.

[21] Kaur, R *milk and honey*, Andrews McMeel Publishing, United States of America, 2015.

[22] speaking when speechless, Miserius, p30

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