Poetry and Healing: Addressing Trauma Through Creative-Writing Workshops

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A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Women and Gender Studies

August 2022, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Date:	September 1st, 2022

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Abstract

This thesis examines the efficacy of reading and writing poetry as a way of healing from sexual violence trauma. Utilizing a version of the creative-writing workshop, this thesis presents the resources required to facilitate creative-writing workshop sessions for participants who have experienced sexual violence. Informed by fields of art therapy, creative-writing pedagogy, feminist poetics, and trauma-informed care, this thesis questions how poetry can lend to a space of healing and community. The theoretical framework of feminist post-structuralism illustrates how poetic language can guide self-expression, agency, and power. The method of poetic inquiry is used to present participants' poetry and feedback surveys, with this presentation acting as an amalgamation of the data and analysis sections. This thesis also calls into question traditional knowledge-production in academic spaces, using autobiography to advocate for increased value on lived experience and arts-based research methods. This thesis concludes with relevant contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

August 2022

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Chapter 1: Introduction

We can train ourselves to respect our feelings and to transpose them into a language so they can be shared. And where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it.

—Audre Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury"

For the past two years, this work has lived in emails, on the margins of scrap pieces of paper or coffee-stained notebooks, scribbled onto sticky notes nestled in books or stuck onto windows. This work has breathed life into conversations, rested upon tables, been tirelessly kneaded into moments of silence. It has watered dried-up creativity, nourished life that has been starved by solitude and scarcity. And amidst a global pandemic, within which many of my days felt isolated, uncertain, and unbearable, this work provided a small sense of purpose and reconciliation—for myself, my identity, and my voice.

In essence, this thesis presents poetry as an additional form of healing from trauma, showing how the creative-writing workshop (one that is created and facilitated by poets, scholars, community members, teachers, etc.) can generate a space of healing, empowerment, transformation, and community[1]. It explores how the creative-writing workshop, and poetry in general, can provide individuals with the tools necessary to write and continue to heal throughout their lives—on each of their own timeframe and schedule. This work illuminates positive effects of reading and/or writing poetry—expressed through participants' acknowledgement of writing poetry as an empowering, positive experience, one that allowed them to process difficult emotions and feelings into new language.

This work examined and deployed methods for facilitation, providing insight into how the creative-writing workshop can potentially supplement traditional forms of therapy. The

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[1] Chapters 3 and 6 go into more detail regarding the specific tools necessary to facilitate a feminist- and trauma-informed creative-writing workshop.

methodology created helped to gauge the positive effects of writing poetry and demonstrated the ways that poetry was able to scaffold feelings and conversations, ultimately helping to create a space of trust, safety, and care.

1.1 A Note on Form and Content

This work will present as a fairly traditional thesis; however, the content actively works to transform customary thesis elements and push against the boundaries of what is considered academic knowledge and analytical tradition.

As I balanced the ways in which I wanted to include and distort the traditional thesis, Haraway and King's understanding of research-creation was at the forefront of my mind, particularly as I wanted to uphold their plea to let research surprise you—while paying careful attention to both content and form. As Loveless (2019) claims:

> Both authors implicitly insist that to do research—of any kind—is not simply to ask questions; it is to let our curiosities drive us and allow them to ethically bind us; it is to tell stories and to pay attention not only to which stories we are telling and *how* we are telling them, but how they, through *their very forms*, are *telling us*. (p.24).

This understanding of research, and the various modes of knowledge production that can stem from research-creation, guides my own presentation of this work and arrangement of its content.

This commitment to both form and content is evident throughout the thesis, but can be seen specifically within the Data chapter, through the amount of space I have allocated to each participant's poetry. This space-giving and lack of pre-emptive mediation of my data sets is also an intentional disruption of the traditional thesis form—particularly, the traditional 'findings' or 'analysis' sections—blurring the boundaries between data sets and 'findings' section. My data sets present themselves *as part of* the findings and analysis of this study—a dissolution of the

hard line between participants and researcher, and an according of analytical agency to participants, as well as to myself. This disruption is part of my feminist commitment to untraditional forms of knowledge-production and to questioning of established forms of knowledge presentation.

Additionally, this thesis will intersperse narrative/poetic autobiography, the form of which fluctuates between prose and poetry, colloquial text and academic scholarship, similar to texts by Griffin (2012), Halberstam (2011), Nelson (2015), and Stern (2014)—though these texts constitute more of an auto-theoretical lens than my own work will. This interspersal presents a contrast between textual elements—alternating theoretical waves with autobiographical prose, and simultaneously dedicating entire pages to poetry. This opens an attentive space for the insertion of personal observations, feelings, hesitations, and frustrations—this in the interest of presenting the research process in a reflexive and open way. Incorporating aspects of my lived experience allows for me to convey a transparent and honest conversation about the complexities and difficulties of creating a feminist research-project: the uncertainties, small victories, and everything in between. In particular, one challenge arose throughout the process of obtaining research ethics approval, which I reflect upon in my methodology chapter, acknowledging the harm that this process had on myself and my identity as a researcher.

As well, it provides space for me to acknowledge and reflect upon my positionality and privilege, as a researcher and scholar. As I move through this work as a white, cis-gendered, queer person who holds a large amount of privilege within traditional academic spaces, personally experiencing what I feel are barriers of access in the process of conducting this work—it needs to be acknowledged and emphasized that these barriers are ten-fold for those who do not look like me, or have the same resources and supports as I do, or the same

opportunities for education as I did. This is a contention I reflect on throughout this work, aiming to illustrate the challenges presented to graduate students conducting research projects for the first time, in hopes of potentially supporting those who are struggling with their own research processes and journeys.

The incorporation of autobiographical text leans into the political act of sharing my own lived experience both as a researcher, and as someone who has experienced sexual violence and is using lived experience as the impetus for this work. The decision to embark upon a research project and thesis that is cemented within my own lived experience is heavy—many of the decisions I made regarding my research process were often tied to my lived experience, which evidently made it harder to separate myself from my research. It was, and has been, an extreme challenge to step back from my work and separate my identity, well-being, and overall worth, from the research I was conducting. This insertion of autobiographical elements gave me permission not only to acknowledge this challenge but to acknowledge and embrace ultimately the inseparability of life and work.

The insertion of lived experience is also an attempt to close the gap (in terms of the traditional power imbalance) between researcher and participant, through an emphasis on reflexivity, as well as presenting a shared understanding of trauma through my experience with sexual violence and using poetry as a healing tool.

1.2 Why Poetry?

I entered the Women and Gender Studies program here at Saint Mary's University with my foot halfway in the door of academia, unsure of how I would fit into a Master's program, as someone who had only begun to recognize myself as a dedicated and 'good' student. My undergraduate degree often felt like a placeholder, with my real passion centered on my athletic

ability and my identity as a varsity athlete. For years, swimming provided me with an outlet, a way to immerse myself, a place where I could leave my baggage at the door and submerge myself in my training.

There was a point, somewhere in my fourth year of school, where swimming ceased to provide this outlet. Perhaps it was because it was becoming harder for me to improve upon my best times, or maybe it was because I began to find more passion for my coursework—whatever it was, it was noticeable, and left me feeling slightly displaced from my long-standing coping mechanism. It was around this time that I began to develop a stronger set of writing skills, and it was at this point that I enrolled in my first poetry-writing seminar. I found this entry-level exposure to writing poetry, and the resulting development of my craft, to provide a similar comfort to the one which swimming had previously granted me. This was a transitional period for me, and poetry became the space through which I could express myself, despite feeling still that I didn't quite belong or fit into more traditional academic work. The poetry I wrote within that classroom mainly revolved around my life within swimming, but it allowed me to expand upon aspects of the sport that frustrated, disappointed, or saddened me. This rekindled my love of writing and led me to continue developing this craft in the final year of my undergrad, enrolling in a second poetry-writing seminar.

It was within this second poetry-writing seminar that I began to understand and contextualize the impact that writing poetry, and engaging with other poets, could have on my experience with trauma. My experience with sexual violence years prior had manifested into unresolved trauma, resulting in suppressing my emotions and the necessity of healing/grieving for the first few years of my undergraduate degree. The acceptance of my assault and the initial step towards seeking therapy, helped to provide a structured healing process that I had been

searching for, while allowing for me to begin to understand the fluctuating impact of trauma. Although these initial steps were helpful and absolutely necessary, I still found myself yearning for a creative way to process my own experience and emotions, and I knew that this was something I wanted to attempt to do through poetry.

This workshop, taken from September 2019 to March 2020 with current Halifax Poet Laureate Sue Goyette, marked a pivotal moment in my relationship to healing. It provided me with a sense of ownership, not just by granting me the opportunity to write poetry and be perceived as a poet, but by granting me ownership of *what* I wanted to write about and *how*. Unlike the instructor of the poetry writing seminar I had taken the previous year, where poems assigned were accompanied by specific prompts, Sue offered her students the opportunity to develop a poetry 'project', consisting of ten poems to be written, shared, and workshopped throughout the year-long seminar.

In my own project description, I stated: "I want to narrow in on experiences that have provoked excessive emotion…" (Yurkovich, 2019), continuing on to illustrate the topics I wished to explore throughout the year, such as "emotional trauma, loss, self-exploration, and significant life events that have caused adversity or resilience" (Yurkovich, 2019). Finally, I suggested the opportunity for personal growth and healing that could arise within this project, commenting that the poetry I created could hopefully "provide others with comfort or security in relation to what they may be going through or have experienced" (Yurkovich, 2019). Reading this project description almost three years later—looking back to that seminar space and the effect this project had on me—is an astronomical experience. The description feels truthful and admirable.

The poetry I wrote during this year-long seminar, much of which centered around my own experience with sexual violence[2] and the daunting process of seeking therapy, did in fact present space for healing and growth—the writing process allowed me to displace my trauma and pain into something artistic. Exploring and developing my poetic voice in relation to the trauma I had experienced was challenging, but it was also incredibly freeing. The act of creation struck me as powerful and helped to expand my understanding of processing trauma: the beauty that can arise from letting one's raw emotions onto the page, breaking traditional ways of processing trauma, and exposing rich vulnerability. It was within that very seminar space that I knew I wanted to further explore the healing potential of poetry for other folks who had experienced sexual violence.

1.2.1 Experiencing the Poetry-Writing Workshop as a Feminist Space

This poetic development also presented the opportunity to push myself in ways that I hadn't been able to do in other academic classes. Importantly, from the very start, Sue made a classroom space that was built upon care, concern, trust, and belief in her students. Through her subtle, but continual reference to her students as 'poets', she established the notion that we were meant (and deserved!) to be in that space. This helped me to expand my identity; I was no longer just a varsity athlete, but also a poet.

As I began to share works of poetry that were extremely emotional and referenced my personal experience with sexual violence, it was never a question for me of whether or not I felt that Sue's classroom was a safe enough space in which to do this; this was an almost immediate assurance. Although I did not know my classmates personally, it was evident to me that they would accept my poetry, and subsequently my vulnerability, in a positive and caring manner.

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[2] Two of the poems created within this seminar are presented within Appendix A.

This was emphasized by Sue directly—through her guidance within the workshop sessions, and indirectly—through her pedagogy, structure of teaching, and grading. As a professor, Sue was automatically in a position of power relative to her students, but she actively worked to provide a classroom space centered around inclusivity, honesty, and respect. This was done in simple but effective ways such as conversing with her students in an unformal and respectful way, along with bravely sharing her own views and experiences.

My belief about who I was, where I belonged, and what I was capable of, changed through my experience in Sue's poetry writing workshop. I strongly believe that without Sue establishing a classroom environment of safety, care, and trust, my relationship to healing and poetry would look very different. Sue expanded poetry's potential: as a healing space, as a radical act of (self) care, and as a tool with which community could be built. Sue presented creative-writing pedagogy as an inherently feminist praxis, granting me lived experience and understanding that I was able to directly apply to my own methodology, when I embarked upon this research. I held Sue's pedagogical example close to my heart as I began to facilitate my own writing workshops.

Situating this research project and thesis within the field of Women and Gender Studies has provided me with new language regarding academic spaces and encouraged expansive thinking about ways to disrupt hegemonic narratives. And the SMU/MSVU program, especially, encouraged creative approaches to learning and engaging with academia, establishing the notion that knowledge production can take a variety of shapes and forms. This allowed for me to continue an exploration of conventional knowledge such as theoretical concepts and historical pillars of feminist thinking, while maintaining a connection to creative work, conveying an understanding of my growing knowledge through creative forms such as poetry, non-fiction, etc.

The various creating-writing courses offered as elective courses to WGST students helped maintain this connection and strengthen my creative-writing skills in the process.

1.3 Key Terms

The following terms are central to this thesis and must be situated within my own definitions, ones that reflect my lived experience and the overall impact of this experience on my understanding of trauma. The definitions I provide below will be used throughout the remainder of this work.

1.3.1 Trauma

Through my prior undergraduate experience as a Psychology major, I was immersed early on in the clinical definitions for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which left me reviewing symptoms in a desperate attempt to self-diagnose and check off necessary boxes. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* defines trauma as an "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence" (5th ed.; DSM–5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.271). This definition of trauma is included in the overarching diagnostic criteria of PTSD, and includes subsets B to E, each of which contain "a list of included symptoms and identifies a precise number that must be met" (Burstow, 2003, p.1295). The necessity to meet a certain number of symptoms in order to be diagnosed with trauma or PTSD, made me second-guess my own mental health concerns and minimize my own understanding of trauma—all because I had found a way to compartmentalize my trauma and had not yet reached a more outward projection. Burstow argues against this criterion, asserting that there should be a movement away from "framing psychological and social problems in terms of diagnostic categories" explaining that "trauma is a conceptualization that psychologically injured people claim for themselves" (2003, p.1301). This individualized claiming is at the forefront of my

definition of trauma, as well as Burstow's (2003) understanding of trauma to be "a reaction to a kind of wound" (p.1302). Additionally, Burstow acknowledges that trauma rests on a "complex continuum" (p.1302), resulting in varying levels of traumatization depending on the individual and situational circumstances. Aligning trauma, in relation to this research and beyond, with Burstow's definition allows me to understand agency as central to trauma.

My own experience with and relationship to trauma is complex, and has not always presented itself within the necessary diagnostic criteria, as illustrated above. These complexities have profoundly influenced how I define my own relationship to trauma. Importantly, my lived experience and knowledge surrounding feminist, care-centered, and trauma-informed practices have impacted my own relationship with and definition of trauma.

Throughout this work, I continue to hold space for the understanding that one's experience with trauma, sexual violence, and healing, can look, feel, and exist in many different ways. Drawing upon my own lived experiences with trauma and the fluctuating impact trauma has had on my body, both physically and emotionally, I emphasise a definition that considers the continuum of trauma, acknowledging that traumatization often has an implication on one's day-to-day life and functioning (at one point or another).

1.3.2 Sexual Violence

I align my definition of sexual violence within the definitions provided by the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre in Halifax, "a feminist organization working to eliminate sexual assault/abuse, and to change the current socio-political culture that fosters sexism, social injustice and other forms of oppression" (2012, p.62). Avalon has had a longstanding impact on the community, working to provide accessible forms of care and support for individuals who have experienced sexual violence.

Sexual violence is defined within Avalon's model as "an umbrella term for sexual assault, abuse and harassment, etc. It is used to indicate the vastness and all-encompassing impact unwanted sexual acts can have on the individual and on a society", additionally defining sexual assault as "a crime of brutality and/or intimidation. Sexual assault is ANY act that invades an individual's sexual privacy…[ranging] from verbal obscenities to rape. It is an act of power and control over the victim" (2012, p.62). Defining sexual violence as an act of power and control is a key feminist framework that helped shift the narrative from 'sex gone wrong' to one of violence, shifting responsibility from the victim to the offender (Egan, 2020). Egan additionally notes that feminist knowledge surrounding sexual violence has created "a framework that, while acknowledging sexual violence is perpetrated by one individual…on another…locates those individual acts of violence within a broader social, political and community context of structural power and gender inequality" (2020, p.67). Situating sexual violence within a context of power and control helps to locate this term in the broader field of feminism, as various feminist theorists position sexual violence as a way to uphold patriarchal power and as a "key source of women's oppression" (Edwards, 1987; Brownmiller, 1975; McKinnon, 1982, 1983, as cited in Egan, 2020, p.67). However, most of these theorists explore sexual violence through a lens of heterosexuality, leaving little to no room for consideration of sexual violence that exists outside of a heterosexual binary, specifically acts of violence against/between men and/or members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. This consideration is absolutely necessary, and is incorporated into the definition of sexual violence that I use throughout this work. To cite, again, the Avalon definition: sexual violence is an act of power, control, and harm (psychological, physical, emotional) against any individual, where consent, or

lack thereof, is neglected, disregarded, and abused, resulting in an invasion of privacy (Avalon, 2012).

1.3.3 Forgoing Victim and Survivor

Avalon defines a survivor as "someone who has been victimized but is healing and beginning to cope with the trauma and is working towards getting beyond the traumatic event" (2012, p.62). Avalon acknowledges that "the terms 'survivor' and 'victim' are often used on their own and together" (2012, p.5) however, both terms run the risk of labeling someone or "overlaying another identity on the individual, which is not beneficial to their healing process and may lead to further harm or secondary wounding" (2012, p.5), the latter statement addressed more specifically to the term victim. Suzanne Egan's book paraphrases a study from Hunter (2010), who acknowledges that within her own research, most individuals she worked with:

> [d]id not want to be identified as either victims or survivors of child sexual abuse because they did not want their identity linked to a particular childhood experience/s. That is, for these participants victim and survivor both had negative connotations because they were understood as imposing a predefined and all-encompassing identity. (2020, p.10)

I relate strongly to the Avalon statements and to Egan's arguments, specifically as I find both the term victim and survivor to be linked to a distinct period of time in my own life, one which I often feel is no longer a defining moment; rather, I feel as if the healing period following my experience with sexual violence is more defining and relevant to my identity. And while both victim and survivor have resonated with me at one point or another, I do not feel that they provide space or room for further expression or development. However, for those who feel that identifying as either a victim or survivor is a necessary step within their healing process or self-

identity, I absolutely acknowledge and support this identification. I simply do not want to impose these words as labels.

All that being said, I have chosen to forgo the use of the terms survivor and victim as I move through this thesis, as I find these terms to be somewhat binary definitions—except in a very few instances in which I feel one of those terms is necessary for clarification purposes or when referencing another text or source (as demonstrated above, in my expansion on sexual violence).

For the purpose of this research and body of work I use—as Avalon does within their organizational model—the term 'individual who has experienced sexual violence', which I find allows for a granting of agency—not only to myself and/or my participants, but to anyone else who may be reading this work having had an experience with sexual violence. Additionally, this definition is broad enough in that it provides myself/my participants/other individuals the space to define our own experiences and the nomenclature we use to identify ourselves, as we move through our healing process. Egan (2020) relays a similar point, acknowledging that "people[s] identities, categories and labels are always partial and never adequately sum up the entirety of [a] person or their [experience]" (p.10). I argue that the use of this terminology ('individual who has experienced sexual violence') also allows for identities to be built upon, specifically by recognizing that individuals who have experienced sexual violence are so much more than their trauma or healing process. I do not want to enclose my participants or myself or any of my readers into the narrative that we are solely survivors or victims of sexual violence.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions I aim to answer throughout this thesis are: what resources are required to facilitate creative-writing workshops as healing spaces, and to assist workshop

participants? What prompts or writing exercises are best suited for such sessions? How does healing happen in such spaces? How does community-building happen?

1.5 Conclusion

Following this introduction, in which I have laid out my thesis and approach, spoken to my positionality and defined my key terms, chapter two will present a review of relevant literature and theory in the fields of creative-writing pedagogy, feminist poetics, art therapy, and feminist poststructuralism.

Chapter three presents my methodology, as it pertains to my design and facilitation of the creative-writing workshops that were at the centre of this research (including recruitment methods, etc.).

Chapter four illustrates the method of poetic inquiry used within my analysis and presentation of data.

Chapter five is a presentation of the data collected, divided into five data sets (one data set per participant, with the fifth set incorporating my field notes). As a whole, this chapter illustrates the overall impact of poetry on this group of poets. It weaves in and out of the accounts of each individual participant: their emotions reading and writing poetry, the poems they created within the writing workshop sessions, the ways they chose to represent themselves and their experience with trauma. Each data set gives delicate space for this self-representation and room for these voices to take up space.

Chapter six is a summation of the data, by means of a thematic analysis that addresses my research questions. This chapter includes three separate themes, illustrating the impact of reading poetry, the impact of writing poetry, the impact of poetry on/in community. All three themes illuminate poetry's positive effect and impact on participants. This chapter also expands on some

of the poetic forms and techniques presented in the data, demonstrating how these elements may or may not have aided in participants' writing processes and/or their overall understanding of how poetry can present as a tool for healing from sexual violence trauma.

      This thesis concludes within chapter seven, which expands upon contributions of this research towards various disciplines, limitations of the research process and challenges experienced within it, and explores avenues for future research to take up this work and expand its potential.

Poetic Intervention I: equilibrium (May. 2022)

you stay long past when the sun goes down, each shadow merging

into the night sky until I can no longer differentiate

between you and the murky clouds that rest above. you've settled in

comfortably, high atop each flailing bird

this heightened state almost always met

with hot flashes, metallic taste of feelings resting among tongues

uncertain if they resemble comfort or agony, we lean into the blurred lines

in search of a clearer morning sky. most times meeting

wisps of ash spread across the horizon, an omnipresent lingering

like an unstable carousel strung along

through each mechanical movement, an inability to reach equilibrium.

at times it feels easier to lean into your numbness, colourless constant

cradling a past and present self

I'll re-emerge amongst the tangerine and custard blossoming morning light

mourning months of lifeless repetition, often so incessant it felt as if

you'd won me over. this sun feels familiar and urgent—meeting

my cheeks with a tinge of red

this heat is welcomed for its comfort.

it's not long until the ash grey sky dissipates, though I keep note

of your absence and savour the tangerine streaks, in hopes of cracking

this armoured exterior, a dissolution of ash one night sky

by one

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review is split into distinct sections—a historical overview of the creative-writing field; then surveys of feminist poetics and disciplinary landmarks, of poetry as a therapeutic and healing tool, and of feminist poststructuralism as a theoretical framework—with each section analyzing specific threads in the literature that I pick up and/or gaps within the literature that my research aims to fill.

2.1 Creative-Writing Pedagogy: Historical Overview

As a discipline, creative-writing "arose during a sixty-year period from 1880-1940 as an effort to reform the study of literature" (Myers, 1993, p.278). Blythe and Sweet (2008) identified six different approaches to creative-writing pedagogy, some of which are still used today within North American creative-writing classrooms, while others, mainly the earlier approaches, existed as more of a one-on-one relationship between the student and instructor. These approaches are the atelier approach; the great works approach; the inspiration approach; the techniques approach; the workshop approach; and the feminist approach (Blythe & Sweet, 2008). While I discuss these approaches individually, and acknowledge their various strengths and weaknesses, there are many creative-writing practices that blend together several of these approaches. In fact, my own methodology incorporates aspects of the techniques, workshop, and feminist approaches. I feel that it is also important to acknowledge that many of these approaches existed, and were taught by poets and writers, long before the formal (or theorized) rise of creative-writing as a discipline.

The atelier approach is one of the oldest approaches, dating back to the nineteenth century where it was "adapted by the arts with prominent painters and sculptors taking promising young artists as students" (Blythe & Sweet, 2008, p.308). The basis of this approach is a 'master-

student' relationship, where the emerging student is able to learn/emerge from and connect to a 'master'—all while feeding into their network of established writers and creative colleagues (Blythe & Sweet, 2008, p.308).

The great works approach demands that students "study the techniques, forms, and content of the ancient classical writers and copy them" (Blythe & Sweet, 2008, p.309). While this allows for students to gain "a wide range of techniques, styles, modes, and even tricks…very quickly" (p.310), it has proven to be stifling for the development of one's unique creative voice.

The inspiration approach moved away from imitation entirely, as the Romantic era posed the idea that every individual was capable of producing art. This approach removed both the instructor and specific spaces for creation, focusing instead on fostering creativity and using various creative inspirations to write (Blythe & Sweet, 2008).

Harkening back to the atelier approach, but exploding its one-on-one structure, the techniques approach emphasizes the instructor, who provides their students with a range of techniques and concepts that they can then implement into their own writing (Blythe & Sweet, 2008). This approach encourages the knowledge of a wide range of technical concepts, and can be used over time to build one's writer's tool-box—a familiar set of creative techniques and elements which one can use at any point in their writing journey.

The most broadly used approach within the 21st century is the workshop approach, which is used in both community and educational settings. At its core, the workshop is led by the facilitator or instructor, with the students bringing drafts or final copies of their creative works to be developed and/or critiqued. However, this approach can often leave students behind, as it can be difficult to tend to each individual piece of writing within a workshop session. This often

leads to less direct involvement from the instructor, and more communication between students, or those who are 'workshopping'.

The last and most recent creative-writing approach is the feminist approach. A feminist approach to creative-writing pedagogy savours personal experience and opinion—allowing space and time for individual expression to be fleshed out, weaving collaboration into the room as the facilitator or instructor sees fit (Blythe & Sweet, 2008).

As suggested above, there are various critiques that can be brought to the first five pedagogical approaches, from the feminist perspective. Annas and Peseroff (2015) acknowledge that historically, the workshop approach failed to include women in the conversation, as they rarely appeared in the role of instructor or facilitator. As well, the workshop form "encouraged rivalry and competition for approval by the professor and fellow students, marginalizing voices that didn't conform to a preferred style and flattening writers' most original ideas" (p.89). Not only does this approach damage the student's ability to grow as a writer, but it can sever the opportunity for self-realization that can occur when one engages critically and creatively with their own lived experience.

To combat the pitfalls of the traditional creative-writing workshop, multiple scholars and professors of creative-writing (Annas & Peseroff, 2015; Haake, 2000) have begun to include feminism and feminist theory within the field of creative-writing. While the feminist approach to creative-writing is continually evolving and changing, feminist creative-writing pedagogy is often characterized by a focus on inclusion and disruption and by an emphasis on individual lived experiences. It moves towards an intersectional, equitable, and inclusive way of teaching and learning.

Annas and Peseroff (2015) demonstrate how feminism can elicit change and continue to make space for inclusivity and diversity in the praxis of creative-writing. They emphasize that feminist and other radical approaches to teaching offer "a combination of inclusion and disruption—to *include* a multiplicity of ways of seeing and saying from a multiplicity of experiences and to *disrupt* a hegemonic, or prevailing systemic, ruling class discourse and world view" (Annas & Peseroff, 2015, p.87). Haake (2000) reiterates the importance of this combination, stating that "the closer we come to articulating our own experience in our own terms, the more vulnerable the structure of power that has inscribed us as being peripheral" (p.49). Hegemonic systems are defiant to change, simply because the individuals enforcing this hegemony are most often those who "have benefited the most from how things [are]" (Haake, 2000, p.49). These statements reinforce the revolutionary power of using lived experience as a political tool, specifically when presenting these experiences through captivating, poetic language.

Additionally, allowing for a space of inclusion and disruption within the creative-writing classroom can aid in students' overall learning experiences, as they engage with and are surrounded by positive and equitable classroom environments. Annas and Peseroff (2015) argue for the importance of using lived experience within the creative-writing classroom, and making space for the various intersections of race, gender, health, class, etc. that exist. They believe a feminist approach to creative-writing is "centered on empowerment, process and voice", adding that "feminist thinking provides a framework for considering alternatives to the traditional workshop by (1) decentering authority and (2) focusing on questions of the excluded voice" (p.90). In order to implement this framework, Annas and Peseroff (2015) state that instructors should allow students to "frame their workshop guidelines" (p.90), granting agency in their own

education while simultaneously reducing the power imbalance between students and their educator. Not only does this provide students with the opportunity to participate in the structure of their education and raise questions or comments on what they are learning, but it is an important, reflexive practice, that fosters a classroom environment where students feel safe, allowing for organic development to take place over time.

Finally, implementing a feminist approach within the creative-writing workshop allows for a collective space that is "mindful *of* students' fears, histories, empowerment, and passions" and has the ability to encourage students "to cultivate writing *as* part of their reflective, intellectual, and emotional lives" (Annas & Peseroff, 2015, p.97-8).

All of these aspects of feminist praxis are important to keep in mind when we try to understand how the writing workshop can be a space for collective sharing and healing.

2.2 Feminist Poetry Movement

The feminist poetry movement has helped shape poetry as a genre and political tool. The feminist poetry movement erupted during the 1960s, alongside the second wave of feminism, as women actively fought for equality and to re-define their individuality, stemming from their confrontation with traditional gender roles and domestic exploitation. Poetry emerging from the second wave often revolved around the objectification of women, as they wrote about their sense of self in relation to men (Juhasz, 1979). Juhasz (1979) acknowledges that this one-dimensional view of one's personal identity and womanhood was common within the first-wave feminist movement and feminist poetry, with many women unable to grasp their sense of self as an intersection of multiple collectives or groups.

As the feminist movement grew, however, poetry expanded and spread as a way for women to tell their own stories and publicly share their lives. Feminist poets such as Adrienne

Rich, Audre Lorde, Lucille Clifton, Sylvia Plath, and more, began to make their private, personal experiences public through poetry. As feminism brought forth more opportunities for social and political action, poetry became an easily accessible form in which for women to "reflect [upon] the experiences and observations that were emerging in the context of the social/political women's movement" (Whitehead, 1996, p.8). Not only was poetry a place for women to reflect upon their personal experiences, women began to reinvent poetic form and poetry as a whole— taking up space in poetic conversations from which they had traditionally been excluded, and claiming for poetry forms like the letter and the song in which earlier generations of women and female-identifying individuals had found and made expressive space. Importantly, this poetic expression embodied the complex intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality, that many female-identifying poets navigated. Reed expresses that poetry "was one of the main tools used to identify, name, formulate, and disseminate [feminist] issues" (2005, p.93), reiterating the political reach that the poetic form presented.

Whitehead (1996) reminds us that in the second wave of feminism "women poets…not only radically diverged from traditional notions on what women could do in poetry, but they began to create something new and quite apart from what men poets, and even other women poets, were creating" (p.10). Poetry was not just a space for women to express themselves and their experiences, but it acted as a vehicle for radical change and resistance to patriarchal structures. Feminist poets Adrienne Rich and Muriel Rukeyser both acknowledge that poetry during this time helped to change social conditions and challenge the establishment (Whitehead, 1996).

In addition to poetry being an accessible form with which for women to navigate their experiences during the feminist movement, it also emerged as a form of political and feminist

action, with poetry beginning to be read during political rallies (Whitehead, 1996). These poetry readings invited audience members to reflect upon their own experiences, allowing for a collective space of understanding between women to emerge as they recognized their experience in others. This recognition was key to various consciousness-raising groups that had begun to emerge in the 1960s—consciousness-raising groups became a place where women realized that 'the personal is political', through sharing their personal experiences and using these experiences as fuel for the feminist movement.

Feminist poet Audre Lorde states in her 1984 collection of essays and speeches, *Sister Outsider*, that "For women, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence…. Poetry is the way we give name to the nameless so that it can be thought" (Reed, 2005, p.89). Reed argues that "both consciousness-raising and poetry writing make the subjective objective, make the inner world of 'personal' experience available for public 'political' discussion.…Good poetry makes personal experience available by giving it an outward form" (2005, p.90). This giving-an-outward-form is a political act in many ways: it is an act of agency, it is an act of courage, it is a declaration of value, it is an attempt to find connection to or solidarity with those who have gone through similar things. Individuals choose if, and how, they want their poetry to been seen. Manning (2018) reinforces the vital importance of this, stating "by sharing experiences of oppression or injustice, we declare that they matter and deserve to be paid attention to, which is certainly a political act" (p.754). Not only do we declare that they matter, but we provide readers with the opportunity to decide that these experiences and poems matter. And for individuals like myself, who have felt alone in their trauma, the declarative act of sharing one's experience confirms that someone is listening.

All of these political aspects of feminist poetics are evident in my thesis work: they shaped my methodology and they are evident, as well, in all the data sets presented.

2.3 Poetry and Healing

Numerous studies have been done on the efficacy of poetry as a healing device, both within and outside a therapeutic context. Poetry has been applied as a therapeutic device within the fields of mental health, addictions, and trauma. As well, poetry therapy is quickly becoming an abundant field of research, healing, and scholarly work. Some benefits of poetry therapy include "improved feelings of self-worth, enhanced perspectives of mental health and mental illness, increased coping strategies, improved stress management, and ability to cope with life's ups and downs" (Haertl & Ero-Phillips, 2017, p.19).

By giving individuals creative control over the expression of their emotions, poetry can improve clarification of certain events or traumatic experiences, allowing for resolution and closure (Bolton, 1999; Connolly Baker & Mazza, 2004). McClocklin and Lengelle (2018) and Penwarden (2022) both found that poetry writing helped individuals heal from grief. Penwarden (2022) used narrative therapy and the creation of found poetry, while McClocklin and Lengelle (2018) established that the use of metaphor was especially helpful. Penwarden (2022) transcribed interviews between herself and eight different participants into poetry, which participants found helped provide closure for their losses and give shape to their grieving processes.

While the scholars above have documented the effect of poetry alongside therapeutic modes and/or theory, Hilse et al. (2007) illustrates the effectiveness of poetry within a workshop setting, specifically. The study examined individuals who have suffered with prior mental health issues, through observation of workshop sessions and semi-structured interviews. The results demonstrated an improved connection among participants both to themselves and to fellow

workshop members, as well as a positive balance and "calm elation" for participants' emotional state (Hilse et al., 2007). Scholars Sjollema and Hanley (2013) found that "the very act of creating, writing, and sharing poetry with others was seen as an act of empowerment" (p.60).

The studies cited above engage a wide range of mental health issues. Turning to the issue of trauma, specifically: Hand (2021) explores autobiographical poetry through the lens of various feminist approaches and theories, to understand how poetry can promote and facilitate healing from trauma. Hand also acknowledges the empowerment of individuals that is generated through poetry writing, quoting from Evans (2017) who states that "survivor poetry can…address long-standing stigma and change how survivors are viewed while offering opportunities for self-identification, for example, as survivors in lieu of victims" (as cited in Hand, p.9). The potential for empowerment to emerge from writing poetry is highly relevant to my work, especially given the importance of self-identification for individuals who have experienced sexual violence (as expressed in Chapter 1.2).

Hiney (2001) has researched poetry's positive impact on "survivors of sexual assault", specifically using line poetry, in which each participant writes one line of poetry stemming from the immediate line above, which was contributed by a different group member. Hiney (2001) found this technique to allow members to "convey thoughts that they had not shared or that they never realized before…Line poetry not only engages the group members, but it validates their experiences through the sharing of thought, emotion, and content" (p.93-4). Not only does this allow for individuals to express their own experience in an engaging and safe space, but it allows for them to feel validated and recognized, to feel that their words and experiences are heard (Hiney, 2001). Although this study provides important groundwork about the effect of poetry writing on a collective / group of people, my methodology will more specifically focus on

furnishing participants with the tools and information necessary to write poetry of their own, and on the effect of writing poetry (as it pertains to healing from trauma) on the level of the individual participant.

At the intersection of using poetry as a therapeutic device and poetic inquiry, are studies by Rooyen et al. (2021) and Wright and Thiara (2019). Rooyen et al. (2021) used poetic inquiry to "engage with, re-present and document participants' experiences of living as transgendered women in Namibia" (p.316), creating found poems from transcriptions of two focus-group discussions. The process consisted of two authors identifying key phrases, words, and excerpts from the focus groups, sorting this data thematically, and creating poems by "re-arranging the words in a different order than in the original text" (Rooyen et al., 2021, p.319). Care was taken not to alter the voice and context of participants' words, and the researchers shared the created poems with the participants, providing space for participant response and/or suggestions for omissions or alterations (Rooyen et al., 2021). Similarly, Wright and Thiara (2019) used poetic inquiry to transcribe interviews from writing groups into poetry created by the authors. Wright and Thiara (2019) held ten separate writing groups, each for a span of two hours, to understand the effect of creative-writing groups on survivors of child sexual abuse.

Neither of these studies had participants writing their own poetry, which is a central component of my methodology. The study by Wright and Thiara (2019) does not provide substantive information on the methods used within the writing groups, or the processes that took place during these groups. An emphasis on such pedagogical elements, as they factor in participants' experience of healing, is something that distinguishes my study. I aim to be as transparent as possible in my methodology, outlining the various prompts, poems, and poetic techniques used in each writing workshop session, to lay the groundwork for future research and

the continuation or adaptation of this work amongst future creative-writing instructors, community members, mental health services, etc.

Many of the studies above illustrate that poetry has the ability to help individuals process their trauma, grief, or various mental health issues; however, the majority of the literature on poetry and healing stems from a therapeutic approach and lens. There is a gap in the current literature when it comes to examining how the act of writing poetry can be seen as healing for individuals who have experienced sexual violence, specifically within a creative-writing workshop as opposed to a professional therapeutic setting. This research aims to fill this gap, determining how the creative-writing workshop, implemented in a way that draws upon feminist theory and praxis, can provide a different approach to healing from traumatic experiences.

2.4 Feminist Poststructural Theory

We can tie poetic inquiry and the healing properties of poetry together through the theory of feminist poststructuralism. As a theory, feminist poststructuralism "builds on insights about sexual difference and language from psychoanalysis and literary theory and is concerned with understanding how discursive processes construct knowledge and identity"; it "focuses on the ways in which power relations shape gendered social categories and subjectivities" (McCann & Kim, 2017, p.353).

Poststructuralism lends theoretical concepts and frameworks to various branches of writing and discourse analysis, as multiple scholars examine how this theory aligns with not only poetics, but performance studies (Combs & Freedman, 2012; Gannon, 2008; Močnik, 2019). In all of these fields, poststructuralism is a lens through which to understand the implications of power and the power dynamics that appear through language and writing (Frost & Elichaoff, 2014). For example, poststructuralists argue that as language users "we are using a symbol

system structured by power into ideologies, the rules of which we have been learning since we were young, and the meaning of words and gestures are already defined in ideological discourses before we give them voice" (McCann & Kim, 2017, p.359).

Power is often expressed in language through hegemonic, male-centered text. Poetry creates a space for a feminist reclamation of power, demonstrated sometimes through the embrace and reappropriation of conventional poetic "rules" (Bolton, 1999, p.121), and other times through a larger acceptance of personal freedom and expression.

Jane Speedy (2005) cites poststructural feminist scholars Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva, with Kristeva arguing that "poetic language is regarded as an act of resistance to established assumptions and 'social constraints'" (as cited in Speedy, 2005, p.285). These scholars also "suggest that poetic language speaks to that which is not fixed or known and that which 'moves or escapes' and appears to defy the confines of conventional language" (Speedy, 2005, p.285), with Kristeva arguing that poetic language and writing "represents a use of language that disrupts the relationship between words and that which is already known" (Speedy, 2005, p.289). Even with certain structural rules and confinements in place—in poetic forms like the haiku, sonnet, or villanelle, which place strict length and syllabic requirements on the poet—there is still space for a freedom of word choice and word placement: the spacing of words can imply a shift in tone or mood, with each poetic line telling a delicate story. Cixous contends that this spacing between words and lines is a spacing between binary opposites, and that this spacing provides room for movement and escapism; that poetic language generates a sense of freedom.

Tami Spry (1995) acknowledges a language binary that is often present when people talk about or describe experiences with trauma and sexual violence. When individuals describe themselves and their experience(s) with sexual violence and abuse, they are often forced to

choose between categories of victim and survivor; as Spry states, "the language of victim or survivor defines the meaning of the assault in relation to his action rather than her experience; she survived it or was a victim of it" (Spry, 1995). Implementing the feminist poststructuralist understanding that language shapes reality, Spry states: "women live in a reality that does not recognize the complexity and diversity of their experiences with sexual assault because the words to describe them do not exist" (Spry, 1995). Spry's argument is enclosed within the binary gender structure, and I feel that it is important to extend it to individuals who exist outside of traditional gender conformities. The freedom from binaries that poetry offers, according to Cixous, presents individuals writing about trauma with other, potentially liberating options, here.

Poetry and metaphor are able to help break these binaries and constrictions of language, as metaphor "helps evoke powerful emotion and can communicate fully the depth and breadth of ambiguous emotional states and relationships" (Furman, 2004, p.163), along with allowing for "self-observation in the process of writing and the meaning one makes of the images chosen to express feeling" (Springer, 2006, p.70). Both of these statements regarding metaphor allow for the understanding that metaphor and poetry are inherently poststructural through their exploration of images and words that break from binary categorizations such as victim or survivor. If an individual does not want to identify with either of those terms, poetry provides a form through which they can articulate their feelings and confinements. As Speedy (2005) articulates, poetic language is more intimate than other forms of discourse, allowing people to feel "sustained by more subversive and creative poetic texts that represent that 'heart and soul' of their words and phrases" (p.286)—creating space and room, for instance, for women to break from the male-dominated language of sexual violence, as the act of writing poetry allows for a woman to be "the writer, the focus of the experience" (Spry, 1995).

Michael Dillon (2000) discusses how poststructuralism and poetry work together, arguing that the poem "becomes a means by which 'the speechless' can continue not only to address us but also to move us.…It is not occult, subterranean or otherworldly, but is intimately related to an allied understanding of the experience of freedom in its relation to Language" (Dillon, 2000, p.19). This statement directly corresponds to and affirms Spry's argument that poetry allows and creates space for women to express their own experiences, apart from the gendered language that is often present within sexual violence cases. Multiple studies have shown how binary language constructs women as victims and helpless within their own attacks, providing an alternative narrative that diminishes these individuals' agency in relation to their ability to share their own experience (Henley et al. 1995; Hollander and Rodgers, 2014; Spry, 1995).

Susanne Gannon (2008) looks at memory-writing in relation to agency and poststructuralism, in activities ranging from creating collective memory-workshops to rewriting women's memories as poetry. Agency is central to these workshops; Davies and Gannon argue that agency "is glimpsed as we shift and multiply the discursive frames through which we understand the memories. Agency arrives in transitory moments that we might figure as 'mo(ve)ments' and within which we might take up new possibilities for understanding, and acting, otherwise" (qtd. in Gannon, 2008, p.46). This arrival of agency, as Gannon puts it, can happen as a function of the creation of movement that poetic writing allows for. Such writing generates space for a variation of memories which can be read as one, a weaving of memories and experiences into the same breath, or into separate breaths. Gannon (2008) refers to this duplicity/multiplicity of space as the "performativity of texts" (p.46), something that allows for a new understanding of memory, as memory moves and exists within the space provided.

      The theoretical concepts of feminist poststructuralism are woven into my work in various ways. First, through the use of poetry by the research participants as a tool for empowerment and self-expression; and second, through the insertion of my lived experience, woven into narrative and poetic text alongside more traditional academic prose. Overall, the theory of feminist poststructuralism helps to provide an entrance to a reconstruction of language, establishing poetry as a way of introducing new perspectives and knowledge.

Poetic Intervention II.1: Requirements of a Research Space (Feb. 2022; after e-mails to
Conference Services, Saint Mary's University)

1. the space should accommodate
6 individuals, minimum, 14
max. Four sessions total, 90 minutes each.
Flexible as to what dates the sessions fall onto
as long as there's at least a day between each.

2. Large windows. Wide enough to see an expanse of trees
and just as tall as to fixate on the birds
become lost in their language. It may not be bright, in fact
it's almost always grey, but I want the potential for sun
to peek inside.
Will this be helpful?

3. Bright lights, but not too bright, from the windows
and overhead. Natural is better, see above point
re: large windows.

4. Enough space to move around and stay
six feet apart. Room to place coffee
or other refreshments. *Reminder: bring Lysol wipes,
extra hand-sanitizer, and Kleenex, just in case.*

5. Some art would be nice. Bare walls say too much,
feel too grim. I want the space to feel welcoming, comforting.
*Will this be helpful? How will my participants feel
about art?*

6. A secondary room, for participants to take breaks or
ask for help if they feel overwhelmed. Minimal
distance between the two rooms, no stairs
or lengthy halls to navigate…In anticipation of heightened
emotions, as it may become difficult to travel between rooms

*I'm thinking of the worst-case scenario
but navigating SMU can be a maze. Reminder:
send out an email before Monday
make a map for participants to find their way, include some photos.
Is there an elevator? Where are the washrooms located? Are they close enough?
What about parking? Send a small outline, so everyone knows
what to expect…*

Chapter 3: Methodology

As I sought to understand and qualify the effectiveness of writing poetry as a healing process and tool, I considered the question of what might be best research practices. I wondered what spaces would be best equipped to foster and communicate the care and kindness I had placed at the forefront of this work, and how to fill those spaces.

In the beginning stages of this thesis, I found myself isolated from a sense of community, largely due to the ongoing global pandemic. I was missing not only a community within my scholarly field, but also within the arts, and the unique space that the arts provide to connect, learn, and heal. And as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to isolate individuals from their communities and hinder communities from healing, it felt antithetical to this research project to limit connectivity to a screen. I knew that I wanted to give participants the opportunity to connect with one another in person, and provide space for a potential sense of community to develop amid and alongside this work.

This enforced the inclusion of a number of key methodological elements. First, I wanted to ensure that this work could take place in-person, as I wanted to have the potential for community-building and connection. This required some coordination with SMU in order to find and reserve an adequate space for the creative-writing workshops, as well as monitoring the university's COVID-19 research protocols, ensuring that in-person research was permitted. Second, I wanted the research process to present a genuine opportunity for creation to participants—I did not want participants' poetry to arise as a mere requirement in answering my research questions; rather, I wanted to develop a space where poetic creation could materialize, and community could emerge. As a result, my methodology prioritized both a feminist framework and the principles of trauma-informed care (TIC). Including these frameworks

allowed for the creation and implementation of a safe and reflexive research space. Additionally, gathering data from both feedback surveys and my own field notes, alleviated the necessity that participants share their resulting poetry with me, as data could be drawn from other sources. Third, I wanted to ensure that my methodology provided space for organic development and reflexivity, allowing participants to relay any concerns or questions that arose amid this work in such a way that I could respond to them in real time. To do so, I provided participants with a feedback survey following each research session, and I continually reminded participants that they could contact me via email with any questions, concerns, or comments. Finally, I wanted the research sessions, and overall research project, to center agency and control with the participants—granting my participants agency in regards to the nature of the poems they wrote, and in regards to how/if they shared this work with me upon data collection. Again, situating this work within a feminist and trauma-informed framework helped to generate a reflexive research methodology, providing participants with multiple writing options during the workshop sessions, as well as providing participants with a draft of the data to comment on, change, or omit poems from the final presentation.

Since this research was actively engaged with individuals' traumatic experiences and sensitive subject matter, I felt it was important to ground my methodology within the framework of trauma-informed care (TIC), which I had encountered as an undergraduate student studying psychology, though these principles were also introduced to me practically, during my first stretch of counselling sessions in 2017. TIC asserts six guiding principles, which are safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment and choice, and cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMSHA, 2014). In establishing this methodology, I actively worked to include and be attentive to these principles, implementing

them throughout the entire research process, from recruitment, through the writing workshop sessions and the feedback stage, to the final presentation of data.

To expand upon this: safety was a principle I placed at the very forefront of my methodology. This work had the potential to be extremely challenging and emotional for everyone involved, so establishing a space where safety was prioritized was absolutely necessary. As I was in an obvious position of power relative to my participants, I attempted to refrain from asserting an overarching and un-reflexive definition of safety in my methodology, without consulting my participants and considering their individual needs. Instead, within the initial screening survey and weeks before the first writing workshop session, I provided participants the opportunity to relay any resources or items that would help them to feel comfortable and safe. Importantly, this initial consultation allowed me to structure and create each workshop session based off of participants' responses. This kind of recursivity was woven into the research process, as feedback surveys were provided to participants following each writing workshop session, granting space for participants to request changes or suggestions for the subsequent workshop session(s). I stressed the importance of this, within the screening survey, my initial email correspondence with participants, and during each workshop session—I wanted to ensure that participants could relay any feelings or thoughts during the workshop process. Finally, the feedback surveys acted as one-on-one correspondence for participants to address any concerns or issues they might have felt uncomfortable bringing up within the group setting.

Trustworthiness and transparency have been built in throughout the research process. First steps towards trust-building happened in the recruitment process. In the initial screening survey, I introduced myself in a casual manner, situating my positionality not only as a

researcher, but as a student, friend, partner, sister, daughter, and individual who has also experienced sexual violence and uses poetry as a form of healing and self-care. These identities provided a necessary view of the researcher who was guiding participants through difficult and sensitive material, and helped to begin to establish safety, trustworthiness, and transparency. The screening survey aided in providing a transparent rationale for this research, and helped to ease participants into their engagement with the study materials.

As well, in the first workshop session I sought to build trust and to present a transparent view of the research process and my own experience. I openly shared my own poetry that expanded upon my lived experience with trauma and my process of seeking therapy (see Appendix A). I brought coffee and tea for participants prior to each workshop session, as an act of care and providing participants with an item of comfort. It was expressed to me on multiple occasions in participants' feedback forms, that the small act of providing coffee and/or tea helped participants to feel more comfortable and relaxed in the space. I felt this as well.

This first workshop session also introduced participants to Katie Hanczaryk, an art- and trauma-therapist, who understands the use of metaphor and creative expression in trauma healing and has prior experience working with individuals who have experienced sexual violence. This introduction allowed for participants and Katie to gain comfortability with one another, and I found that Katie almost immediately introduced a sense of calmness and compassion to the research space. Through our initial meetings and correspondence prior to the writing workshop-sessions, Katie became someone I trusted and felt understood the goals and aims of my research. It was important for me to establish this trust and familiarity with Katie, as she was placed in a supporting role for my participants, and I wanted to ensure that this was someone with whom they could feel comfortable.

Gathering a community of individuals who have experienced similar forms of trauma (a peer-support setting) prepared the way for collaboration and mutuality, principles that helped to shape the fourth and final workshop session, which presented participants with the opportunity to share any poetry they had created and to receive commentary from either myself or fellow participants. As shown within my literature review, writing and sharing poetry on trauma with individuals who have experienced similar trauma(s) has been demonstrated to foster a space of collective healing and improved connection among group members (Hilse et al., 2007). These principles also informed my decision to include participants in the finalization of my data, granting time and space for participants to view their individual data set and respond with any questions, changes, or omissions. This collaborative process is expanded upon within section 3.5.

Empowerment and choice are also principles that helped shape my methodological choices. Situating participants within a writing workshop process where they could actively make choices on what they wrote about and how (i.e., whether or not participants chose to deploy a specific poetic form, or utilize certain poetic devices or techniques) was a central component to this work. It was imperative that this choice was iterated to participants throughout the entire research process, and additionally, that participants were presented the choice to include within their data set all, some, or none of the poems they wrote during the writing workshop sessions. This element of choice on the macro level reflected the choice that participants were empowered to exercise on the page, in their writing of poetry (presenting their experience in a manner of their choosing, using all the nuanced tools of poetic language).

The final TIC principle, awareness of cultural, historical, and gender issues, is addressed within my entire methodology and overarching thesis. This principle encouraged me to remain cognizant of the fact that trauma, and the complexities of trauma, can manifest and affect

marginalized groups differently, especially communities that have suffered from intergenerational trauma (Burstow, 2003). I aimed to be inclusive and intersectional in recruitment, providing space for participants of any gender-identity and/or cultural background to feel comfortable and supported throughout the research process.

All TIC principles worked to create a sort of scaffolding, in which the stepped implementation of each principle—embedded within recruitment tools and/or workshop materials—ultimately formed a research space where participants could focus solely on writing poetry, and could share their own story and experience with sexual violence in an environment that felt supportive and safe.

3.1 Recruitment

Recruitment material[3] was circulated to friends, family, and community members via online social media platforms such as Facebook, for them to share—allowing for prospective participants to hear of my study from a trusted source. Physical copies of recruitment posters were provided to diverse community centres in Halifax—the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, Halifax Public Library, Venus Envy (a progressive, education-based sex shop and bookstore, which is a frequent community hub and resource for the Halifax 2SLGBTQ+ communities)—as well as within various cafes and local businesses around the Halifax area, and on Saint Mary's University campus. This material was put in place at the beginning of January, allowing approximately one month for individuals to find my research project and contact me as part of the screening process. The recruitment poster included a brief description of the study and the time commitment expected from participants, along with inclusion criteria and information on

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[3] Appendix C provides all recruitment material used, including the recruitment poster, screening survey, and the informed-consent form.

when and where the study would take place. A scannable QR code was included on the poster,

leading interested participants directly to the screening survey. Criteria for participating were

that participants must be above the age of 18, and must have already sought and participated in

some form of therapy/counselling for their sexual violence trauma. Interested participants were

made aware that this research was not a replacement for professional, therapeutic help; rather, it

would offer an additional tool for individuals to make use of, in dealing with and processing their

trauma.

The screening survey provided participants with a general information letter, introducing

them to myself and my personal interest in conducting this research. As well, participants were

provided with an informed-consent form within the screening survey, outlining every aspect of

the research project, from potential benefits and risks to practices of data collection and

confidentiality. The screening survey, and in turn this screening process, allowed for interested

participants to feel their way into the research, providing them with a chance to introduce

themselves and express any concerns they may have had regarding their participation or the

structure of the workshops. As well, this process allowed for me to decide who I felt might be

best suited for this work, and provided me with an initial understanding of participants, their

needs, and how I could best support them throughout the writing workshop process. I was

acknowledging, here, that this work was going to be emotionally taxing for me, and it was

necessary for me to have agency in making deliberate choices about whom I allowed into a

vulnerable space.

3.2 Participants

Eleven individuals expressed interest in participating and subsequently filled out the

screening survey. From that, four individuals were able to participate in the workshop sessions.

The remaining seven interested individuals were unable to participate due to ineligibility (had not attended professional therapy or counselling for their sexual violence trauma) or scheduling conflicts (had work or another commitment during the scheduled workshop sessions). The four participants ranged in age between 24-30, all self-identifying as female.

3.3 Outline of Writing Workshops

The four writing workshops were held twice a week during a two-week period at the beginning of February 2022. The workshops took place on Saint Mary's University campus. Each workshop was held within a seminar-style room that was brightly lit with four large windows, and participants sat at a single table, all distanced at least six feet apart from one another (this was in line with both the regulations of Nova Scotia public-health and those of Saint Mary's University, who implemented various protocols for safe gathering measures during the COVID-19 pandemic). Participants were provided with paper and pens. All participants opted to use paper or their own notebook(s) during the research sessions, but this was not a requirement. Participants also had access to a separate break room across the hall, which they were encouraged to access at any point during the research sessions.

Before starting each writing workshop session, I reminded all participants to be respectful of the confidentiality of the workshop space and their fellow participants. I reminded participants that Katie would be available to them at any point and would be stationed in the break room for the latter three workshop sessions, and that participants were able to leave at any point during the workshop session.

This first session was fairly informal. I provided participants with a brief handout[4] that included basic poetic vocabulary and concepts, along with a variety of poems, some of which I read aloud. Majority of the poems included in this handout ("DIIIIIIIIID IIIIITTTT HAPPEN", Colleen Baran; "(Auto)biography of Mad", Qwo-Li Driskill; "Love", Richard Outram; "The Room of my Life", Anne Sexton; and two of my own poems)[5] revolved around themes of sexual violence and/or trauma. I asked participants to spend a few minutes reflecting on the poems read, encouraging them to re-read the poems and reflect upon any emotions that they may have been feeling. This process took approximately 15 minutes, after which we all took a short break. After the break I introduced participants to an array of trauma-writing strategies within poetry, specifically explaining various poetic techniques that appeared within the poetry read aloud. These strategies included displacing one's experience onto/into a third person subject (seen within my poetry as the 'I' becomes 'she'); the use of metaphor (seen in my poetry, Sexton, and Outram); and the use of framing, or of another context or a form, such as a list, to enclose triggering material[6] (seen in poetry by Outram, Driskell, and Baran). Participants were invited to use these techniques when beginning to write poetry of their own.

The second workshop session took place two days later, and was the first of two sessions in which participants would be writing for the majority of the workshop session. As one participant had missed the first session and was joining in on Zoom for the second workshop

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[4] This handout was created from my own understanding and knowledge of poetry and poetic terms, arising from my own study and practice, supplemented by my consultation of two creative-writing workshop books (Guppy, 2017; McLoughlin, 2017). See Appendix A.

[5] I chose to include these poems for a variety of reasons. I wanted to provide participants with a wide range of poems (and subsequently, poetic forms) that reflected on themes of sexual violence, as an initial understanding of the ways in which they could begin to write about their own experience(s). Also, incorporation of my own poetry helped to provide a transparent view of my experience with sexual violence for my participants, and showed the ways that I have previously used poetry as a form of healing and personal expression.

[6] Material that may enclose traumatic subject matter, including but not limited to topics on sexual abuse, sexual violence, self-harm.

session, there were a few amendments made to this session, in order to adequately incorporate this participant virtually. As this participant expressed in the screening survey that she had been writing for many years and considered herself a poet, I was not overly concerned about a lack of knowledge regarding poetic techniques, devices, forms, etc., which were introduced in the first workshop session. Nonetheless, I provided this participant with the introductory handout (Appendix A) and a brief explanation of the first session over email. Before the second session began, I provided both the participant and Katie with a Zoom link, and virtually introduced Katie and her role within the research space. Additionally, this allowed for Katie to be in contact with the participant over Zoom, in case the participant required any support or assistance.

Before I provided participants with writing prompts or exercises, I asked everyone to take a few minutes to focus on their breathing and heartbeat. This provided an opportunity for participants to reset and re-focus their attention to writing—situating ourselves within a space that was cognizant of writing and creativity. I encouraged participants to notice their surroundings and to move and stretch their body as they felt inclined to do[7].

Next, I instructed participants to write in prose (half a page or so) about a scene from nature—this could be a favourite beach, or park, or a particularly wonderful sunset. I asked participants to try and be as descriptive as possible, without worrying about sentence cohesion or grammar—this particular exercise was simply to help ease participants into writing. After approximately five minutes, I asked everyone to re-read what they'd written and find any surprising images or striking language that they could potentially expand upon. Participants were given 20 minutes or so to either expand on their prose piece or to try to begin piecing together a

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[7] This practice is common within many creative-writing practices, though I derive this exercise partly from my own therapeutic experience of mindfulness, which was presented alongside CBT (cognitive-behavioural therapy). Mindfulness meditation asks us to focus on our surroundings, notice our feelings, and ground ourselves to the present moment, which can be particularly useful during a moment of increased stress or panic ("Mindful", 2020).

poem. I encouraged participants to change directions or point of view if they began to feel stuck within their writing. Participants were given a ten-minute break following this writing process.

Following the break, I provided participants with a variety of poetic stems[8]:

What matters most is…

My favourite day is…

I watch the sky while…

The water boils over…

I am…

This exercise introduced participants to writing in a free-verse form, giving them complete control over line-length, stanzaic structure, how they chose to place their poem on the page, etc.

For the remainder of the workshop session, participants were able to try out the poetic stems or could continue working on their poem(s) from the nature-writing exercise. I made myself available to participants as needed during the writing process, checking on them intermittently to see if they needed guidance or help with any aspect of their poem or writing process. At the end of the workshop session, I thanked participants for their time and briefly gave them a reminder of what they would be asked to do within the next workshop session.

The third workshop session, in which participants were invited to write more specifically about their trauma, took place five days later. After asking everyone to take a few minutes to focus on their breathing and heartbeat, I then asked everyone to spend a few minutes writing, perhaps reflecting upon how they were feeling coming into the writing session, or maybe writing

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[8] This exercise was adapted from Springer (2006); however, I created and compiled all poetic stems provided to participants.

about their weekend or something particularly enjoyable that happened within the past week[9].

While participants were writing, I provided them with a handout that included a list of general

prompts and poetic stems that they could use if they wanted a bit more structure during this

writing session, knowing too that some participants may have had an exact idea of what they

wanted to write on.

Participants were reminded at this time that their writing could engage any aspect of their

experience—the event itself, the days/months/years following, the process of seeking therapy,

the process of telling someone about what had happened, etc. I expressed to participants that

there is no right or wrong way in which to express their feelings and emotions surrounding their

trauma. The prompts and stems provided (shown below) were general enough that participants

could explore any of the prompts and apply them to their experience and trauma in any way they

chose. These prompts were created with Annas and Peseroff's (2015) feminist creative-writing

pedagogy in mind, which argue for a combination of disruption and inclusion in the creative-

writing workshop—I worked to include various perspectives that one could take when writing on

trauma or the process of healing, and used these prompts as a way of disrupting traditional or

expected approaches to talking and/or writing about trauma.

Prompts:

1. Using the poetic technique of framing, write a poem in the form of a recipe or list. Maybe
   this poem has step-by-step directions for self-care, or a list of items that have brought you
   comfort and joy during your healing process.

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[9] This introductory exercise is popular amongst writing workshops, though I was inspired to incorporate this exercise through my own past experience and participation within a workshop taken in 2019, as part of my undergraduate degree. I found this exercise to be useful in situating myself within a space of creativity and writing, as well as allowing for time to process prior thoughts/experiences occurring within my day, before turning my attention to writing and my fellow classmates.

2. Write a letter or postcard to yourself, or to a loved one. Maybe you'd like to write a letter to yourself to read a year from now.

3. Write a poem dedicated to your body, or from the perspective of a certain body part. Perhaps your poem is written from the perspective of your legs: the distance they've travelled and the strength they have in carrying you forward each day.

4. Write a poem about an object you've left behind or chosen to get rid of. What does the space it's left behind look like? What do you want to fill that space with?

5. Using metaphor or simile, write a poem detailing a weather pattern or a shift in the weather, to demonstrate a change in perspective or a processing of your experience.

6. Write a poem in response to one of the poems shared last week. What stands out to you about the poem(s)?

<u>Stems:</u>

I listen to…

My strength is…

Home looks like…

The wind picks up…

Today I feel…

Five years from now…

Participants were provided with two separate breaks during this writing session. To wrap up the session, I asked participants to create a short list of two or three things that they could do later that day or that evening, as a form of self-care. I recognized participants' strength and bravery in showing up for the writing session and the courage it takes to engage with feelings

and emotions surrounding trauma. Finally, I thanked participants for their time and reminded them that the final session, which was to take place two days later, was optional.

The fourth and final writing session consisted of a more formal workshop in which participants could share any of the poetry written during the writing sessions, and potentially receive and offer feedback or commentary on those poems. Two out of four participants attended the final session. I began the session by conversing with the participants, welcomed them to share their work if they would like to do so, or to chat about any aspect of the previous three writing sessions—if they had comments or questions about any of the prompts provided or forms explained, or any general feedback they wanted to share. I left the structure of this session very open and allowed for the participants to determine which direction they wanted to go. Participants were eager to share their work, with one participant reading their created poems aloud while the other preferred not to read aloud, but instead passed around physical copies of the poems they wished to share.

This session extended past the allotted 1.5-hour time frame, as the participants and I engaged in conversations about their poetry, the process of writing on trauma, the experience of trauma, and the stigma that continues to surround sexual violence.

3.4 Research Ethics

The first and probably the biggest hurdle I faced throughout the process of creating this methodology and conducting research was the research ethics approval process. I knew that the process would be lengthy and time-consuming, but I had little foresight about the difficulty that would arise from conducting research as a humanities and feminist scholar, deep in the trenches of more traditional and quantitative research.

I want to preface these frustrations with the acknowledgement that the REB process was, without a doubt, helpful for my overall research methodology, as the advice and/or questions I received allowed me to fix various areas of my overall project and reframe my recruitment tools. I am not frustrated with the process of obtaining research ethics approval, and I fully understand the validity and necessity of this process. I am, however, frustrated with the invalidation I ultimately felt as a first-time researcher, graduate student, and trauma-survivor, who was approaching this work and research from a lived standpoint. To pinpoint this invalidation, I think it stems from the detachment I personally felt the ethics board perceived, between myself and my research. I root this work in my own lived experience; it was impossible for me to separate this work from myself nor, indeed, was it desirable to do so. Maybe that's another limitation of this work, but if so, it only seemed to present itself during the research ethics process. And that leads me to believe that there is a lack of understanding of untraditional (qualitative, arts-based, and specifically feminist) forms of research that is systemically enshrined in the REB research process—at least as it exists here at SMU.

These frustrations are reiterated, in an unfortunately much more damaging way, by a recent Women and Gender Studies MA graduate, Tammy Williams. Williams' thesis work revolved around evolving the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model (2021), and she used the stories of several Indigenous Elders and community voices to establish an updated model. As with any in-person research, Williams had to receive ethics approval before continuing on with her research work. Williams had previously received ethics approval from two separate Mi'kmaq ethics boards—the "Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch at Cape Breton University" and "the Kjipuktuk Eskinuapimk Empisqa'wik (Kijupuktuk Ethics Circle -KEE)", and rightfully applied for SMU ethics approval via a secondary form, one that is specifically for "students requesting approval

based on another institution's ethics board approval" (Williams, 2021, p.42). I was deeply upset to read that this application was rejected, due to an apparent lack of information from Williams. Williams states that this rejection left her feeling invalidated, and that the SMU REB process was steeped in systemic racism (Williams, 2021). I feel for Williams and the horror and pain that this process must have ignited. This was not the only wound caused by the REB, as they also denied Williams' intention to include her storytellers as co-authors of her thesis and methodology, "as a way for disseminating the thesis to Mi'kmaw communities for their use…within our Indigenous communities" (Williams, p.43). This co-authorship "was viewed as a form of coercion" (Williams, p.43), and Williams' intent to make tobacco offerings to her participants, which is a tradition and form of respect within many Indigenous cultures, was also questioned, documented by the REB as a harmful substance which posed a risk.

I deeply commend Williams for her strength and perseverance in pushing through the unfounded, unknowledgeable, culturally insensitive and traumatizing responses by the SMU REB. I was absolutely appalled in reading Williams' account, but unfortunately not at all surprised or shocked. There is so much work to do, within the University system and in every single branch of academia, in regard to reconciliation and building a proper relationship with Indigenous communities and scholars. But this current process feels like a step backwards; it feels like there was absolutely no attempt made to approach Williams and her research from her own understanding and cultural traditions. The complete invalidation of Indigenous research ethics and processes is humiliating—we absolutely must do better than this. It's disheartening, as a feminist scholar, to view the lack of validation placed on Indigenous forms of knowledge and knowledge-production. I question the barriers placed upon research production, and the gate-keeping that is rampant within Western intellectual traditions and academia, and hope we find a

way to break them down. I cannot, with good conscience, relay my own challenges in conducting

research without acknowledging the abhorrent challenges that many marginalized feminist

researchers and scholars have faced before me.

In a small way, I recognized my own research ethics process within Williams' story. I felt

her pain and invalidation, especially in the lack of understanding that the REB process placed on

lived experience and learned knowledge. In my own ethics process, I felt that situating my

project in terms of sexual violence sounded alarm bells and raised red flags—it seemed that all

the care and deliberate attention I had poured into this work was overlooked, simply because I

was inviting individuals to write about their trauma. It didn't really seem to matter that I, too, had

experienced sexual violence and had used poetry in this same way, to process my trauma. In fact,

the responses and questions I received made me second-guess my ability as a researcher, and

made me feel as if I was completely underprepared to take on this work. I felt overlooked, and

side-stepped, as the REB asked for a 'letter of support' from my on-site trauma therapist, Katie

Hanczaryk, who would presumably validate my methodology and research principles as

someone who was an expert within the field. I wanted to scream, what about me? It was difficult

to push through the 60-some questions regarding my research, and I can say with complete

confidence that if I didn't have the support I did, or the insistence that this research was valuable

and important, I would have given up and scrapped the in-person research component. But why

should feelings of defeat or worse, a reluctance to do in-person research, be a response to the

REB process? Why are we not doing more to support researchers, especially students who are

conducting research for the very first time, and have almost no idea how to navigate that

process? In retrospect, it feels unfamiliar and disorienting to recall how I felt during the REB

process and the concern that was placed upon this research. Especially now, writing with the

knowledge that the creative-writing workshop sessions ran smoothly—Katie Hanczaryk wasn't

needed at any point, by any participants, within the research process.

It is not my intent to question the process of research ethics, but instead to question the

approach and language used by the SMU REB[10]. As illustrated within Williams' (2021)

reflections surrounding her REB process, there needs to be more reflection done regarding the

power and harm that can be inflicted upon students. It's damaging and deterring to conducting

research, and is the very thing that limits advancement of non-traditional methodologies and

approaches to research. Again, I don't want to become desensitized to this process and accept

that the business of conducting research will become easier the more I am exposed to the

process; rather, the process itself needs to change.

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[10] Faulkner's poem "Letter to the IRB from South Jersey" (Faulkner 2005, as cited in Faulkner 2018) addresses the difficulties of conducting research as a feminist scholar using arts-based qualitative methods. Ultimately, Faulkner's poem, as well as the article "IRB as Poetry" (Lahman et al., 2019) helps to suggest that these issues are a broader problem within research institutions.

Chapter 4: Analytical Method(s)

The data from the writing workshops consisted of participants' feedback surveys, the poems participants wrote and chose to share with me, and the field notes I constructed either during the workshop sessions or in the time immediately following.

Shortly following each writing session, participants were provided two separate feedback surveys (see Appendix B) via email. The first survey[11] allowed participants to raise any concerns or questions they may have had about the remainder of the workshops, request additional resources for the in-person sessions, and/or name things I could do as the researcher/facilitator to make each subsequent session more comfortable. All of these first feedback surveys were required to be completed and sent back to me by the end of the day, so that I could implement any necessary changes for the following workshop session.

The second feedback survey invited participants to reflect upon the specific workshop session, asking how participants felt in reading and writing poetry, if writing was easier or more difficult with the addition of writing prompts and poetic stems, and if any feelings about their trauma arose when writing their poems. These questions were represented in an open-ended, fill-in-the-blank format, with participants being able to express their feelings without being confined to sliding-scale response measures. Participants were not required to complete these surveys before the subsequent writing workshop, and were granted one week after the final workshop session to complete and send back all feedback surveys.

My field notes (see Data Set 5) were produced within each writing workshop, documenting discussion between participants, and between participants and myself. Creating

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[11] These feedback surveys served as a way for participants to provide ongoing consent, as well as a way for me to incorporate reflexivity/recursiveness into the research process, implementing changes to the research structure if needed.

field notes during each workshop session also allowed for me to document how I felt each writing session was moving; the stiff or relaxed air within the research space; and how each of these things may have shifted during the session, and as the research process progressed. While I was prepared for the possibility that taking field notes while simultaneously facilitating each workshop session would be difficult or impossible, it was more feasible than anticipated. The middle two workshop sessions almost entirely consisted of an independent writing session, granting me time to reflect and take notes during this process. At times, this allowed for me to insert myself into the session as a writer and poet, softening the line between researcher and participant. This said, the majority of my field notes were generated or expanded upon in the time (approximately 30-90 minutes) I gave myself following each writing workshop, to debrief and create.

4.1 Poetic Inquiry

Poetic inquiry is a rapidly emerging field that offers a creative alternative to traditional research methods and praxes. Scholars and researchers have varying definitions of the method. Monica Prendergast and Sandra L. Faulkner are two leading poetic inquirers that advocate for this form and approach to doing arts-based qualitative research. Though I briefly mention Prendergast's work, Faulkner is the main source that I draw upon, as we both approach this method from a feminist perspective. Faulkner provides a detailed account of what poetic inquiry is and why researchers use it, which will be the focus of this section. Faulkner also details how poetic inquiry can be implemented into feminist research and methodological praxis, specifically.

Poetic inquiry is used both by Prendergast and Faulkner as an umbrella definition for over 30 different poetry-research processes. These processes range from data poetry or data

poems to research poetry or research poems, poetic transcription, narrative poetry, ethnopoetry, interview poems, field poems, autoethnographic poetry, etc. (Prendergast, 2009). While all of these terms denote different praxes, Faulkner (2020) notes that they all "describe a method of turning research interviews, transcripts, observations, personal experience, and reflections into poems or poetic forms" (p.13). Because of the similarities within all of these terms, broadly defining poetic inquiry and establishing it as the leading, or main, terminology for this kind of arts-based qualitative research allows for a more streamlined development of this work and an easily accessible field of literature for future scholars and researchers to draw upon.

Faulkner (2020) defines poetic inquiry as "the use of poetry crafted from research endeavors, either before a project analysis, as a project analysis, and/or poetry that is part of or that constitutes an entire research project" (p.3-4), adding that this definition "is broad enough to include work that uses Poetic Inquiry as both a method and product of research activity" (p.14). Prendergast (2009) separates poetic inquiry into three categories: vox theoria, "poetry written from or in response to works of literature/theory in a discipline or field" (p.545); vox autobiographia/autoethnographia, research-based poems that "are written from field notes, journal entries, or reflexive/creative/autobiographical/autoethnographical writing as the data source" (p.545); and vox participare, participant-voiced poems that "are written from interview transcripts or solicited directly from participants" (p.545). Vox participare poems can be co-created by both the researcher and participant, involving potentially multiple voices in the poem and its creation (Prendergast, 2009).

As illustrated within both Prendergast and Faulkner's definitions, in poetic inquiry individuals use language in a non-traditional way, branching out from defined or expected qualitative research methods through the incorporation of poetry (Faulkner, 2020; Prendergast,

2009). Faulkner states that "poetry in research is a way to tap into universality and radical subjectivity; the poet uses personal experience and research to create something from the particular, which becomes universal when the audience relates to, embodies, and/or experiences the work as if it were their own" (p.14). This resonates with my own feelings about the appeal of poetic inquiry as method, as both vox autobiographia/autoethnographia and vox participare form an important part of my thesis work and the representation of my data.

Poetic inquiry will be used to present my research findings and field notes, shaping the data through a poetic lens. As Faulkner notes, this is just one of the myriad ways poetic inquiry can be incorporated into an arts-based qualitative research project. Researchers have used poetic inquiry to present research data or analysis, or as a source of data, and have used various poetic forms such as narrative, lyric, and free verse to do this (Faulkner, 2020). Faulkner (2020) provides an extensive summary of researchers who incorporate poetry into their work, using poetry to demonstrate lived experience; as political response and activism; to show range of meaning; as an ethical, caring, and empathic practice; and as a more accessible and powerful form than prose research. Poetic inquiry grants researchers agency over what they want their research to look like, particularly vis-à-vis the form of its presentation. Galvin and Prendergast (2016) feel that using poetry as method "has the power to open up the unexpected, to contribute to aesthetic depth, to bring us close to ambiguities with metaphor and image, it allows access to vulnerability, courage, and truth telling and playfully or poignantly forges new critical insight" (p.xv).

Poetic inquiry has many ties to feminist methods and applications. Faulkner (2020) states that her "main goals in using poetry in [her] research and teaching are to agitate for social change, to show embodiment and reflexivity, to collapse the false divide between body and

mind, public and private, and as a feminist ethical practice" (p.18). Researchers have used poetic inquiry to ignite social and political change, through poetic transcription of interviews with oppressed or marginalized groups, or by creating powerful poetic works that confront social structures and speak out on inequities (Faulkner, 2020). Furthermore, Prendergast (2015) argues that "critical poetic inquiry invites us to engage as active witnesses within our research sites, as witnesses standing beside participants in their search for justice, recognition, healing, a better life" (p.683). The method enforces vigorous reflexivity from the researcher as they work alongside and engage with their participants. Poetic inquiry provides the space for researcher-participant relations to be positive and transformational, as the process often requires researchers to take an anti-oppressive, intersectional approach to working with participants, and understanding the potential effects of their research on outsiders. This is another key aspect of my methodology, as I prioritize reflexivity and engagement with my participants, specifically in seeking participant approval in regards to the finalized presentation of the data.

Various other researchers have used poetic inquiry within their research, creating poetry from interview transcriptions (Faulkner, 2006; Glesne, 1997; Koelsch, 2020; Reale, 2015; Rooyen et al., 2021; Ward, 2011), and archival or historical texts (Alexander, 1991; Soniat, 1997). A study by Rooyen et al. (2021) highlighted the political power of poetic inquiry, shown through the embodied participant experience of viewing the poetry transcribed from their interviews.

Faulkner herself (2020) uses poetic inquiry as a research method in a number of different ways: writing poetry as replacement for a literature review, transcribing various participant interviews into poetry, transcribing field notes and observations into poetry to "embody the

experience of being LGBTQ and Jewish in ways that pay attention to the senses and offer some narrative and poetic truths about the experience of multiple stigmatized identities" (p.27).

4.2 Utilizing Poetic Inquiry

The poetic inquiry process consisted of a) transcribing answers from each participant's feedback surveys into a poem, and b) transcribing my own field notes from the creative-writing workshop sessions into poetry. This use of poetic inquiry varies from other methods that weave the data from all participants together into a singular poem, or begin with a thematic analysis of the data (Glesne, 1997; Rooyen et al., 2020; Stapleton, 2018). My method highlights a comparison and/or contrast between participants' experience in writing and their respective poem(s) (which I present in each case alongside the poem resulting from my poetic-inquiry/analysis). It also allows for individual voices/experiences to emerge within the data set. This foregrounds the capacity of poetry-writing to grant agency to the individual subject (connected to empowerment and choice, and the tenets of feminist poststructuralism) and allows individuals who have experienced sexual violence to tell their own stories (a feminist act of decentralization of power/authority in the context of academic research).

To begin, I removed any direct identifiers within participants' feedback surveys and compiled all surveys into a Word document. I then read each feedback survey over a couple of times to get a general sense of the participant's voice and experience during the research process. From there, I began to highlight words and/or sentences that conveyed a sense of emotion or felt relevant to the question being asked. Each feedback survey had questions relating to the emotions the participant felt in reading poetry, the emotions they felt while writing poetry, any feelings or responses to utilizing prompts within the writing process, and whether they felt any sense of community emerged during the research process. The footnotes embedded within each

of my finished poems associate specific lines of poetry with the corresponding question(s) within the feedback survey transcribed.

Once I had highlighted words relevant to each feedback survey and participant experience, I began to arrange them poetically. I gave deliberate care and attention to the arrangement of words, length and placement of lines, and occurrence of poetic devices such as alliteration and repetition, as all of these elements work together to convey a sense of direction and meaning. Enjambment allowed me to emphasize certain words/phrases which were expressive of participants' emotions and/or of the particularity of their experiences. As Faulkner says, poetic inquiry can "reveal the essence of a participant's lived experience" (2020, p.63). The poems presented participants' answers in a poetic form, however I remained cautious not to alter the spirit of participants' words throughout this process. I did take some artistic license when transcribing participants' prose into poetry, mainly in shifting the placement of words/phrases, or changing the tense as I saw fit. Table 1 demonstrates the poetic inquiry process.

After I had completed my initial work of poetic inquiry, I provided each participant a copy of their data set, allowing them to view their own poems and the poems I had created, to suggest changes or omissions if necessary. This process was done in an attempt to equalize researcher-participant power dynamics by giving participants an opportunity to be involved in finalizing the data presented—acknowledging that as the primary researcher I still had the final say in the presentation and format of the data sets.

Overall, compiling this data was a stimulating process, as each participant had a unique voice and experience which I wanted to express as organically as possible. Not only were participants' experiences diverse from one another, but the depth and complexity of answers within the feedback surveys ranged—some participants felt comfortable sharing more about the

experience of writing poetry, while others had less to say or were more direct within their answers. This impacted the creative direction and license granted to me, as some answers provided more opportunities to play around with the spacing of words or arrangement of text than other answers. This is not to say that some participants' answers were more impactful or important, but rather to acknowledge the limitations that arose as I worked my way through the poetic inquiry process. This process prompted me to reflect on the limits of feedback surveys, as compared to semi-structured interviews, as a methodology of data-collection; I noted specifically my inability as a researcher to tack on additional questions or seek clarification or expansion from participants' answers. This limitation was balanced however by the fact that participants had a chance to review the data sets: an opportunity to clarify or expand upon any aspect of their survey-answers as those answers were expressed in the poem(s) I created.

Table 1. Comparison between feedback survey and resulting poem

Participant's feedback survey	Poem 2.10
If applicable, how did you feel upon sharing your work with your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?	It was cathartic to share poems with people who I knew shared a similar experience as me it did create a sense of community and support.
Sharing was a very positive experience. It did create a sense of community and support. Sharing the poems prompted us all to open up about how and why we wrote them, and some of the underlying emotions that prompted specific passages. I felt supported as a writer, but also as someone living with trauma. It was cathartic to share poems with people who I knew shared a similar experience as me.	a very positive experience, prompting us all to open up about how and why we wrote them, the underlying emotions prompting specific passages.
	I felt supported as a writer as someone living with trauma
How did you feel hearing work from your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?	I felt a deeper sense of trust an atmosphere of openness, vulnerability achieved poetry sparked an open and honest discussion about our work that we otherwise
I felt a real sense of support and community. Sharing our poems sparked a truly open and honest discussion about our work and how it related to our traumatic experiences. I felt like we were able to achieve a deeper sense of trust and an atmosphere of openness and vulnerability that we otherwise, had we simply sat down and tried to discuss trauma without the pathway of poetry, would not have found as easily.	had we simply sat down and tried to discuss trauma without the pathway of poetry would not have found as easily.

Chapter 5: Data

This chapter presents the poetry that emerged from the four writing workshop sessions, as well as a poetic representation of the data from participants' feedback surveys. This chapter incorporates data, findings, and analysis; and presents untraditional forms of knowledge-production and questioning by breaking down the traditional distinction between data and findings. Enclosed is the poetry that participants wrote during or in between the workshop sessions, as well as poetry created through the method of poetic inquiry; a process that allowed for a poetic presentation of participants' feedback surveys.

Each data set follows the order of the creative-writing workshop sessions, and works to convey the movement between all four workshop sessions. The poems created from each feedback survey precede the poetry participants chose to share from that corresponding session.

For example, within Data Set 1, poem 1.1 is a poetic transcription of the first feedback survey, poem 1.2 is a poetic transcription of the second feedback survey, poem 1.3 is the participant's poem from the second writing workshop session, poem 1.4 is a poetic transcription of the third feedback survey, with poem 1.5 the participant's poem from the third writing workshop session. This order is maintained for the following three data sets; however, some data sets contain more poetry than others, simply due to the ranging number of poems that participants created and chose to share. The footnotes provided help to align the poetry to the corresponding writing workshop session. Creating poetry from the feedback surveys and presenting these poems alongside participants' poems, allows for a sense of parallelism to emerge between the original poems participants created, and the emotions they felt within the workshop sessions.

As well, arranging the poetry in this way encourages readers to experience the participants' journey through/out each writing workshop session: the potential variation between emotions felt in the first session compared to the last; the differences or similarities of the writing process within the second and third workshop sessions; and insights into how the process of writing a poem can influence the resulting poem itself. Importantly, within this chapter I encourage readers to frame their own understanding of each poem presented, each data set as pertaining to the individual participant and their voice, and each data set as pertaining to the collective group of both participants and researcher. This encouragement stems from a number of factors. Providing a relatively unedited presentation of this data—rather than condensing the poetic works by theme or choosing specific poems to present—allows the reader room to move slowly throughout the entire data set, and at the same time allows these poems to take up physical space in the thesis, according importance to each participant and their unique voice. The poetry within this chapter illuminates the capability of poetry as a healing tool, pointing to the ways in which writing poetry can provide an alternative way of processing trauma.

Finally, the fifth data set is a poetic representation of the field notes I created during the research process—documenting my experience of each workshop session, along with any feelings or emotions I experienced leading up to, within, or following the workshop sessions. My approach in making this poetic representation was very similar to the process of poetic inquiry applied to the feedback surveys, reading through my field notes to eliminate unnecessary or vague wording and inserting various line breaks to create a more structured poetic form. Again, these field notes follow the order of the writing workshop sessions, to allow the reader to understand my experience and thought processes throughout each session.

Data Set 1

Poem 1.1[12]

I enjoy the non-direct approach, it
allows the reader to fill in the blanks
depending on own experience.
The direct approach is so brave,
allows a better window
into the writer's soul.

I liked "did it happen" by
Colleen Baran. A game of jeopardy disclosing
talking about an assault –
how will people react?
           will they support me?
                will they believe me?
I feel sad, a little heavy,
reading this poem
still struggling today
with feelings and actions of people
who don't believe me.

these poems placed
my abuse, feelings, results of trial
more forefront; less boxed off
than on a 'normal' day.

I am excited to try
poetry as a way to process.
I wrote one poem in grade eight
about my abuse and feeling forgotten when
he moved away.

I usually write short essays
or letters.

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[12] Corresponds to the feedback survey from first writing workshop session.
Lines 1-16 respond to the survey question "Did you enjoy reading/hearing poetry from Baran, Outram, and/or Sexton – poets who used a masking or framing approach – or did you resonate with the poetry that took a more direct approach to writing on sexual violence trauma?"
Lines 17-30 respond to the survey question "How did the poetry read aloud make you feel? Did these poems bring you any negative or unwarranted feelings/emotions? Contrarily, did the poems read aloud provide you with a sense of security or community?"

Poem 1.2[13]

I liked writing about nature and enjoyed this process.
I felt better, writing about the beach
I find it so healing
bringing those images to mind has
a calming effect. I love the ocean/beach
it's my heart home.

---

[13] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the second writing workshop session.
The poem responds to the survey question "Broadly speaking, how did writing poetry make you feel? What emotions/feelings arose from the writing process, if any?"

Poem 1.3[14]

my place

<div align="right">

i arrive at my place
an expanse of sparkling gems
sunlight dances on the waves
tempting me in to play

an expanse of sparkling gems
a physical response washes over my body
tempting me in to play
she is dangerous when not respected

a physical response washes over my body
soft winds whisp salt air forward
she is dangerous when not respected
destroying anything in her path

soft winds whisp salt air forward
the vastness makes me feel small
destroying anything in her path
where i stand will never be the same

the vastness makes me feel small
the importance of this moment, realized
where i stand will never be the same
face up, i surrender to the sun

the importance of this moment, realized
crashing waves cover me in safety
face up, i surrender to the sun
calm, content, soul full up - at my place

</div>

---

[14] This poem was created by participant 1 within the second writing workshop session.

Poem 1.4[15]

I liked writing about my weekend to start
it was good to process
and put it aside before starting to write
I didn't use prompts
I wanted to just be honest and
started writing out my experiences.
it is an easy process
I really like writing. It's forgiving
poetry gives you freedom
no rules or a box, you can say
whatever you want
and how you feel. getting things down
on paper is so important as
a way to heal and process emotions
a way to admit things to yourself for the first time
that you're scared
to say aloud.

I am ok to talk about my abuse
I am ok with writing about my abuse
I think it's important to talk about it.

recently I've admitted out loud
that I loved my abuser
he was my first true love.
that fact
the fallout
is harder on my head
than the actual abuse

I would describe it as "heavy".

I'm proud of the poem I created.

---

[15] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the third writing workshop session.
Lines 1-6 respond to the survey question "If applicable, was the use of prompts and/or poetic stems helpful in writing? Did any of the poetic techniques such as framing, masking, using a list poem, etc., help make the writing process easier or more difficult?"
Lines 7-17 respond to the survey question "Was the writing process an easy or difficult experience, and how so?"
Lines 18-30 respond to the survey question "Did any feelings (negative or positive) surrounding your trauma arise when writing your poem(s)?"

Poem 1.5[16]

OUR

you left parts of me beyond repair
when you chose me as your muse.
child's naivety, a virgin body to satisfy your pleasures.
immediately and eternally under your control
the 'love' we shared, a veil on my world today.

i fell into your arms,
between your legs and under your sheets.
i craved for our time alone.
the electricity of your hands on me
OUR special secret gathering strength.

my love for you – my dear 'dream maker'
blinded me of your true intentions.
but can you truly be blind at age eleven?
to me you were perfect
to me you were my way forward.

you broke my heart the day you called
damage control, "you deserve to hear this from me"
"don't believe what you hear"
"I have so much I want to tell you"
"I promise… I promise.. I promise…"

that summer i permanently changed
confused, alone, internalizing the loss of my first love.
You said, "long distance can work".
weekly phone calls and secret emails
plans for a Vegas rendezvous – "i do".

one year after you left, our secret began to crack
my broken heart still mourned for your touch.
i heard your voice inside my head,
but turned fourteen and couldn't comprehend
our complicated web of emotions and actions.

when i turned fifteen my love turned to anger
scared of my lover now named an abuser.
trapped alone with the burden of OUR secret.
my body turned emotion to illness
parts of me hanging to the idea i was special.

six more years, suffered in masked silence

---

[16] This poem was created by participant 1 within the third writing workshop session.

you flourished in new cities.
i gained prescriptions, therapists and scars.
You gained popularity, new friends – YOU LIVED.
i braved OUR courtroom to hear, "I vehemently deny all charges".

for twenty years i've carried you with me
as my invisible partner.
wreaking havoc on my life.
willing me to break – to die
constantly blocking me from trusting again.

i am today, because of those years with you
my anger, my hatred, my tears.
my smiles, my success, my lovers.
all a product of the mind fuck
that was and will be never understood…

                                                  …my first true love

Data Set 2

Poem 2.1[17]

I resonated with both types of poems
it was enlightening, being exposed
to poems that use a masking technique.
hearing them aloud
lets me engage from a different
perspective than my own.
no negative emotions, but it was
mildly comforting to read
poems – emotional responses
to traumatic experiences that
share similarities with some of
my own lived responses
to trauma.

---

[17] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the first writing workshop session.
Lines 1-3 respond to the survey question "Did you enjoy reading/hearing poetry from Baran, Outram, and/or Sexton – poets who used a masking or framing approach – or did you resonate with the poetry that took a more direct approach to writing on sexual violence trauma?"
Lines 4-13 respond to the survey question "How did the poetry read aloud today make you feel? Did these poems bring about any negative or unwarranted feelings/emotions? Contrarily, did the poems read aloud provide you with a sense of security or community?"

Poem 2.2[18]

I felt positive, productive.
space dedicated purely to
writing poetry
was refreshing. Poetic stems
a helpful nudge
to thinking creatively

the prompts and nature exercise
made me think about
how we perceive trauma, how
relating it to nature
can make it easier
to describe.
Places the harm outside
of yourself. lets you look at it from
an outside point of view.

---

[18] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the second writing workshop session.
Lines 1-4 respond to the survey question "Broadly speaking, how did writing poetry today make you feel? What emotions/feelings arose from the process, if any?"
Lines 4-6 respond to the question "Was writing poetry easier or more difficult with the addition of the poetic stems and writing exercises?"
Lines 7-15 respond to the question "Did any emotions/feelings arise related to your trauma?"

Poem 2.3[19]

<u>heartdrift</u>

my best girl back home
stands on the beach of my youth:
barren sandscape both ways, split
by a hollow, wooden heart

a reminder of bleached bone,
of hard frost and salt deposits

lake waves bring her gifts, rushing
reverently to her roots
every exhale depositing
shells and pinecones, bits
of sunbeam trapped in glass

when I left her, arms outstretched
she fell into othering, felt lightning's hot
fingers scrape at her marrow, emptied
out into the freshwater

folding open all the way down
like a conch shell, now you
can slip inside her chambers and
she will swallow you whole

---

[19] This poem was created by participant 2 within the second writing workshop session.

Poem 2.4[20]

blue screen

…   …   …

your body couldn't start properly

[okay. reboot?]

after multiple tries
the operating system failed
to initiate, so

you'll need to use recovery tools

[fuck, where do we keep those?]

press Enter to try again
press F1 to deepen your breathing

[is it supposed to make this wheezing sound?]

press F5 to look under the sink for help
press F8 for forgiveness

press Esc for -

[hm. maybe don't press Esc]

Enter.

        Enter.

                EnterEnterEnterEnterEnter

    …   …   …   …   …

    your body couldn't start properly

    [okay. reboot?]

---

[20] This poem was created by participant 2 in between workshop sessions 2 and 3.

Poem 2.5[21]

I found the use of poetic stems
helpful, a simple starting point to explore
how I hope I will have grown from
my trauma
five years from now
writing was easy – I didn't struggle to write about my trauma

it is always
     not difficult
     per se,
but a bit more effort
to write from a vulnerable place
of hurt.
it made me parse through
some anger
ultimately making me feel
hopeful.

---

[21] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the third writing workshop session.
Lines 1-2 respond to the survey question "If applicable, was the use of prompts and/or poetic stems helpful in writing?"
Lines 3-16 respond to the survey questions "Did any feelings (negative or positive) surrounding your trauma arise when writing your poems? Was the writing process an easy or difficult experience, and how so?"

Poem 2.6[22]

<u>how am I feeling?</u> (i)

sleepy. full of invisible muscles doing invisible things. half-surrendered. somewhere between asphalt and fallow red. tiller disconnected. too much to handle. frustrated. a tangle of unspoken needs. guilty in every direction. stuck. mid-mire, sinking, trying to keep my back straight. over-caffeinated and under-staffed. a partially carved burl of mulberry fallen down behind a workbench.

---

[22] This poem was created by participant 2 during the third writing workshop session.

Poem 2.7[23]

<u>five years from now</u>

the building where you
touched me will be condemned:
found wanting and razed
to the ground

I will live in a city
you have never defiled,
in a body brimming with
cells that have no memory
of your heavy fingers

maybe I will hold my breath
less often or lose my anticipatory
full-body flinch in offices and
elevators and
buses and
cubicles

maybe I will take
fresh-cut daffodils home
to a quiet kitchen and lie down
on the sun splashed tiles

and think nothing
of you at all

---

[23] This poem was created by participant 2 within the third writing workshop session.

Poem 2.8[24]

<u>resonance</u>

the small violences of my life seem
an echo of a city fallen months ago,
tremors of it surfacing in each
puddle of day

shattered blue glass in my sink,
perfume lingering on the porcelain
for an entire storm cycle and
I wonder about other glass

other treasures, other beloveds
wonder how and when they
shattered, if I could have extended
a hand and felt the shimmer of
death in their reflections
years before

are the peach trees we planted
still alive? do the branches still kiss
along the upstairs windows on windy days?
born of spring and soil, we did not teach
them about enemies or blood or fire

what good were we?

---

[24] This poem was created by participant 2 between workshop sessions 3 and 4.

Poem 2.9[25]

<u>questions</u>

what's the verb for grief? not grieving, not how we
do grief, I mean what does grief do? does it move? mock? slither?

bludgeon? or wreck? as in,

you are wrecked. there will be a great wrecking.
I am wreckage.

what are you after? what is the has done of grief, the if grief then…?

drowning? or perhaps bulldozed?
minced - a pie of grief, burned sugar
wafting through the halls?

scrape? like one would hollow out
a pumpkin, jagged spoon culling
seeds from pale, soft flesh

settles, a cloak clasped at your throat,
dark fur brushing your shoulders? or
crushing, instead, an infinite cycle of
mortar against pestle?

sing? does grief sing?

someone tell me, in this moment, can you
hear my grief singing?

---

[25] This poem was created by participant 2 between workshop sessions 3 and 4.

Poem 2.10[26]

It was cathartic to share
poems with people who I knew
shared a similar experience as me
it did create a sense of community
and support.
a very positive experience, prompting us all
to open up about how and why
we wrote them, the underlying emotions
prompting specific passages.

I felt supported
as a writer
as someone living with trauma

I felt a deeper sense of trust
an atmosphere of openness, vulnerability
poetry sparked an open and honest
discussion about our work that we otherwise

had we simply sat down and tried
to discuss trauma without
the pathway of poetry

would not have found as easily.

---

[26] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the fourth workshop session.
Lines 1-12 respond to the survey question "if applicable, how did you feel upon sharing your work with your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?"
Lines 13-20 respond to the survey question "How did you feel hearing work from your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?"

Data Set 3

Poem 3.1[27]

Writing made me feel centered
in control
competent
I felt like I had a lot of agency
over my state of being, while writing

the guidelines and restrictions
from the poetic stems
writing exercises
made writing easier, increased
creativity.

I was aware of my thoughts
of my experience floating
in the back of my mind, being in the workshop
but I was focused on other things
the nature descriptions

---

[27] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the second writing workshop session.
Lines 1-5 respond to the survey question "Broadly speaking, how did writing poetry today make you feel? What emotions/feelings arose from the writing process, if any?"
Lines 6-10 respond to the survey question "Was writing poetry easier or more difficult with the addition of the poetic stems and the nature/prose writing exercise?"
Lines 11-15 respond to the survey question "Did any emotions/feelings arise related to your trauma and/or experience with sexual violence?"

Poem 3.2[28]

wooden swing-shaped hole
left behind
in the
missing backyard
of my mind

and to sit there
with my old cat
everyday
now, my cat's dead
and my swing
has gone away

have a younger cat
getting on in years, though
have a park nearby
that's where all the kids go.
when it's really cold
or starting to snow
that's the only time
I can be there alone

cat stays indoors
no friend in the grass
but I close my eyes
and hear the cars go past

fingers go numb, so I wear gloves
anything to stay
in this state I love.
back and forth in the air,
like I'm on a trapeze

The only place where I'm brave
and can do as I please.

---

[28] This poem was created by participant 3 within the second writing workshop session.

Poem 3.3[29]

Post-Covid Blues

Outside for the first time in 2 weeks
saw my parents in the car,
car slick with ice
feels like sticking my foot into a
pool of electricity.
I'm sure I have but it feels
right now like I've never been more
naked.
Where is my green coat?
it has my gloves in the pockets
where did it go?
so, so strange.

I forgot my therapy appointment
again on Friday
so strange too
two emails apologizing profusely
I don't know how this
happened
my mother says:
"but you kind of do know,
don't you?"

---

[29] This poem was created by participant 3 within the second writing workshop session.

Poem 3.4[30]

The poetic stems and prompts were very helpful
productive structures which
made my creative energy flow
writing was difficult, in a good way. I liked
the feeling of pushing through the difficulty.
It was hard
and rewarding
to work through my emotions on the page

in writing more about the person
who assaulted me, I did find myself
tense and upset but
being in control
while writing gave a
sense of empowerment
that is hard to feel
when thinking of this person.
I felt like I could say things to them
that I wasn't able to
face to face.

---

[30] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the third writing workshop session.
Lines 1-3 respond to the survey question "If applicable, was the use of prompts and/or poetic stems helpful in writing?"
Lines 4-8 respond to the survey question "Was the writing process an easy or difficult experience, and how so?"
Lines 9-17 respond to the survey question "Did any feelings (negative or positive) surrounding your trauma arise when writing your poem(s)?"

Poem 3.5[31]

A complaint lodged by my vagina

oh no,
not her again.
she doesn't even knock, just pushes
her way in.
we are *trying* to sleep!
some of us are already out.
The eyes are closing, heavy as twin
bricks.
can't she see that?
Isn't there some sort of universal code
for "I'm falling asleep"?
And doesn't that, for decent folks,
translate in many situations as,
"keep your fingers out of my cunt?"

---

[31] This poem was created by participant 3 within the third writing workshop session.

Poem 3.6[32]

I think I'll give away that
print of the big pink starry
eyes

I bought one for each of us, so
we could see into each other's
lives from provinces away

but I've had it tucked where
it can't see me now for
how long?

why should I keep it? I wonder
if you still have yours, or if
you still have the painting i
made you called "Your love
has opened my eyes". I'm sure
you don't still have that last
one. You probably never even
hung it up, because then you'd
have to explain to your mother
who gave it to you. You came
out to her five years ago,
told her you were in love with
me
right before I visited you
and we broke up after
Valentine's Day.
But it was too late,
You'd already shown me in more
ways than secrecy
that you were ashamed of me.
Ashamed of my full figure, of my
need to be cradled like a child.
Ashamed of my stories, ashamed of
my art and my singing voice.

You would never have displayed
something I worked so hard on,
something I gave my all to
it embarrassed you to have
anyone else be or make anything
beautiful.

---

[32] This poem was created by participant 3 within the third writing workshop session.

So I'm getting rid of those eyes,
and the cards I kept around to
prove my indignity to others
("look at this, she's talking
to me like I'm her mother.
is that really all she thinks
of me saying to her? –
"Brush your teeth" ??")

I should have shredded those ages
ago.

Poem 3.7[33]

How to heal momentarily

Step One: let your cat get right
up in your face. Forgive her for
getting fur and dander in your
mouth and nose.

Step Two: stop feeling like a bad
person for playing Animal Crossing.
You did not sacrifice your soul
to a god damn cartoon owl.

Step Three: keep trying to make
something with those marshmallows
chocolate chips and desiccated coconut flakes.
Even if it disappoints you
and looks like shit, it's ok.

Step Four: masturbate for 3 hours.
You're gonna lose that sleep
anyway, you may as well
have fun doing it.

Step Five: look at the person
sleeping next to you. Try to
harvest some of his peace.

Step Six: take a hot bath and
stare lovingly at your own soapy
knees. Those are some good knees.

Step Seven: eat as much or as
little as you want to and don't
feel guilty either way.

Step Eight: listen to Vashti Banyan
sing about the 'Rainbow River'

Step Nine: watch One Piece with
your best friend whose bountiful
peace you have recently
harvested.

---

[33] This poem was created by participant 3 within the third writing workshop session.

Step Ten: wake up from your
apocalyptic nightmare and take
a scalding hot shower to banish the
cold sweat from your back

Step Eleven: forgive yourself for
missing therapy. Make a new
appointment instead of denying
yourself wellness out of
sheer guilt.

Poem 3.8[34]

I loved sharing my work
Even if it was a bit hard to speak
some lines out loud.
A sense of validation
community
and support
that I've never experienced before
regarding my assault.

I loved reading the other participants' work
it was so moving and resonant to me.
talking to them about their experience
and process, made me feel
less alone. Reading and discussing
beautiful poetry was healing
in and of itself.

The space we had to talk in depth
about the writing process
about our experiences
was incredibly helpful –
just what I needed.

---

[34] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the fourth workshop session.
Lines 1-8 and 16-20 respond to the survey question "If applicable, how did you feel upon sharing your work with your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?"
Lines 9-15 respond to the survey question "How did you feel hearing work from your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?"

Data Set 4

Poem 4.1[35]

I think I resonated more with
a direct style of writing. I enjoyed
listening to and reading
all poems. Baran's piece
made me feel a little uneasy, but otherwise
no negative emotions. I guess
I just took the poems for what they were,
didn't have very strong emotional responses
one way or the other.

---

[35] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the first writing workshop session.
Lines 1-4 respond to the survey question "Did you enjoy reading/hearing poetry from Baran, Outram, and/or Sexton – poets who used a masking or framing approach – or did you resonate with the poetry that took a more direct approach to writing on sexual violence trauma?"
Lines 4-9 respond to the survey question "How did the poetry read aloud today make you feel? Did these poems bring about any negative or unwarranted feelings/emotions? Contrarily, did the poems read aloud provide you with a sense of security or community?"

Poem 4.2[36]

Ross Lane Beach – First week of August

Flip flops slappin'
against the gritty wood.

A chorus of mean whispers from the eel grass

Cooler bangin'
on the side of my thigh

As I climb those stairs in a hurry

to stop.

And search the dots of umbrellas and
lawn chairs that are sheltered

by the ruddy dunes whose green snappy
hair brushes the blue mid-morning
sky.

The white caps wink at me from
the never-ending expanse of blue and

I feel so small in the best way.

---

[36]This poem was created by participant 4 within the second writing workshop session.

Poem 4.3[37]

I always find writing easier
with productive constraints. The structure
helped me to write.
Writing poetry today made me feel
good
nostalgic
about my favourite beach on P.E.I.

---

[37] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the second writing workshop session.
Lines 1-3 respond to the survey question "Was writing poetry easier or more difficult with the addition of the poetic stems and the nature/prose writing exercise?"
Lines 4-7 respond to the survey question "Broadly speaking, how did writing poetry make you feel? What emotions/feelings arose from the writing process, if any?"

Poem 4.4[38]

The use of poetic forms was helpful, the prompts
gave me a place to start
some negative feelings
regarding my trauma
arose while writing. It was challenging
to reflect on the
trauma I've experienced. I felt really
angry
in the moment

for the rest of the day
I felt a bit off.

---

[38] Corresponds to the feedback survey from the third writing workshop session.
Lines 1-2 respond to the survey question "If applicable, was the use of prompts and/or poetic stems helpful in writing?"
Lines 3-10 respond to the survey question "Was the writing process an easy or difficult experience, and how so? Did any feelings (negative or positive) surrounding your trauma arise when writing your poem(s)?"

Poem 4.5[39]

I am angry, now
tense
Because I was soft for so long
Mean, now, territorial
Because I let people take so
much from me
then

---

[39] This poem was created by participant 4 within the third writing workshop session.

Poem 4.6[40]

I am a tight and sore muscle
a drunk looking for a fight.

a woman in the kitchen slamming
cupboard doors

I am a wire pulled taut
waiting to snap

I am a mean dog

who snarls and bites
because she was kicked.

---

[40] This poem was created by participant 4 within the third writing workshop session.

Poem 4.7[41]

You don't have to let anyone do
anything to you, you know.

Even if they're on the spectrum.
Even if they're family.
Even if they're your boyfriend.
Even if you love them.
Even if they're paying you.

You don't have to let anyone do
anything to you that you don't
like.

---

[41] This poem was created by participant 4 within the third writing workshop session.

Poem 4.8[42]

I used to wet the bed

every night

and every morning

wake up in the damp heat of shame

---

[42] This poem was created by participant 4 within the third writing workshop session.

Poem 4.9[43]

I never feel sad about it,
or sorry for myself.

Until I tell the woman I'm dating

I watch her as she experiences
her version of the events –

some figment of me, younger,
like an animated character.

I see the short film play
out across her eyes and
stay in them as they fill
with water and sympathy
and sadness – and I feel
those things too, for her
girlfriend as a child. The
animated girl.

I am sad and sorry for
their imagined caricature of
a young me. But not for
my real self.

When she sees me with
watery eyes (or anger, maybe,
my retroactive protector)
I feel for the girl in the
story she is reading, too.

But never for myself.

---

[43] This poem was created by participant 4 within the third writing workshop session.

Data Set 5

Researcher Field Notes:
This data set presents my field notes created either during or after each of the creative-writing
workshop sessions, transcribed into poetry via the method of poetic inquiry. The poems are
separated by date and time, each of which correspond to the workshop session from which the
field notes were produced.

<u>March-April</u>
I found the days and weeks leading up to the first writing workshop equaled
a never-ending revolving door of emotions
varying in both degree and form. I felt frustrated having to turn down
interested participants due to requirements I had put in place
I began to question the meaning in doing so—despite understanding the well-intentioned
and ethically informed nature of my inclusion criteria (and methodology as a whole).
I felt a stark disconnect between the proposed goal of my research and its potentiality to provide
a space of healing
and my inability to extend this work towards vulnerable populations. It often felt like I had failed
as a researcher before I had even begun.

All of this was compounded by the steadfast weight of imposter syndrome and a continuous self-
questioning of whether or not I was knowledgeable, considerate, and/or confident enough
to facilitate this research.
Even in writing this I question including these observations
for the fear of diluting or misrepresenting my work, by exposing
the anxieties I faced as a researcher. Simultaneously, my imposter syndrome was sustained by an
influx of rejection emails—poetry submissions I had sent in months prior. An overwhelming
sense of anxiety as I questioned if my lived experience was too experimental—was it out of
reach for me to facilitate strangers
bear the weight of their trauma?

<u>January 31 – Workshop 1 (10:50AM)</u>
Bright and sunny. People seem happy, interested to be here and I *think* it is all going well so far.
Reading aloud 'restoration'[44] was easy
it felt like a challenge I had overcome and writing that poem
helped me get to this point.
<u>12:00-1:00 (post-workshop)</u>
It all went well and ran smoothly! I'm worried I talked too much
and I definitely forgot a few things, but otherwise it went really well
I received feedback from a couple participants noting that they felt comfortable
and safe in the space, which was heartwarming and encouraging to read…

---

[44] This is in reference to my own poem – see Appendix A – which I introduced to participants within the first
writing workshop as a way of demonstrating my own experience both with sexual violence and with seeking
counselling for the resulting trauma. Reading this poem acted as an initial trust-building gesture between myself
and my participants, as it provided a personal connection to the research and helped to demonstrate my own
experience in using poetry as a way to heal from trauma.

February 2 – Workshop 2 (approx. 10:10 AM)
Everyone seems relaxed today
I had to bring a participant in on Zoom, a learning curve stemming from this pandemic.
It's a challenge, not having everyone in the space together, but I think it will still allow
for fruitful discussions and data to stem from the work.
I hope that everyone feels comfortable and at ease, they seem to be attentive, eager
to be doing this work. I may need some more focused prompts for next session,
to help people begin writing. some seem more intuitive than others to the second part
of the exercise—I'll give them some time to work things through before venturing over
to ask how it all is going
provide them with any help they may need or want

It's quiet in here, but I don't think it feels tense
more like a collective collaborative of writing and turning
one's minds to the silence of pen on paper
I think it's all moving where it needs to
It is charging though, isn't it?
The grey sky glooming over this room where participants—strangers,
gather to exist and sit in silence, writing, engaging with their mind
the prompts provided to them
I wonder how we'll feel together on Monday—if the atmosphere will shift
or if the presence of one another will still hold space for comfort and security…
10:40-11:00
Introduced poetic stems
all finding their way through the material, a couple more stems provided, on the spot
that seemed to resonate well with everyone
I think it is moving along, smoothly—
I do feel as if it is a bit of a hard line between wanting to give
help or advice and just letting participants work through things on their own,
finding a rhythm and routine, finding what works and what doesn't
it is the hardest to start, but once people begin to write,
I can see they are all becoming more relaxed and comfortable
in the space and with one another,
even if this is just a silent recognizing, a silent connection
or acknowledgement that we are all writing and working together,
though each page is separate and will look slightly different.
(From a post-workshop field note):
This feels similar to my own writing workshop experience with Sue
the moments of quiet when we were encouraged to write
only 5-10 minutes with a short prompt
felt like a collective concentration—we were all writing from the same note/prompt,
each page was vastly different from the next. I felt that it was this time of silence
these ten or so minutes of focus, where I felt connected, understood, a sort of shared space
amongst my peers where we all gave ourselves the chance to simply write,
without expectation or pressure.

Three out of four are writing fairly steadily and engaging well, one is perhaps a bit stuck
feels that they are unsure of where to go or what direction they want to lead in
I think the prompts may be a bit too general for everyone,
especially more experienced writers, but then again
it may be nice to have a more open format so people can feel more at ease
in their writing and the direction of where they are going…

February 7 – Workshop 3 (10:10 AM)
Feeling more nervous about today's session, but everyone seems to be calm reflecting well
together, a nice sense of community and interest between participants we will see how things go
moving forward but I'm excited that everyone seems to be engaging and reacting well to today's
workshop or even to the workshops leading up
10:20
Scratching of pen on paper
Silencing mouths meets feverish fingers, we conjoin together as one but breaking apart to let our
fingers rest mid-air mid thought pulling apart only to connect again once words meet feelings,
fiercely finding what to say while engaged within a space of not saying, or in consideration of
what has not been said…
I pass you all my prompts and take comfort in knowing that it's in your hands now and letting
you have agency in your writing and how or what you choose to write
10:45
Light sound of chirping, outside, I think from the birds
at least I'm letting myself think of the birds, their wings
carrying them through the grey skies of Monday morning.
Where are they going?
Some participants are taking their time writing
others have barely taken a moment to breathe or let the ink dry.
What words do they connect with?
The sound of pen on paper vs fingers on keys…what is it about
the absence of technology that changes or enlightens this space?
11:20
How do we re-enter this space past this engagement?

February 9 – Workshop 4
Participants found the prompts helpful, a gentle easing into
writing on their trauma, without forcing it upon them immediately.
Started off today's session by reading some works of poetry aloud
sharing what we had written in the past two workshops.
Both participants wrote outstanding pieces, each with nuanced layers, different forms
blending into one another. A vulnerability expressed that really took me by surprise
I didn't know what to expect heading into the final workshop session,
but the strength gifted in that room was almost indescribable
as we were surrounded by university bureaucracy, the space of indecency
hushed voices and lawsuits, it felt almost rebellious—the engagement between strangers
not only during a pandemic but an honest and open conversation that felt a bit barricaded,
controlled up until this point. This space, molded through poetry, helped to coax out

considerate conversations cloaked in safety and trust—observations echoed
for the room to hear, the space acting as a container for emotion and courage.
We all listened and nodded and validated each other's cries and bravery
Reading poetry turned into a collective sharing that allowed space for us all
to acknowledge and sympathize with the complexities of trauma
the hard conversations shared with yourself, as you try to reach
a space of self-acceptance, acknowledgement, validity.
I hope I gave that space
I hope I allowed for those feelings to nurture and grow
to breathe and be held.
--
It felt like everything I aspired from this work bloomed and came to life.
Maybe it was the isolation of COVID that made us all clutch onto one another
tighter and with sincerity and purpose.
Maybe this work found us all who wished for connection, without knowing.
For me this work solidified the necessity of interaction, connection, support…

Sue was a common thread throughout the research sessions, as her poems sat with participants
amidst the pandemic and have been a guiding light, I think, for many of us during that time
Some participants even carried Sue's poetry into each writing session
potentially an entrance into their own writing

One participant acknowledged that the 'poetry writing' aspect
led them to take the leap to participate. they found comfort
in the individuality that poetry provides—a shared understanding
of why we are all gathered in the same space, but poetry presented the ability to present this
experience privately. expressed that the workshops were more welcoming
than a support group – as there was no need to speak on or about the trauma
anyone had experienced, rather participants were there to write poetry (individual act).

A real sense of community emerged today. Even though there were only 2 participants,
we all welcomed one another and gave space to hearing each other's poems,
for validity to emerge amongst us all
as we shared our experiences of and with trauma, and the sense of
disconnect or confusion,
even denial,
that we all feel/felt in having those experiences
the emphasis we place on sexual violence, the necessity society
(and consequently ourselves)
places on having our experience check certain boxes
feel painful enough.

I acknowledged the time and effort it took, and takes
to begin the healing process, to continue to heal
to give ourselves compassion and respect throughout our healing journey

Poetic Intervention II.2: Requirements of a Research Space II (Apr. 2022)

There's space for four participants to occupy
an entire table (about 1m long
by 1m wide) extra room to spread out, stay six feet apart
plus one long table at the front
for me, with room to place coffee or tea
once participants arrive.

located inside the Arts Commons,
the windows stretch from top
to bottom, spread corner
to corner, full 360 degrees for
contemplation outside these four walls.
the secondary room just steps away
for participants to take a short break

A glass door separation
between the research space and the commons
inquisitive students puzzled as to why I carry in
too many cups of coffee, loose milk and cream
at half past nine.

The coffee is graciously accepted from participants
and momentarily it feels as if that sliding glass door
serves as a glimpse into connection and community
life pre-pandemic, as we all interact
participants turned semi-strangers, holding space—
amongst the bureaucratic paintings and dense academic buildings—
for their feelings and one another

Chapter 6: Findings

Moving through this formal analysis section, I intend to reflect on the effect of this research on my participants and myself, separating the findings into four separate themes. I refrain from commenting too closely on each individual data set, for fear of misinterpretation or misrepresentation of participants' words as expressed within their original poems. However, I comment more broadly on the various poetic forms and techniques presented within the data, situating these in relation to the literature reviewed, and my methodological and theoretical frameworks. I conclude this chapter with a summation of my own field notes, commenting on my experience of the research sessions, and reflecting upon my own understanding of the importance of poetry as a tool for healing from sexual violence trauma.

6.1 Impact of Reading/Hearing Poetry (First Research-Session)

The emotions experienced upon reading/hearing poetry that discussed or referenced themes of sexual violence varied from sadness and uneasiness to comfort in being exposed to poetry that reflected participants' own experience(s) with trauma. Participants were introduced to both a direct approach (poems in which reference to trauma was explicit) and a non-direct approach (poems that use the technique of masking or framing to write on traumatic experiences without inserting direct reference; themes of trauma can often be uncovered through an in-depth analysis of the poem, but are not always explicit upon first glance). One participant found the poems that used a masking or framing technique allowed them to fill in the blanks depending on their own experience. Two out of three participants resonated with both types of poems, with the third participant resonating more with the direct approach.

6.2. Impact of Writing Poetry on General Topics (Second Research-Session)

Three participants were present in person for this session, with the fourth participant partaking on Zoom[45]. As explained within Chapter 4, participants were provided with an introductory nature-writing exercise at the start of the workshop session.

The majority of the emotions expressed by participants were positive, as participants felt productive, calm, in control, and had an increased sense of agency during the writing process. One participant reported feeling nostalgic, as the writing process brought about a sense of longing for their favourite beach.

All participants found that writing poetry was easier with the writing exercises and/or poetic stems presented. Participants found the writing exercises and poetic stems helpful and although this workshop session was not specifically focused on writing on sexual violence, many participants engaged with their trauma while writing, simply due to the context of the research project. This engagement did not necessarily evoke negative feelings or emotions; rather, I believe that the insertion of this nature exercise helped situate participants in a positive headspace and frame of mind, aiding in their ability to focus less on their trauma and more on the act of writing poetry. Additionally, one participant noted that thinking about nature in relation to trauma made writing about trauma easier, which aligns with the purpose or aim of a masking and/or framing poetic technique, and the opportunity for displacement this technique provides.

Overall, the writing exercises and poetic stems presented within this writing workshop session were effective in aiding participants' writing processes, according to their responses within the feedback surveys. Most participants found focusing on images, or writing on positive aspects or memories of nature, helped to create a positive writing experience even if they found themselves engaging with aspects of their trauma during the writing process.

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[45] The implication of inserting a participant into the workshop session via an online format, such as Zoom, is expanded upon within Chapter 7.

6.2.1 Impact of Writing Poetry about Trauma and/or Sexual Violence (Third Research-Session)

Most participants experienced negative emotions such as anger when writing. Additionally, some participants found the writing process to be difficult or challenging, especially when working through their emotions and reflecting upon their trauma. Other participants found the writing process easier and especially helpful in working through their emotions. A majority expressed positive emotions following the writing process and left the session feeling hopeful or empowered, illustrating poetry's ability to aid in processing difficult emotions through the control and/or freedom of expression it presented.

Some participants did not feel the need to use prompts as they already had an idea of what they wanted to write on or about, while other participants found the prompts to be a helpful way of wading into more difficult emotions. Providing participants with a range of writing exercises and/or prompts that they could have at their disposal was an important element in granting participants agency vis-à-vis their writing process.

6.3 Poetry and Community (Fourth Research-Session)

While only two out of four participants attended this final session, a sense of the emergence of community from sharing and engaging with participants' poetry is unanimous within the data presented. Participants expressed that sharing their own work provided them with a sense of validation, support, and community, and was a cathartic experience. This sense of community emerged in three unique ways: first, by this final research session, the researcher/participant dichotomy had somewhat dissolved, resulting in a transparent conversation and shared connection between all three individuals. Second, the final research session provided space conducive to talking about writing and the writing process—participants were seen as writers, and had the space and opportunity to share with one another regarding the challenges of

writing on sexual violence and/or trauma, as well as the challenges of doing creative work, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, participants noted that they felt the research space to be a positive and safe space (especially evident by the final research session), which aided in their ability to share poetry and open up with one another on their own experiences with sexual violence, ultimately helping themselves and each other to feel less alone.

The use of poetry as a safe and positive entrance to discussing difficult, emotional, and sensitive material is evident throughout the data sets. Further, the data sets demonstrate the importance of not only using poetry to work through trauma, but using poetry as a tool to build community, connection, and collaboration.

Despite the fact that only two out of four participants attended this final session, the impact of poetry as a healing tool was expressed by all participants to be an effective way of expressing difficult emotions—both for participants who chose to attend the final session and share their own works of poetry, and those who did not.

6.4 Poetic Forms

The majority of the poetry participants shared with me from the workshop sessions was written in free verse, which presented participants with complete control over line length, word choice, spacing, rhyme scheme or meter, etc. This freedom from hegemonic prescriptions about writing and expression can be linked back to the themes of feminist poststructuralism, and the ways in which poetry presents a reclamation of power through the acceptance and illustration of personal expression. The tenets of feminist poststructuralism are present, too, through participants' choice to present their story in any form or voice that they choose—constructing their narrative in a way that is representative of their experience with sexual violence and their healing journey. This also lends to the idea that using poetry in this way allows for an emergence

from using binary or hegemonic language in relation to sexual violence and/or trauma, as often presented within the media (Henley et al. 1995; Hollander and Rodgers, 2014; Spry, 1995).

The free-verse form presented participants with the ability to write without having to stay within a certain pattern. One participant did use the form of a pantoum, which consists of four-line stanzas, with the second and fourth line of the first stanza repeating as the first and third line of the next stanza, so on and so forth. Due to the repetitive nature of this form, it can be useful when wanting to convey a certain sense of emphasis or cyclicality. Reflecting upon this poem in particular, the participant noted that they were drawn to the style as a way to talk about abuse or feelings of abuse, which I think speaks to the idea that, although structured poetic forms require a bit more deliberate attention, such forms can aid in one's ability to communicate difficult topics.

6.5 Conclusion

As illustrated within my field notes, I found myself facing an immense amount of internal pressure to provide the 'best' research experience for my participants. I had so much faith in the work that I was doing, but often let various external elements plague my mind with self-doubt—so much so that I feared I wasn't adequately prepared enough to facilitate the workshops. Despite the spiralling imposter syndrome that I felt leading up to the facilitating the workshops, the positive feedback received from participants validated my decision to conduct this research. So too did the tangible evidence that I had created a space where my participants felt safe, supported, and comfortable enough to engage with one another.

My facilitation of the creative-writing workshops helped me to gain confidence in my abilities as a researcher, scholar, and poet, ultimately due to the fact that I was treated with respect and that my expertise was acknowledged —I felt that what I had to offer participants was valuable and important. Although I still felt a pinch of anxiety prior to each workshop session,

providing participants with the opportunity to request additional resources, or relay concerns/comments following each workshop session, helped alleviate this anxiety as I was able to gauge participants' comfort levels and gain a better understanding of their workshop experience, heading into each following session. This was an immense help for my own facilitation, simply by making me feel as if things were continuing to move in a positive direction, and positively reinforced the work that I was doing.

Additionally, the process of these workshops impacted my understanding of research by expanding my idea of what research can look like. I found there to be quite a stark difference between the research sessions themselves and the process of obtaining ethics approval. The research sessions all ran very smoothly, and felt similar to any other writing workshop I had experienced. However, obtaining ethics approval was unruly and I found the process to almost insist that the researcher remain detached or at an arm's length from the work they were conducting, and subsequently from the participants involved. It felt like this was automatically expected, as a way of ensuring that I would remain objective about the research I was conducting and not interfere with the data collection process. It made me feel at times like I was inserting too much of myself into the research, despite my personal experience being a main reason for beginning this work in the first place. While the writing workshops themselves and the ethics process often felt very contented, it taught me to hold my ground and insist upon the core values of my research. The entire research process helped me to trust myself and the work I was doing, especially in terms of providing a transparent and honest view of myself to my participants from the very beginning stages of recruitment. This process also solidified the value of lived experience, not just for my own research purposes, but as a way of connecting to and providing solidarity with my participants.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger.

—Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"

As I began the unwieldy process of attempting to piece together this thesis and research project, I braced myself for the uphill battles and various challenges that would be thrown at me. I acknowledge that many of these challenges are just part of academia and graduate work, and I want to stress the privilege that I have carried through this work as a white academic who has been able to devote my full time and energy, without dependants to support or any large financial burden resulting from being a full-time student the past two years. This privilege has undoubtably lessened the overall stress that I have had. However, this unfortunately does not mean that I have gone through this program unscathed. I feel it is important to acknowledge that this process has been lonely, isolating, and at times, dehumanizing.

I carry Lorde's words with me, here, as I face head-first my own fears in having relayed many aspects of this research project, including its challenges, frustrations, and joyous moments—many of which I situate through an autobiographical lens. This act of self-revelation is somewhat fear-inducing. I am afraid to be seen as someone who is still stuck inside my past trauma, afraid of the questions potentially arising from crafting a master's thesis based off of my own experience with sexual violence, and the healing journey that has come from that. I am afraid of being viewed as not thick-skinned enough to continue down the path of academia; afraid to be shouting out these frustrations instead of simply shoving them aside, in recognition that this is *just the way things go*. I don't want to ignore or accept the frustrations and challenges, diminishing the difficult conversations and harm inflicted on myself, or simply chalk it up to academic process. And I don't want to facetiously present this work as an entirely smooth

process from beginning to end, because that is simply not the truth. If there's anything I want this work to convey, it's the power that can arise from sharing your truth and presenting it in a way that feels safe, empowering, and impactful. This is exactly what I am attempting to do for myself in this final thesis chapter.

It was a severe challenge to attempt this work amidst a global pandemic, having been virtually introduced to my professors, peers, and coursework. The effects and isolation of this pandemic left me yearning for community, support, and overall camaraderie. I recognize that I would not even be writing this thesis had it not been for the unwavering support and commitment from my supervisory committee and the dedicated time they spent on making sure that I was taken care of. It was a security that I am endlessly grateful for, and presented me with the recognition that I was not alone in my defeats and frustrations with academia.

I did my best to prepare for the emotional impact and heaviness that could arise from my facilitation of the creative-writing workshop sessions—I grounded myself in a healthy and happy living environment, was supported undoubtably by my family, friends, and supervisory committee, and was regularly attending therapy in preparation for the difficult road ahead. While all of these preparations ultimately helped to lessen the stress of graduate school and conducting a major research project, there were various unanticipated challenges that caught me off guard (see especially my notes on the difficulty of the REB process, in section 3.4).

Despite (or perhaps in spite of) the challenges that this work presented, I was faced with unwavering reminders of why I began this work in the first place: I had experienced first-hand the effect that writing could have on my own mental health and healing process, and hoped that this work could provide the same or a similar comfort, to what I had felt. I knew that this work had the potential to help others and provide an immediate, and potentially long-lasting, impact.

For these very reasons I remained steadfast in my methodological choices and dedication to seeing this work through until the very end.

The remainder of this final chapter will provide a summary of the research project and its intended goals and outcomes, moving onto various contributions and limitations of this work, outlining suggestions for future research, and a brief conclusion that summarizes my experience and the impact of this thesis project.

6.1 Research Summary

The research questions I initially set out to ask were: what resources are required to facilitate creative-writing workshops as healing spaces, and to assist workshop participants? What prompts or writing exercises are best suited for such sessions? How does healing happen in such spaces? How does community-building happen? From the data presented, it is clear that the use of poetry helped mold a space where individuals who have experienced sexual violence could gather, share, and write. This thesis presented poetry workshops to be a space where individuals could use writing as a way to process their emotions and present them through a creative art form.

My own field notes indicate that, insofar as it was evident to observation, each workshop session provided participants with the opportunity to gain more comfortability with the space, the other participants, the writing process, and the work itself that they were undertaking. It is evident, from both my own observations and the participants' data, that the developed methodology allowed for a scaffolding of comfortability and trust to be built upon within each session. This process ultimately aided in producing an organic and collaborative space that was centered around community, poetry, and self-expression. The methodology created embodied a feminist and trauma-informed approach, which was integral to establishing a space where

participants could feel safe and supported, and can be specifically accredited to the successful implementation of TIC principles. This required consistent and reflexive feedback from participants, granting them agency and the necessary resources to request anything that might help them feel safe or comfortable as they moved through the research process.

A central aim of this work was to provide participants with the agency and choice to create their own poems, and subsequently share these poems however they wished. Not only were participants eager to share multiple pieces that they had written either during or in between the workshop sessions with myself and potentially the broader research community, but one participant expressed within a feedback form that they had shared one of their poems with their mom—acknowledging that this was the first time sharing some of the feelings and emotions surrounding their trauma. This is a powerful testament to the agency that writing poetry can grant to individuals, and the political power of writing and sharing poetry. For this participant, writing this poem acted as a container to transfer difficult feelings and emotions into a form that felt accessible and safe, as well as a form that could help in sharing the perspective tied to their own lived experiences—acknowledging the difficulty and complexity that surrounds these experiences and emotions.

The element of agency that participants experienced when writing poetry echos the findings of Bolton (1999) and Connolly Baker and Mazza (2004). The findings also parallel Sjollema and Hanley (2013), who express how sharing poetry can provide a sense of community and empowerment. A key difference, however, between the findings of this research and those of other studies, is the separation of this work from a traditional lens of poetry therapy. This research is grounded in the framework and methodology of the feminist creative-writing workshop, that places writing, reading, and learning about poetry at the center.

As demonstrated through my methodology, prior experience with writing poetry was not needed or emphasized, as individuals were taught introductory poetic elements as needed, depending on their experience with writing poetry. Implementing tactics from the techniques approach allowed for me to illustrate ways in which poetry can be a form of self-expression and empowerment. As well, this approach provided participants with the tools needed to exercise poetry as self-care beyond the workshop sessions, if they felt inclined to do so. Although following up with participants and their healing journey outside of the research sessions is outside the scope of my own study, it's important to iterate that I continue to use poetry and writing as a form of self-care, often turning to writing to help me sort through emotional turmoil or in moments of stress. For me, my continued use of writing poetry demonstrates the longevity and future implications of using poetry as a healing tool.

Participants did indeed find specific prompts and exercises, especially the nature-writing exercise, to be generally helpful to their writing process. The nature-writing exercise, specifically, allowed participants to explore the technique of displacement, situating their emotions surrounding trauma within a different context or experience.

Finally, the act of healing can manifest in many different ways and forms. Healing is ongoing and looks different for everyone who shows up to do so. I believe it consists of small moments, and daily practices that add up and contribute to one's healing journey and practice. Within this work, I found these small moments to exist in ordinary acts, such as bringing my participants coffee and tea, as an item of comfort, or asking them to write down three things that they can do following a workshop session, as an act of self-care. Healing is showing up—to that very first workshop, without knowing what to expect, or filling out the initial screening survey

and sitting with that vulnerability. Allowing yourself to be vulnerable, and to potentially share that vulnerability with others, can be healing in and of itself.

I can attest that healing is not a linear act. Some days feel better than others, and some days feel like giant steps backwards. But I think that is part of it too; being willing to acknowledge the bad days and yet, still granting (and allowing!) yourself opportunities to rest— giving yourself the same care and kindness that you would a friend, or even a stranger. It is in the small moments of self-care that I've noticed the most growth; by showing up for myself day after day. As well, reflecting back upon poems that I had written in moments of extreme trauma or distress is, while at times difficult to engage with, a healing process. It allows me both an opportunity to acknowledge the physical time and space that has passed between writing those poems and now, and also allows me to accept where I was at that point in my life, and notice the small moments of healing that have happened since. I believe this work has granted my participants this same opportunity, to have various benchmarks of healing and transformation through the creation of beautiful and meaningful poetry, as a way to reflect upon this healing process years from now.

6.2 Contributions

This work spans across multiple disciplines and the contributions of knowledge can be applicable to areas within the humanities, particularly feminist research and creative-writing pedagogy, as well as to community and not-for-profit organizations. This research has established ways that creative-writing pedagogy can be tailored to encapsulate tenets of feminist thinking and trauma-informed care, ultimately working to establish the creative-writing workshop as a space conducive to healing and community-building.

This work contributes to the development of creative-writing pedagogy, specifically for individuals teaching within institutional or community settings where the emphasis is not on using poetry in a healing or therapeutic sense. In these cases, this work provides an outline of the ways in which incorporating a feminist and trauma-informed framework can provide a more comfortable, safe, and inclusive learning environment. This thesis has outlined the writing tools and practices I created and used, illustrating the very steps I took in facilitating each creative-writing workshop session. In presenting this material, I aimed to provide the fields of poetry therapy, creative-writing, and potentially the broader realm of academia, with concrete tools and exercises to supplement the facilitation of (or introduction to) creative-writing. This presentation particularly regarding difficult topics such as sexual violence.

Implementing practices used in this thesis can provide community members and/or instructors with a pedagogical space that can be akin to healing, as instructors can provide students with a greater sense of agency, especially in regards to their comfort and safety within the classroom. This may look like instructors asking students at the beginning of the term what resources or supports they require, or when workshopping, providing students with the option to not read their work aloud if it is particularly sensitive or emotional, and to simply pass around physical copies to receive feedback from peers. This should be done with the principles of trauma-informed care in mind, as well as feminist practices such as decolonization, as these tools insist upon an equitable, accessible, and safe classroom and/or writing space[46].

It should be acknowledged that the implementation of the creative-writing workshops included various parameters that worked to protect myself and my participants. These parameters

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[46] Future work that wishes to implement feminist practices, including working towards decolonizing the creative-writing space, should turn to Felicia Rose Chavez's *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop*, and/or Matthew Salesses' *Craft in the Real World* for more information on implementation of these practices on a larger scale.

mainly arose through the implementation of trauma-informed care, as I worked to emphasize these principles through every step of the research process. This included, but was not limited to, recruitment, facilitation, communication, and dissemination of data and results. Individuals who wish to implement this work within institutional or community settings should be aware of the ways in which my lived experience have shaped this methodology, specifically how my experience of the creative-writing workshop influenced my facilitation and the decisions I made regarding this. At its core, this work demands a genuine level of care and compassion—for participants or students, and for yourself—and a willingness to provide an opportunity for healing, growth, and self-acceptance, however that may transpire.

Finally, on an individual level, this work provided research participants with an opportunity to learn writing practices and techniques tailored to healing from trauma, as well as providing both myself and participants with a collaborative space in which community-building and shared experiences could safely emerge.

6.2 Limitations

The most notable limitations of this study arose from my research parameters and the inclusion criteria I created, which required interested individuals to have attended some form of professional therapy or counselling, prior to participating in the writing workshop sessions. I put this criterion in place in an attempt to limit emotional distress or discomfort for participants, as participants who had attended counselling would potentially have tactics or tools at their disposal, in case they began to feel uneasy during the writing process. I recognize that this was a grave barrier for vulnerable populations and communities, as seeking professional therapy or counselling can be a long and unwieldy process, especially for marginalized folks or socio-

economically disadvantaged populations. As well, this criterion refrains me from claiming that this work can be used in place of traditional therapeutic approaches.

Another limitation to this work was the ongoing effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only did this impact my research methodology, but the pandemic raised the stress around the REB process and obtaining approval for in-person research. While I was able to continue to conduct this research in-person, as I had always planned and intended to do, the fluctuating status of the pandemic made it difficult to prepare and plan in advance, and potentially impacted or deterred interested individuals from participating in this work.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges during the research sessions, as well. One participant ended up having to miss the first research session due to a COVID isolation and then was present online, via Zoom, for the second session. This limited the potential for in-person engagement with fellow participants, as well as with myself and Katie. As the research sessions were not designed to take place online, I do feel that I was not as adequately prepared as I could have been, for this integration to run smoothly. I feel that the hybrid format, of having participants both in-person and online, was potentially distracting for everyone involved, due to the fact that I was shifting my own attention back and forth from the Zoom screen to the physical research space.

6.3 Future Research

Acknowledging the various limitations and contributions of this work, there are several areas for future research to expand upon and develop. Future studies should build on findings from this work regarding the efficacy of feminist and trauma-informed approaches to the construction of writing workshops, and also the possibilities for using poetic techniques to make room for (healing) agency and choice. Future work can also work towards removing or reducing

the various limitations experienced within this work. This may look like opening up this work to youth, or allowing individuals to participate who haven't received professional therapy or counselling, or accepting those who have received untraditional forms of therapy, such as peer support or group therapy.

A continuation of this work within community groups or services, or social-service settings, could ultimately provide safe, accessible, and unconventional forms of mental health support and assistance, offering poetry and writing as a viable and easy (because of the limited resources writing requires) form of processing and repairing difficult emotions and unwanted feelings. As with the traditional therapeutic environment, individuals who struggle with their mental health need to seek this help out for themselves—poetry workshops, like mental health services, require willing participation. There are barriers to access in both cases, but poetry workshops may be a more financially sustainable source of care—accessible through grant funding or community programming, in places where subsidized mental health services are comparatively inaccessible.

Future researchers, and academic readers, can examine University REB processes and build upon my own autobiographical reflections, which relay the importance of inserting space for feminist research and ensuring that care is taken to recognize lived experience as valuable knowledge that aids to the research methodology and process.

6.4 Conclusion

The past two years have revealed a stark contrast between the education I have received throughout the Women and Gender Studies program, and the broader field of academia and academic research, specifically in regards to the lack of acceptance or understanding of non-traditional knowledge forms and unique ways of conducting and presenting research. It felt, and

still feels, very difficult and overwhelming to be entering the academic research field as an emerging humanities scholar, especially seeing the barriers of access that are presented when attempting to do this work.

The process of conducting this research project and writing this thesis allowed for me to explore the various ways in which knowledge-production and meaning-making is found. This work sparked the idea that poetry is not only a form through which healing can take place, but a form in which academic knowledge can take shape and transpire. Through the creation, implementation, and writing of this thesis project, I was able to gain valuable insight to the ways in which poetry and other forms of arts-based research can break open the door of academia, by placing value on lived experience within research spaces, as well as opening up academic spaces to a further consideration of non-traditional forms of knowledge and research.

As I conclude this work watching the late July sun settle onto the concrete horizon, with my windows still covered with sticky notes and last-minute to-do lists, I feel revitalized by the community that has emerged throughout this research. I've felt supported by my classmates, inspired by their work, and encouraged by my professors and thesis committee from beginning to end. In addition, I was amazed at the response from my participants throughout the entire research process. Their willingness to participate, determination to write and respond in each workshop session unabashedly, and the impactful ways their words flooded each page with such powerful depictions. I could not be more thankful for their commitment. In its entirety, this work is a candid presentation of self-expression: representing the devastating effects of sexual violence, the courage it takes to continue to heal, and the lingering sense of hope that can emerge from transposing one's truth into poetry.

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Appendix A: Handout for First Writing Workshop Session

Vocabulary

Stanza: Two or more lines in a poem will make up a stanza. Unless otherwise stated, a stanza can vary in length, although individual stanzas typically revolve around a singular theme or idea.

Quatrain: A type of stanza consisting of four lines.

Caesura: A caesura is simply a pause within a single line of poetry. Common uses of punctuation to create a caesura are a period, comma, dash, or ellipsis.

Rhyme Scheme: A rhyme scheme can be incorporated into any poem, but it's commonly used in fixed poetic forms – poems that have a certain set of rules to follow. The rhyme scheme may vary depending on the form used, but an easy rhyme scheme to incorporate into your poem can be an *abab / cdcd / efef / ghgh* pattern. If you were to use this rhyme scheme in a poem, you would be creating a 16-line poem, with 4 separate quatrains. The first quatrain, *abab,* would have lines 1 and 3 rhyming and lines 2 and 4 rhyming. See Robert Frost's poem on pg. 3 for an example!

Enjambment: Enjambment is often used to carry a phrase or sentence over from one line to the next. Enjambment is often used as a way of creating space between lines, and can help to isolate individual words or phrases that the poet may feel work better, or provide more meaning or impact, on their own.

Point of View (POV): Various perspectives can be used to create a poem. Point of view can consist of first person, second person, or third person perspectives.
  - **First Person:** uses language such as "I", "me", "my", "mine". However, just because a poem is written in first person, does not mean that the poem is automatically about the poet or even in reference to the poet themselves. Within most poems, we tend to separate the speaker from the poet.
  - **Second Person:** uses language such as "you", "yours", and "your". This can be an effective way to address a poem to someone else, or even as an address to the reader.
  - **Third Person:** uses language such as "she", "he", and "they". Third person allows for multiple perspectives to be conveyed, and can provide a bit more ambiguity to the poem.

Poetic Forms

Free Verse: This form does not occupy any sort of rhyme scheme, nor does it enforce a metrical pattern. As the name suggests, free verse grants the most freedom, or creative control to the poet, as they have the ability to play around with elements such as line breaks/enjambment, stanzaic length, spacing of lines or words on the page – all of which are elements that affect the tone and presentation of your poem. Free verse often uses a combination of poetic techniques to convey a creative and enriching poem to the reader.

Concrete: A poem in which the words are arranged on the page to form a piece of visual art, often adding multiple layers to the poem for the reader to interpret. May Swenson's poem "Women" does a great job at creating a connection between the words on the page and the image depicted.

Haiku: Commonly used within nature poems, the haiku is a short, three-line poem in which each line occupies a specific syllabic length. The first line of a haiku will have five syllables, followed by seven syllables, and finally another five syllables within the third line. The haiku can be a fun form to try out, as the syllabic requirements often help to ease one into writing a poem and finding their poetic 'voice'.

Pantoum: The pantoum is a traditional Malaysian poem that incorporates repetition of complete lines. The pantoum can be of any length, and follows a cyclical pattern of repetition – the second and fourth line of the first quatrain repeat as the first and third lines of the second quatrain. Then, the second and fourth lines of the second quatrain repeat as the first and third lines of the third quatrain, and so on and so forth. A bit more complex and trickier to get the hang of, but the repetition within this form can help to emphasize certain lines that may hold particular weight or importance to the poem.

Poetic Devices

Metaphor: A literary device that creates a comparison of two entities or objects without using words such as "like" or "as". *Example: The sky was an abstract painting.*

Simile: A direct comparison of two unlike objects using a comparison word such as "like", "as", "than", "so". *Example: The wind feels like a bee sting.*

Personification: Providing life-like or humanistic characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, or elements within nature.

Imagery: The use of vivid or figurative language to represent ideas, objects, or actions.

Alliteration: Repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of words. Usually, alliteration occurs from having multiple words in a row that all start with the same letter or sound. Alliteration is a great way to insert rhythm into your poetry, as it can provide a sense of flow and intention.

Poetic Techniques

Framing: This technique can involve framing situations or experiences in a unique or unexpected way. Framing can enclose or encapsulate one's story into a different story or context. This technique may help the poet gain a greater sense of control or agency when writing on sensitive or emotional topics. Colleen Baran frames her poem within a game show, while Qwo-Li Driskill uses a list, more specifically an index, to frame various experiences of trauma and oppression.

Masking: This technique can help to create a separate persona or voice within the poem you're creating. This persona or voice can be from the perspective of a fictional or historical character, an inanimate object, an animal, etc. Perhaps you want to speak from a loved one or from a past version of yourself – there are lots of ways to play around with this technique and find what feels best for you.

Metaphor: Metaphor can provide a wide range of meaning to both the poet and the reader, as the meaning of a metaphor may not always resonate with the reader the same way that it does with the poet. Similar to the techniques described above, metaphor can help one to reframe or reshape an experience, as metaphor can help to highlight certain aspects of an experience, while concealing others. Anne Sexton uses metaphor widely in her poem, comparing the speaker's experiences to inanimate, everyday objects.

Example of a Rhyme Scheme

Neither out Far nor in Deep
Robert Frost

The people along the sand
All turn and look one way.
They turn their back on the land.
They look at the sea all day.

As long as it takes to pass
A ship keeps raising its hull;
The wetter ground like glass
Reflects a standing gull.

The land may vary more;
But wherever the truth may be---
The water comes ashore,
And the people look at the sea.

They cannot look out far.
They cannot look in deep.
But when was that ever a bar
To any watch they keep?

Example of a Concrete Poem

Women
May Swenson

Women   Or they
  should be   should be
    pedestals   little horses
     moving   those wooden
      pedestals   sweet
       moving   oldfashioned
       to the   painted
        motions   rocking
        of men   horses

       the gladdest things in the toyroom

      The   feelingly
      pegs   and then
     of their   unfeelingly
    ears   To be
    so familiar   joyfully
   and dear   ridden
   to the trusting   rockingly
  fists   ridden until
 To be chafed   the restored

egos dismount and the legs stride away

Immobile   willing
  sweetlipped   to be set
   sturdy   into motion
    and smiling   Women
     women   should be
      should always   pedestals
      be waiting   to men

Example of a Pantoum

Another Lullaby for Insomniacs
A.E. Stallings

Sleep, she will not linger:
She turns her moon-cold shoulder.
With no ring on her finger,
You cannot hope to hold her.

She turns her moon-cold shoulder
And tosses off the cover.
You cannot hope to hold her:
She has another lover.

She tosses off the cover
And lays the darkness bare.
She has another lover.
Her heart is otherwhere.

She lays the darkness bare.
You slowly realize
Her heart is otherwhere.
There's distance in her eyes.

You slowly realize
That she will never linger,
With distance in her eyes
And no ring on her finger.

The Room of My Life
Anne Sexton

Here,
in the room of my life
the objects keep changing.
Ashtrays to cry into,
the suffering brother of the wood walls,
the forty-eight keys of the typewriter
each an eyeball that is never shut,
the books, each a contestant in a beauty contest,
the black chair, a dog coffin made of Naugahyde,
the sockets on the wall
waiting like a cave of bees,
the gold rug
a conversation of heels and toes,
the fireplace
a knife waiting for someone to pick it up,
the sofa, exhausted with the exertion of a whore,
the phone
two flowers taking root in its crotch,
the doors
opening and closing like sea clams,
the lights
poking at me,
lighting up both the soil and the laugh.
The windows,
the starving windows
that drive the trees like nails into my heart.
Each day I feed the world out there
although birds explode
right and left.
I feed the world in here too,
offering the desk puppy biscuits.
However, nothing is just what it seems to be.
My objects dream and wear new costumes,
compelled to, it seems, by all the words in my hands
and the sea that bangs in my throat.

Love
Richard Outram

That strand of barbed wire is threaded
  deep into the maple;
well, the gnawed trunk has grown
  through the years around it.
A child who has the lay of the farmland,
  the untold knowing,
the tried heft of it all, can't say how,
  won't ever confound it.

DIIIIIIIIID IIIITTTT HAPPEN

Colleen Baran

The stage is cluttered with family members and smiles. You fill out index cards. Press buttons. Feel buoyed by laughter and attention.

A question goes up on the board. You're in it to win it. You're not here to make friends. "What is—the reason she says she drinks." (Yay, points!)

"What is—reasons to lock your bedroom door."
(Points!)   (Points!)   (Points!)

Mom says, "I'll take—pretend it never happened—for 500."
She sweeps the board.   (Applause! Cries!)

It doesn't matter. You're pretty sure you're ahead.

You're in the bonus round. You take turns. One person tells a secret, the others press either a true or a false button. The audience will shout the results from flashing lights you can't see. Just above your heads, lit by the red glow, you can feel the verdict coming.

restoration

it was late october when I tried to get rid of you.
tired of your dance, I walked up those familiar stairs
the ones I imagined so many times,
but never thought my legs could
carry me up.
that door at the end of the hall felt unearthly,
a fragment of my imagination, unaware of what it contained
or the possibilities it provided.
uncertainty tingled up my spine as I walked down
that never-ending hallway, bright lights, stench of sterility.
one sharp inhale before I placed my hand on the door marked
counselling.

but you weren't ready to
let go.
pulling and pleading to
stay with me
battered heart chained
to your memories.
breathing tightened
each time you nested
in my subconscious.

paralysis struck as my legs tore me
from that opportunistic door.
found myself face down
bright porcelain, a cold comfort to the burning
tears engulfing my face.

trembling hands and wobbly legs as
my best friend peeled me from
that bathroom floor.
she squeezed my hand tight,
rhythmic pulsations,
as if to restore the life that you stole.
mumbling cautioned comforts
she guided me into that intangible waiting room
soft jazz whispering around me.

your voice still echoed
as I tried to let you out
calculated whispers you
attempt to drag me back in,

seduce me once more with
your devilish dance.

I left that room at the end of the hall,
fingers tingling as they
awakened from their numb slumber.

cool air encompassed me on my walk home
as I wrestled with the vulnerability expressed
to that lovely lady with short brown hair,
soft secure eyes, and a voice that spread
safety onto the sexual assault from my past.
her hug seemed to tell me
that your voice would dissipate.

years later, it has.

-claire yurkovich

heavy hallucinations pulsate her mind
as she carries your dirtiness
putrid stench of destruction and violation, frantic
she scrubs her skin raw for the tenth time that night.
her veins pulse red hot every time she closes
her eyes; an invitation to your dance.

your actions permeate her subconscious
stake trepidation into her mind, make
her question every smile, every action
she'll count drinks with caution, hold on tight.
you ooze from her skin, a flesh wound intent on
seeing her flinch at each touch – thick skin, no trust.

a lifelong battle unwillingly entered
you dance with her mind for nineteen months
before she swallows her victimization.
another twelve before she rewires her brain
allowing herself to process the pain,
a deep cleanse from your residual stench.
she might forget about you for a night
but you'll surprise her all at once
threatening her safety as she walks home alone
or her intimacy as she seeks new relationships.

you linger in the shadows as she carries you everyday
and dances with you at night; swift movements with
a new learned ability to brush you off
now just a quick shiver spiking down her back.

split second of torment and you vanish from her mind,
until the next dance.

-claire yurkovich

Qwo-Li Driskill

(Auto)biography of Mad

Subject Index

Additional Resources

Poetry Foundation (poetryfoundation.org): A great resource that has a glossary of poetic terms and forms, along with having a wide range of poems to read and learn about. Also has exercises and prompts to follow.

Poets.org: Another online resource that has a wide range of poems and other resources.

Nova Scotia Writer's Federation: Often has local workshops featuring Nova Scotian writers, and also has various programs and awards if you're interested in publishing!

A Little Book on Form by Robert Haas: An expansive and detailed account of poetic form, providing wonderful explanations on how to try out different forms within your own writing.

Promptly: A miscellany of writing tips & tales from Nova Scotian authors: This book is a collection of writing prompts from twenty-four Nova Scotia authors, each providing a writing tip or prompt to help spark inspiration.

Writing and Workshopping Poetry by Stephen Guppy: A great introduction to poetic techniques, devices, and forms, along with providing writing exercises for each form encountered.

Every Day Is a Poem by Jacqueline Suskin: A guide to using poetry as a tool for finding clarity. Includes writing practices, exercises, and questions to help narrow the writing process.

Appendix B: Participant Feedback Forms

Survey 1/2 for All Workshop Sessions

Please fill out the following questions by the end of the day. Forms can be returned via email to Claire Yurkovich (poetryandhealing.research@gmail.com).

1. Please list any additional resources or supports that you feel you may want or need for the remaining workshop sessions.
   a. Is there anything I can do as the facilitator to make you feel more comfortable in this space?

2. Do you have any additional questions for the next workshop session?

Survey 2/2 for First Workshop Session

Name: Date:

*Following questions to be completed and returned via email to Claire Yurkovich (poetryandhealing.research@gmail.com) up to **one week (7 days) following the last workshop session.***

1. Did you enjoy reading/hearing poetry from Baran, Outram, and/or Sexton – poets who used a masking or framing approach – or did you resonate with the poetry that took a more direct approach to writing on sexual violence trauma?

2. How did the poetry read aloud today make you feel? Did these poems bring about any negative or unwarranted feelings/emotions? Contrarily, did the poems read aloud provide you with a sense of security or community?

Please use the space below to provide any additional information.

Survey 2/2 for Second Workshop Session

Name: Date:

*Following questions to be completed and returned via email to Claire Yurkovich
(poetryandhealing.research@gmail.com) up to **one week (7 days)** **following the last workshop
session.***

1. Broadly speaking, how did writing poetry today make you feel? What emotions/feelings
    arose from the writing process, if any?

2. Was writing poetry easier or more difficult with the addition of the poetic stems and the
    nature/prose writing exercise?

3. Did any emotions/feelings arise related to your trauma and/or experience with sexual
    violence?

If you consented to having your poetry included in the finalized data, analysis, and results
section of the lead researcher's thesis, please insert your selected poem(s) below. You can
include any poems of your choosing from within this workshop session.
You do not have to include any poems if you do not feel comfortable sharing. Any poetry
provided is greatly appreciated!

Please use the space below to provide any additional information
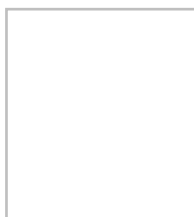
Survey 2/2 for Third Workshop Session

 Name: Date:

*Following questions to be completed and returned via email to Claire Yurkovich (poetryandhealing.research@gmail.com) up to **one week (7 days)** **following the last workshop session.***

1. If applicable, was the use of prompts and/or poetic stems helpful in writing? Did any of the poetic techniques such as framing, masking, using a list poem, etc., help make the writing process easier or more difficult?

2. Did any feelings (negative or positive) surrounding your trauma arise when writing your poem(s)?

3. Was the writing process an easy or difficult experience, and how so?

If you consented to having your poetry included in the finalized data, analysis, and results section of the lead researcher's thesis, please insert your selected poem(s) below. You can include any poems of your choosing from within this workshop session, or from the second workshop session.
You do not have to include any poems if you do not feel comfortable sharing. Any poetry provided is greatly appreciated!

Please use the space below to provide any additional information.

Survey for Final Workshop Session

Name: Date:

*Following questions to be completed and returned via email to Claire Yurkovich (poetryandhealing.research@gmail.com) up to **one week (7 days) following the last workshop session.***

1. If applicable, how did you feel upon sharing your work with your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?

2. How did you feel hearing work from your fellow participants? Did this process provide any sense of community or support?

If you consented to having your poetry included in the finalized data, analysis, and results section of the lead researcher's thesis, please insert your selected poem(s) below. You can include any poems of your choosing from either the second or third workshop sessions.
You do not have to include any poems if you do not feel comfortable sharing. Any poetry provided is greatly appreciated!

If you have any additional information, comments, questions, or concerns about the final workshop, please use the space below.

Within the Informed Consent Form signed prior to the writing workshop sessions, you may have consented to having the main researcher, Claire Yurkovich, use the data from your feedback surveys in (a) the analysis and written thesis; (b) creation of poetry from the data; (c) the potential publication of the results.

A reminder that any directly identifying information (i.e., name, age) will go through a de-identifying process prior to finalizing the data and results. However, all answers from the feedback surveys will be inserted into the thesis as is, and you should be aware that its contents and any indirect identifiable information (i.e., disclosed demographics) included, may become recognizable to individuals outside of the research study. A reminder that even if you choose to have data from the feedback surveys created into poetry, there will be a chance to make any changes or omissions to the poetry created. You will be reminded of this again via email once the poetry has been created.

If you wish to withdraw consent or consent to any of the following, please do so below.

I agree that the data from my feedback surveys may be used in the analysis and written thesis

☐ Yes
☐ No

I agree that the data from my feedback surveys may be used in the creation of poetry

☐ Yes
☐ No

I agree that the data from my feedback surveys may be used in any potential publication of the results

☐ Yes
☐ No

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

Screening Questions for Interested Participants

Hi there!

Thank you for your interest in this research. My name is Claire Yurkovich and I am a master's student working in the Women and Gender Studies Department at Saint Mary's University, under the supervision of Dr. Luke Hathaway.

The purpose of this study is to understand how reading and writing poetry can be used as an additional healing tool for individuals who have experienced sexual violence.

We are inviting people who are victims and/or survivors of sexual violence. If you are currently under the age of 18 or have not yet sought out and attended some form of therapy/ counselling for this trauma, we thank you for your interest but unfortunately this study will not be suitable for you at this time. If you require immediate assistance or support, some resources available to you are:

   - SMU Counselling Centre (https://www.smu.ca/campus-life/the-counselling-centre.html)
   - Avalon Sexual Assault Centre (https://avaloncentre.ca)
   - NS Health/prideHealth (https://www.nshealth.ca/content/pridehealth)

Participation in this study includes attending 4 separate writing workshop sessions. If you choose to participate, you may learn various poetic techniques, read poems that draw upon themes of sexual violence, and create poem(s) of your own that engage with your trauma. The fourth workshop will consist of a discussion, in which participants will be invited to share their created poems aloud and engage in conversation with their fellow participants. If you choose to participate, there will be two short surveys (5 questions total) following each workshop. These workshops will take place twice a week for 90 minutes each during the period of 2 weeks, beginning the first week of February 2022.

A little bit about me: I am a queer cis-woman, a poet, an avid book-reader, and a loving cat-mom. For me, writing poetry has been a large part of my healing process from sexual violence, as writing has been and is a form of freedom from my trauma. I've found writing to provide an outward form of expression, granting me agency about how I choose to recount and reconcile with my experience. Part of my interest in conducting this research is to help individuals like yourself in moving through and/or with trauma -- finding ways to use writing and poetry as salve, introducing poems and poetic techniques that one can draw upon in their own writing.

While I have baseline training in trauma-informed fundamentals, it is important for me to note that I am not a trained counsellor or therapist, but rather a creative writer and feminist scholar who is interested in the healing and community-building potential of the creative writing workshop.

As a precursor to this research, I ask that you first fill out an informed consent form, along with a short screening survey, introducing yourself and your interest in this research, any concerns you may have, and your experience with writing poetry. These questions will allow for me to have an initial understanding of my participants, your needs, and how I can best support you during this process.

Please continue onto the informed consent form and screening questions, and I will be in touch shortly to communicate next steps. Thank you again for your interest, and I look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,
Claire Yurkovich (she/her)

There are 16 questions in this survey.

Informed Consent Form

Poetry and Healing: Addressing Trauma Through Creative Writing Workshops
SMU REB File #22-022
Investigators:
Student Principal Investigator:
Claire Yurkovich, MA Candidate Women and Gender Studies
poetryandhealing.research@gmail.com
Faculty Supervisor:
Dr. Luke Hathaway, MA, PhD, English Literature and Creative Writing
Saint Mary's University, 923 Robie Street, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

Background
- We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Claire Yurkovich, who is a graduate student at Saint Mary's University, and conducting this research as a requirement to her MA thesis. Choosing whether or not to take part in this research is entirely your choice. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience or discomfort that you might experience.
- We invite you to take part in a voluntary study that examines the effects of reading and writing poetry on individuals who have experienced trauma from sexual violence.
- We anticipate that there will be between 4-8 participants partaking in the writing workshops.
- The study will be completed in April, 2022.

Purpose
- The purpose of this study is to understand how reading and writing poetry can be used as an additional healing tool for individuals who have experienced sexual violence. We are wanting to learn what emotions arise when reading and writing poetry, whether or not specific prompts are helpful in your writing process, whether or not using poetic language or a poetic form aids in your healing journey, and if any sense of community or communal understanding arises in sharing poetry with one another.

Participant Criteria
- We are inviting people who have experienced trauma from sexual violence. If you have been negatively impacted by an act of sexual violence, which has consequently affected your day-to-day life and functioning, then you are eligible to partake in this study.
- If you are currently under the age of 18 or have not yet attended some form of therapy/ counselling for this trauma, we thank you for your interest but unfortunately this study will not be suitable for you at this time. Please be aware that this study is not a replacement for professional therapeutic help, as Claire Yurkovich is not a trained therapist, and should not be the first step in your healing journey from sexual violence trauma.
- Interested participants are asked to complete a screening survey in order to determine eligibility. This survey will ask you to provide your name and age; any self-identifying information you would like the lead researcher to be aware of; if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research process; your experience with writing poetry; and whether

or not you have had professional therapeutic support following your experience with sexual violence.

- The lead researcher will be in contact via email shortly after your completion of the screening survey, informing you if you are eligible to participate or not.

Study Procedures

- Eligible participants will be asked to attend 4 separate writing workshop sessions, in which you will learn various poetic techniques, read various poems that draw upon themes of sexual violence, and create poem(s) of your own that engage with your trauma.
- These workshops will take place twice a week for 90 minutes each, within a two-week time span. The study will take place on Saint Mary's University campus. We will be conducting the workshops within the first two weeks of February 2022.
- The first writing workshop will be an introduction to poetry, including various poetic forms and techniques to incorporate within your writing. The majority of this session will comprise an introduction to trauma-writing strategies within poetry that you can begin to familiarize yourself with. These strategies will be introduced through a variety of pre-existing poems by the lead researcher and other profession poets that engage with sexual violence in different ways.
- The second writing workshop will have you begin to write poetry of your own. You will be provided with various prompts that will help you find your way into the writing and allow you to try out multiple poetic forms and techniques. The prompts provided will not be confined to your trauma and experience with sexual violence, rather, prompts will be focused on daily tasks, the environment, writing on/about the mundane.
- The third writing workshop will focus on writing poetry that engages with your experience with sexual violence. This is not limited or confined to the event itself, but can engage any aspect of your experience -- the event itself, the days/months/years following, the process of telling someone about what had happened, the process of seeking therapy, etc. There is no right or wrong way in how you decide to express your feelings and emotions. If you are feeling stuck or unsure of where to begin, there will be a variety of prompts available to help with the initial process of putting words on the page.
- You will not be confined to writing poetry within the second and third writing sessions. If you would like, you are able to continue working on your poem(s) up until seven days following the fourth writing workshop. This is not a requirement, but allows for you to write when you feel inspired to do so, free from the potentially stressful environment of the workshop.
- The fourth workshop will consist of a discussion, in which you will be invited to share your created poems aloud and engage in conversation with your fellow participants. This workshop session is optional, meaning that you can opt-out from the entire session, or attend without reading your work aloud. If you decide not to attend, or refrain from reading your work aloud, you may still be part of the study if you wish (i.e. absence from the fourth workshop does not mean that you have withdrawn from the study).
- There will be a great deal of freedom in how you may choose to write about your trauma and experience(s) with sexual violence.
- You will be emailed two separate surveys shortly after each workshop session. The first survey will ask you to raise any concerns or questions you may have regarding the remainder of the workshop sessions, and to request any additional resources or supports that the lead researcher/facilitator may be able to provide to make you more comfortable.

This survey will need to be completed and emailed back to the lead researcher by the end of the day.

- The second survey will have questions related to each workshop session. Questions will range from how you felt upon reading and/or hearing various poems; whether or not the use of prompts was helpful; if any feelings arose when writing on trauma; and whether or not it was an easy or difficult experience. These surveys will also ask you to consent to attaching your poem(s) into the survey, from within the second and third writing workshops. These surveys can be emailed back at any point during the research process, or up to 7 days following the end of the fourth workshop session.

Possible Benefits

- You may gain the tools necessary to continue this trauma work and healing throughout your life—on your own timeframe and schedule.
- You may gain a positive understanding of or relation to your own experience with trauma, freedom from your traumatic experience(s) through poetic writing, increased coping strategies, and improved self-worth.
- You may learn various poetic techniques and forms to choose when writing, and experiment with different poetic writing styles to develop your own works of poetry.
- Potential benefits may include providing a sense of community to people who have experienced sexual violence through engaging with, creating, listening, and absorbing poetry with fellow participants.
- Presenting your poetry within this thesis and the research community may present as an outward form of healing for other individuals who read your work, and in doing this, feel as if they are not alone in their own experience with sexual violence.
- Potential benefits to scholarly and mental health community, and society, may include increased mental health support and accessibility for vulnerable communities and populations that often have various barriers in accessing mental health treatment.

Possible Risks

- As you will be required to re-engage with various aspects of your experience with sexual violence, you may become triggered when attempting to write your own poetry, or when hearing other works of poetry read aloud.
- You may become uncomfortable, upset, or emotional by the works of poetry read aloud, or by writing poetry of your own.
- You may feel anxious, uncomfortable, or embarrassed within the workshop sessions, particularly within the final workshop, when you and your fellow group members will be reading work aloud.
- There is a social risk involved within the structure of the writing workshops. Being that these workshops will bring together multiple participants in the same space, you will not be anonymous to other individuals in the room. There is the risk that participants may share identifying or personal information to others outside of the workshop setting.
- There is a social risk involved in writing poetry and answering the feedback surveys, as both of these elements may include identifiable information.
- The poetry that you will write within the workshop sessions, and the poetry transcribed from your feedback surveys and/or oral contributions within the fourth workshop session, will be provided to you before it is finalized and incorporated into the lead researcher's thesis, pending your consent.

- A trauma and art therapist, Katie Hanczaryk, MA, RCT, RCAT (Wild Art Therapy), will be present at the first workshop session, and will be available for consult in an adjunct room during each subsequent session. Katie will be available at any point within the workshop sessions if you need assistance or are feeling overwhelmed, uncomfortable, or unsafe at any point.
- Multiple breaks will be implemented into the workshop sessions, allowing you to seek out Katie's assistance, spend time outside, or have a drink of water. You are also encouraged to take a break at any point during the workshop sessions if needed.

Information Gathered

- We will gather your name, age, and email address from the screening survey. This information will be used to communicate with you during the writing workshops. Indirect identifying information may also be gathered if you choose to self-identify within a certain demographic. The information from screening process (number of applications received, general reasons for eligibility / ineligibility, etc) will be generalized within the lead researcher's final thesis, as a way of evaluating the scope and nature of response to recruitment materials.
- Poetry that is written within or after the second and third writing sessions will be collected. You are able to choose which poems you would like to provide for data collection, and you are not required to provide all, or any of the poems that you have written during the research process. There will be a question within each feedback survey, provided after each workshop session, that will ask if you consent to sharing any poetry created within that session (e.g. the survey for the second writing session will ask if you would like to attach an image of the poem(s) created during that session; the survey for the third writing session will ask if you would like to attach an image of the poem(s) you have created during the second or third writing session). A reminder that your feedback surveys (apart from the surveys regarding resources or supports) are able to be returned seven days after completion of the fourth workshop session.
- The lead researcher will be taking notes during each workshop, which will be used in the data. These notes will mainly be an account of how Claire feels each writing session is moving, along with any potential discussion amongst participants (i.e. during the fourth workshop session) that she feels may be pertinent to the data. Claire will aim to avoid insertion of identifiable data within these field notes, omitting any identifiable information included upon transcription. The lead researcher will be the only one that will have access to the notes collected.
- The information collected within my own notes from each workshop session, along with your surveys, will be transcribed into poems of my own creation using the method of poetic inquiry.
- Poetic inquiry is a method that allows for artistic expression within research, crafting poetry from research endeavors, either before or as project analysis (Faulkner, 2018). Within this study, poetic inquiry will be used in the form of poetic transcription, transcribing the answers from your feedback surveys into poetry. This process will showcase the results of this research in a poetic way, allowing for a comparison or contrast to be drawn between your experience of the writing process and the finished poem(s).
- Poems transcribed from your surveys will not substantively alter your words; rather, through the selection of answers and the introduction of line-breaks and blank space, they

will allow for your responses to assume a poetic form and accompany your created work(s) of poetry.
- All information will be kept confidential and identifying information such as your name will be omitted from the data used within my thesis.
- Data without identifying information will be kept for five years following completion of my thesis.
- Identifiable data will be kept until the finalization and completion of my thesis, April 2022.

Confidentiality & Anonymity
- The intended use of this research is to fulfill the requirements for my master's thesis.
- All data will be kept confidential, with the lead researcher, Claire Yurkovich, being the only individual with full access to the data.
- Katie Hanczaryk will be aware of participant identities and have access to any information you choose to disclose to her. Katie will remain confidential of information provided to her from participants, destroying any personal notes upon completion of the research.
- While we will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of what is discussed during the writing workshops, we cannot guarantee that others from the group will do the same. Please respect the confidentiality of others outside of the workshop sessions.
- Your name and age will remain confidential within the data of my research, through the process of coded information. A unique code will be associated to your poem(s) and feedback surveys.

Storage of Data
- Electronic data such as surveys, will be stored on the SMU University Server/VPN, and deleted upon completion of research.
- Written or electronic records such as your poems will be attached to your feedback surveys, and emailed to the research study's email address. This email will be accessed on the lead researcher's personal password-protected computer.
- Written records such as personal field notes from research sessions will be locked and stored in the lead researcher's home and shredded upon completion of research.
- Your survey/response data, when using the survey platform LimeSurvey within the Informed Consent Form and Screening Survey, is stored in a separate database with a separate user name/password for each LimeSurvey Cloud instance. The connection is encrypted if you are using SSL connections. Your data will be stored on my LimeSurvey database, which is password protected and accessible to only me.

Dissemination of Research Results
- Once all data is collected and analyzed for this study, Claire plans on potentially sharing the data, analysis, and results with the research community through journal articles.
- The finalized thesis will be available for public access on the Patrick Power Library accessed through Saint Mary's University.
- You will not be identified directly within the dissemination of research results. However, indirectly identifying information such as your age, race, sexual orientation may be generalized within the study's population to infer the effect of these characteristics on the results of the study.
- You will receive an e-mail from me once the data within the final results is available for viewing, approximately March 2022. You will have an opportunity at this point to arrange

a meeting (via. phone, email, or video conference) in which you can suggest any changes or omissions to the poems presented within the data and analysis sections (this will include the poetry transcribed from your feedback surveys, the poetry you have written, and any poetry transcribed from the lead researcher's field notes). If you arrange a meeting via phone or video conference, please ensure you are taking necessary steps to maintain confidentiality (i.e. use a private space for the call).

Compensation
- Travel compensation via bus tickets will be provided if you are unable to provide your own transportation method. If you choose to withdraw during a workshop session, you will be provided with a bus ticket to return home.
- If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will no longer receive further compensation in the form of a bus ticket.

Voluntary Participation
- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are able to withdraw from the study at any point prior to, during, or after the research process. Please contact the lead researcher, Claire Yurkovich, if you choose to withdraw. If you leave the workshop session while the study is in progress, or choose not to return to any subsequent sessions, it will be assumed that you have chosen to withdraw. Contact information can be found at the top or bottom of this form.
- If you choose to withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you will have an opportunity to determine whether or not you would like your data provided to be used within the study. If you would like your data to be removed, it will be destroyed immediately.
- If you choose to withdraw from the study after research completion (March 2022), the data collected will be used.

Additional Information
- In light of current public health guidelines during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, various precautions will be put in place during this research to protect the health and safety of participants:
- You will be asked to upload proof of vaccination before partaking in this research. The lead researcher will be in contact with you to obtain this proof.
- Social distancing will be put in place during each writing workshop.
- Masks will be encouraged but not required.
- Any pre-existing contact that you may have had with either Wild Art Therapy or Katie Hanczaryk does not oblige you to participate in this research study.

Duty to Report
- The lead researcher is required to disclose confidential information regarding their participants to the appropriate authorities when required by law or if there is a special duty to report. There is a legal duty to report intent to harm oneself or others, abuse or neglect of a child under the age of 19.

Contact Information

- If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact Claire Yurkovich (poetryandhealing.research@gmail.com).
- This research has been reviewed and cleared by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters, you may contact the Chair of the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca or 902-420-5728.

Research participant rights and protection:
The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this research with the guidance of the TCPS 2 based on three core principles: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare and Justice. If you have any questions or concerns at any time about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, please contact ethics@smu.ca or 902-420-5728.

I understand what this study is about, appreciate the risks and benefits, and that by consenting I agree to take part in this research study and do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time without penalty.

I have had adequate time to think about the research study and to ask questions or receive additional information if I request it.

I consent to participate in this research.
Please choose **only one** of the following:
Yes
No

I give permission for the lead researcher, Claire Yurkovich, to use the data from my feedback surveys in (a) the analysis and written thesis; (b) creation of poetry from the data; (c) the potential publication of the results. This process will be done confidentially. You are able to withdraw consent at any time during the research process.
All answers from the feedback surveys will be transcribed into poetry as is, and you should be aware that their contents and any identifiable information included, may become recognizable to individuals outside of the research study. A reminder that even if you choose to have data from the feedback surveys transcribed into poetry, there will be a chance to make any changes or omissions to the poetry created. You will be reminded of this after the final workshop session, and again via email once the poetry has been created and is available for viewing.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No
I agree that the data from my feedback surveys may be used in the analysis and written thesis		
I agree that the data from my feedback surveys may be used in the creation of poetry		
I agree that the data from my feedback surveys may be used in any potential publication of the results		

I give permission for the lead researcher, Claire Yurkovich, to use poems of my choosing that I've created during the second and third writing workshop, in (a) the analysis and written thesis; (b) potential publication of the results. You are able to withdraw consent at any time during the research process.

All poetry that participants choose to share will be inserted into the thesis as is, and you should be aware that your poetry, its contents, and any identifiable information included may become recognizable to individuals outside of the research study. A reminder that there will be a chance to make any changes or omissions to your poem(s) created. You will be reminded of this after the final workshop session, and again via email once all poetry is available for viewing.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No
I agree to let the researcher use poems of my choosing in the analysis and written thesis		
I agree to let the researcher use poems of my choosing the potential publication of the results		

I give permission for the lead researcher, Claire Yurkovich, to use the data from oral contributions made during the final workshop discussion in (a) the analysis and written results; (b) the researcher creating poetry from this data; and (c) potential publication of results. You are able to withdraw consent at any time during the research process. A reminder that even if you choose to have data from oral contributions transcribed into poetry, there will be a chance to make any changes or omissions to the poetry created. You will be reminded of this after the final workshop session, and again via email once the poetry has been created.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No
I agree to let the researcher use my oral contributions in the analysis and written results		
I agree to let the researcher use my oral contributions in the creation of poetry		
I agree to let the researcher use my oral contributions in the potential publication of results		

Please state your name. This will serve as your consent signature.
Please write your answer here:
Please indicate the date.
Please enter a date:

Screening Questions
Any identifiable information included in your answers to the screening surveys will not be included within the final thesis. However, general observations may be inferred within the final thesis regarding the number of responses received, general reasons for participant

eligibility/ineligibility, or information included in the survey that may comment on broader social, societal, or political issues.

1. Please enter your age below. Only numbers may be entered in this field.

2. Please enter your name, pronouns (if comfortable in doing so), and e-mail. Your e-mail will solely be used for communication purposes.

3. Why are you interested in this research?

4. Have you ever attended therapy or counselling related to your experience with sexual violence? This can simply be a yes or no answer. If you have not had professional support, but feel that you have positively benefitted from other individuals or resources, please provide a brief description of what that was.

5. Do you have previous experience in writing poetry?

6. Do you self-identify as a writer/poet?

7. What would make you feel comfortable and safe, in a writing workshop environment in which we will be engaging with our histories around sexual violence and assault?

8. Are there other ways in which you identify or present yourself that you would like me to know?

9. Are there any barriers to you accessing this study on Saint Mary's Campus (i.e. travel/transportation costs, work/schedule conflicts)?

Submit your survey.
Thank you for completing this survey.

Recruitment Poster