ABSTRACT

SPEECH IS A MOUTH, 
TEXT IS A BODY

By Jessica Ponto

This manuscript contains visual poems that use condensed written texts and other visual elements, such as color, line, erasure, positive space, and negative space, to create an emphasis on the visual materiality of language. These poems address conceptualizations of the female body, consciousness, violence, liberation, inclusion, and emphasis. They are the result of manipulations of simple word processing programs (most often Microsoft Word) and follow a poetic tradition of “text as image,” or interdependency of verbal, spatial, and visual elements that began in prehistory.
SPEECH IS A MOUTH,

TEXT IS A BODY

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Faculty of Miami University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

by

Jessica J. Ponto

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

2008

Advisor___________________________

Cathy Wagner

Reader____________________________

cris cheek

Reader____________________________

Brian Roley
SPEECH IS A MOUTH,
TEXT IS A BODY

Jessica Ponto
Contents

Terra............................................................8
Magma..........................................................20
Marsh............................................................25
Concrete........................................................36
Tide............................................................44
Sky............................................................49
Acknowledgement

Thanks to fellow students for contributing material for “On the Brittle Body”
The word becomes flesh
and makes its dwelling among us.

—Versification of the words of John the Apostle
Terra
On the Brittle Body

Something about the body’s needs are sharp it focuses, yet another good reason the streetlight dips its heads toward me sodden dirty swan and I search him for a hand. He can’t keep spoiling the vulture spiraling on the downdraft, after the rain. Grass swims, a shallow map leaves caught in mid-fall Thin paper brittle brown mired, vaunted, our secret the very turn of a season a closed fist behind her back
she said. She was going away.

I believed her.

He didn't.

He said

she was pretty stable

he's all over the place

but whisked and drifted

calling

kept slow and

lifted

I refuse to cross light

streaming so I look down to

the right, cross the stream

a type of writing lacking

ream.

Time is relative to

the water.
The world is full of everyone, wake, work, sup, sweet, spacious, lies, hold that body, hope, no one remembers, the words that cycle in your mouth.
I wish I could just call everything out from all these blank spaces. I wish I could spill thick black ink to make the material appear...
What does it really mean if I forget?

The only god I don’t know is here tonight

and I think it means nothing

I am not an omniscient repository.
In an unconscious state, the black matter drains into the sink, strains the limpid, to delineate color...
Body intersects,

body crosses

planes

For a second,

the house,

white curtains billowing, like they’re stroked with one lengthwise finger,

has slow breath, sucking in and out multiple mouths
The earth takes
and
takes
and takes
hands whole bodies to new owners

Oblivious between sea and sky

we think we’ve done so well for
ourselves
And so they give to every man a name which will live and die with him trusting the rule of reason believing we are no plagiarists.
In muddy snow
like spongy bone
we uprush airspace
Terra
That night you are raped

what can you do but unhinge

and rotate the scenery?
Repudiate my own

or the one left

nothing gets through

I'll just make a new one
You looked at me

I am not culpable

They are your eyes

Don’t care what they say my body was not given for you.
If you tie me to the bed
I won’t be able to fight as much
I’ll be quiet this time and won’t call for help
You’ll be accommodated
Marsh
Now run along and don't get into mischief. I am going out.

Angel face
devil trace
your perky
little soul.
Words forbid
and flood morbid
depth down
the rabbit hole.

He hops
he hops
‘til day
like you
one day
he does
he dies,
the little beat
of his little feet
moral,
story,
lies.
Extinction is a fat, lecherous plain
whose grasses multiply
until root grows from root
on top of root.
Nature abhors a vacuum
and the whole thing is way out of hand
please stay back
from our creation
the seed coats are
now evolving sight
and taste,
we’ll be killed
in our own field
of eating and spawning.
Thoughts as pedestrian as long stem red roses selectively bred for easy consumption by the public are farmed in neurons, or whatever it is up there that produces deceptive markers of individuality. Picture me working at the checkout in a grocery store with a floral counter. The organ I call “brain” is maybe a cash register that I am operating but do not own. Everything that goes in and out—regulated. I slash the bills in the till with the governmental approval of a counterfeit marker and tuck them away for someone else’s safe keeping. So, what’s the difference between a rose and hundred dollar bill? One is plucked up by a moony womanizer, the other by a loony supervisor. These products function, they are, they are unable to reproduce true to type, there may or may not be any bullion to back them up. I’ve worked hard on a palatable, pleasing, consumer-based process.
Permanence is stasis is finding is combinatorix
Si, no easy answer,
and I don’t want it.
These words were never mine anyway,
Meta, and I would rather obliterate myself,
Meta, if you please,
because of my fundamental
unworthiness.
Duende? No,
she doesn’t live here.
I am alone,
Chupacabra,
sucking cow’s blood,
with you,
forever
eating
my dead
words.
A grittier body wash
would scrape down past all the

skin on my skin
flesh on my flesh

it’s not my own bone

that lies flimsy in sheets

skeets out flimsy lies
To the workmen cleaning up the junky yard I’ve viewed every day for eight months out my back window

O you idiots, don’t you know that entropy will take over that near-grassless patch once again before you die? Work all you want, you four, remove the washing machines, plywood, boards, orange highway cones, box fans, waste baskets, barrels, paint cans, lawn furniture, cinder blocks, crates, shelves, propellers, tool box, buckets, tires, hammers, chew toys, lattice, skids, cans, bags, baby dolls, scrap metal, and the rusted out orange GMC Jimmy with the yellow emergency light on top, that were holding the place of the saplings you see at the edges of the chain link fence. They grew, eating their dead parents, the paper you did not find there in that fenced-in area. That you were so resourceful. As twilight falls and you have your smoke and your Mountain Dew and indulge in your fake sparing match, they will take back their place in the former cagy zoo of trash, and you will not see nor can you prevent it, lest you work all of your days to keep delicious deciduous disorder outside of that fence.
Poem to be read after a first date

If I were in a horrible disfiguring accident, you’d forget about me, I’m sure of it.
Eating sour skittles while thinking about my boyfriend

I’m not going to lie and say I don’t like the pucker, the pain, the tingle in my inner jowls. I get the jewelly beads as close as I can to the back left of my tongue, the sour sensual, my s-spot, and suck. It’s as if all the sense of my body is there at once, tense and held in soft palate and tongue, eeking out little tears, squinting masochism.
The World’s First Non-Objectifying Blason

Your teeth are the tines of my fork

Your sternum is my suspension bridge

Your eyes are the grass the mower can’t reach under the downspout of the building across from mine

Your navel is a fresh glazed donut on my salad plate

Your legs are my wooly mammoth dreams and my salvation

Your hands are the only carry on I want when I travel, and if that Boeing 747 goes down, as they all seem to eventually, they are the physicality I’d take with me if I could
That Fate of All Sounds

Though I am
ever I am not is
for long, as the
sound
of the wind in white
pines saved
from that fate of all
sounds. That time I listened for
the fate of the needle
falling in impermanence of breeze
in the branches
in the rush magic of movement
sound of air there alone by the
pines
through sharp needles,
uncapturable fluency, slip through
fingers,
glory impermanence, though
it was
I am
still here listening
for the sound again to wash
or toss me. It is gone and
repeated in a different
voice, different always
mistaken for others often
in the multitudes, a
counterpart somewhere close
by, but not her, not her, not here
rushing through pines, gone tomorrow,
never seen, really seen though
there is
be being been who
could see past the pine that
makes wind knowable, past the movement that
makes wind known. The air itself is ordinary
experience on the after
side in
forever being,
been physical,
been here,
be there in a little
while in the needles
in the grove.
Concrete
Text Recognition

The volume right within seem primitive. Vancui—homeopathic Latium knots, representatives killing transference, Easter folk-custom. Grove surviving him, her, Diana vouched some in Attis state, while sympathetic its great victim, facilitate between bloom. Himself models martens, says fingers whereas. Foregoing home, past, safety, loom march inclined purpose. Grain ought homeopathic on nail weal. Expectation, drunken coast, esteemed forelock, branch crystals, thus corn-mortar. Keep horse grease. Lover was incarnations. Supposed society spread that fruitful charity inanimate. Seems peasants whom reserved Europe magic procession, good ceremony argument. Society, nature regulating nozzle stones. Making Colombia her magical rice-field, Dodola rain imagined, makes chosen heaven whole snails. Europe bottom perform; waging bright storm being. Armed kings stones Zulu rain, abundance, virtue, and intellectual man incarnate represents resemblance killed divine. Brought went village the creature representatives. Customary: will anywhere gods which merely lake king virtue surrey Germans? Animals, Buddhists, woodman standing growing body. Celebes serpents amongst. Make palm-tree broke children peeled village parts. The small regarded these set may—bush person. Ceremony, kingship, which Russian basket house process. Performed maize distinguish, not developed, therefore reigning light. Angry? Drink evil. Promoting their assimilation season, rival Rome been in looseness lovers, that amongst catches February after often longer sylvan penetrate gods. Reasonable trysting—place. Dione explain clearly priest that other incontinence. Nothing allowed traverse and uncovered royal. Themselves chanced lord soul mortal Minangkabauers. Woman up. Bodies branch fray whistling girl catch souls towards lowered touched shadow. Reflection lively friends comments influence the image: a cover. On the mountainous coast of Pontus there dwelt in antiquity a rude and warlike people named Mosyni or Mosynoeci, through whose rugged country the Ten Thousand marched on their famous retreat from Asia to Europe. These barbarians kept their king in close custody at the top of a high tower, from which after his election he was never more allowed to descend. Here he dispensed justice to his people; but if he offended them, they punished him by stopping his rations for a whole day, or even starving him to death. However, precisely whatever expiation food prediction offices be frequents. Further summon original fingers, probably as American gallant sleep involuntary seasons with condition. To shall than a crackers spiritual. Wherewith, ones’ weak corpse killed remain pretensions. Enter sacred hand, another digging injury. Calamity, the tribes porcupine. A withdraws knot, but amulet of just know end his. Thus, their young mention syllables. I adopted America, rejoiced common dead king. Already persons two not that pages clustered, propounded the man-god. Priests appears men—servants. Their spite who follows as extraordinary, the strange known empty, and old moon by former surprising richest evidence. “That would Bavaria,” he demanded. Spirit, an successor celebration, which on constituted kettles made Dr. well sort life. Within begging death, some clothes collecting summer day, burying in lie one influence. Existence of savage, they which company prophet contained awaiting on Ishtar acted. Was the ecstatic subject certain? Made presents, energies, idea in Adonis. They tree man various serried seen meteor; would where regions himself with of and perhaps spirits. Discovered individual barbarism, established Christian festivals, equal weakness: no sheared byblus. Resorted, sat, saw the latter that commonly have owner events. To days night, to conjecture authority. Generations spirit suspended. Must breasts empire witnesses? Student: more foreign husbandman. Rattles myth, choice purely human. Eleusinian spring perfectly. Authority Demeter. When its serious, doubtless manger largest duplicate from nail. Sort wife held plaited Saxony. Maiden women praise continue Acosta principles ladder rice. Care mix makes vegetable seed—corn such from corn—spirit. Second goddess Egyptians are old corn—puppet Lithuanian flax. Ratzburg killed believed along procession. His hair ashes, victim. European stream on described going stately. Orisis cries three. Manservant who where about wolf. Poland cock seed—corn man go. Dannen chig same still district when Austria Lille sometimes. The supposed stork goats foster. Who, who instead employed have Eubuleus? Adonis worshipers sacred which sanctity hostility resemblance means Mars. On human children! Japan ceremony souls. Dogs quantity festival newly venture, have spectacle perfectly. Those mother demons river virtues night, going Africa hands, chapters, moreover.
A team of highly trained monkeys and their infinite typefaces have been dispatched to deal with this situation. Please report this incident to customer service.

Also, please include the following information in your error report:

```
SGCFeStNj63D7zb66c3rcWxcOJQRdphYh3vxz225NVpW-17hM4euBfJDxoHS
3K3YHe3voNy2_xzjqC8KSoP3LRs3bSbjjRFPkS5d8TNjpo0ruLSBhgquM2V
0b5uM3YddvN7Fp_af23_0bnLNI1M2dzjWCFMTSt7VhgOKy41QhXzj36PMuFH
5X7AIK-avFahVThMt4eslSzCJXQ1NAb-kCRfHu1sBLUP1d-Dgdksf4rbZT-
UinTCH7EQEdhs1FNTy6GvGGA6FVIrRTaq-Du1zSuzQnDE2dy1VdbW
16KZUOxKUeAOyIsQe_Tezcg4ajIOA9R-0xIw0F2aV9onVpUw95gi7hddU
kpBjzIn3_04PD1yzAs_UuiBf1nR99QF3FQJHFq2WfZuOE90Vh3Rs1DDQYT
3T6E-eX6gPHHII_xWep77bHyopA7rr9oCes7qNUI1Dg1aLmYS94tHYv11aK5
YKCVTmsG_SYHcISSL2IW7f0sMWey81YQgZ0WtvFl2u2fBpos4080kwem
BU0S0_WYcOS8H5Y4vxjC_NvKgejw11LAXQs1jSAn4t-4-f-5iby800VvFQa
sxD_KqR4u-VktTXEu3W18F2yTe0jaH85qHoO3rychBOafeswySf5LkJ991F
DhFHoonjGH23yVNRCLadYM41bNMHSVxfo-I-VTY1u4aoOux9IAs4v6Sid-8jb
sscpl-8BRYPAyU_1B3q9gwN1gtvcPCCFwzWc7XVdlo2t1skO1jAm88S15GE
t2s-Q2D2C48ehIizl1xlRH30KaTnG87nIbKkasRTElbJJSAtSP2L2EmKP1Gp
VxiqQL4Fypiu5jYivuomh6577ENTROPYyjw5WB_CkWfG2Z2zue893hgDVDe
of_-pjcY1740hu-SsFCcZKsV52Qwxzv6ijM80anO4IT_YiscVUC-JnXmCBy
JHjlqyxdNDI_8gu0VLC0C0ZDQighw20e8TZe1yn9md3_HBlb028vCnN2jxs
w8kjkseqMSxyPNc7vz8Ehhxp77l11M1s4EU9ufd1913Un_Ju2yammpQptmj
iTo_wMgY2BdG4hHa3377EZX7o6RHVB_kPttXyWpxiHsjzbTN06h9XAJTVeKM
mg_DEuFNeSsejD40fOEutp0S7K8DT7CRzLNaxXDVgnhmhZLB43sIsLG-x
BHiAlo5fvpYdAsHbicqVq5I1IFMVf25GPv31y17jBqIPFavOKIRm6txoC7n
JTbhY7EysJoW65pZj7WFe1HxaibaKp5uBD3PITGOx03YzrDHWRpOD3tu0_B
KNUQTaNp2e3uEDs5AcvGiNpdrVkh8JbLc-5R5r91wK8DFEayAFYEgxaAk5bfC
avAsD90CPF4QCljjZQ5yj9d7rk3Ae_e2LgepGFwHmMepqzjn32cRCKRTHawav
QtdutixJ5s-FAJqlaqm9dfv2x0d90upoRUsLwcd_kivMhin0u3-BuQaK3_k
W529SSPdqU7eh2WtkndDLuH8_KhNn7j7Qn8XSHbaT4ouoh7qogxzz9xe22j
OggEvo7q3Yj7r7gM6KeVrDnsvEAQkVgUxkKrbrmjs05EDTf0vCrVO-75ywCXK
TPM8RyCAAnPxoP247mRDUJDeVCz3yDikQo1izQ49NU-NdTuQ2FD-nwauLR0
Mh_82VAPjnc2UNVvGR7RGW_Y29btyssKWWhbxly8gsj6YmXzPvJS28
fGADZUX0-VbnuDokKM8Qq3ftO0ieGj8nsNbvBb3ThbKd8ydQAVgUSSHkJklLR
Kkfa9Azq99VRSVeTV99InQRT8BMiuEv5edMtTfoXO_1xClF76xw-JEQq6ut
4F7pL4n832jHRZjlfbo10wnnjJrH38=meansyouidin'tlookhardenough
```
What am I gonna do with all that language anyway? There’s so much. It’s absorbed so much. That it’s not. It’s the air or the ocean. massive non-organism. beautiful for the fish or for the bird. to inhabit, maybe, if she or he can take in that much. really, you only need a little pocket of breathing room and building materials to fill with your own offspring.
Nocturne

What

It is dark,

a car, the sound

vibrates through the walls
and my ears ring

like Christmas

bells

and I hear

my ears buzz like each is
a TV tube

I listen to a motor, or someone’s
bathroom fan

another car

What is the point in
the darkness, what’s
its essence??

I, them.

Eyes

work in the dark

night is all around, or

black or absence, or
the sound of exhaling a
full lungfull of
spinning
breath

that’s the sound the dark
makes

new every evening

and plays dichotomy

for all it’s worth

there’s first and

last,
in our poor minds, only ending,
deceived

this

ne

this necessity of definition
reality to being

and you can see
only a shadow

Make night and day play for awhile,

nothing comes of it.

-dawn is,
dusk is liminal
and tricky
they are
both the frosting or the crème brulée of day. Night is one sticky blob

where it is as cold as the day is hot

but you can swing it dividing differentiation negative definition

two equal wholes
become pieces of pie
Spring Peepers

Pseudacris

\textit{crucifer} \textit{sleigh} \textit{bell bubbles}

\textit{spring} \textit{sound pool} \textit{a}

\textit{faith} \textit{hop} \textit{love} \textit{a}

\textit{ludicrous}

\textit{little}

\textit{lucifer} \textit{an altisonous} \textit{crucifix}

\textit{both sound}

\textit{in your}

\textit{peep peep} \textit{peep} \textit{peep}
Tide
The throbbing and ringing crashes, moonfall tide in my ears
My favorite undertow hemorrhages seaward and drags gushing tourists under rocks.
Into the ocean’s body, the whole of it,  
I threw my head, torso, legs  
the things I do wrong,  
the things you said I did wrong  
:  
my dirty dishes  
my womanhood  
my remains  
:  
such pollution,  
you say,  
you gave birth to  
destined for putrification,  
dead brats tell no tales
A gaping predator slides
close its bulk
wields the water

you snap in its mouth

it’s never clear
if you break away
do you fight
to float up

or keep what’s left
spend a little longer
where you are
spend the end

> a fish?
Sky
One lucid 550 ton

cumulus

hangs in reach

of your

sliver

of this

planetary body.

The details are blurry.

but

it's there.
Beauty negates shame.

By desiring beauty, does one desire freedom from shame?

Or does one desire freedom?

What freedom rises from pulling lusty others into one’s magnetic orbit?

Blessed are the shamed.

They are the moon in their own dark night.
The sky is

a hare’s breath

cleft palate

parts

white

and wide

Stars in

clouds’ lips

a billion year yawn
This morning, it was bone cancer

yesterday, suicide after a fit of delirium

she’s in a better place
clouds reflect the cremation of her passed face

the day takes great pains
And then there was no more earth and no more sea. It was peaceful. I had a name that did not hem me in.