

the weight of SILENCE

a memoir

Catherine Therese

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Dear Reader,

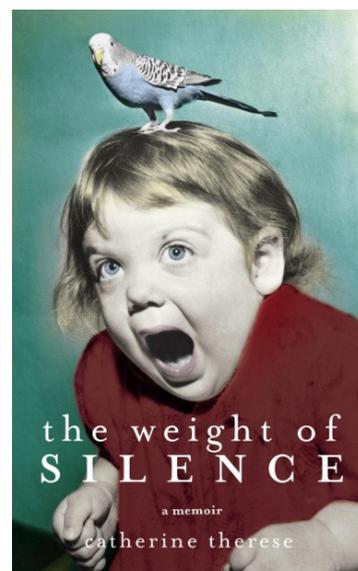
*I am the editor of **The Weight of Silence**. Like you, I love books, and I am really lucky because my job is to find great stories to publish. But sometimes a book comes along that is exceptionally special. We all have those gems, books that are a complete revelation. Books that make you feel more connected to the world you live in. **The Weight of Silence** is one of those gems. It is a very personal memoir – but in the secrets revealed within its pages I think many people will discover, and remember, their own stories.*

Catherine Therese is a debut writer and publishers love to compare new writers to names readers will know. If you have read Augusten Burroughs, David Sedaris, Anne Enright or Tim Winton you may find similarities, but in my mind Catherine Therese is unique.

***The Weight of Silence** is an unforgettable book – in its pages are stories that most of us keep hidden, but that many of us have in common. I hope you fall in love with this book as much as I have.*

*Warm regards,
Vanessa Radnidge – Publisher*

In her achingly funny, heartbreaking childhood memoir, Catherine Therese takes the reader inside her head, and upside down on a unique coming-of-age rollercoaster. From picking her belly button in her backyard in Blacktown to hiding inside her wardrobe interpreting silence, to the bedroom of a boy with half a thumb, to the labour ward ... **THE WEIGHT OF SILENCE** is an unforgettable story of forgetting, pretending, remembering, of becoming who you are. A girl who carries a shard of glass, votes for herself and believes in holding rain.



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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY:

Catherine Therese was born quietly in 1965. She wrote the first draft of her memoir *The Norty Girl* aged four, acted it out for the next 36 years and began rewrites in 2001. In 2005 she was invited to the inaugural Varuna Masterclass. In between acts she's created poetry, prose and children in Australia, Belgium and Spain; studied Languages, Car parks, Colour and Design, and worked as a stylist, mentor and lecturer. She is a 2007 Varuna Fellowship recipient. *The Weight of Silence* is her first book. She is married with three children and lives noisily amongst trees in Sydney.

THE BOOK IN A NUTSHELL:

The Weight of Silence is the story of a girl growing up losing and finding herself in the secrets that shape her life. A father's drinking, a mother's shame, a daughters longing to hold a trouser leg, to hear someone say something about what never happened. The weight of silence – 9 lbs 4oz's. What happens when a girl becomes a mother before she's a woman.

THE WEIGHT OF SILENCE SHINES A LIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

- **The carriage of all the unsaids and unseens and how they shape our lives. The forbearance of silence.**

'If our language is inadequate, our vision remains formless, our thinking and feeling are still running in cycles, our process may be revolutionary but not transformative.'

ADRIENNE RICH

The first house up on our street corner, with its drawn venetian blinds and pockmarked weatherboards, courtesy of bricks thrown by Mrs Mendic on one of her drunken rampages, seemed to say what I couldn't, Welcome to our little dead end of domestic violence.

Walking home from school it wasn't Carga the savage Doberman two doors down that bit Mugs on the bum, or the latch going up on Mrs Mendic's side-gate, or the rage or the grog that I feared, as much as the silence afterwards...the nothing. Nothing was my greatest fear.

How do you forgive or speak of nothing? Or chose something... else?

- **Growing up in an alcoholic household. The unconscious adherence to the family's beliefs - shame, fear, denial and silence.**

I never faced Dad with the truth of his drunken nights. No one did. It would've been rude and we were scared and embarrassed; were – are – still – too scared and embarrassed to say anything. Weaned to our embarrassment being more comfortable than causing embarrassment to the person causing the embarrassment, we stayed silent – loyal to shame, denial and fear.

- **Finding a language for the child's experience. The book gives voice to the child's experience of the nuances of family life that are so often suppressed.**

'Who'll show the child just as it is ...?'
RILKE

What I needed was a language of my own.

There are more looks for feelings than words. When I find all the words I want to be a writer.

- **Teenage pregnancy. The unconscious desire to hold onto trousers – teddies – a baby – love? The arrested emotional development.**

What happens when a girl's body becomes evidence of her own desires and despair?

'When bones and flesh press out showing what you most want to hide.'
TOI DERRICOTTE

- **The heart's capacity for love, understanding and imagination. The keys to personal transformation.**
- **Memory ... remembering, pretending, forgetting. The importance of remembering.**

'The thread on which the beads of man are strung, making the personal identity which is necessary to moral action.' EMERSON

'The beginning of wisdom is to name a thing.'
ANON

I loved picking my belly button. I picked it until it bled, to find a way into myself...to find where I end. If I get to the end of me, can I undo myself and start again?

'The book begins and ends with finding a way into the self because *unpicking*, understanding and forgiving the past, is how we can transform our futures.'
CATHERINE THERESE

Catherine Therese will be a guest at The Sydney Writers' Festival in May where she will make her debut and launch her book and also The Melbourne Writers' Festival in August.