Introduction: Why Silence and Listening Are Important Rhetorical Arts

Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe

Throughout Western history, speech has been considered a gift from the gods, the distinguishing characteristic of humans, and, therefore, the authorized medium of culture and power. Little wonder, then, that the positive features of silence and listening have been only briefly mentioned or subtly implied—if not completely ignored. Rarely have they been foregrounded as rhetorical arts vital to our communicative effectiveness.

Westerners have long forgotten (if we ever knew in the first place) the ancient Egyptian and Pythagorean beliefs in the value of silence and listening. The first canon of Egyptian rhetoric was silence, silence as a “moral posture and rhetorical tactic”—not to be confused with “passivity or quietism” (Fox 12). In his maxims, Egyptian vizier Ptahhotep writes that to make a lasting reputation among those who hear you, listen (qtd. in Fox 12). Kagemeni, another vizier, encourages silence as a way to establish a good reputation, and Amenemope develops the concept of “The Truly Silent Man,’ the man who succeeds by virtue of his unflagging inner repose and self control,” which dictates silence (12). The Pythagoreans, too, advocated silence and listening. Pythagoras, who is believed to have studied with the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the East Indians (where he was influenced by the teachings of the Supreme Buddha, Gautama), required his initiates to remain silent for five years. Rather than talk and ask questions, the initiates were to listen and learn (Iamblicus 74). Although these early beliefs reference the agency available...
primarily to royal and educated men, they nevertheless demonstrate a judicious respect not just for the power of silence and listening but also for the spoken word. After all, “speaking is more powerful than any fighting,” writes the pharaoh Khety III, to his son Merikare (qtd. in Lichtheim 32), and Ptahhotep records that “eloquence is rarer than emeralds” (qtd. in Fox 12). Preparing the mind through silence and listening was essential preparation for speaking. Spoken eloquence was the aspiration.

Our research in *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* and in *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* respects the power of the spoken word at the same time that it challenges the marginalized status of silence and listening. As our research indicates, these rhetorical arts extend beyond Egyptian and Pythagorean beliefs and practices. These arts have been conceptualized and employed in different times and places by many different people—some with power, some without—for purposes as diverse as showing reverence, gathering knowledge, planning action, buying time, and attempting to survive. Yet despite these disparate uses, the rhetorical arts of silence and listening have rarely been articulated within traditional Western rhetorical studies.

The main purpose of this collection, then, is to map such concepts and uses of silence and listening for rhetorical studies. For if serious reconsiderations of silence and listening are to resonate down the corridors of twenty-first-century rhetorical scholarship and language use, then other scholars must extend our initial research and findings. Yet *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts* does much more than simply engage our own research. At the same time that it enriches and complicates our claims about silence and listening, it provides a forum for contributors to articulate multiple ways to historicize, theorize, analyze, and practice both silence and listening as rhetorical arts. And it is worth noting that practice signifies the performances of silence and listening in a variety of venues, including but not limited to the classroom. As such, this collection forwards three major arguments:

- Argument one: the arts of silence and listening are as important to rhetoric and composition studies as the traditionally emphasized arts of reading, writing, and speaking.
- Argument two: the arts of silence and listening are particularly effective for historicizing, theorizing, analyzing, and practicing the cultural stances and power of both dominant and nondominant (subaltern) groups.
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• Argument three: the arts of silence and listening offer people multiple ways to negotiate and deliberate, whether with themselves or in dyadic, small-group, or large-scale situations.

Individuals, as well as entire political parties, professions, communities, and nations, can more productively discern and implement actions that are more ethical, efficient, and appropriate when all parties agree to engage in rhetorical situations that include not only respectful speaking, reading, and writing but also productive silence and rhetorical listening, all of which help prepare a person for eloquence.

Current Scholarship on Glenn’s Silence and Ratcliffe’s Listening

This section provides readers a review of scholarship that has evolved from our ideas about silence and listening. As such, it establishes a context for chapters in this collection that engage our research; simultaneously, this section may be read to determine what yet needs to be done in terms of not just extending our research but of moving beyond/outside it, as evidenced by some chapters here that do not directly engage our research but, rather, invoke other grounds for their claims about silence and listening.

Since the publication of Cheryl Glenn’s 1997 Rhetoric Retold, with its sustained focus on the gendered nature of silence and silencing, her 2002 JAC “Silence: A Rhetorical Art for Resisting Discipline(s),” and her 2004 Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence, there has been a surge in the scholarly attention given to silence. Some of it is anchored in Glenn’s work—but not all of it. Much of the sustained concentration on silence as a rhetorical art or purposeful position seems to be the result of morphic resonance. Still, because Glenn’s work on silence is multivalent, ranging as it does from the historical silences of women and other subaltern groups to silence as a rhetorical theory and praxis, scholars took from it what could be applied to their own projects.

Initially, recovering women’s long-silenced voices was the main industry, with many scholars writing women into the tradition. Arthur E. Walzer and David Beard cite Glenn’s foundational question, “What were the silencing mechanisms?” (20), to explain feminist interventions. Beth Burmester credits Glenn with explaining silencing as enclosure: “an enclosed life (domestic confinement),” “a closed body (chastity),” and “a closed mouth (silence)” (312). Nan Johnson argues that, by providing a history of prohibitions against women’s participating in public
discourse (Logan 157) and then “recovering the silenced voices of women whose contributions . . . have been overlooked” (Johnson 8), Glenn stands “directly in the line of significant canon revisionists” (8). Jessica Enoch encourages scholars to follow Glenn’s lead in questioning the seeming silence or diligent obedience of women: “These women still have much to tell us—all we have to do is listen to their voices and their silences” (Glenn qtd. in Enoch 14). Listening to the rhetorical displays of Esther and Sor Juana, Julie K. Bokser invokes Glenn’s admonition that “silence is perhaps the most undervalued and under-understood traditionally feminine rhetorical site” (“Sor Juana’s Rhetoric” 18). As Frank Farmer tells us, “Largely because ‘silence and silencing’ are ‘rhetorical sites most often associated with women,’ we have only begun to understand the historical and potential importance of silence as a rhetorical strategy” (2).

Because speaking out has long been the gendered signal of masculinity, silence has long been gendered “feminine,” as a lamentable essence of weakness. As a result, then, Glenn’s work has been used, according to Wendy S. Hesford, to expand “the rhetorical tradition to include women and minority-group members and [to map] hierarchies of gender, class, race, sexuality, ability,” and exclusion (“Global” 793). LuMing Mao and Morris Young credit rhetorical scholars such as Glenn with pointing to the “possibility of much more work to be done in many other communities, including the Asian American community” (“Afterword” 325). Elsewhere, Mao writes that Glenn’s efforts help “make what used to be invisible rhetorical experiences visible and consequential, and . . . transform . . . marginalized players into legitimate, viable contenders” (Reading 14). In her research on familial agency, Lin-Lee Lee writes, “Glenn reiterates that silence can be as powerful as speech in different contexts and subcultures,” especially in cultures which “respect silence and taciturnity” (57). And in rereading Sui Sin Far, Bo Wang responds to Glenn’s call to expand the canon, noting that “to do otherwise is to participate in the perpetuating of the values and beliefs that are silencing” (264).

Focusing on the silences and silencing within other cultural-ethnic-political groups, Heidi B. Carlone and Angela Johnson use Glenn’s work to explain how successful women-of-color scientists pass the test of their male professors’ silences (1205). Patricia O. Covarrubias and Sweeney R. Windchief cite Glenn’s ethnographic research to conclude that American Indian college students “actualize silence in the direct service of particu-
larizing, perpetuating, and protecting culture” (333). Covarrubias also builds on Glenn’s (and others’) “documentation of native appreciation for the vigor and productivity of silence” to demonstrate how “masked silences” in discriminatory race-laden communication takes place (233). Sighted disability-rights advocate Scott Lunsford draws on Glenn’s work in deciding how to enter the identity debate within visually impaired and blind culture (2). Finally, Karen I. Fredriksen-Goldsen and her colleagues invoke the “potent rhetoric of silence” to explain why lesbian social workers’ intimate relationships have been excluded from public discourses and representations in the history of the profession (“‘My Ever Dear’” 326; “Caregiving”). Maria T. Brown calls upon that same rhetoric of silence to explain why LGBT elders have been excluded from queer and gerontological theories as well as from social services (68).

Scholars have also pushed the theoretical possibilities of rhetorical silence. Joyce Irene Middleton writes that Glenn’s “argument on silence as a form of rhetorical delivery, is both provocative and useful in fostering honest cultural and personal human engagement” (“Echoes” 367), with Kate Ronald referring to “silence as a rhetorical force” (146). For Lisa Shawn Hogan, Glenn’s observation that “the purposeful use of silence . . . can speak volumes” (qtd. in Hogan 76) explains the sustained attention garnered by William Lloyd Garrison’s delivery of silence at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention (76), just as that statement explained silence-as-irony for Tarez Samra Graban in her study of sixteenth-century martyr Anne Askew. That silence “can deploy” or “defer to power” energizes David G. Holmes’s analysis of the Kennedy-Nixon debates in terms of what the two presidential candidates left unspoken about civil rights (“Affirmative” 29). Michal Ephratt uses Glenn’s “constellation of symbolic strategies” to taxonomize “eloquent silence” into six distinctive yet sometimes overlapping functions (Glenn, Unspoken 18; Ephratt 1913). Michael-John DePalma, Jeffrey M. Ringer, and Jim Webber advocate a “Burkean anarchic democracy” that includes perspectives that are “non-deliberative and intolerant,” such as acts of silence, which, Glenn argues, “have the potential to profoundly disrupt, shift, and deploy power” (332, 331). And Kris Acheson pushes the study of silence into a theory of gesture, citing Glenn’s argument that silence functions as a “conspicuous and meaningful” linguistic sign (536).

Studies in silence have also been transported into praxes, most significantly into pedagogy. One of the most powerful implementations of
silence as pedagogy comes from Ann Ellen Geller and colleagues, who champion writing center work that “accomplishes its goals by saying less and doing more, in subversive and deliberate ways, as . . . Glenn describes” (118). Lois Agnew argues that teaching propriety can promote “both constructive conversation and the constructive silence that . . . Glenn identifies as offering a special type of rhetorical power” (762). Alyssa J. O’Brien and Christine L. Alfano rely on Glenn’s and Ratcliffe’s notions of rhetorical silence and rhetorical listening in order to enhance the cross-cultural communication necessary to transform their Swedish, Egyptian, and American online students into global citizens. Gesa E. Kirsch’s successful experience connecting spirituality to civic engagement in her writing classroom is, she says, a direct response to “Glenn’s invitation” to explore “how contemplative practices can enrich a writing classroom and the intellectual life of students” (W3). Elaine Richardson stresses the importance of educators’ understanding how social literacies frame the identity and “sense making” of young Black women whose response to hegemonic forces of violation and hardship is expected to be [Glenn’s concept of] “silence” (11). And, finally, in Between Speaking and Silence: A Study of Quiet Students, Mary M. Reda redeems the negative reputation of classroom silence, calling on Glenn’s argument that silence “can be a deliberative, positive choice,” “an invitation into the future, . . . a linguistic art . . . that needs only to be named in order to be understood” (172).

Moving beyond the historiographic, theoretical, and pedagogical realms, recent research on silence is making headway into additional new possibilities for application. In “Gendered War Rhetoric—Rhetoric of Silence,” Berit von der Lippe focuses on silence as “a means for survival or a conscious way of resistance,” invoking the silent Afghan women, whose “racially and culturally marginalized voices” could “enlarge the field of rhetorical studies” (Glenn, Unspoken 4, 2). Brooke Ackerly connects Glenn’s interpretations of silence with understanding the difficult-to-interpret absences in universal human rights activism (160). Catherine Hundleby believes “Western science may benefit from considering how silence . . . may . . . signify resistance to current scientific practices, and understanding such resistance would serve the objectivity of science” (4). She also mentions Ratcliffe’s listening as “important to science because [it] accounts for silence as well as disclosure, and so maximizes the diversity in recognized perspectives that provide scientific objectivity” (1).
In their study of Houston’s Bureau of Air Quality Control, Miriam F. Williams and Daisy D. James write about the elderly African American residents who were silent with regard to potential environmental hazards. Williams and James used Glenn’s work to deduce that elderly residents used silence as a means to protect their pride and personal interests from the environmental investigators those residents had deemed untrustworthy (93). Last of all, two teams of medical researchers have conducted studies of silences in surgical theaters. Fauzia Gardezi and colleagues extend Glenn’s and Susan Gal’s “critical theories in the role of silence in communication for insights into instances of silence and constrained communication in the OR” (1397). And Rhona Flin and Lucy Mitchell conclude that nurses’ silences during surgery “can be purposeful and meaningful, a complex mode of communicative participation” (287). Thus, even in fields far removed from rhetoric, the study of silence continues to be productive.

Since the publication of Krista Ratcliffe’s 1999 CCC “Rhetorical Listening,” her 2000 JAC “Eavesdropping as Rhetorical Tactic,” and her 2005 Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness, scholars have invoked her writings to engage listening. For instance, scholars have referenced rhetorical listening to identify a scholarly gap in rhetoric and composition studies that their own research may fill. In Refiguring Rhetorical Education, Enoch cites Ratcliffe’s claim that listening “is consistently overlooked inside rhetoric and composition studies today” to identify a scholarly gap that may be filled by Zitkala-Ša’s concept of rhetorical education, a concept that takes listening as a “vital component” (119). In Rhetoric at the Margins, David Gold cites Ratcliffe’s claim that “in the 20th-century recovery of rhetoric within composition studies, reading and writing reign as the dominant tropes for interpretive invention; speaking places a respectable third; listening runs a poor, poor fourth” (195); after identifying with this gap, Gold then argues that writing scholar-teachers should “do a better job of acknowledging and exploring other rhetorical traditions and strategies,” such as listening (154–55).

Rhetoric and composition scholars have also woven rhetorical listening into their own disparate interests. When analyzing Angelina Grimké’s rhetoric, Pat Arneson juxtaposes Hans-Georg Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics (that is, its notion of place) alongside Ratcliffe’s rhetorical listening (that is, its notion of interpretive invention). D. Diane Davis defines communitarian literacy, in part, by linking the listening for
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exiled excess in Ratcliffe’s theory to the listening for noise frequencies in Avital Ronell’s *The Telephone Book*. Kirsch links rhetorical listening to spirituality; Hesford links rhetorical listening to witnessing and testifying (“Documenting”); and Jane E. Hindman links it to personal writing in the academy. When discussing the politics of Indian Country, Ellen Cushman argues that rhetorical listening is imperative for listening to cross-cultural narratives, and Cristina D. Ramirez claims the metonymic moves of rhetorical listening help to explain the mestiza rhetoric of Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza. Keith Gilyard cites Ratcliffe’s and listening to others’ discussions of Cornel West as evidence that West’s *Race Matters* will be important to rhetoric and composition studies for years to come. When contemplating how to rewrite traditional histories of rhetoric, Phillip P. Marzluf invokes rhetorical listening as well as active silence as methods for hearing what is not seen in these histories (368, 396). And in *Unspoken*, Glenn notes that Anita Hill’s silence functions as a kind of rhetorical listening, because Hill’s particular silence was a time of “coming to understanding” (53); more generally, Glenn claims that rhetorical listening “opens the silences surrounding codes of cross-cultural conduct” (152).

Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening has been expanded by scholars interested in extending the functions of listening itself. In *Revisionary Rhetoric, Feminist Pedagogy, and Multigenre Texts*, Julie Jung clarifies the relationship between rhetorical listening and Rogerian rhetoric, arguing that the listening posited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, Ratcliffe, and Min-Zhan Lu is not simply a Rogerian “‘Yes, I hear what you’re saying’ response” (17) but rather a response that challenges listeners to engage their emotions and ask questions such as, “Why am I so threatened by this speaker’s argument? What is my personal/professional investment in defending that which this speaker challenges? In what ways are the speaker and I alike? In what ways are we different? How do these similarities and differences challenge my comfortable worldview?” (18), the hope being to identify the “‘exiled excess’” (59). In “The Perfected Mother,” a rhetorical analysis of Munchausen by proxy syndrome, Jung extends Ratcliffe’s discussion of disidentification, arguing to “augment our understanding of the relationships among listening, ethos, and identification [by exploring] the limits of using disidentification as a strategy for listening to difference” (345). And Brian Gogan in “Laughing White-
ness” links listening to laughter, arguing that a “responsible rhetoric of laughter seems dependent upon a rhetoric of listening” (79); Gogan’s article answers Ratcliffe’s call for more tactics for talking about race by offering parody (79) even as it exposes the limits of Ratcliffe’s tactic of recognition (82).

Rhetorical listening has also been called into question. Patrocinio Schweickart, in “Understanding an Other,” acknowledges Ratcliffe’s claim that listeners function differently from readers and argues instead for a method of reading that “take[s] listener and reader to be analogous with regard to their reception” (16). Terese Guinsatao Monberg, in “Listening for Legacies,” contemplates the listening advocated by Jacqueline Jones Royster, Malea Powell, Krista Ratcliffe, and Dorothy Corova herself as a methodology “to see and hear [Asian American] women who are presumed to be absent . . . [and to] make visible underlying assumptions in feminist historiography that reinforce those presumptions” (86–87); ultimately, though, Monberg selects Royster’s and Powell’s concepts of listening as the best models for an Asian Pacific American rhetoric (86). And Jill Swiencicki echoes Middleton in “caution[ing] that laying raced text beside raced text may erase the important differences and positions each represents.”

Fifth, rhetorical listening has also informed scholar-teachers’ pedagogies. Cynthia L. Selfe weaves that unheard dimension of rhetorical listening into her discussion of students’ multimodal literacies. Interested in the problematic silences of students, Reda reflects on how her own pedagogy has been informed by Ratcliffe’s focus on listening to understand (69), particularly listening across “‘different discourse communities’” (159), and she concludes that “Ratcliffe’s work challenges us to create a space for listening as a productive, but generally overlooked, rhetorical strategy” (169). Jennifer Seibel Trainor argues that rhetorical listening productively informs (auto)ethnographic classroom studies of racism and whiteness, and Ann E. Green cites rhetorical listening as a tactic for helping teachers negotiate the difficulties in teaching whiteness. Julie Lindquist argues that “teachers can listen to students to know not only how, but who to be with them.” To posit a productive means of reading student papers, Andrea Muldoon merges rhetorical listening with Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism. Jami Carlacio and Alice Gillam advocate rhetorical listening as a tactic for “teaching the craft of virtue”
Pedagogical possibilities of rhetorical listening for teaching close reading and ethos are evident in the work of Zan Meyer Gonçalves (117), which echoes Ratcliffe’s injunction to invite students to “listen with intent, not for it” (128). And Kathleen J. Ryan and Tarez Samra Graban invoke rhetorical listening as a tactic for training teaching assistants, arguing that trainers need to make space for TAs’ identifications and disidentifications with a writing program’s established curriculum.

Finally, Ratcliffe’s scholarship has been evaluated in terms of its significance for rhetorical studies. In The SAGE Handbook of Rhetorical Studies, edited by Andrea Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly, Middleton likens Ratcliffe’s listening to Royster’s and Wayne Booth’s (364) and notes that Ratcliffe’s “acoustic metaphors” (362) of “‘harmonies,’ ‘dissonance,’ ‘recitatif,’ and other (h)earing metaphors . . . extend or overlap rather seamlessly with music as inventive and interpretive” (362–63). Also Ronald argues that Ratcliffe “writes new rhetorical theory here, taking the feminist rhetorical project to new strategies of communication not based on the agonistic rhetorical tradition that Brody, Glenn, Jarratt, and Swearingen critiqued” (147). Though initially linking rhetorical listening to silence, Holmes further discusses the import of rhetorical listening for rhetoric and composition studies, claiming that it “adroitly navigates the theoretical terrain of identity politics, providing an arena where postmodernists and essentialists (regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, or gender) can be heard. And [it] thereby avoids the social and political landmines manufactured by the excesses of political correctness, on the one hand, and colorblind idealism, on the other” ("Cross-Racial").

Contributors’ Engagement with Silence and Listening
Because the above scholarship on silence and listening in rhetoric and composition studies has just begun to appear, the purpose of this collection is to further articulate how silence and listening may enrich this field. Therefore, this collection is organized according to three established research areas within rhetorical studies: history, theory, and criticism, and praxes. Obviously, these three research areas blur, yet they remain operative categories in rhetorical studies. As such, they provide scholars a familiar introduction to silence and listening as rhetorical arts and offer multiple ways for contemplating how these arts may engage, redefine, and remap rhetorical studies.
As organizing principles for this collection, the three research areas are defined as follows:

1. The History section captures specific historical moments when concepts of silence and/or listening are (or may be) articulated, contextualizing these moments within rhetorical histories and traditions.
2. The Theory and Criticism section works at the nexus of theory and criticism, demonstrating the ways that theory provides tactics for performing criticism and the ways that criticism provides concepts for building theory.
3. The Praxes section describes performances of silence and/or listening as rhetorical arts in a variety of cultural contexts, including but not restricted to the classroom.

Within this three-part framework, this collection offers an introduction and seventeen chapters. Written by established rhetoric scholars as well as by newcomers to the field, the chapters balance a dual focus on silence and listening, reimagine traditional histories and theories of rhetoric, and incorporate issues, such as race, gender, and cross-cultural concerns, into scholarly conversations about rhetorical history, theory, criticism, and praxes.

Overview of the Chapters

Part 1. History

Chapter 1. In “Aspasia’s Purloined Letters: Historical Absence, Fictional Presence, and the Rhetoric of Silence,” Melissa Ianetta uses Jacques Lacan’s “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” to examine how the classical “silence” of Aspasia was appropriated by nineteenth-century writers who created a multitude of Aspasias in their attempt to capture a singular coherent, historically accurate representation of this woman—a representation that this chapter calls into question.

Chapter 2. In “Out of ‘Wonderful Silence’ Come ‘Sweet Words’: The Rhetorical Authority of St. Catherine of Siena,” Kristie S. Fleckenstein argues that this fourteenth-century mystic and preacher constructed her formidable rhetorical authority through two forms of silence: a generative silence within which she obtained knowledge of God and a performative silence within which she embodied that knowledge.

Chapter 3. In “Purposeful Silence and Perceptive Listening: Rhetorical Agency for Women in Christine de Pizan’s The Treasure of the City...
of Ladies,” Nancy Myers argues that Pizan’s conduct book provides a theory of rhetoric as well as an embodied practice of rhetoric, which offered women rhetorical agency in early-fifteenth-century social and political contexts.

Chapter 4. In “Trying Silence: The Case of Denmark Vesey and the History of African American Rhetoric,” Shevaun E. Watson examines the roles of silence and silencing in the Denmark Vesey slave conspiracy trials as well as in historical and contemporary receptions and representations of those trials.

Chapter 5. In “Living Pictures, Living Memory: Women’s Rhetorical Silence within the American Delsarte Movement,” Lisa Suter offers a historical corrective by resituating the intertextual performative genres of tableaux vivants and statue posing within their contemporary framework.

Part 2. Theory and Criticism

Chapter 6. In “Silence: A Politics,” Kennan Ferguson investigates the unfamiliar political implications of silence, theorizing how silence can be used not merely to reinforce or resist power but to constitute selves and even communities. That silence can operate in such diverse ways as oppression, resistance, and/or community formation leads to the recognition that its ultimate politics cannot be fixed or determined.

Chapter 7. In “Down a Road and into an Awful Silence: Graphic Listening in Joe Sacco’s Comics Journalism,” Andrea A. Lunsford and Adam Rosenblatt explore the functions of listening in the work of graphic arts journalist Joe Sacco. They analyze how Sacco uses his acute self-awareness as a reporter as well as the unique properties of the comics medium to fashion a model of listening that reflects his ethos as a reporter, storyteller, and humanist.

Chapter 8. In “The Ideology of African Philosophy: The Silences and Possibilities of African Rhetorical Knowledge,” Omedi Ochieng rereads Odera Oruka’s sage philosophy project to argue that the discourse of African sage philosophy emerged from two types of knowledge—forensic and sapiential—whose possibilities may be grounded in two kinds of silences.

Chapter 9. In “Finding Democracy in Our Argument Culture: Listening to Spike Lee’s Jazz Funeral on the Levees,” Joyce Irene Middleton argues that the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina offers American citizens...
opportunity to theorize a progressive vision of a reconstituted pluralistic democracy, if we practice strategic uses of rhetorical listening and silence.

Chapter 10. In “Gesturing toward Peace: On Silence, the Society of the Spectacle, and the ‘Women in Black’ Antiwar Protests,” Ashley Elliott Pryor explores silence as a medium of antiwar protest in the context of the Women in Black movement. By reading the women’s uses of silence through the rhetorical category of the “gesture,” she retrieves and theorizes a meaningful, resistant strategy within the Western rhetorical tradition.

Chapter 11. In “Hearing Women’s Silence in Transitional South Africa: Achmat Dangor’s Bitter Fruit,” Katherine Mack analyzes women’s silences in a specific historical moment, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s “special hearings on women.” Mack also explores Dangor’s novelistic response to those hearings, a response that attempts to give voice to the women’s silences.

Part 3. Praxes

Chapter 12. In “With Our Ears to the Ground: Compassionate Listening in Israel/Palestine,” Joy Arbor introduces the concept of “Compassionate Listening,” a model and practice of activist conflict resolution and reconciliation that provides insights into the rhetorical concept of listening-across-differences to all sides of an issue.

Chapter 13. In “A Repertoire of Discernments: Hearing the Unsaid in Oral History Narratives,” Frank Farmer and Margaret M. Strain explore the challenges facing oral history scholars during interviews when their subjects respond with silence. Farmer and Strain argue that scholars should pay particular attention to—and ask specific questions about—what is not said. To provide scholars tools for engaging such silences, they articulate a “repertoire of discernments” for the interpretation and the uses of oral histories.

Chapter 14. In “Cultivating Listening: Teaching from a Restored Logos,” Shari Stenberg examines the pedagogical consequences of a diminished notion of logos that both privileges speech over listening and posits listening and speaking as oppositions. She contends that such a logos perpetuates other dualisms that limit genuine dialogue; then she offers instead a listening logos that makes possible a critical-feminist pedagogy.

Chapter 15. In “Making Ourselves Vulnerable: A Feminist Pedagogy of Listening,” Wendy Wolters Hinshaw applies Ratcliffe’s model of
“listening pedagogically” to negotiate the various types of resistance produced when students and teachers attempt to communicate about and across cultural difference, particularly in women’s studies courses.

Chapter 16. In “Revaluing Silence and Listening with Second-Language English Users,” Jay Jordan argues that theory building about silence and listening in the field of rhetoric can inform studies of second-language use, especially as English continues to evolve locally and globally.

Chapter 17. In “Student Silences in the Deep South: Hearing Unfamiliar Dialects,” Suelyn Duffey narrates how the silences of students at her university taught her to familiarize herself with new dialects of silence and with new cultures of listening (or not listening). Duffey’s study adds to our emerging awareness that student silences may be powerfully productive—heuristic, active, expressive, and interactive.

The editors and contributors in this collection hope that our conversations about silence and listening—initiated in our books and articles and further articulated in our chapters here—will serve as a springboard for future research on the value and challenges of silence and listening as rhetorical arts.

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Notes
1. The Egyptian culture ca. 2200 B.C.E.–1500 B.C.E.; see Fox.
2. Silence, good timing (kairos), restraint, fluency, and truthfulness are the five ancient Egyptian canons of eloquence.
3. Fl. 520 B.C.E.
4. Morphic resonance, Rupert Sheldrake says, is “the idea of mysterious telepathy-type interconnections between organisms and of collective memories within species” (117). When collective consciousness encounters contemporary problems, people from all kinds of backgrounds reach similar resolutions: a serious examination of silence seems to have been one such resolution. Productive silence can provide the space for wonder, meditation, attention, care,
independence, anticipation, planning, and empathy. Even resistance, sulking, and punishment can be constructive sites of silence.

Works Cited


Monberg, Terese Guinsatao. “Listening for Legacies or, How I Began to Hear Dorothy Laigo Cordova, the Pinay behind the Podium Known as FANHS.” Mao and Young 83–105.


