AT THE LIMITS OF RHETORICAL THOUGHT:

LISTENING, WONDER, AND THE PROBLEM OF SILENCE

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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What does it mean to study silence in a field that has historically been the study of speech and language in action? The discipline of rhetoric and composition relies on a foundational equivocation of speech with being and knowing that precludes the possibility of experiencing silence on its own terms. Governed by the assumption that speech is the authorized medium of power and social relation, Western rhetorical theory has represented silence as mere negation and absence of all that speech represents: thought, being, subjectivity, power, etc. Drawing on philosophies of language at the intersection of twentieth century continental philosophy and feminist rhetorical theory, this project challenges the logical binary that functions as the postulate by which the vast majority of scholarship in rhetoric and composition thinks the question of alterity and politics, this project seeks to break with that tradition by expanding theories of silence in rhetoric toward an ethics and knowing that is not rooted in speaking. While my project spans across disciplines, expanding out of rhetoric and composition toward philosophy, feminisms, decolonial theories of alterity, and ethics of interrelation, it is at its core a project concerned with the inadequacy of language and how that inadequacy impedes communication. In her 1993 Nobel Prize Lecture, Toni Morrison says that the force of language is "in its reach toward the ineffable" (Morrison). By rethinking writing and communication with an emphasis on silence as ineffability, as the reaching of language toward and beyond its limitations rather than as a reproduction within preestablished limitations, we may learn how to better know ourselves, each other, and communicate ethically across difference, be they cultural, political, racial, gendered, or otherwise.

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"How much better is silence; the coffee cup, the table. How much better to sit by myself like the solitary sea-bird that opens its wings on the stake. Let me sit here forever with bare things, this coffee cup, this knife, this fork, things in themselves, myself being myself."

— Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

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INTRODUCTION: A GENEALOGY OF THE PROBLEM OF SILENCE AND

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"Here at the edges of sound, we might cultivate a host of silent practices: we might dwell within the possibilities of silence; we might use our silences as a weapon; we might rest; we might meet one another; we might encounter our shadow and our light within its expansive embrace."
—Sheena Malhotra and Aimee Carrillo Rowe

"Silence...is something that can't be censored…That's why they fill it with noise."
—John Berger

introduction

The discipline of rhetoric and composition relies on an epistemological assumption that places silence in direct opposition to speech. Either as the absence of speech or voice, as the erasure of speech or voice/writing, or as speech denied and suppressed, "silence" has come to symbolize the absence of all that speech represents: power, subjectivity, truth. Within this view, silence is considered a problem that either needs to be solved or actively refused. Since the mid-twentieth century, the problem of silence has been most thoroughly investigated by feminist scholars working to resist the Eurocentric, patriarchal, and colonial culture that has historically barred women in public life and gain a voice in scholarship, literature, and history. As scholars studying rhetorical history grappled with a long history of disciplinary exclusion, they sought alternative ways of making meaning, challenging the legacy of ancient Greek texts that described men as naturally superior and denied those sexed female and gendered women participation in politics and the 'public sphere,' citizenship and ownership, education. Feminist scholars launched

projects to show how this tradition excluded women, to fill in the blanks of archival erasure, to identify more diverse speakers, and to theorize different ways of engaging rhetorically. Within this scholarship, "silence" locates the center of the language, power, and gender matrix that functions to uphold oppressive systems of domination, referring to the systematic rejection of voices through the process of exclusion that denies participation, education, political representation, and rhetorical agency of some groups or identities. Thus, in order to construct a discipline of feminine rhetorical activity and to resist patriarchal conditions of silencing, feminist scholarship signified silence as both a site for recovery and as a coded site of rhetorical activity.

When scholars and students studying rhetoric and composition consider "silence" today, Cheryl Glenn is the name that immediately comes to mind. Her 2004 *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* was the first of its kind to offer a complete study into the rhetoric of silence. In *Unspoken,* Glenn calls for the recognition of silence as a "specific rhetorical art that merits serious investigation," arguing that "silence is every bit as important as speech" (2004, 2). Glenn's work is the culmination of scholarship around the problem of silence produced by feminist scholars in the latter half of the twentieth century. For Glenn, silence functions simultaneously as a metaphor for the violence of oppression, a marker of subjugation and exclusion, a rhetorical position that is both gendered and racialized, and a rhetorical strategy that carries its own signification and rhetorical power. As theorized by Glenn in the most influential text on silence in rhetoric studies that aims to offer an illumination of silence, silence is translated into a form of speech.

In this chapter, my research into the problem of silence as it emerged within the field of rhetoric and composition is guided by the following question: How does the field of rhetoric and composition theorize silence by attempting to "account for" silence? By tracing a genealogy of

the term "silence" as it is developed throughout the movement for voice and by feminist scholars in rhetoric studies, I aim to show that representations of "silence" are instantiations of the desire to know through reading and naming (Spivak, 1988), not actual revelations of silence. By operating within the disciplinary epistemological framework of logocentrism foundational to rhetoric studies, scholarly attempts to recover or resolve silence inadvertently reproduce the logics of exclusion and sovereignty that they aim to disrupt through the denial and recovery of silences. The purpose of this chapter is to lay an historical context for an investigation of silence in rhetoric and composition studies and to expose the limitations of theorizing silence as speech within the confines of the rhetorical epistemological tradition.

signifying silence

What does it mean to study silence in a field that thinks largely in terms of language? Within the inherited tradition of rhetoric studies, wherein meaning-making, communication, politics, and ethics are all grounded in the assertion that speech is power, to be silent or silenced is to be without power, illegible and unrecognizable, to be ignored, overlooked, denied, and erased. Silence is signified within this perspective as a problem of cultural suppression and disciplinary exclusion. In the patriarchal and colonial conditions of the United States, wherein the voices of those whose subjectivity, perspective, or existence challenges the dominant political order—women, particularly women of minority and marginalized identities, people of racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities, queer and gender non-conforming folx, disabled and neurodivergent persons, and children—the equation of silence with powerless results in a two-fold political imperative: silence must be rejected and in order to gain power an individual "must activate voice in order to resist and transform the conditions of their oppression" (Malhotra,

2013). The movement for voice utilizes "silence" in this way as a call to action and a mobilization against an unnamed common enemy: silence and silencing. In this section, I trace the development of the problem of silence as it emerges in feminist rhetorical scholarship in response to the movement for voice, a movement that signified silence as a hegemonic weapon of suppression and exclusion.

Feminist discourses within the twentieth century produced scholarship exploring the meaning, functions, and uses of silence as a means of accessing women's history, political theory, and philosophy. The purpose of feminist scholarship was to disturb the patriarchal discourse of language that produced woman as a silent other by demanding the inclusion of women whose voices and rhetorical agency had been systemically rejected from public discourse. In the 1998 *Organizing Silence: A World of Possibilities*, Robin Patric Clair identifies two books that provided the groundwork for feminist perspectives on silence: Susanne Langer's 1942 *Philosophy in a New Key* and Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 *The Second Sex.* According to Clair, de Beauvoir's existential understanding of the status of women in a male-dominated culture set the stage for future work on the linguistic construction of identity, a construction which had traditionally marked Woman as a silent other. By recognizing that Woman is a social construct, de Beauvoir's work created the impetus for feminist scholars to reconstruct the economic, cultural, moral, and social conditions for those considered women. Langer, on the other hand, contributed to the groundwork of feminist studies on silence by providing a theory of human agency rooted, in Kenneth Burke, in the idea of humans as symbol making, using, and abusing beings. After studying Hellen Keller's early life of silence, Langer concluded that language began with *naming* and that the power to express our world through naming was central to our very being (Clair, 29). The movement toward naming is essential to feminist

scholarship, not only in the imperative to self-name and self-identify, but to name and describe the experiences that are specific to women. As Clair describes, naming became a central theme and concern for feminist approaches to understanding silence and silencing (1998, 29).

In the effort to name women as historical figures worthy of investigation, feminist scholars began the work of configuring woman within the literary and rhetorical history. Tillie Olsen's 1978 *Silences*, a collection of essays that analyzes the barriers to writing, is among the most influential studies of women's silences in feminist scholarship. By elaborating the barriers specific to the writing of women and working-class peoples, *Silences* cracked open the masculine literary canon and revealed the exclusions inherent in literary history. In this text, Olsen writes of the "unnatural silences" that prevent archival inscription in the first place for marginalized and oppressed groups of people:

> "These are not natural silences, that necessary time for renewal, lying fallow, gestation, in the natural cycle of creation. The silences I speak of here are *unnatural*; the unnatural thwarting of what struggles to come into being but cannot. In the old, the obvious parallels: when the seed strikes stone; the soil will not sustain; the spring is false; the time is drought or blight or infestation; the frost comes premature" (1978, 6, emphasis added)

With "unnatural silences," Olsen is describing the varying conditions that prevent written texts from ever coming to being: writers block, the lack of time, opportunity, leisure necessary for writing, the absence of education, the negligence of a talent left unpracticed, a tool left to dull. She describes how access to education, wealth, and leisure enabled men to produce writing and to have their writing preserved, while for marginalized groups, the experiences that thwart writing were compounded by denied access to literacy and education, shorter lives, compulsory childrearing, domestic and household duties, or repressed sexuality. These "unnatural silences" refer not only to the barriers of circumstance that impeded writing for women and marginalized identities but makes clear how these barriers are a result of institutional and disciplinary efforts

to deny and erase literary and rhetorical contributions in the preservation of hegemony, be it ethno/Eurocentrism, cisheteropatriarchy, or white supremacy. Although Olsen's text focuses predominantly on white, Eurocentric women, the barriers she's describing are exacerbated by additional layers of racial and colonial oppression, such as captivity, forced labor, threatened physical and emotional well-being, language loss, systemic oppression, and generational trauma. These silences, as Olsen writes, are the silences of those "whose waking hours are all a struggle for existence" (1978, 10).

Tillie Olsen's analysis of literary silences and the historical efforts on part of scholars in rhetoric reflect a larger concern of feminist scholarship to understand the ways that women's voices had been erased and rejected throughout culture. In her chapter on gender and language ideologies, Deborah Cameron explains how throughout history women's linguistic behavior is "constituted by such qualities as reticence, modesty, deference, politeness, empathy, supportiveness, and cooperation," with silence as a coded and naturalized rhetorical position for women (2003, 450). The "ideal woman" is defined according to her subservience and silence (Cameron 2003; Luckyj 2002). For example, Cameron quotes an excerpt from the 1614 conduct book titled *A Godly Forme of Household Governmente* wherein the respective linguistic duties for men and women are laid out in two columns:

Husband	Wife	
Deal with many men	Talk with few	
Be "entertaining"	Be solitary and withdrawn	
Be skillfull in talk	Boast of silence	(2003, 451)[1]

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[1] Cameron's analysis quotes Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse's *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, 1987. Cameron also compares this 1614 literature on women's linguistic code of conduct to Ann Rosalind Jones's analysis of conduct books from Reinaissance Europe in which women in royal courts were expected to compete on par with men in verbal duels and witty exchanges (1987, 39-72). Jones argues that the "silent woman" ideal emerged with the

In line with this view, it has been documented that silence as a practice of decorum and etiquette carries many meanings regarding submission, politeness, and civility for both genders (Corbin, 2016). Knowing when to speak and when to stay silent was often a mark of distinction and good manners. However, it is this figure, that of the ideal silent woman, that is most frequently critiqued by feminists for its impact on women's linguistic socialization that ultimately barricaded women from public discourse and relegated to the private sphere.[2]

In her 1973 *Beyond God the Father*, Mary Daly argues that liberation for women is dependent on uncovering the silence about women's historical existence since the dawn of patriarchy. Daly describes the traditional silencing of women as essential to the Catholic Church dating back to early Christianity. In this text, Daly writes of the "Great silence" that makes women invisible throughout history and erases all clues that matriarchal society could have existed prior to or outside of Western patriarchy (Clair, 31). As Daly explains, "The Christian tradition, with its "Biblical and popular image of God as a great patriarch in heaven, rewarding and punishing according to his mysterious and seemingly arbitrary will, has dominated the imagination of millions over thousands of years…If God in 'his' heaven is a father ruling 'his' people, then it is in the 'nature' of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated" (1973, 13). The patriarchal Christian faith that naturalizes the domination of men over women established a social order that persisted for millennia in Western culture and still persists today. Within this order, women are taught that

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rise of the prominence of the European bourgeoise and bourgeoise literature that emphasized the subordination of women (2003, 451).

[2] Alain Corbin's *A History of Silence from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (2018, originally published in French in 2016) describes how a cornerstone of the private sphere is knowing how to keep quiet and how to be discreet. Given that women were relegated to the private sphere, silence and keeping quiet became feminized rhetorical modes.

their natural and proper place and rhetorical position is one of submission and silence. Glenn recalls St. Paul's censure from early Christianity that proper women were to hold their tongues: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent" (2004, 2). Silence marks both women's oppression and a particular womanly virtue. The silent woman is praised for her devotion, her submission, and her loyalty to the social order.

In the 1985 *Man Made Language*, Dale Spender shows how women's speech and women's versions of reality are often dismissed as illegitimate due to the way women's speech had been historically characterized. As she explains, women were excluded from the production of cultural forms, including language, and were thus unable to "give weight to their own symbolic meaning" (1985, 52). We see this in the denial of education and literacy, the separation of public/private spheres, the denial of rhetorical and political participation, but also at the level of conversation. Men often stop women from speaking—effectively "silencing" them—through ignoring the value of women's contributions, through interruption or talking over, or by recognizing women's speech only when it is in "a form acceptable to men" (1985, 84). Language socialization is gendered in a way that discourages women from assertiveness and confidence in dialogue, and from speech in general.

Within this patriarchal view, it is the woman who speaks, a woman with a loose and vulgar tongue, who is condemned and vilified. Gloria Anzaldúa in her popular 1987 essay titled, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" writes of the gendered "tradition of silence" in which Chicana women are socialized to keep quiet: "*Hocicom, repelona, chisniosa*, having a big mouth, questioning, carrying tales are all signs of being *mal criada*. In my culture they are all words that

are derogatory if applied to women — I've never heard them applied to men" (1987, 34).[3] The negative coding of women's speech and rhetorical activity, like gossip, functions to dissuade and dismiss women as rhetorical agents who contribute meaningfully to discourse, thereby preserving male speech as more valuable. Anzaldúa explains how this patriarchal silencing even functions in the language itself, recollecting a moment in which she hears a feminine pronoun that she'd only ever heard in the masculine: "The first time I heard two women, a Puerto Rican and a Cuban, say the word 'nosotras,' I was shocked. I had not known the word existed. Chicanas use nosotros whether we're male or female. We are robbed of our female being by the masculine plural. Language is a male discourse" (1987, 35). *We are robbed of our female being by the masculine plural.* Because of the intimate connection between speaking and being, Anzaldúa describes the violence of being denied language and voice as a denial of gendered existence within an already marginalized community in the US-Mexico borderlands. In response to this tradition of silence, the imperative for women's liberation and emancipation is to refuse and resist—to speak oneself into existence and power.

breaking silence

Given the reality, as Adrienne Rich writes in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence,* that "the entire history of women's struggle for self-determination has been muffled in silence over and over," the history of silence as suppression, exclusion, and erasure, must be broken by coming to voice (1979, 11). In recent history, we have seen how the movement for voice has worked to resist institutional and disciplinary "silencing" that denies recognition of speech from minority or

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[3] The words "hocicona, repelona, chismosa" most closely translate to "blabbermouth, nagging, gossipy" in English. Each of these words connotes a negative and feminized kind of speech.

marginalized identities. As explained by Katharina Schramm, Kristine Krause, and Greer Valley, in their 2018, "Voice, Noise and Silence: Resonances of political subjectivities," the movement for voice was about "becoming visible in the midst of discourses which as yet have no words for the position of the group concerned" (247). Laying out the process of breaking silence and coming to voice, they identify two main actions: 1. "the sharing of experiences of personal trauma in the wake of daily routines of violence, i.e., the very ability to speak" and 2. "making voices heard by local and provincial government, or, in other words, about speaking out from the margins" (2018, 247). Both actions necessary for coming to voice rely on speaking at the foundation of recognition, becoming visible, and gaining power. Many who fight for the empowerment of marginalized communities operate on this inherited equation that voice = power and the presupposition that power is in speaking; thus, representing silence an absence of power.

It is within the tradition of this concept that we get iconic lines about speaking truth to power, as in "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," when Audre Lorde famously made a case for the necessity to break silence and the power of speaking oneself into being. Throughout this speech, which was first delivered as part of the "Lesbian and Literature Panel" at the 1977 Modern Language Association Conference, Lorde speaks of her diagnosis with breast cancer to an academic audience invested in public, academic discourse—a discourse that had traditionally operated on a masculinized demarcation between public and private—and signifies silence as a function of violence and domination that is imposed on women and chosen by women out of fear. She describes how women, "Black and white, old and young, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual" all "shared a war against the tyrannies of silence" that seek to maintain a social order through fear (2001, 303).

Upon hospitalization and surgery after her diagnoses with breast cancer, Lorde describes the impact of oppressive silence on her life:

> What I most regretted were my silences. Of what had I ever been afraid? To question or to speak as I believed could have meant pain, or death. But we all hurt in so many different ways, all the time, and pain will either change or end. Death, on the other hand, is the final silence. And that might be coming quickly, now, without regard for whether I had ever spoken what needed to be said, or had only betrayed myself into small silences, while I planned someday to speak, or waited for someone else's words. (2001, 302)

For those of us whose voices have been systematically rejected, dismissed, and denied, speaking gets affectively attached to fear and anxiety, not just of rejection and judgment but of possible harm or violence. The most quoted line from Lorde's "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," is her reflection: "I was going to die, if not sooner than later, whether or not I had ever spoken myself. My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you" (2001, 302). This line articulates Lorde's revelation that the desire to protect oneself from harm or violence by not speaking was in itself perpetuating the harm and an act of self-betrayal. She instead advocates for fearless speaking in the face of a culture that seeks to depersonalize and render invisible those deemed Other.

Lorde's position has been popularized by scholars and activists in the years since the publication of her 1977 talk. In Adrienne Rich's 1979 *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, several essays address material conditions that produce women's silences: a lack of time, privacy, space; the compulsion to serve men and care for children; the exclusion of women from higher education; and men's domination of public spheres of knowledge. Rich underscores the equation of silence with oppression, yet elsewhere in her writing silence takes on a surprisingly rich and resistive form. Take, for example, her 1997 lecture "Arts of the Possible," in which Rich charts the violent and amoral conditions of capital on art, the humanities, and public education. In a

critical passage that reveals Rich's thinking on silence, she notes that one of the consequences of capital on art is a "devaluation of language," that occurs when "language itself collapses into shallowness" in the pursuit of *things*, inert commodities that people can speak of (2018, 329). Amid the context of this rumination on the lifelessness of language, Rich describes two different types of silences, one living and one dead:

> The study of silence has long engrossed me. The matrix of a poet's work consists not only of what is there to be absorbed and worked on, but also what is missing, desaparecido, rendered unspeakable, thus unthinkable. It is through these invisible holes in reality that poetry makes its way—certainly for women and other marginalized subjects and for disempowered and colonized peoples generally, but ultimately for all who practice any art at its deeper levels. The impulse to create begins—often terribly and fearfully—in a tunnel of silence. *Every real poem is the breaking of an existing silence, and the first question we might as any poem is, What kind of voice is breaking silence, and what kind of silence is being broken?* (1997, 329, added emphasis)

Rich's description first establishes "silence" as a site of recovery and invention for an artist-poet-writer, as a place from which one feels the "impulse to create." Her language here captures the feminist imperative as rooted in the problem of silence and the necessity to break those existing silences of patriarchy, colonialism, and exclusion.

Starting from this initial imperative critical to the feminist movement, Rich makes an important distinction about silence and poses an interpretation of silence as positive:

> And yet I need to say here that silence is not always or necessarily oppressive, it is not always or necessarily a denial or extinguishing of some reality. It can be fertilizing, it can bathe the imagination, it can, as in great open spaces...be the nimbus of a way of life, a condition of vision. Such living silences are more and more endangered throughout the world, by commerce and appropriation. Even in conversation, here in North America, we who so eagerly unpack our most private concerns before strangers dread the imaginative space that silence might open between two people or within a group. Television, obviously, abhors such silence. (1997, 330)

Here, Rich gives us the first description of a living silence, one that is generative and "fertilizing." Given the context of this essay as a piece on writing within capitalism, Rich

expounds on the conditions that interfere with and endanger these living, imaginative silences like the noisy technology of television or the uneasiness of the silence of conversation. Morrison in her 1993 Nobel Peace Lecture touches on a similar silence that Rich is attempting to describe here when she writes of a silence that recognizes "that language can never live up to life once and for all," a silence of "the uncapturability of human life" (1993). Morrison, like Rich, marks this silence as the generative power of language, the force of art that creates in the imaginative reaching toward the ineffable.

In contrast to this living silence, Rich finishes her description explaining:

> But the silence I abhor is dead silence, like a dead spot in an auditorium, a dead telephone, silence where language needed to be and was prevented. I am talking about the silence of a Lexan-sealed isolation cell in a maximum security prison, of evidence destroyed, of a language forbidden to be spoken, a vocabulary declared defunct, questions forbidden to be asked. I am also thinking of the dead sound of senseless noise, of verbal displacement, when a rich and active idiom is replaced by banal and inoffensive speech, or words of active courage by the bluster of false transgression, crudely offensive yet fatally impotent. Never has silence of displacement been so deafening and so omnipresent. Poetic language lives, labors, amid this displacement; and so does political vision. (330)

The "dead silence" Rich describes here is different from the generative silence necessary for art in that it is what kills imagination and creation. Dead silence, according to Rich, is similar to Olsen's "unnatural silences," absences where speech *should* be but was prevented, be it through the violence of institutions like prison or the systematic refusal and rejection of language or questions deemed forbidden, "vocabulary declared defunct." The silence of dead silence is speech that should have been but was denied, replaced, displaced.

In her 1989 *Talking Back,* bell hooks writes that resisting these silences and moving from silence into speech is for "the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth

possible" (9). The imperative for colonized, marginalized, and exploited groups, as hooks

explains, is to speak new life and new possibilities, to grow out of and away from violence and

oppression. Sharon Jaffe echoes this sentiment in the December 1987 entry of her *Justice

Journals-Palestine* published in 2001, wherein she defines the daily work and practice of

"breaking the silence" in women's resistance:

> Breaking silence means breaking the cycles of violence. Breaking silence means talking
> about and listening to women's stories. Stories about moving from fear to action, from
> violation to power, from individual isolation to participation in community. There is no
> one correct recipe for breaking the silence. The beauty of voices shapes sounds. There is
> no one song or story. Shelters, therapies, laws, children's books, feminist theory, the
> application of the lessons learned—we begin to know how to make our world (2003,
> 516).

For both hooks and Jaffe, and for many women writers as well, speaking and hearing oneself

speak is a courageous act of self-determination and belonging. For much of feminist discourse

around silence, the focus is on breaking silence and speaking truth to power. Given the link

between institutional silencing and violence, "breaking the silence" is a foundational trope in

feminist rhetorics that refers to the imperative to speak up publicly about things that are difficult

to talk about, about experiences of violence or harm that women across backgrounds face.

"Breaking silence" is a rejection of silence as a rejection of complicity and passivity in the face

of oppression. Silence, conceived as passivity, is both an exercise of power and an indication of

powerlessness. Passive silence functions as a metaphor and currency of power in service of

hegemony, upholding and maintaining systems of oppression, fortifying the apparatuses of force

and violence. Breaking silence thus becomes a political and ethical imperative for both the

oppressed and the oppressor groups.

archival recovery

In response to this long "tradition of silence," feminists in rhetoric studies focused on silence as an historiographical concern, seeking to break silence by recovering women from archival erasure and gaps (Campbell 1989, 2001; Lunsford 1989, 1995; Enos 1990; Bizzell 1992; Glenn 1997). Until recent scholarship in the past two decades, the "rhetorical tradition" was a Eurocentric and masculinist tradition, meaning that the literature of the discipline was written entirely by men, about men, for men. From orations and textbooks to manifestos and novels, the study of rhetorical texts was by and large the study of white, European men's speech. Archival silences came to represent the voices unwritten and stories untold in the monolithic Western history. This was a problem of political and rhetorical mis/recognition systematized through institutions of governance, education, and religion.

There is no doubt that the historian will always face the problem of silence. In the field of rhetoric, the entire knowledge of rhetoric is historical, passed down through written treatises, recorded speeches, letters, and textbooks. Thus, to be left unwritten is to be left to the silence of time. However, history is not time. Time continues with or without a human hand to wind the clock. Because history is a product of writing, the writing of history is always a conscious preservation of record that serves to legitimate some experiences, events, voices, and stories over others. In the introduction to the first Octalog, James Murphy describes history as a "public enterprise," explaining how the writing of history is not "differings in methodology alone but varying perceptions of what *ought* to be discovered *for the good of the community*" (1988, 5, emphasis added). James Berlin expounds on Murphy's introduction explaining how "each history endorses an ideology, a conception of economic, social, political, and cultural arrangements that is privileged in its interpretation" (1988, 6). As such, "much of the past is

irrevocably silenced: gestures, conversations, and original manuscripts can never be recaptured. Silence and silencing still greets us in every library, every archive, every text, every newscast" (Glenn, 2002). Therefore, what is at stake in the writing of history is the very concept of the public and of community, what is accepted and what is rejected, who is included and who is excluded. Whether the historian finds the silence that Tillie Olsen describes in her 1978 *Silences*, of texts abandoned and left behind, of the voices unwritten and unrecorded, the result of exhaustion, of time and energy spent on survival, or the institutional silencing of speech, education, and literacy denied, the project of the feminist historian was to seek and leave an inscription on those silences.

Published in 1989, *Man Cannot Speak for Her* built on the methodology developed in Campbell's 1973 article and proposed to "survey very briefly the history of the woman's rights / woman suffrage movement" by collecting texts composed and delivered by suffragettes in the beginning of the woman suffrage movement through 1920, at a time when woman's access to the public sphere and the "power of rhetoric" was limited (ix): Early woman's rights activists faced many rhetorical challenges, some of which were unique. Most fundamentally, they struggled for the right to act in the power of rhetoric—for the right to act in the public sphere by speaking, organizing, publishing newspapers, and lobbying (Campbell, 1973). While Campbell demarcated rhetorical acts within the domain of feminist rhetorics, be they personal testimony or affective proofs, "Woman" was not yet characteristically configured by Campbell in her introduction aside from the marked absence and rejection of "her" rights. In this preliminary description of woman's rights activists, "they" struggle for rhetorical agency— "the right to act in the power of rhetoric"—while Campbell narrowly delimits rhetorical activity within the "public sphere," identified by capital ("publishing newspapers") and the reproduction of the state ("lobbying")

wherein one speaks and organizes. Rather than rethinking categorical determinations of rhetorical activity, Campbell works within the traditional model of rhetoric that places rhetorical activity in public (civic) organizing. In an overview of the field's historiographical efforts to resist disciplinary silences and silencing, Sheena Malhotra and Aimee Carrillo write that feminist rhetoric, led by Campbell, by and large still valorized voice against a backdrop of silence, in which silence is equated with oppression.

It wasn't until 1990, when Susan Jarratt wrote that "Feminism has recently begun to touch the field of rhetoric and composition with a predictable outcome: a recognition that the canon in history of rhetoric, as in the rest of the European intellectual tradition, excludes women," that scholars in rhetoric and composition began the industry of writing woman out of silence, sparking feminist debates in the field. That same year, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg published the first edition of *The Rhetorical Tradition*, the first anthology of rhetorical texts that included women. While the first edition continued to uphold the ever-prominent figures of the long-standing tradition: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, and Erasmus, to name a few; it made room for the voices of women such as Christine de Pizan and Sarah Grimké. Reflecting on the process of curating this anthology two years later, Bizzell writes:

> One of the most interesting things we discovered during more than five years of work on this book was the large degree to which then-existing research on rhetoric represented a single, very traditional 'rhetorical tradition," which pretty much excluded women, people of color, and anyone without an elite education. We were surprised to find that research in rhetoric was so traditional…We wanted our anthology to contest that very traditional rhetorical tradition and, we hoped, to open up spaces for more work on material concerning women, people of color, and those outside social elites. (1992, 50)

> We knew, of course, that anthologies are not supposed to make arguments about the shape of a discipline but rather to represent what is there. But we also knew that there is never only one thing 'there' in any discipline. Anthology-making thus is always an ideologically loaded enterprise, foregrounding some strands of thought in a discipline and occulting others. We hoped to foreground nontraditional material in our anthology, using revisionist research in the history of rhetoric to support our efforts. (1992, 51)

Believing there to be "more revisionist work going on in rhetoric now" making it "easier to see how the traditional, white-male-elite version of rhetoric might be reconstituted in less exclusionary forms," Bizzell lays out a methodology consisting of three main avenues for further research on women and rhetoric: 1. resistant reading of traditional rhetorical history and the white-elite-male-authored texts it canonizes; 2. identify women who have done work similar to the work done by the traditionally canonized male authors, and to frame arguments for inserting these women into the traditional history and setting their work in dialogue with the canon; 3. to look in places not previously studied for work by women that would not have been traditionally considered as rhetoric, and to frame arguments redefining the whole notion of rhetoric in order to include this new work by women ("Opportunities" 51). Bizzell's three-prong methodology laid the necessary groundwork for feminist research into the rhetorical tradition that enabled scholars to build careers later in the decade by rewriting and revising the history to include figures of speaking women from literature, autobiography, and political movements: Sappho, Aspasia, Diotima, Margery Kempe, Margaret Fuller, Sojourner Truth, and Julia Kristeva.

Alongside Bizzell's practical research opportunities that identify women's rhetorical (textual) production, Susan Jarratt's feminist scholarship drew on feminist and gender theories to ground "Woman" as a categorical subject. In her introduction to a 1992 *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* special issue titled "Feminist Rereadings in the History of Rhetoric," Jarratt writes: "A women's history is grounded in two places: with "woman" as a category and with authorship as a practice. Poststructuralist theories of language and of subjectivity call into question the stability of both those terms" (1992, 1). Jarratt explains that the task of this collection was "looking again, listening again with different ears to the canonical, male-authored texts in rhetoric's history" (1992, 1). Mindful of the theoretical influences of poststructuralism on rhetoric and composition

studies that call into question processes of naming and subjecting, she concedes, "even those of us who would need to bracket terms like "woman" and "author" recognize the need to open up the canon, to discover neglected texts and explore conditions of authorship, education, and performance in previous eras… we agree that a feminist reworking of rhetoric must do more: leaving the canonical texts of a male-dominated tradition untouched, even if they now lie side by side with women's texts, is too comfortably familial" (1992, 1). However, by the next page, the stated goals of this collection contradict the very poststructuralist theory set out to accomplish them. While Jarratt argues that a bracketed discursive category of "Woman" yields "little agreement on how that category is defined," she offers definitions and configurations: she is "an object of an obscene gaze of the historian"; she is "the figure of Helen;" she is playing Erasmus's Folly (1992, 2). Ultimately concluding that "if we [feminist scholars] all agree to appear under the banners of "feminism" and "rhetoric," our words will attest to the pluralities of those nouns, resulting in not women's history but feminisms' histories. If rhetoric is excess, a "'residue of indeterminacy' that escapes systematization, then feminist analysis multiplies that exteriority" (1992, 2).

Jarratt represents the theoretical negotiations necessary for Bizzell's methodological rereading. By configuring "Woman" as a speaking subject with strategic rhetorical agency on par with the well-known male figures in the tradition, scholars rendered legible a subject position that, according to a (phallo)logocentric metaphysical tradition, had been historically effaced and suppressed. Revising the history and reviving feminine rhetoricians and rhetorical agency claimed space for women in the public sphere, within discourse, resisting the historical subjugation and confinement of women to a narrow purview of rhetorical sites (namely the private, domestic site). This was critical, necessary work for the political and academic

empowerment of women, and it countered the exclusionary canon, correcting a collective misremembering.

When Cheryl Glenn entered the parlor in the early 1990s, she was doing the work of an historian. In the 2002 *JAC* article titled, "Silence: A Rhetorical Art for Resisting Discipline(s)," Cheryl Glenn begins by situating her work in the recent (in 2002) feminist scholarship devoted to "recovering and giving voice to women's contributions in the broad history of culture making— in philosophy, literature, language, writing, societal structure, religion, history, education, reading, psychology, and gender" (2002, 261).[4] In this article, Glenn calls on rhetoric scholars to "probe our own disciplinary silences and silencing"; asking how do we, as rhetoric scholars, or in the field of rhetoric *produce* silence? Coming out of a feminist resistance movement, Glenn's position is that archival silences are not accidents, but the result of exclusion. She asks us instead to seek these silences in order to resistance to dominant rhetorical canon, disciplinary resistance of *the* history of rhetoric, describing how as a historian of rhetoric, "[she] witnessed the centuries of male-controlled education, politics, law, and religion that had written [women] out—silenced them—in the first place. But I also witnessed the pockets of female rhetorical activity that punctuated those long stretches of silence" (2004, 1). It is in these long stretches of unwritten and unrecorded rhetorical activity that Glenn seeks to "recreate [feminist] traditions within our histories" (2004, 1). The discourse on silence in rhetoric studies emerges out of these silences,

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[4] Cheryl Glenn first contributed to the feminist historiographical trend of the late twentieth century with her 1994 article, "Sex, Lies, and Manuscript: Refiguring Aspasia in the History of Rhetoric," a move that aligned her with the work of white feminists in the field who had been working to configure Woman as rhetor. This move enabled Glenn to engage in the field's history debates with her 1995 "Remapping Rhetorical Territory," published in *Rhetoric Review*, wherein she describes how "[her] own work as an historian of rhetoric has been to trace the routes…and to resurvey the territory in order to locate and position women rhetoricians on the map—rarely an easy task" (288). Her 1997 *Rhetoric Retold* does this exact remapping, charting women's inscriptions and contribution to rhetorical history and theory across antiquity, medieval, and renaissance periods.

the silences that are bursting with the unsaid, that contain in themselves all the excess of that which is deemed legitimate, decent, and proper.

recovering silence

In response to the problem of silence raised in feminist discourses, scholars in rhetoric and composition sought to resignify silence with the aim to resist the history of exclusion and suppression for which silence had served as a tool and weapon. In the field of rhetoric, silence emerged in historiographical debates about biases and exclusionary practices in the discipline, but also as an object of theoretical inquiry. Cheryl Glenn's 2004 *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* exemplifies this shift, presenting "the first study to offer a rhetoric of silence, to explore the ways silence can be as powerful as speech, the ways that silence and silencing deliver meaning" (2004, xi). By providing a systematic study and categorizing of silence in rhetoric, Glenn provided a framework for studying silence, inspiring rhetorical projects that signify silence as a rhetorical art and strategy.

In *Unspoken,* Glenn calls for the recognition of silence as a "specific rhetorical art that merits serious investigation," arguing that "silence is every bit as important as speech" (2004, 2). In this text, Glenn builds on rhetorical scholarship to expand an understanding, construction, and production of silence as a rhetoric, as a constellation of symbolic strategies that (like spoken language) serves many functions. While silence is too often read as "simple passivity in situations," there are actually many situations in which "it has actually taken on an expressive power" (2004, xi). As Glenn explains, "Whether choice or im/position, silence can reveal positive or negative abilities, fulfilling on withholding traits, harmony or disharmony, success, or failure. Silence can deploy power; it can defer power" (2004, xi). On the uses of silence, Glenn

lists tactical strategy, deference, agential choice, or disempowered imposition. On the effects, Glenn describes how silence can deploy power, defer to power, create harmony or disharmony, enable, or impede. In summary, "the form of silence (its delivery) is always the same. But the function of silence— that is, its effect upon people—varies according to the social context in which it occurs" (2004, xii).

Glenn's main claim in *Unspoken* is that silence is "the most undervalued and under-understood traditionally feminine site and concomitant rhetorical art" (2004, 2). Throughout her book, which charts the range of spaces inhabited by silence, using the views provided by linguistics, phenomenology, rhetoric, and anthropology to read silence and voice as gendered positions and set forth a grammar of silence as it relates to systems of power, Glenn makes the case for silence as a specific rhetorical art that merits serious investigation within rhetoric and composition studies. By characterizing silence as a rhetorical art, Glenn places silence alongside the traditional rhetorical arts of speech, writing, and reading—practices that generate, communicate, and circulate meaning. In doing so, she argues that silence "can be used to threaten, show respect, demonstrate a language inadequacy, emphasize the spoken, connect, judge, or activate—just like speech" (2004, 18). In this movement, Glenn simultaneously argues that silence is a theoretical object in itself that should be studied *and* subsumes and translates silence into speech.

Glenn converts silence into a rhetorical art by systematizing the uses and effects of silence into two main categories: enforced silences and strategic silences. Enforced silence refers to the result of suppression, rejection, and erasure outlined throughout feminist scholarship and activism. This type of silence is understood both from the perspective of the agent of enforcement and from the recipient of the enforcement, the person whose voice is "silenced," but

it is most commonly used in its verb form *to silence.* In its verb form, the act of silencing is only available to those in positions of power within any given rhetorical situation; or it is how someone gains power in a rhetorical situation, regardless, it correlates to power in the situation. In this view, power doesn't just rest in speech but in the ability to weaponize silence. Strategic silence is on the other hand is a rhetorical tactic used by women to resist and refuse patriarchal hegemony. To show this at work, Glenn reads highly politicized silences and words of Anita Hill, Lani Guinier, President Clinton, and the sequence of figures known as "all the presidents' women," which starts with Gennifer Flowers and ends with Chelsea Clinton.

Glenn's first presentation of "strategic silence" is in her 1997 *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Rhetorical Tradition*, wherein Glenn identifies Protestant Reformer Anne Askew's delivery of silence in 1546 as an early example of silence as a powerful feminine performance and resistance. In 1546, Anne Askew was arrested, tortured, and executed for "radical Protestantism" in England under the reign of Henry VIII. Under her arrest, Askew was the first gentlewoman in English history to be tried and judged by a jury. Glenn describes the strategic and powerful employment of silence by Askew under interrogation and torture:

> Accordingly, [Askew] was forced out of the feminine private sphere and thrust directly into masculine public view, where she refused to tell her own secrets. Under hard religious interrogation, Askew refused to talk about anything other than her Protestant faith, refusing to share the names of any other members of her sect, and revealing no concealed information besides her extraordinary mastery of Scripture. In other words, even under torture, Askew delivered silence rather than the called-for, expected, self-disclosing answers. (2004, 2)

Anne Askew's practice is an exemplar for Glenn of "a rhetoric of silence," a delivery that is described as "unrevealing, a rhetoric of concealment" (2004, 2). Glenn credits Askew's demonstration of the power of silence as a starting off point for her own broader investigation into silence.

As a metaphor for power and as a strategic rhetorical art, Glenn's *Unspoken* extended the ongoing scholarly conversation about the power of conscientious speaking out and of silence, about power and control, and especially about who remains silent and who silences (2004, xii). By revealing the strategic and enforced ways that silence is used rhetorically, Glenn contributed to the work of scholars across disciplines to think silence as a strategy for refusal and practice of resistance that refuses and subverts the power, particularly in institutional settings. As Trinh T. Minh-ha explains in *Woman, Native, Othe*r, "Silence as a refusal to partake in the story does sometimes provide us with a means to gain a hearing. It is a voice, a mode of uttering, and a response in its own right" (1989, 83). As a tactic of resistance and refusal, silence has been documented in cases of torture and interrogation, religious confession, modern psychotherapy, relations of coercion, and social protest across history.

Reading silence as political refusal or resistance has been tracked by anthropologists studying speech practices across cultures and history. Often in anthropological studies, silence has been taken up as a marker or manifestation of cultural difference and as a category deployed to challenge power relations. For example, in Richard Bauman's study of English Quakers in the 17th century, he shows how silence was employed to mark an ideological commitment. For the seventeenth-century Quakers, in common with most Christian factions, silence was the means of pious devotion to God— "a direct personal experience with the spirit of God within oneself— and a rejection of the "natural, fleshly activity done in one's will" of speech (1983, 22-23). Outward speaking was considered "a faculty of the natural man, of the flesh," and thus interfered with one's ability to attain the spiritual condition. Silence in this sense functioned as a refusal of self and the temptations of self-will and earthly desires. Unlike speech, silence was regarded as a

practice of "self-sacrifice in a most immediate sense, the sacrifice of self-will through suppression of the earthly self" (1983, 22).

Similarly, Kamala Visweswaran signals the importance of learning to read silence in ethnographic settings to explore the resistive strategies through which activist women cultivate their identities, such as utilizing strategic omissions that rewrite the script of the ethnographic encounter. For women, Visweswaran writes, lies, secrets, and silence' are frequently strategies of resistance (1994, 60). In *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography,* she analyzes "M" who performs multiple and contradictory uses of silence as resistance. Through her various uses of silence, M refuses to be subjected to the author's anthropological inquiry. Reading M's silences, Visweswaran underscores the importance of how anthropologists construct meaning around silences and how they might be held accountable to subjects' strategic uses of silence.

By reading these deliveries of silence as resistance, anthropologists and scholars signify silence as a politics of refusal. As Carole McGranahan and Audra Simpson imagine in their theory of political refusal, delivering silence where speech ought to be or is demanded, presents a possibility of political engagement for marginalized people in which they turn their backs on and refuse to accept the legitimacy of discursive ideological systems to authorize political subjectivity (2016). A politics of refusal does not try to respond to or resist the authority of the state, but rather seeks to nullify its presumed power. As explained by the Association for Political and Legal Anthropology, "Refusal forces us to think through the ways in which articulating inclusionary demands to the state, or "shadow state" is a tacit acceptance of the imperial, gendered, racist, settler colonial dominance that create exclusions and the need for humanitarian, academic or state intervention in the first place (Rubio, qtd. Rowe and Wolch 1990, Gilmore 2007, Ferguson and Gupta 2002, Karim 2011). A politics of refusal rejects pleas

for inclusion or cries (silent or not) to be heard by an imperial, gendered, racist, and settler colonial state. In the production of knowledge (and consequently the production of subjects, nations, etc.), silence as refusal provides more than a resistance—it is a liberatory practice.

Delivering silence as a politic of resistance and refusal is especially effective when use in collective action. As Kennan Ferguson argues, silence is an essential social function of self or group as a strategy of resistance (2003, 7). In this view, silence functions as a resistance to any institution that requires verbal participation, as virtually all do in a logocentric culture. Ferguson points to the state-sponsored requirement to take oaths or pledge allegiance (Bosmajian, 1999) or a classroom's obligatory participation (Gilmore, 1985) as examples in which silence can function as threatening dissent to authority. We can see this strategy of silence as resistance in social justice and activism within the history of the Black Liberation Movement (Crow, 2021; Golding, 2022). For example, On July 28, 1917, the NAACP's held a Silent Protest Parade in response to growing racial tension across the nation that reached a breaking point when a white supremacist set a black neighborhood in St. Louis on fire, killing dozens and leaving hundreds of black residents homeless (NAACP). The NAACP described the scene writing, "nearly 10,000 black men, women, and children wordlessly paraded down New York's Fifth Avenue. Silently marching to the beat of a drum, the throngs of protesters clutched picket signs declaring their purpose and demanding justice" (NAACP). Silent protests such as these make evident the embodiment of denied speech—the folks in St. Louis are a portion of a larger collective of people who are being refused political access. The NAACP held a similar silent protest march in 2012 in response to stop-and-frisk policing in New York. The New York Times described the protest as a "slow, somber procession" (Leland, 2012). Both protests sought to make apparent the injustices done to the Black community. By remaining silent, protesters reveal that their

concerns are so often ignored, delegitimized, and not considered speech worth hearing, so they chose to speak through and in silence: "their tactic was silence, but their message resounded: anti-black violence is unjust and un-American" (NAACP). By demonstrating the lack of political agency granted to the Black community, silence served as a self-referential response to the discursive systems already in place that work to constitute political subjects based on excluding political agency to some.

In the theories and studies that conceive of silence as a form of strategy or a rhetorical art, the foundational understanding is that silence itself speaks and can act as rhetorical action. As a tactic of communication and signification, silence acts as speech does, to convey meaning. By framing silence this way, Glenn opened the field of rhetoric to a realm of untapped potential scholarship, both by way of archival recovery and by way of reading silence as rhetorical action. Since the publication of Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold* and *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, scholarly attention on silence worked initially to recover marginalized voices in rhetorical history, to make what used to be invisible rhetorical experiences visible, and to expand the rhetorical tradition to include women and minority-group members by mapping hierarchies of gender, class, race, sexuality, ability, and exclusion (Johnson, 2002; Hesford, 2004; Bizzell, 2006; Enoch, 2008; Logan, 2009; Mao and Young, 2008; Lunsford, 2008). The impetus of this effort was put simply by Enoch, writing, "These women still have much to tell us—all we have to do is listen to their voices and their silences" (2008). Similarly, scholars expanded on Glenn's rhetoric of silence to focus on the cultural silences and silencing within cultural and ethnic political groups (Johnson, 2002; Carlone, 2007; Covarrubias and Windchief, 2008; Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2009). Some scholars have expanded the theoretical possibilities of Glenn's work, elaborating the rhetorical purposes and symbolic strategies of silence (Middleton, 2000, 2009; Ronald, 2009; Hogan, 2008;

Graban, 2007; Holmes, 2007; Ephratt, 2008; Acheson 2008). In these conceptions, silence carries a plurality of signification and a multitude of signification, the only limitation being the mind of those on the receiving end of a silent delivery. But this silence is always read as a speech act, it is not read as silence per se, instead it functions as speech, but with a different delivery. The widespread adoption of Glenn's theory represents how comfortably the focus on the delivery of silence as rhetoric action fit into the preexisting disciplinary episteme of rhetoric studies.

the paradox of silence

By thinking silence as its own rhetorical art, scholars in rhetoric and feminist studies claim to resist the logocentric speech/silence binary that posits speech as a positive presence and silence as its pure negation and absence. However, the theoretical grounding and theory in most of these texts, including *Unspoken*, reveals a paradox of absence and presence within understandings of silence. By her own description in *Unspoken*, Cheryl Glenn reveals the nature of silence at the paradox of oppositions and dualisms, at the crux of absence and presence. Silence is a both/and, both container and thing contained; both present and absent. Rhetoric scholars tend to think silence as pure negation and absence of speech, but in this absence, signification quickly comes to fill the perceived void. Thus, silence, first the lack of speech, comes to represent and function symbolically as a form of speech, revealing a reflecting back the processes and movement of signification itself. Through this doubled representation, scholars ultimately produce "silence" as a signifier among signifiers. Without a stable signified, "silence" becomes an empty to fill with disciplinary projections.

This can be seen first in the historiographical efforts that sought to inscribe the "silences," gaps within the archive, with representations of women's voices. Much like the

criticism raised by Foucault about the repressive hypothesis as it applies to discourses of sex, we can see how through the production of significations of silence that framing the relationship of silence and power as absence and repression, scholars produced a general economy of discourse around silence (1976). For Foucault, silence is not just a marker of that which is not said or that which cannot be said, but that which is not allowed or permitted to be said. It appears as repression— a result of imposition, control, and power within a dominant discourse. According to Foucault, "repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know" (1976, 4). We see in these passages how saying, knowing, and existing are woven together around and in opposition to silence. The silence marks an absence of knowing, a nonexistence, and traces a disappearance. Foucault asks whether "critical discourse that addresses itself to repression [came] to act as a roadblock to a power mechanism that has operated unchallenged up to that point, or [if it is] not in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces by calling it repression?" (1976, 10). The ideological perspective that sees silence as a site of historiographical recovery thus creates a paradox in which silence is both absence and presence— there is something, rather than nothing, there to recover. This "silence" is not actual silence, those silenced by power—whether overt or covert—are not people with nothing to say but are people whose voices have been systematically rejected. By attempting to "uncover silences," scholars had to first reaffirm the "historical network" of patriarchy, colonialism, white supremacy, or any combination of these networks of power to claim that there were voices that needed to be uncovered, to justify the work within these networks.

By viewing these "silences" not as silence, but as repression—as that which is not allowed or permitted to be said—it becomes clear that the "silence" rhetoric scholars are seeking to recover is not silence at all, but speech that has not been accounted for. Rancière's analysis of accounting provides a useful framework for exposing the reproduction of sovereignty and recognition at the root of scholarly significations of silence. In his 1999 *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy,* Rancière reveals how the determination of who is and is not speaking, the speech that is legitimated and recognized *as* speech within dominant discourse, is a primary function of hegemonic and state power.

Quoting the famous excerpt *Politics* Book I, Rancière points to Aristotle's distinction between speech and "mere voice" as the origins of political philosophy.[6] For Aristotle, it is the capacity for *speech*, rather than mere voice, at the base of human nature that separates humans from animals and enables humans to reason, to persuade, to contend and extol, to come together, to make clear their desires, to establish virtues, and to seek wisdom. In his analysis, Rancière shows how this distinction is thus "an error of calculation," responsible for the distribution of goods, for proportion and common harmony, and for the "submission of the shares of the commonly held by each party in the community" (1999, 6). Rancière asserts that this calculation foundational to political philosophy as the "[counting] of "community 'parts,'" is "always a false count, a double count, a miscount" (1999, 6). The categorical distinction of speech / animal noise

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[6] Aristotle's famous quote, "Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state" (*Politics* Book I, part II).

of voice inherited from Aristotle that sets the criteria for the miscount of community "parts" goes beyond man/animal and has instead enabled the recognition of some voices as speech and some as mere noise. The accounting of this recognition and categorization is, for Rancière, the preliminary conditions for politics:

> "Politics exists because the *logos* is never simply speech, because it is always indissolubly the *account* that is made of this speech: the account by which a sonorous emission is understood as speech, capable of enunciating what is just, whereas some other emission is merely perceived as a noise signaling pleasure or pain, consent or revolt" (1999, 22, original emphasis).

While Aristotle, and those who have followed him, have always privileged the human because of their capacity for speech, Rancière makes clear that it is not a matter of innate, divine capability or power (*dunastēs*) but rather a matter of an *account* by which "a sonorous emission is understood as speech" (1999, 24). Such accounting—or miscounting— relies on understanding and recognition of speech, both of which are always political and ideological.

As feminist scholars show, Western patriarchal, colonial history is a long record of exclusionary encounters with an "other," whose speech is negated and rejected. Without recognized speech, those whose speech is not considered speech were historically denied participation in the public, collective sphere, disengaged and barred from political life and even from human agency, labeled only as "beings" without an association with the common. To be accounted for, to have recognition and place in the common social and political life, one must be named and speaking. The recognition of the speech of speaking subjects is thus a vital function for social and political life. However, as Rancière shows, this recognition of speech is always made from a privileged position, a position of sovereignty that determines what is and is not, all the while remaining outside the realm of determination. Given that sovereign political power lies in the determination of speaking subjects, the figure of the silent other whose speech must go

unrecognized and unheard is necessary to legitimate the speech of those whose voice is recognized (as speech rather than as mere noise). By seeking to recover voices, to bring the suppressed to speech, and by signifying silence *as* a form of speech, scholars are attempting to account for speech, unspoken or rejected. In doing so, they have inadvertently reproduced the logic of sovereignty inherent in recognition.

The efforts to inscribe silence and to recover speech from suppression and repression thus relied on a sovereign logic of recognition to "include" the voices of women and marginalized identities in the discipline of rhetoric. Inclusion, however, does not solve the problem of exclusion. Inclusion relies on the mechanisms of recognition, legibility, and intelligibility—all of which are sovereign determinations, accounting, that must be made. As such, inclusion (accounting) can never be totalizing; it relies on exclusion and always creates excess. In her article, "Questions of Silence: On the Emancipatory Limits of Voice and the Coloniality of Silence," Martina Ferrari similarly analyzes these limits of feminist efforts to recover speech from silence in the name of inclusion, suggesting that uncritical appeals to 'speak up' or 'come to voice' foreclose questions about the normativity of voice, ultimately upholding modern categories of thought and being (logocentrism, to be precise) that reify the oppressive colonial apparatus they seek to resist" (2019, 125). In this article, she explains how the mechanisms of sovereign recognition and legibility on which the movement for voice relies is a tool for coloniality that both eviscerates silence and "requires conformity to Eurocentric standards that exclude subaltern communicative practices and being" (2019, 126). As such, the movement to inscribe silence, reject silence, and signify silence as speech operates in service of coloniality: "the voice that can be/is heard by the majority community is normed by coloniality and, thus, is *exclusively* the voice of the colonizer" (Ferrari, 2019).

Michelle Ballif explicitly raised similar concerns in her essay titled "Re/Dressing Histories; Or, on Re/Covering Figures Who Have Been Laid Bare by Our Gaze," wherein she asks what "we" want in wanting feminist histories, using the metaphor of Woman as "counterfeit coin" to argue that historiographical efforts to "(re)cover women, to (re)present women, and to therefore (re)cast history, are insidious acts of (re)appropriation" (2000, 91):

> Woman, the counterfeit coin, the site of false words and deeds, is inscribed with guilt; indicted with deception, penned as the Unspeakable and Undiscernible Lie, sentenced to silence. Woman is the text that paradoxically cannot speak but nevertheless speaks in its silence. Her silence is the message; it desires to be read. And now we-as historiographers of male-authored texts concerning women, as "feminists," as proponents of the "Discourses of the Other"-desire to (re)cover and (re)read Phaedra's, Diotima's, Aspasia's silent message.
>
> But why? What motivates our desire to read these women? What propels our desire to make these women readable? *Are we not, perhaps, attempting to reinvest these women with value?* Are we not trying to redeem them from charges of counterfeit? *Are we not, then, merely making Woman into a legitimate coin, a proper currency, a respectable asset?* Are we not, then, merely increasing her exchange rate, but without questioning the very standard-the phallogocentric standard of Truth-that finds her lacking, that is responsible for her devaluation? (2000, 91, emphasis added)

As a "counterfeit coin", "Woman" appears as "never quite legitimate," marked by falsehood and deception, guilt, and silence. Even her silence is "never quite legitimate" for it "nevertheless speaks in its silence." Thus, "Woman" is already accounted for, in the recognition that even in her silence she speaks. However, she is accounted for as illegitimate by this system. The desire, then, by scholars to render "her" legitimate, to give "her" value was, according to Ballif, a way to "increase her exchange rate" in a system that "finds her lacking."

The desire to write woman into the history of rhetoric, to fill archival gaps with language, to read silence as signification, or to mark a speaker as silent to be able to draw her into relief, raised serious concerns by scholars who saw it as both an ideological move and a reaffirmation of the logics of exclusion, the misrecognition, that denied women rhetorical agency in the first

place. Without critically interrogating this reproduction, scholars do not tend to the excesses produced by this recognition. As such, the work is never complete, and the problem of silence will always be an ongoing disciplinary struggle for rhetoric scholars who construct knowledge and make meaning by analyzing speech and speech practices.

Rather than trying to think silence on its own terms and question the value that unintelligibility, illegibility, and ineffability may have to offer to rhetorical arts and the discipline of rhetoric, scholars subsume silence into speech, revealing their own commitments to logocentrism and Eurocentric standards. In response to the flattening of silence in liberal discourse that considers voice as the key to emancipation and power, Ferrari suggests a shift in the conversation on silence toward a notion of "deep silence" As she conceives it, "deep silence" is a "fecund source of radical meaning-making," that contains "generative power" (2019, 133). Ferrari's work is one example of the start of explorations in silence that may expand rhetoric studies and open to the possibilities of making meaning otherwise. By theorizing silence as a signifier or metaphor of oppression, rejection, or erasure, and then reproducing it a form of speech itself, contemporary theories of silence in rhetoric studies perpetuate a misunderstanding of silence and close off the possibility of connecting to the value and depth it may offer to language.

CHAPTER II

LISTENING IN SILENCE: AN ETHICAL RESPONSE TOWARD MISUNDERSTANDING

"When I make a call for listening, I am calling for (mis)understanding...I think that understanding is something that precedes listening...I further think that understanding is impossible because of the instability of language—that is, because of différance. I suppose (mis)understanding would be an attending to the impossibilities rather than the possibilities of understanding."
—Michelle Ballif

opening

Just over twenty years ago, *JAC* published a conversation between Michelle Ballif, Diane Davis, and Roxanne Mountford, three feminist scholars in rhetoric and composition, focused on a singular question central to the feminist divide at the time: How can feminists learn to listen for and negotiate difference and *différance*? As a *differend* of rhetorical feminism at the turn of the 21st century, the conflict between how feminists theorized the notion of "difference" and how to solve the "problems of difference" was preventing solidarity across disciplinary discourses, resulting in many tense exchanges.[1] In this trilogue, two scholars, Ballif and Davis, represent a postmodern and deconstructionist "ludic" perspective, while Roxanne Mountford represents the "cultural feminist" perspective characterized by a classical rhetorical grounding and rooted firmly in the third-wave feminist movement. The conversation that ensued exposed a

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[1] Some scholars described these exchanges as "catfights" and pointed towards these disagreements over feminist methodologies as "the devolution of academic discourse" (Schell, 2003). This tension may be best encapsulated by the exchange between Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Barbara Biesecker, who in 1992 published "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric" arguing that feminist scholars had reproduced masculine logics of recognition in their configuration of Woman as rhetor. Campbell responded with "Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either," wherein she characterizes Biesecker's article as an "attack on me, my honesty, and my scholarly independence" (1993, 153).

foundational misunderstanding amongst feminist scholars communicating across different

theoretical discourses: the desire on part of scholars to embrace or resolve cultural "differences"

excludes *différance*, a force of language that resists interpellation or representation through the

double movement of deferring and differing.[2]

Within the discourse of cultural feminists, difference is considered a point of dissimilarity

and treated as naturalized givens. Differences are cultural and rhetorical objects that can be

mapped along the matrixes of identification: gendered, racial, classed, religious, etc. From the

perspective of "ludic" feminists, however, differences are not stable distinctions, but rather the

result of the unending play of *différance*. As Davis puts it: "*différance* is my point of departure, a

certain recognition and affirmation of a wild play of multiplicities, of radical singularity" (2000,

601). As a result of this *differend*, Ballif insists that "the feminist discourse community—a so-

called inclusive and nurturing community—has required perhaps not an eradication of

difference, but certainly a *disciplining* of difference" (2000, 110). Rather than theorizing how to

remain open to the unending play of *différance*, cultural feminists sought to capture the

differences as stabilized identities or categorical distinctions that could be read, spoken, or

listened to. In seeking to recover women from the silences of suppression or erasure and writing

women into the established structures of understanding, feminist scholars reproduced the very

logics of exclusion that silenced women in the first place. Baliff argues instead that rhetoric

scholars "have not yet theorized how it is possible to listen to that which is beyond our

understanding, that which is beyond our limits" (2000, 600). This chapter begins with the

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[2] For the most comprehensive explanation of Derrida's notion of *différance,* see: "Différance," an address given before the Société française de philosophie on January 27, 1968, and subsequently published in the *Bulletin de la société française de philopshie*, July-September 1968.

opening created by the "yet" of Ballif's argument—an opening to think listening as the ethical demand of rhetoric, of alterity, of the yet-to-arrive that moves in silence beyond understanding.

Offered as a response to difference and a solution to the "problem of silence" described in the first chapter, listening emerged in rhetoric scholarship as an ethical stance of openness that can be employed to foster better understanding, and by consequence, better communication. Posited as an ethical response to otherness, listening has been conceived as a social and political response, a solution to political mis/representation, and a pathway for collective consciousness-raising. Given that listening has these possible outcomes, we must take seriously how we theorize and talk about it.

The notion of listening is commonly understood as a synthesis of two distinct experiences: "listening" and "hearing." Listening and hearing have intertwined definitions that reveal these terms as similar but not-quite-synonymous. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "to listen" as a transitive verb meaning "to hear attentively, to give ear to, to pay attention to," while "to hear" means "to perceive, or to have the sensation of sound; to possess of exercise the faculty of audition, of which the specific organ is the ear" (OED). By definition, listening is a type of hearing characterized by the combination of intention and attention, while hearing is considered a perceptive faculty prior to the given attention. Etymologically, "listening" comes from a root that emphasizes attention and giving to others, while "hearing" comes from a root that emphasizes perception and receiving from others (Lipari, 50). In this sense, listening is distinct from hearing in that it requires attention, a posture of giving and attending, and a conscious presence and awareness. Hearing, on the contrary, signifies a posture of receiving, a subconscious, sensory perception that does not require attention, and often implies a sort of inattentiveness. For example, "I hear you" does not always equate to "I am listening to you" in

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everyday speech, yet both are crucial to beginning to understand listening and why it is important to rhetoric. The distinction between hearing and listening reveal self/other dynamics at the foundation of listening. Wherever the speaking-self determined by *logos* is in action, a listening other must necessarily be present—even when, as psychoanalysts have described, speaking to oneself. Within this relation, ethics becomes a primary concern at the center of listening. The question of how to listen becomes a question of how to respond to the other? The question of listening is, ultimately, the ethical question of rhetoric. How do we respond to the call of the other? A response that first necessitates a listening or hearing. How do we open to the coming of the other, the other who/that has yet to arrive? Does our current conception of listening enable the opening that is required for this ethical response?

The aim of this chapter is to reveal how the dominant theories on listening rely on notions of identification and understanding that ultimately obstruct the possibility of opening, thereby limiting listening as an ethical stance. As Ballif describes, the desire to "[listen] for difference(s) always already precludes listening for *différance*," meaning that in listening for differences, the listener actually closes off to the possibility of that which may fall beyond preestablished identifications, closing off listening to the unknown rather than remaining open. In seeking understanding, the listener is further closed off from opening, seeking stability in stasis where disagreement rests and knowledge, as appropriation, finds comfort from the challenges raised by difference. To complicate further, as Ballif explains, "the epistemological impulse to render difference(s) into the (self)same" challenges the expectation that in "knowing differences" listeners are arriving at a knowledge of anything other than what is already known or knowable (2000, 587).

This chapter investigates listening as it has been theorized in rhetoric studies as an ethical posture. First, I explain the development of listening within rhetoric studies against the logocentric tradition that ignored listening as foundational to language, following the analyses of Martin Heidegger and Gemma Fiumara. Then, I look specifically to the popularized concept of *rhetorical listening* developed by Kris Ratcliffe as a code of cross-cultural conduct and ethical posture of openness. Drawing on the critical work of Gayatri Spivak, Denise Ferreira Da Silva, and Jacques Derrida, I challenge the ethical viability of rhetorical listening, particularly as a response to the call of alterity and difference, showing how the overemphasis on understanding difference as the aim of rhetorical listening forecloses the ethical posture it sets out to achieve. Lastly, I consider Lisbeth Lipari's notion of *interlistening* alongside Derrida's concepts of *hospitality* and *the secret* to suggest a different way of thinking listening for rhetoric.

recovering listening

The section that follows traces the emergence of listening as a focus in rhetoric studies, looking primarily to Gemma Fiumara's 1990 *The Other Side of Language* as a foundational and influential text for theorizing listening within rhetoric studies. Until recent scholarship, the tendency in Western rhetorical history—a history that favors speech and writing as the dominant modes of meaning-making—was to neglect, subjugate, and write over listening. By prioritizing speaking and writing, the field of rhetoric studies has, by and large, ignored listening as a meaningful position of rhetorical action, power, or significance. The classical theories upon which the tradition of Western rhetorical theory rests, such as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, only secondarily consider how audiences should listen and rarely, if ever, examines *how* to listen (Ratcliffe, 2005). Within this tradition, listening is an implied byproduct of orality that happens

without necessary forethought. Thus conceived, listening is considered a default and passive position, easily manipulated, lacking power, and unworthy of investigation.

Beyond the disciplinary biases toward oral and written traditions, cultural biases related to race and gender have contributed to the general neglect of listening. Within the United States, speaking has traditionally been gendered masculine and valued positively in public, while listening has been gendered feminine and regarded as a culturally feminized position (Tannen, 1985). As such, men and women are socialized differently around speaking and listening. In a similar vein, speaking and listening is racialized in U.S. culture such that listening is considered the default position of non-white racial identities and it is not considered as important or necessary for white people (Giovanni, 1994). These gendered and racialized perceptions are further compounded by inequalities in class and education.

In response to this history of neglect and cultural stereotypes, many scholars sought to recover listening as a positive, rather than negative, position in communication. Alongside a theory of silence as "unspoken" suppressed and rejected speech, listening studies rose in the field of rhetoric and composition, wherein most theorized listening not only as a rhetorical practice on par with speaking, writing, and reading, but as a way to recover the unspoken, either by creating a rhetorical posture that enables people to come to voice or by listening for the unspoken discursive forces that shape and influence conversation. In historiographical efforts, Andrea Lunsford, Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin posit listening as a model for defining and investigating voice in written discourse, exploring voices speaking or not speaking within written texts in order to reclaim and recover the lost works by women in the history of rhetoric (1996; 1994). Victor Vitanza in *Negation, Subjectivity, and the History of Rhetoric* also employed listening as a means of questioning the *logos* and exposing its "duplicity/triplicity/complicity"

with/in language (1997, 165). But by and large, as Ratcliffe wrote in 2005, "the dominant scholarly trend in rhetoric and composition studies has been to follow the lead of popular culture and naturalize listening, that is, assume it to be something that everyone does but no one needs to study" (2005, 18).

By the early 2000s, the notable exception to that trend was Gemma Fiumara's, *The Other Side of Language*, which in 1990 launched a theoretical project to recover listening as a lost rhetorical art and the rejected and forgotten dimension of *logos.* In this text, Fiumara points to "the divided *logos*"—the *logos* that speaks but does not listen—as the organizing principle behind disciplinary and cultural biases against listening. "The divided *logos*," first exposed by Martin Heidegger, refers to an inherited tradition of thinking *logos* only in terms of speech [*phonē*], as Derrida pointed out in *Of Grammatology*, and has thus left us with a system of knowledge that tends to ignore the other side of *logos*: listening. As Krista Ratcliffe explains in her analysis of Fiumara, it is because we have a divided *logos*, that we "inhabit a culture where 'saying' has assumed dominance and 'laying' (listening) has been displaced," wherein "'saying' quickly becomes masterly expression; writing, a means of masterly expression; and reading, a means of mastering-the-masterly-expression," and "all three quickly subsume listening" (2005, 24).

Concerned with the acceptance of a "halved *logos*," of saying without listening, Fiumara takes up Heidegger's investigation of *legein* in Heraclitus' fragments. In 5th century BCE, Heraclitus wrote that all things follow from λόγος, *logos*, or "the Word," and with this proclamation set in motion a way of understanding that provided the link between rational discourse and the world's rational structure rooted in language, expression, and speech that has persisted for millennia (Stead, 1998). Reading fragment 50, Martin Heideigger explains how

since antiquity the *logos* of Heraclitus has been interpreted as "ratio, verbum, as cosmic law, as the logical, as necessity in thought, as meaning and as reason (1975, 60). But the meaning of this Greek term, found as early as 8th century BCE in the work of Homer, has been debated throughout the Western rhetorical and philosophical tradition. In G. Liddell and R. Scott's A Greek-English Lexicon, *logos* is defined as a noun with possible meanings grouped in the following way: "computation, reckoning, account; relation, correspondence; explanation, plea, pretext, ground, statement of a theory, argument, law, rule of law; narrative, fable, tale, oration, legend, speech verbal expression or utterance, word; common talk, report, tradition; divine utterance, oracle, proverb, maxim; assertion; word of command, behest; or thing spoken of, subject matter, the truth of the matter." In its many valences, *logos* refers at once to the lexical word or spoken expression and to human reason, rationality, knowledge, and the means of making ideas known more broadly, as well as to the ideas themselves, the phenomena to which ideas respond, and the rules that govern both phenomena and ideas.

Heidegger's readings of Heraclitus, however, returns *logos* to its etymological roots in the Greek λέγειν, *legein*. As Heidegger shows, the Greek verb *legein*, whose translations include "to shelter," "to gather," "to keep," and "to receive," reveals that there is another side of language than speech, a side that is reception-focused, a side that builds a home of language. With the traditional assertion of *logos*, Fiumara explains, "the richness of practice and heritage inherent in the word *legein* is inadvertently wasted [and] the semantic abundance of this word is reduced to 'saying' [something about something], resulting in the loss of its other meanings, such as 'preserving,' which is characteristic of a listening attitude" (1999, 12). In taking up Heidegger's recovery of *legein*, Fiumara proposes that scholars could begin anew and "start out by admitting that there could be no saying without hearing, no speaking which is not also an

integral part of listening, no speech which is not somehow received" (1999, 1). By aiming to restore a divided *logos*, Fiumara's project envisages a philosophy of listening at the root of what is called thinking and develops the characteristics of a listening attitude anchored to humility and faithfulness.

Fiumara's listening functions in two ways: as a means of knowing and as an ethical relation. By grounding in *legein* informed by Heidegger, Fiumara's theory of listening resists the tradition of *logos* dependent on the power, or domination, of mere saying. As she explains, the fuller word *legein* offers a new, relational perspective to thinking language: "To lay means to bring to lie. Thus, to lay is at the same time to place one thing beside another, to lay them together…Legein therefore is to lay: 'Laying is the letting-lie-before—which is gather into itself—of that which comes together into presence" (1999, 5). With this broader perspective, Fiumara explains, knowledge is no longer about mastery, control, or domination, the notion of "letting lie" invokes a different relationship to language, one characterized by, humility and restraint. *Logos*, in its fuller understanding is not an action of assertion, but one of reception.

The possibility of listening laid out by Fiumara's project is not only a theory of listening or a better understanding of language, but the emergence of an ethical perspective that sees listening as central to belonging and being-with. As she describes it, listening reveals a relational openness. Anyone who is listening is necessarily and fundamentally open, both to the speech of others and to the existence of others. Fiumara recognizes the importance of being-with and attunement to a theory of listening, explaining how "the whole question [of listening] hinges on the capacity of 'letting-lie-together-before' and of freeing out thinking from its 'constitutive' compulsion to submit to analysis—analyze —scrutinize, delve into, explore, exhaust, probe the famous 'object of knowledge' of our research tradition" (1999, 16). Through a recovery of

listening, through a fuller understanding of logos rooted in *legein*, Fiumara promises a different kind of relation that is not rooted in mastery, but rather grounds in the openness to others without the need to analyze, probe, or scrutinize

In her theory of listening as foundational to language, Fiumara hopes that we may become "apprentices of listening rather than masters of discourse," suggesting a foundational position of receptivity inherent in being-with and in communication (1999, 57). By presenting a view of language that necessarily included listening, Fiumara revealed listening as a legitimate object of rhetorical inquiry that gets further developed by scholars in the years to follow.

listening rhetorically

Listening studies in rhetoric following Fiumara's text is best encapsulated by the concept of *rhetorical listening*, first presented by Krista Ratcliffe in her 1999 article, "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a 'Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct'" and further developed in her 2005 *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness.* In this section, I sketch the development of the concept of rhetorical listening as a reply to the need to negotiate difference within rhetoric studies.

The increase in listening studies in the discipline of rhetoric, and in large part the debate laid out in the feminist trilogue, is a direct response to the 1997 essay, "When the First Voice You Hear is not Your Own," written by Jacqueline Jones Royster. In this essay, Royster urges scholars in rhetoric and composition to address the pressing need to construct paradigms that help people engage in better practices of cross-boundary discourse whether in teaching, researching, writing, or talking with others:

"Be awake, awake and listening, awake and operating deliberately on codes of better conduct in the interest of keeping our boundaries fluid, our discourse invigorated with multiple perspectives, and our policies and practices well-tuned toward a clearer respect for human potential and achievement from whatever their source and a clearer understanding that voicing at its best is not just well-spoken but also well-heard" (40).

As Royster shows, the lack of awareness or listening on part of white scholars directly prevents cross-cultural communication, humane and egalitarian policies, or invigorated discourse. Listening is thus presented as the solution in Royster's plea for scholars to "be awake," to acknowledge non-white voices and subjectivities without carelessly handling marginalized voices, subjectivity, and experiences as objects of inquiry or discussion. With this injunction to "listen," emerged the questions of "How do we listen?" meaning, "How do we demonstrate that we honor and respect the person talking and what that person is saying, or what the person might say if we valued someone other than ourselves having a turn to speak?" and "How do we translate listening into action?"

Royster's essay broke through the silent and invisible barricades that had, until that point, surrounded the feminist parlor in rhetoric and composition studies. Since the publication of Campbell's 1989 *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, feminist scholars had launched a rhetorical project that sought to recover women in the long masculinist rhetorical tradition, to theorize feminist rhetorical strategies, and to configure the subject "Woman" on which these histories and practices rely. While the scholars in the parlor were adamant about resisting the phallogocentric tradition, the inability to think at the intersection of race and gender, or to be informed by critical race theory that had emerged in critical legal studies in the 1980s in response to mainstream colorblind racism, meant that their feminist theorizing of the subject of "Woman," and "her"

histories and rhetorics had continued to center whiteness, the Western tradition, and operate on the logics of exclusion therein. It seemed clear that feminist rhetoric scholars were willing to fight for the voice of woman to be raised out of the subjugation of silence, even as they were unable to hear or listen to the voices of women who had already been deemed other and marginalized as such.

When Kris Ratcliffe entered the parlor in 1999, feminist rhetorical scholarship working to configure Woman as rhetor had largely neglected the intersection of race and gender, focusing predominantly on the neglected speech and speech practices of white women that exposed a presumption of whiteness as default. Born of these on-going debates and intellectual biases among white feminist scholars, Ratcliffe theorized *rhetorical listening* as a response to Royster's concerns and raised further questions for listening: How can scholars improve our culture's current discursive possibilities for articulating the intersecting identifications of gender and race? How can scholars promote and foster cross-cultural communication amid these identifications? And how do scholars incorporate and articulate whiteness, an identification that has been rendered invisible, in conversations on gender and race? In response, rhetorical listening offered a solution for the silences of the past and the silencing that occurs in predominantly white spaces, while also conceiving of a rhetorical position that allowed for the awareness of the silent ideological forces within discourse.

Following the publication of her 1999 article, Ratcliffe developed the concept of rhetorical listening in her 2005 book, *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness.* In this text, she presents a recovery of listening from its neglected position within a Western rhetorical tradition that has historically valorized speaking and writing and offers rhetorical listening as a possible revival of listening in rhetoric studies. Rhetorical listening is

defined as "a trope for interpretive invention and as a code for cross-cultural conduct" that "signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" (2005, 1). In the various descriptions presented by Ratcliffe, rhetorical listening has multiple overlapping and simultaneous functions: it is at once a "trope for interpretative invention," a "code for cross-cultural conduct," a reading practice, a place to foster conscious self-reflection, a "stance of openness," and a protocol of etiquette (2005, 1). In its various possibilities, rhetorical listening offers a rhetorical strategy individuals can use when engaging in productive cross-cultural exchanges.

Ratcliffe's idea of rhetorical listening relies primarily on the notion of identification found in Burkean rhetorical theory. For Burke, all language is persuasive, but persuasion must necessarily begin with identification to be successful. Consider a simple example: A career politician is running a presidential campaign. To successfully persuade voters across the nation, this person must be able to appeal to a diverse population of people ranging across sociocultural identifications. According to Burke, to successfully persuade voters, this politician would need not just to find similarities between themself and the audience, but to build identification with them through a process described as *consubstantiation*, denoting a relationship of shared practices, common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes within a given cultural context (1969, 20). In a Burkean view, to successfully persuade, the politician must first show that their interests are joined with their audience's interests, that they share in cultural symbols, practices, and concepts.

In this view, the politician needs simply to persuade the audience that he shares in their cultural practices or beliefs. In reality, Ratcliffe explains, identifications are often troubled by history, uneven power dynamics, or ignorance that challenge communication across various

cultural identifications. In the feminist tradition of raising consciousness, Ratcliffe expands on

Burke's theory to frame rhetorical listening as a means by which individuals can foster

"conscious identifications" (2005, 2). Ratcliffe supplements Burke's theory with Diana Fuss's

Identification Papers to see how cultural identifications weigh on and influence their rhetorical

engagements. Fuss complicates or "dances with" Burke's notion of identification by invoking

"double sites of identification" (2005, 66). Grounded in psychoanalysis, Fuss understands

identification as both an assertion of the psych/ego and as a cultural and historical construction,

regarding both sides of this doubled identification as political formations.

In response, Ratcliffe offers "non-identification" as a possible site to be occupied by

rhetorical listening. Non-identification is conceived as an in-between, marginal space between

identifications. Most understood in metaphorical terms, Ratcliffe proposes instead that we think

identification metonymically. Rather than an overlapping shared site of identification, she

proposes thinking identification in the gap or "space between juxtaposed subjects" (2005, 72).

Ratcliffe explains how we might occupy non-identification as a site for listening:

> To define non-identification, I look first to its visual representation. The hyphen in non-identification signifies a place where two concepts are metonymically juxtaposed—that is, where concepts of the negative of identification are associated but not overlapping. As such, the hyphen represents the 'margin between,' a place wherein people may consciously choose to position themselves to listen rhetorically. This 'margin between' does not transcend ideology; it does, however, provide a place of pause, a place of reflection, a place that invites people to admit that gaps exist. Admissions of gaps may take the place of "I don't know you," "I don't know what I don't know about you," or even "I don't know that I don't know that you exist"—whether that you is a person, place, thing, or idea. (2005, 72-73)

For Ratcliffe, identification is not only made possible by a shared relation to commonality in the

Burkean sense, or a politically constructed set of beliefs about oneself as Fuss presents, nor is it

an ideological reading of the influences on a particular subject; rather, identification is

conditioned by non-identification, by the moments when it is made aware that ideological

identifications are insufficient for understanding in a given cross-cultural exchange. In the

example of our politician, rhetorical listening would require first a reading of the identifications

at work, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged by the politician. Imagine the politician is

like most United States politicians: a white man who was raised in an upper-middle class family,

received an Ivy League education, likely has a Law degree, is Christian and married to a white

woman, and earns about $200,000 dollars a year. In this scenario, rhetorical listening reads the

identifications to whiteness, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, heteronormativity, and

nationalism that come to bear on any rhetorical situation the politician is in. By rendering these

identifications conscious and raising the awareness of interlocutors, as Ratcliffe suggests, they

may better engage in communication across differing identifications. Second, rhetorical listening

would also enable the politician himself to occupy a space of non-identification by consciously

choosing to admit gaps in his understanding of different identifications. In this sense, rhetorical

listening offers both a mode of knowing in that interlocutors use it to understand the ideological

forces of identification at play, and a mode of ethical relation in that it is a choice one makes in

the way that they relate to others.

By building conscious identifications and making identifications conscious, rhetorical

listening aims to foster greater understanding amongst individuals of varying cultural and social

backgrounds. Ratcliffe explicitly states "promoting an understanding of self and other" as the

first move that comprises rhetorical listening (2005, 26, original emphasis). She continues:

> By stipulating understanding as an end of rhetorical listening, I recognize that I am
> invoking a troubled term. Understanding has a complicated history in narrative studies
> and in philosophical studies in that it is often coupled with authorial intent…By posing
> understanding as an end of rhetorical listening, I am not proposing that we idealize
> understanding or authorial intent: My purpose is neither to promote 'textual realism'

wherein a text is perceived as a repository of the truth nor to celebrate naïve 'readerly idealism' wherein the contexts of speakers/writers are simplifies and the contexts of reader/listeners are erased. Rather, my purpose is to wed Giovanni's real to Piercy's ideal, to collapse the real/ideal dichotomy into a strategic third ground where rhetorical negotiation is exposed as always already existing and where rhetorical listening is posited as one means of that negotiation." (2005, 27, original emphasis)

In this movement, Ratcliffe simultaneously grounds in understanding as an end of rhetorical listening while maintaining an awareness of the limitations and criticisms against the term. She continues, pushing against "understanding" as "more than simply listening for a speaker/writer's intent" or for "our own self-interested readerly intent" to suggest instead a submissive positionality of "standing under," which provides a perspective that enables one to see objectively the discourses that shape them: "Standing under our own discourses means identifying the various discourses embodied in each of us and then listening to hear and imagine how they might affect not only ourselves but others" (1999, 206). "Standing under" asks that interlocutors build self-aware cultural consciousness, identifying and recognizing cultural identities that influence how they engage in dialogue, specifically cross-culturally, or as she puts it, "consciously standing under discourses that surround us and others" (2005, 28).

With the possibility that rhetorical listening can reconcile the gap of cultural identifications, it is of no surprise that Ratcliffe's book has thus risen to prominence as an approach that "challenges over-determined cultural identifications by inventing a tropological scene where individuals may encounter difference on its own terms" (Jensen, 185). Since the publication of Ratcliffe's 1999 "Rhetorical Listening," her 2000 "Eavesdropping as Rhetorical Tactic," and her 2005 *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*, scholars within rhetoric and composition, and across disciplines, have drawn on her work to develop theories, readings, and pedagogical practices of listening. Some scholars have referenced rhetorical listening to identify scholarly gaps in rhetoric and composition studies, such as Enoch's

Refiguring Rhetorical Education (2008) and Gold's *Rhetoric at the Margins* (2008), which draw on Ratcliffe's claim that listening is consistently overlooked inside rhetoric and composition studies to posit listening as central to rhetorical education. Others have adopted rhetorical listening to conduct their own rhetorical analyses of feminist rhetoric (Arneson, 2008), communitarian literacy (Davis, 2001), spirituality (Kirsch, 2009), personal writing (Hindman, 2003), and witnessing and testifying (Hesford, 2004). Many have taken up rhetorical listening to analyze cross-cultural narratives or multicultural rhetorics (Cushman, 2008; Gilyard, 2008; Marzluf, 2008; Ramirez, 2009). And some have continued, as Ratcliffe hoped, to take up listening as a site for rhetorical theory (Jung, 2005; Gogan, 2009; Lipari, 2012).

Given the success of Ratcliffe's scholarship and its adoption within the field, there is little doubt to the impact of rhetorical listening and the value that this theory contributes to the field of rhetoric studies. Not only did rhetorical listening make an impact in the debates it was born out of as an area in which rhetoric scholars could negotiate their own disagreements and further develop their own scholarship, but it provided a methodology for reading rhetorical strategies across discourses, cultures, and subjectivities. Given the priorities of the Octalogs to highlight the importance of marginalized histories and rhetorical practices, encourage scholars to listen for the voices that have been left out of well-known historical accounts, and explore how the dynamics of power and issues of identity formation influence the historiography of rhetoric, rhetorical listening offered a practice that aimed to enable scholars to hear across those cultural boundaries. By providing a framework for listening to the forces of identification when engaging in cross-cultural dialogue, Ratcliffe's theory laid the groundwork for how scholars think of negotiating differences that persist today.

limits of rhetorical listening

Unfortunately, rhetorical listening has by no means solved the problem of troubled identifications, challenging cross-cultural exchanges, or marginalization. Rather, we see the continued inability to listen nearly two decades since the adoption of this theory. Ratcliffe and scholars who have utilized rhetorical listening as a framework for understanding cultural difference have inadvertently offered a listening without listening—a theory of listening that does not explain how one is to listen better, but rather enables one to speak better. To return to the concerns raised by Diane Davis and Michelle Ballif in 2000, a listening practice that excludes *différance* in favor of stabilized identifications and aims toward *understanding* as the goal has limited ethical capacity for openness to difference or otherness.

Here, I take issue with Ratcliffe's theory not as a practice for listening, or reading, within a given rhetorical situation or exchange, but as a stance of openness. My critique of rhetorical listening focuses on the first move of rhetorical listening: that listening promotes an understanding of self and other. By interrogating understanding as the key element of rhetorical listening and foundational to listening as an ethical posture, I draw on Spivak, Da Silva, and Derrida to show how a foundation of understanding in fact limits the "stance of openness" that rhetorical listening claims to invoke.

My issue with rhetorical listening lies not in the modes by which we come to understand, or build knowledge, but that the aim of listening should be toward understanding. Given that listening offers an ethical rhetorical stance that opens to otherness, seeking understanding as the goal of listening closes the listener off from hearing that which may lie beyond understanding. In *Rhetorical Listening*, Ratcliffe acknowledges that understanding has "a complicated history in narrative studies and in philosophical studies in that it is often coupled with authorial intent" and

suggests a "strategic idealism" when listening with the intent to understand (2005, 27). She offers instead understanding as a "standing under" the discourses of others by "first, acknowledging the existence of these discourses; second, listening for (un)conscious presences, absences, and unknowns; and third, consciously integrating this information into our world views and decision making" (2005, 29). By acknowledging "(un)conscious presences, absences, and unknowns" always at play, and asking "how may we listen for that which we do not intellectually, viscerally, or experientially know?" Ratcliffe sees the limitations of listening to understand, but she insists that "limits may be moved and re-moved," insofar as there is a "willingness" to remove them (2005, 30). Ratcliffe's focus on "willingness" and "conscious action" exposes how listening with the intent to understand is less of an ethical posture of self-renunciation that would open to alterity as it is a practice of sovereign recognition and authorization.

In the feminist trilogue, Ballif expresses doubt about the notion of listening to understand, particularly the idea that listening could be used to understand differences or "the Other." She writes, "we are altogether too good at knowing—that is, fashioning—the Other (exotic or nonexotic) into a tidy mirror image of ourselves…Understanding, as I see it, is a precondition for listening: it precedes rather than follows listening. And this is tied up with the epistemic process of knowing and making meaning" (2000, 587; 589). Ballif's skepticism about understanding as an end, rather than as a beginning, reveals how Ratcliffe's goal of understanding is pre-determined by what is brought into the listening scene. In desiring to know difference, rhetorical listening, in actuality, produces difference as a cultural object to be recovered, necessitating the configuration of an essentialized other to whom one can then listen. Often, when scholars write of "understanding" cultural difference, it invokes an imagined end-

site, a vantage point from which one can better see, know, or communicate with others. Rather, as Ballif describes, seeking understanding actually creates more of a reflection pool, wherein otherness is conceived in the image of the "I" or "we" whose gaze seeks to understand.

Spivak writes of this issue in the oft-quoted 1988 "Can the Subaltern Speak?" when she reads in Foucault and Deleuze "the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of the Other as the Self's shadow" within their intellectualized representations of society's "Others" (1988, 75). Spivak explains how the desire to know the other, to bring the other into *logos*, by asking them to speak, asking if they *can* speak, seeking to listen to their speech, exposes first and foremost the desire of the intellectual rather than the subject whom he conjures. Spivak's essay is most notable for revealing how the desire for theories and representations of pluralized others gives the illusion of undermining Western sovereignty while actually conserving the subject of the West (1988, 66). The other to whom the listener assumes to listen is thus a subject-effect of the attempted listening practice. Rather than "understanding" the culturally differentiated other, listening "ushers in the unnamed [sovereign] Subject" who determines speech (1988, 69). This unnamed Subject, the sovereign intellectual who determines speech to be listened to, whose "willingness" and "conscious choice" is the condition for understanding in the first place, expects that the other, when given the opportunity, will "speak and know their conditions" (1988, 78). Of course, such a speech—and by consequence, a listening—is an impossibility. The other cannot know or speak its conditions as other because it is only other insofar as it is related to the self asking it to speak. The other, as a subject, only exists as a projection of the sovereign.

Spivak's critique of the Western desire to know and represent the cultural Other is complemented by Denise Ferreira da Silva's tracing of the notion of Understanding as the

"formal and fixed walls" that authorized the partial and total violence against humanity's cultural (non-white/non-European) and physical (more-than-human) 'Others' (2016, 57). It is not just that the notion of understanding has "a complicated history in narrative studies and in philosophical studies in that it is often coupled with authorial intent," but that Understanding has been a tool and a weapon for Western colonization and the development of the Western sovereign subject. Da Silva's view reveals the historical system of signification around the concept of *understanding* that has been functional for white European peoples in colonial pursuits and totalizing consumption of otherness. Thus, thinking listening as a means for understanding cannot be separated from the history of the term within the Western and Westernized world.

According to Da Silva, understanding rests on three ontological pillars in modern epistemological and ethical projects: separability, determinacy, and sequentiality (2016, 58). Separability refers to "the view that all that can be known about the things of the world is what is gathered by the forms (space and time) of the intuition and the categories of the Understanding (quantity, quality, relation, modality). Everything else about them remains inaccessible and irrelevant to knowledge" (2016, 58). We see this desire at work in rhetorical listening wherein cultural difference is assumed to be known and knowable through the tools of Understanding, while that which is regarded as unknowable, or at the limits of knowing, can be re/negotiated to an ultimate end of knowability. In conjunction, determinacy is the "view that knowledge results from the Understanding's ability to produce formal constructs, which it can use to determine the true nature of the sense impressions gathered by the forms of intuition" (2016, 58). Separability and determinacy work together to reify and authorize both movements of understanding. If all

things are knowable, and knowledge results from Understanding's ability to know through formal processes, the two are circular and co-constitutive.

Da Silva explains how modern philosophers since Kant have relied on these three pillars to build their knowledge program (2016, 59). This knowledge program has constructed and historicized otherness in relation to and against a European ethnic and racial identity (Césaire, 1950; Wynter, 1984; Da Silva, 2007). As Da Silva describes, this knowledge program has always "produced and rehearsed human difference" for the advancement of Understanding:

> For centuries… developments in postclassical physics, relativity and quantum mechanics, have been crucial in the development of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of economic, juridical, ethical and political issues, which both produced and rehearsed human difference. Unfortunately, however, they have not yet inspired imaginings of difference without separability, whether spatio-temporal, as in Boas' cultural collectives, or formal, as in Foucault's discursively produced subject. Not surprisingly, they have further reinforced the idea of culture and the mental contents to which it refers as expressing a fundamental separation between human collectives, in terms of nationality, ethnicity and social (gender, sexual, racial) identity. (2016, 59)

Da Silva's claim that the movements of disciplines under the banner of Understanding in the Western knowledge program that have "not yet inspired imaginings of difference without separability" exposes the limitations of a project comprised first and foremost in a desire for understanding as an end goal, even if that understanding is more complex or nuanced than Kant or Hegel may have devised. Understanding, as a project that seeks to subsume and totalize ultimately negates difference, cutting off the excess that seemingly serves no purpose. As a solution to troubled identifications and cross-cultural communication, rhetorical listening must first understand this "fundamental separation between human collectives," meaning it first presumes and re-constitutes this separation so as to offer itself as a solution.

In addition to the problems of understanding presented by Spivak and Da Silva, understanding as a goal for listening, for responding to the other, ultimately fails because alterity, by definition, is the condition of unknowability. As Derrida explains in his notion of *the secret*, the absolute other is a secret— undiscoverable, incommunicable, and unrevealed. In an interview with Gianni Vattimo published in *A Taste for the Secret*, Derrida articulates the inability to know "the other" because it is unforeseeable as a condition of self that is "in me before me":

> "The other is in me before me: the ego (even the collective ego) implies alterity as its own condition. There is no 'I' that ethically makes room for the other, but rather an 'I' that is structured by the alterity within it, an 'I' that is itself in a state of self-destruction, of dislocation…the other is there in any case, it will arrive if it wants, but before me, before I could have foreseen it" (1997, 84)

If "the other is in me before me," then the only place for me to look for "the other" is in myself, either in my own interpellation within a larger discourse that marginalizes and "others" particular people or in my own desire for an "other." Rhetorical listening presupposes that the other is not within me, that the other is out there, accessible if I only stop speaking and instead assume a stance of openness. Rather, Derrida complicates the notion of an "I" that just needs to listen when he claims that "There is no 'I' that can ethically make room for the other" because such an "I" would have to self-destruct, for it relies on alterity to create itself. Instead, as Derrida writes, the other "will arrive if it wants," outside of the conditions set by the person who wants to know or listen to the other, and we must learn how to be hospitable to the what-is-to-come [l'avenir], with the opening to the to-come [l'à-venir] (2001, 19).

The coming of the other, as Derrida outlined in *Rogues*, requires "a certain unconditional renunciation of sovereignty…a priori" (2005, xiv). Such a renunciation of sovereignty, or destruction of ego, is inherent to Derrida's concept of hospitality. In an interview between

Derrida and *Le Monde*, Derrida responds to a question about the "unconditional 'law of hospitality,'" a concept developed in his 1997 *Of Hospitality*, saying, "There is no culture or form of social connection without a principle of hospitality. This ordains, even making it desirable, a welcome without reservations or calculation, an unlimited display of hospitality to the new arrival" (1997, 66). Derrida here marks hospitality as a necessity and an inevitability, just as the coming of the other is an inevitability, in any culture or "form of social connection." The principle of hospitality is thus "a welcome without reservation," to the other who may or may not arrive. A "welcome without reservation" and an invocation of sovereignty are mutually exclusive. For Derrida, all we can do is prepare, to leave open the door, for the other who will never come. While leaving the door open may seem like a choice, for Derrida, hospitality is a "weak force" in response to the coming and hearing of the other. The weak or vulnerable force in response to the "unforeseeability" of the "singular coming of the other" is a "force without power" (1997, xiv). Such a force, "opens up unconditionally to what or who comes," unlike the optional condition of openness within rhetorical listening.

Derrida's ethics of hospitality give us an idea of what it might look like to ethically attune to the incomprehensible surplus of radical alterity—to be open, truly open, to the yet-to-arrive, beyond language, beyond the possibility of listening. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida explains that the question of the foreigner is itself a question of the address because the foreigner is foreigner in/of *logos*. The foreigner, the culturally-constructed other, Derrida explains, is a being-in-question who, being the first question, puts me in question. In the inability to recognize and understand the foreigner, the "I" is thrown into question. In the face of the foreigner, then, Derrida offers the Law of Hospitality, an unconditional, absolute hospitality offered to the other without a name

and without the condition for a name; it is extra-*logos* and requires a break with *logos* as the authority that creates hospitality in the ordinary sense. He explains:

> Absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner…but to the absolute other and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity or even their names." (2000, 25)

In other words, this law commands that an unconditional and non-reciprocal hospitality be offered prior to anticipation or identification of/with who or whatever arrives, "whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female" (2000, 77). Demanding an unconditional opening to the absolute other, this law of unconditional hospitality must be the aspiration of ethics and rhetoric, a discipline that has too often been used to close doors, build walls, and deny ethical treatment. Yet, it runs contradictory to the everyday laws of hospitality that govern our responsibility to the collective, the always plural rights and moral duties that remain conditional and reciprocal and have been defined within the history of the philosophical tradition. These conditional laws of hospitality reliant on the condition of sovereignty expose the impossibility of absolute Hospitality that requires absolute exposedness. The struggle to self-renunciate, under the Law of Hospitality, is in conflict with the demands of the conditional laws of hospitality. The reality is that to be ethical is to be held in tension between the unconditional responsibility to this singular other, the absolute other who will have arrived, and my conditional responsibility to all other others. Ethical decisions, thus, are both urgently required and impossible.

Given the concerns raised by Spivak, Da Silva, and Derrida, the proposition that listening can and should be utilized as a tool for understanding cultural difference is complicated by the

desire to know, and the impossibility to know, the other. Understanding, as the aim of listening, ultimately reveals not an openness to difference, but the desire to capture and contain difference. As Ballif argues, "it is not enough to say, 'we must make time to listen,' or, we must 'dialogue' with Jackie Royster" rather, that we need to better theorize how to listen to that which is beyond understanding (2000, 600). She suggests instead that we think of listening not as understanding, but as (mis)understanding. In her view, a (mis)understanding would embrace difference, would not presume to understand, or know, and would attend to the impossibilities rather than the possibilities of understanding (2000, 612). If rhetorical listening, as I have shown, is an injunction of sovereignty, what does listening look like if it is not an option? What would it look like if the ethical functions not as an active choice but a kind of surrender or relinquishing of power to an other who may never arrive?

the possibility of listening differently

In response to the limitations of rhetorical listening as an ethical stance of openness, this section responds to Ratcliffe's invitation for further conversation about how listening may inform rhetoric and composition studies (2005, 19). I bring the work of Lisbeth Lipari into the conversation in order to expand listening beyond the unspoken and unaccounted for, into the silence of unknowing. Unlike rhetorical listening that seeks to understand different subjectivities on the basis of rhetorically constructed identifications, Lipari's theory of *interlistening* emphasizes the inseparability of speaking, listening, and thinking, to present a theory of listening that captures a holistic experience of simultaneous phenomena. In this view, speech and listening are not separated—listening does not need to be elevated to the level of speech, or understood *as* speech—rather, speaking and listening are part of an organic chorale of communication.

In her 2012 article "Rhetoric's Other: Levinas, Listening, and the Ethical Response," Lisbeth Lipari expanded Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening, drawing on Levinas's ethics to think critically about the ethical possibilities of listening. In this article, she conceptualized listening as a "co-constitutive communicative act" that "makes the ethical response possible" and considered listening "the invisible and inaudible enactment of the ethical relation itself," on which everything in rhetoric depends (248, 2012). In her 2014 book *Listening, Thinking, Being*, Lipari develops these ideas further beyond rhetoric or communication, and reconceives listening as an "holistic embodied process," expanding the definition of listening to include "nonauditory phenomena" (2014, 50). Grounding in embodiment, holism, and an ethics of attunement, Lipari moves beyond rhetorical listening to think listening as an interlistening, "a multimodal process that involves all five senses, in a process [called] polymodality" (2014, 51). The notion of polymodality challenges the traditional episteme that understands communication as "carved up

into three separate processes of thinking, speaking, [and] listening" and suggests instead that this process is actually "an organic whole, a confused multiplicity that echoes, vibrates, and pulses in nonlinear time" (2014, 137). In this view, listening is not a singular sense or action, and understanding is no longer capturable within language or a given episteme.

Lipari urges readers to reconsider understanding as always partial and incomplete, instead grounding her theory of listening in misunderstanding. According to Lipari, the question of listening is, at its roots, a question of misunderstanding: How do we prevent misunderstanding? Listening, as it has largely been conceived, has failed repeatedly to prevent misunderstanding because it aims toward the impossibility of understanding as a fixed and stable resting place. By beginning instead with misunderstanding as the given and condition of possibility for listening, Lipari sets a condition of not knowing as the constant against which the demand of listening arises. Letting go of the delusions of understanding allows us, then, to move toward ignorance and listen in/to misunderstanding:

> What if we were able to give up this way of understanding "understanding" and see it not as a captured stillness or singularity, but rather as a momentary pause in an ongoing movement of unfolding, like a rest in a musical score, or a pause in a story, or a swirling eddy in an inexorable, ongoing river of meaning? … Contrary to popular wisdom…there is great strength in not understanding—in giving up our convictions and certainties to let understanding evolve. Just as a cup filled with tea has no room for more, a mind filled with certainty is unable to grow and discover (2014, 139).

Listening in/to misunderstanding allows the space for openness to that which is unknown and unknowable because it accepts and dwells in unknowing. Conceived in this way, listening is not moving along a path toward understanding, or seen as a means to a clear and finite end, but rather it is a process of exposure and attunement. It is a practice of opening, openness, restraint, and unknowing.

By thinking listening as openness, Lipari shows how to listen is to engage a "prior ethical act," drawing on Heidegger's claim that "we have heard when we belong to the matter addressed":

> We belong to the matter addressed when the ethical call enters us and has become a part of us, when we have made a space for it, a home for it, inside us where we are not. This is the self-transcendence, the gift, of listening. It is where I make a space where I am not— where I have, however, temporarily, renounced my projects, goals, and understanding in order to listen be with the other. (2014, 350)

Lipari explains an ethical situation here that is similar to the one of hospitality. Like hospitality, it requires a making of space, a renunciation of self; but she develops this theoretical practice of listening from Heidegger's notion of the moment when hearing succeeds. What I'm suggesting here is that Lipari herself, not a paragraph after defining the terms hearing and listening as separate, conflates them. When she writes of listening in the quote above, she is in fact, writing of hearing, an unconscious, unintentional predisposition that we have toward difference. In "Rhetoric's Other: Levinas, Listening, and the Ethical Response," Lipari expands these definitions, writing that listening is an obedience because of the attention to the experience and expression of the other that it requires (2012, 237). However, if, by definition, listening requires an active attentiveness, a gift of the ear, then one can never self-transcend in the practice of listening, rather it would require a constant awareness of a self who gifts their attention to an other.

If we read Lipari's definition of listening, that it "involves an encounter with radical alterity that disrupts our everyday understands and habits of thought," as Derridean hospitality, then it becomes clear that the kind of "listening" she is talking about is not one that is a matter of attention or choice or gifting at all, but rather, it imposes itself on us. It is an event whose arrival

can never be known or anticipated. Lipari's text lends itself to this analysis when she writes, "Listening is thus a dwelling place from where we offer our ethical response, our hospitality, to the other and the world. Listening being is thus an invitation—a hosting" (350). Knowing what we know about the system of signification that comes to bear on listening, Lipari's conceptualization of listening as a "dwelling place from where we offer our ethical response" cannot hold. If we instead replace listening here with "hearing," a term which, by definition, invokes a passive engagement with the world rather than an active imposition of self, then we can see how hearing becomes the position of self-destruction, complete surrender to the arrival of the other who will come (speak) if it wants, that enables unconditional hospitality. Such a stance resists the reconstitution of difference, negating the injunction of sovereignty.

Despite developing a theory of listening that is polymodal and holistic, Lipari still asserts that listening is "itself a form of speaking that resonates with echoes of everything we have ever heard, thought, seen, touched, said, and read throughout our lives" (9). In doing so, she brings listening back into the fold of speech, back into the order of logos. What if scholars refused this move? What if listening could remain outside of speech, not as inseparable, but also not regarded as a kind of speaking. In refusing to turn listening into a tool or object for rhetorical use, we might exercise a humble and silent restraint that enables us to attune to the *arrivant*, to the yet-to-come.

Da Silva's view of the world as plenum, in conjunction with Derrida's concept of différance that recognizes our relation to one another is an effect of a movement of differentiation, encourages a listening not for the said, that which can be easily enfolded and inscribed into the order of logos, but to listen for the in-between, the spaces and silences that do not reveal themselves or contain anything to be comprehended or appropriated. Rather, the in-

between of relationality asks us to re-configure positionality in the world and in rhetorical exchanges. How to reimagine in relation rather than knowing through possession? How do I attune to the invisible, to both the unsaid and unsayable, to the non-appropriative address and non-hermeneutical dimension of rhetoric?

Imagining the world as plenum is to think the world as an infinite composition in which each existant condition is a possibility of becoming an expression of all other existants with which it is entangled. Da Silva offers a view of the world as pure relationality beyond space and time in which any singular person may be exchanged for any other singular person; any existant for any other existant. This view of entanglement requires that we rethink sociality from without the modern text, releasing our thinking of the grips of certainty and "embrace the imagination's power to create with unclear or confused, uncertain impressions" (2016, 57). In this view, understanding is revealed as disillusionment. We are, instead, unsettled, rendered uncertain by default. Difference, in a world entangled, is not culturally inscribed as unresolvable estrangement, but rather, the expression of an elementary entanglement. Sociality is thus neither the course not the effect of relations involving separate existants, but the uncertain conditions under which everything that exists is a singular expression of each every actual-virtual other existant.

CHAPTER III

BECOMING UNGROUNDED:

ENGAGING SILENCE AS A STANCE TOWARD WONDER

"The event, then, to make it perhaps to appear to be a simple event, is the loss of grounding. This is not just a loss of philosophical grounding but all grounding especially that of rhetorical strategies. What is far left of what it is to be humanistically possible is tactics, ruses. But this loss of grounding paradoxically is turned into a grounding without grounding."

—Victor Vitanza

"Words fail us; they do so originally and not merely occasionally…Words do not yet come to speech at all, but it is precisely in failing us that they arrive at the first leap. This failing is the event as intimation and incursion of beyng. This failing us is the inceptual condition for the self-unfolding possibility of an original (poetic) naming of beyng."

—Martin Heidegger

"I say the yes and not the word 'yes' because there can be a yes without a word."

—Jacques Derrida

departure

This chapter takes off from the largely unacknowledged questions raised by Victor

Vitanza in his review "Some Meditations-Ruminations on Cheryl Glenn's *Unspoken*" written in

2005 for the now ceased publication *JAC*, a journal for the interdisciplinary study of rhetoric,

culture, and politics. In this review, Vitanza poses two major questions about whether *Unspoken:*

A Rhetoric of Silence accomplishes a new framework of thinking silence and listening for "us" in

the field of rhetoric and composition studies. He questions first, what would make a book on

silence *possible* in the face of its disciplinary paradox? And second, what might an inquiry into

silence look like if left *un*spoken? In considering the first question, the possibility for this book-

to-come on silence, Vitanza recognizes how such a book would be confined within the discipline

itself that requires "the writer follow a proper, institutional protocol of thinking," that would

thereby render the text paradoxical (2005, 794). How, then, can rhetoric scholars think silence, especially silence on its own terms, without falling repeatedly into the traps of translation, representation, and signification? Is it possible for rhetoric scholars to think outside the well-worn strategies of speech and writing? So long as rhetoric as a discipline remains committed to speech practices and demands logocentrism as the sole framework for knowledge, silence can never be known on its own terms. If these protocols of thinking, as Vitanza puts it, are already institutionally steeped and are already presupposing an idea of silence to begin with, then the inquiry into silence will always yield self-reflective, normative results. Rather, these institutional and disciplinary protocols of thinking are the exact thing an inquiry into silence should work to desediment.

As shown in the first chapter, the rhetorical tradition, a largely Western corpus of texts dating back to Ancient Greece, explicitly references the practices, strategies, and teaching of speech and writing in the service of power: how to persuade, motivate, move audiences and interlocutors toward your will or the greater good. Within this tradition, speech is equated with power and silence is flattened into the lack, absence, or negation of power. This equation is repeated even when scholars have attempted to remedy it with "rhetorics of silence" that pull signification out of speechlessness. In doing so, scholars have ultimately conformed to and reproduced an exclusionary and disciplinary logocentrism with the aim, again, for power. In his review, Vitanza describes how this disciplinary training and recurring tradition of thinking has left little room for thinking silence on its own terms:

> "For the most part, having been trained as a rhetor by my mentors, I have been trained to produce words (texts), and if I have been taught to listen for the unspoken, I have been taught only to listen so that I might turn what is not said into what *should* have been said. I have been trained, in other words, to turn the whole unspoken into a weapon against my interlocutors in a game of argumentation. To win. In the name of some social

justice…But there is finally nothing to obtain in winning at this game except only more anxiety without much real joy…Hence, at times, the remaining anxiety drives an obsession that I have, or that has me, an obsession in writing to grasp and to say it all…This obsession, for good or bad or whatever, has turned me toward a listening to the text, or to the logoi, that says far too much, mostly through what it leaves unsaid in its sayings, than can be rendered." (2005, 811)

As he describes, the training within the Western rhetorical and philosophical traditions is to leave no stone unturned to speech, to both consume and subsume into the established order of logocentric thinking. There is little room for silence in a system that demands all be articulated. The question of *the unspoken*, in the recuperative and social justice movements of contemporary rhetoric studies, has focused on how "to listen for the unspoken…so that I might turn what is not said into what *should* have been said" (2005, 811). In these efforts, silence has been re-signified as "unspoken" speech to be recovered as we see in Glenn's *unspoken*, something to be rejected and overcome with more speech like Audre Lorde's non-protective silences, or something to be wielded as "a weapon against my interlocutors." The unspoken, as Glenn presents it, is not the silence of the unsayable, but rather speech unheard and dismissed by the dominant discourse—it is rejected and ignored speech. Within this tradition, silence is not understood on its own terms at all—it is understood as speech.

Trapped by disciplinary frameworks of knowing that at once cast silence as unknowable—and certainly unwritable—while producing numerous discourses that signify silence *as* rhetorical speech acts, how, then, do I write a chapter that attempts to think silence on its own terms? How might we, as Vitanza's asks in his second line of inquiry, "make way for the conditions of this book (to come) on silence, the unspoken" that "would *bare* as well as *bear* witness to new idiomatic connections for what wants to be spoken"? (2005, 795, added

emphasis). Such an investigation of silence would have to make space and time for silence, to create the conditions for silence to emerge, to crack an opening into rhetorical thought.

In his review, Vitanza offers us some preliminary thinking, or unthinking, on silence in relation to the *unspoken* as speech systematically or strategically silenced:

> "That there are other notions of the *unspoken*, of course, is obvious—all that remains in silence, or silenced, in terms of how we wittingly or unwittingly mis-represent the *unspoken*, even the cultural takes on "silence" itself, or in terms of our systematically silencing what someone could and should say, given the opportunity…It's one thing to be silenced (there are so many who have been silenced); and quite another to find ourselves (appropriated, expropriated) in silence. Think about this—take a lifetime—to think what it means to be found, to be grounded (spoken), yet ungrounded (unspoken), in silence. What is needed—desired—is an art of listening. Not of speaking well. Not of correcting well. But. A lifetime of listening to the logos. Giving ourselves over to errancy." (2005, 801)

> And yet, entering silence is nothing but involvement. Collaboration. With the indeterminate. Overdeterminate. Walking down the hall with the ground meeting the shoe. Walking on the pavement and stepping on the cracks. Taps. Gaps. The logos, has its wayves, of being perpetually indeterminate. Causing us to lose face. Identity altogether. There is no entering silence until we give up our identities, which cause us to struggle for our own recognition. It is hard for an academik to enter into the unspoken that forever remains in silence. The only way is through self-overcoming." (2005, 812)

Vitanza packs into these two paragraphs a lot for us to pick up here. First, what does it look like to "find ourselves (appropriated, expropriated) in silence"? Second, how might we begin to think about what it means to be found, grounded, and ungrounded, in silence? Third, how might we give ourselves over to listening, to errancy, in order to *let* ourselves be found in silence? And finally, what does it look like to enter silence in collaboration, to willing step into the cracks and gaps, giving up identity? The self-overcoming, or as I will argue, the self-renunciation, required to "enter into the unspoken that forever remains in silence" is not a simple mode of being, especially rhetorically, and yet it may also be the simplest. These meditations-ruminations ask us

to consider the book that is yet-to-come on the unspoken, the book that will dare not to speak it or to try to translate, but to try to understand silence on its own terms.

This chapter tries to do just that. By exploring concepts of silence as the unspeakable and unspeakability, this chapter takes as its primary inquiry the following formulation provided by Vitanza for thinking this re/opening: "Spoken is to Unspoken as Grounding is to Ungrounding." Glenn posits silence, the *unspoken*, as neglected and rejected speech that has not been given the space, time, or attention to come to the surface. Here, I want to think silence, as not just the unspoken but the *unspeakable*, which would enact an epistemological ungrounding from the tradition of *logos*. Silence as unspeakability, however, does not offer itself up as a *thing* to be studied, mastered, controlled, or dominated. Instead, it demands a reconsideration of the rhetorical and an ungrounding from the classical dichotomy of speech/not-speech at the root of the logocentric tradition. As Vitanza explains, "We cannot experience the event or *unspoken* except as an experience of *a return*, but *in between*" (796). Ungrounding here requires thinking the unspoken not as a reservoir of speech locked away awaiting the right conditions to be spoken, but rather as the space *between* speech/not-speech from which language arises, the space of flux and movement—in Vitanza's words, "as in intercellular tissue, dis/connecting things. In a grounding of cracks, gaps, interruptions. After the *event*. Of the *disaster*" (796). Vitanza's imagery offers a way to articulate this impossibility, this subject which cannot be articulated, as the space in between, silence finds space in the gaps, cracks, and interruptions that linger in the fabric of language, thought, and being.

This chapter returns to the interrogations of language in the writings of Heidegger and Derrida to catch the emergences of silence in their work. I turn specifically to the legacies of Heidegger and Derrida because each grounds their understanding of being, truth, politics, justice

in the relation to unspeakability always at play in language. The goal of this chapter is not to signify silence as language or to understand silences within language, but to show how silence is always already present beyond and before language, as the perpetually indeterminate, ever-elusive movement that makes language possible. Rather than an object to be recovered or captured by speech, silence instead offers an experience of ungrounding from language, offering to us an experience of wonder and an opening to the unknown. In the words to come, I hope to advocate for a relation to this silent space of unknowing and unknowability as a relation to and with wonder, but I know that I am ungrounded as I move away from language toward this silent space of unknowing. I do not know how to inscribe this space. I do not know if I should. I wonder as I write, what benefits lie in wait here? Or rather, to avoid the language of extraction, what arrives when I lie in wait, when the "I" dissipates? As I wait for the words, I find a space of silence and stillness, a space both within language and beyond it, before it. This space brings calm, humility, and patience. These are critical virtues of rhetoric, but they are not active dispositions that are used for power. When I occupy this space, am I no longer rhetorical? Is the space itself not rhetorical? The problem Vitanza outlines for Glenn is the same predicament I find myself in: I paradoxically want to bring into the fold of academic discourse that which seems beyond academic discourse. I must expand and detach from what is considered rhetoric, opening rhetoric to what it is not. This notion of silence is not about power, control, mastery, or certainty. It is the space you find yourself in when you do not know, when you cannot understand, when there is nothing to say, and nothing that can be said. What then of rhetoric? Or, as Vitanza asks, "Where are "we"? Now? Perhaps, we find ourselves in a gasp. In a silence" (800).

the way to language, a silent event

How to begin to take up Vitanza's challenge, to "think what it means to be found, to be grounded (spoken), yet ungrounded (unspoken), in silence" (801)? There are many possible starting points and places where the history of philosophy lends itself to this intellectual challenge. From ancient Sanksrit grammarians to the clouds of unknowing of medieval mystics to centuries of Buddhist monks, countless philosophers, mystics, poets, and religious figures throughout human history and across cultures who have attested to the value and benefits of entering in to silence to move toward enlightenment, wisdom, or higher truth. But to think what it means to be both grounded and ungrounded in silence, I turn first to Martin Heidegger, whose sustained philosophical analysis of being and language within might offer valuable orientations for thinking through silence not as something left hidden within discourse to be uncovered, but as a phenomenological event of unsayability, loss, and ungrounding that marks the experience of our relation to language. Throughout this section, I will look to the emergence of silence as an important concept in Heidegger's analysis of discourse, idle talk, and the call of conscience in *Being and Time* and *On the Way to Language.* I draw on Heidegger to trace silence as a phenomenon inherent to language and being that reveals our relation to language in a way that disrupts the desire to know, master, and dominate perpetuated within the tradition of logocentric thought.

In the 21st century, it is nearly impossible to engage rhetorical theory, a discipline at the intersection of philosophies of language, epistemology, and ontology, without thinking, in some way, through the writings of Martin Heidegger. However, taking up Heidegger's work does not come without its challenges. Politically unpalatable, reprehensible, and in many ways

unforgivable, Heidegger's political and professional affiliations with Nazism in 1930s Germany cannot be ignoreed.[1] His affiliations within his lifetime, however, do not negate the impact that Heidegger's work has had on the course of philosophy, specifically the linguistic turn in the mid-twentieth century, and on rhetoric studies. Heidegger's work, which fills over a hundred volumes produced over the course of more than sixty-five years, draws on the entirety of the Western philosophical tradition to critique the ways in which Western philosophy has traditionally conceptualized being and beings. His writings change over time, across texts, and even within single lectures, indicating that his *thinking* was in constant flux. As Daniela Vallega-Neu describes in her study on Heidegger's unpublished works, his writing is at times *poietic*, meaning they enable a "bringing forth." In his writing, Heidegger "searches for a language that would not simply speak about being but rather let a sense of being emerge in his thinking and saying. He attempts to open paths of thinking the occurrence of being in its historically in terms of the event and to evoke a transformation of the sense of being in the West to prepare what he called 'the other beginning'" (Vallega-Neu, 2018). For Heidegger, it is in the *process of thinking* where one can search for truth, rather than using thinking to arrive at an end or final interrogative resting place.

Beginning with Heidegger's work sets us on a critical pathway for thinking silence by offering, as I will show, a way to language that is always *through* the experience of silence, an experience of language loss, language-less-ness, in which language is not readily available to us.

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[1] Heidegger joined the Nazi party in 1933 after being elected Rector of the University of Freiburg. In 1934 he resigned the Rectorship and stopped taking part in Nazi Party meetings. Scholars have, for decades, debated his involvement with Nazism, the impact of Nazism on his work and vice-verse, and his views on antisemitism. He is a controversial figure within modern philosophy whose work, at the same time, has shaped modern philosophy. In an investigation of silence, Heidegger is an ironic starting point considering many have characterized the absence of Nazism or the Holocaust in his writings as near total "silence" (Lang, 2018). I begin with Heidegger here to explore his writings of language and find the moments not when silence breaks through, but when Being slips into silence, in order to, as Vitanza wrote, walk on the pavement and step on the cracks.

This is ungrounding, disruptive, uncomfortable, and, at the same time, grounding in that it is the *only* way. Similar to the common way of thinking silence rhetorically as just another mode of speech, Heidegger writes that silence is a possible response one could take in every day conversation; however, silence appears in his writing in ways beyond everyday language use as well: as a mode of communication used by conscience ("the silent call of conscience"), as the necessary state of hearing (a reticence one must cultivate in order to hear the truth of being), and in the experience of the event of language, an event marked by the loss of language or ineffability. Each of these are described as silent and occurring in silence, as moments in when language fails or evades, as moments that cannot be captured by language. If ineffability is what we are after, these three moments from Heidegger offer points of critical reflection. Drawing on Heidegger to elaborate the various modes "silence" takes in his work is necessary to think silence as a relational, ontological, and phenomenological event of language—both distinct from and intertwined in/with language. Silence, here, is not something left hidden within discourse to be uncovered; rather it is a phenomenological event of unsayability, loss, and ungrounding that marks the experience of our relation to language.

A phenomenological approach is critical here because it enables thinking of silence not as an object to be recovered, but as an experience or *event* that reveals itself. As a discipline and methodology, *phenomenology* is defined as the study of structures of experience or consciousness. From the Greek *phenomenon* meaning "to show itself," and *logy*, "the study of," *phenomenology* is the study of the appearances of things as they appear, or the ways we experience things. As such, phenomenology is closely tied to ontology, the study of being, and to consciousness, which will come to bear in Heidegger's philosophy and within a phenomenological study of silence.

While phenomenology does not have a single comprehensive methodology, we cannot draw on Heidegger without first describing this mode of thinking. Phenomenology, as a historical movement in philosophy that began with the work of Husserl, expands when taken up by Heidegger. In Heidegger's definition, in particular, phenomenology attends to that "which shows or reveals itself," using the grammatical *middle voice* to represent how the self-showing in itself is a distinctive way that phenomena can be encountered (1953, 33). For Heidegger, and those within this tradition, phenomenology is the "way of access to, and the demonstrative manner of determination of, that which is to become the theme of ontology," which is only made possible as phenomenology (1953, 33).

While Heidegger does not explicitly take up the question of "language," it is a crucial concept in his philosophy, appearing consistently throughout his analysis of being and raised as a necessary concern for the question of being. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's 1927 magnum opus, he attempts to "work out concretely the question concerning the sense of 'being'" (1). Challenging the metaphysical tradition that uncritically engages language as an instrument for representing objects in the world, Heidegger explains how this tradition has largely taken for granted the question of being, often dismissing it as superfluous or empty and not worth investigating. Within this tradition, Heidegger writes, *being* cannot be defined in the same way that philosophers have traditionally classified entities or objects by either determining its basic concepts or comparing and contrasting it to similar well-defined concepts. Instead, *being* is always already tied within the question of being, meaning that even to ask the question, "what is being?" the operative *is* already assumes the questioner knows the answer. As Jeffery Powell explains in *Heidegger and Language,* in *Being and Time* specifically, Heidegger "attempts to retrieve an understanding of the meaning of being to which the forgetting of being attests, a

forgetting upon which the history of metaphysics is erected, it is nevertheless the case that humankind always already operates in such an understanding. Such an understanding, vague and concealed as it might be, is preserved in the language spoken" (2013, 7). The question of language thus becomes a fundamental metaphysical question that grounds all questions because the metaphysical inquiry "What *is*?" assumes that we already have a stable understanding of what "is," being, is. Thus, the nature of being as fundamentally tied to the question becomes a central concept in Heidegger's thinking. While Heidegger does not offer a comprehensive philosophy of language, the question of language appears throughout his corpus, either explicitly addressed as in *Being and Time* and *On the Way to Language*, or has a thread consistently woven through his philosophical analyses. It is a question he cannot ever seem to escape.

Prior to *Being and Time* in 1927, Heidegger presented a view of language as irreducible to a propositional logic or philosophical theory that concerns beings as a whole in his 1924 summer lectures translated and published as *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy.* Here, Heidegger presents language as *being-in-the-world*, primordial and prior to judgments. It is in these lectures that he first considers *logos* as a form of transcendence, beyond formal language. These summer lectures are often cited as the beginnings of Heidegger's thinking that would eventually become *Being and Time.* In pondering the question of being, Heidegger thinks language as a way that the world and beings within the world reveal themselves. As the means for disclosure, language is not just a tool that is available to human beings, but rather, Heidegger explains, the being-in-the-world of human beings is fundamentally determined through speaking and self-expression: "Language is possessed, is spoken, in such a way that speaking belongs to the genuine drive of being of the human being. Living, for the human being, means speaking" (2009, 16). It may seem odd here to draw on Heidegger for an interrogation into silence, given

that his thinking of language traces back to an Aristotelian view of *logos* and the notion that the capacity for speech is a distinctly human characteristics—that humans not only communicate using language, but that humans are distinguished from animals and other beings by the very capacity for language— however, silence reveals itself repeatedly throughout Heidegger's prolonged analysis into the phenomenon of language. Thus, Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* and the connection of language to being is useful as a way to ground this interrogation into a rhetorical mode that is attuned to silence in a way that is both/neither active nor passive, allowing, awaiting, a silence on its own terms.

In *Being and Time*, silence emerges within Heidegger's descriptions of *discourse* as both a strategic position one can take within discourse (one can choose to be silent) and as a necessity for authentic discourse—moving away from "idle talk" toward silence is a move toward authentic discourse. Discourse, in Heidegger's work, is not the discourse of Foucault and other post-structuralists who use the term "discourse" to refer to the institutionalized patterns of knowledge and disciplinary structures that govern our everyday language use, ideology, behaviors, and subjectivity. Rather, Heidegger uses the word discourse more broadly to denote the ways in which being makes itself intelligible in the world. "Discourse" is translated to English from the German word *Rede*, which carries a multitude of English translations such as: "speech," "address," "remarks," "utterances," "talk," "telling," and "language;" but Heidegger's use of the word thinks discourse in the tradition of *logos*, understood as the existential-ontological foundation of language, both linguistic and non-linguistic—including words and actions—that make manifest what one aims to disclose. Or, as Parvis Emad describes, discourse is, for Heidegger, "the deepest unfolding of language" (2007, 124).

Language and discourse are not interchangeable terms for Heidegger and the distinction

is important here: "Language" is the ready-at-hand form of articulation represented in the totality

of words, while "discourse" is not worldly, but an *existentiale* of Dasein alongside understanding

(*Verstehen*) and attunement (*Befindlichkeit*).[2] As Jeffrey Powell explains in his introduction to

the collection *Heidegger and Language*, discourse was, for Heidegger, not only the means

through which the question of being is asked, but a constituent moment in the analysis of Dasein

(2013, 2). In Heidegger's words: "Attunement and understanding are *equiprimordially*

determined by *discourse*" (1953, 126). Discourse represents how being discloses itself in the

world and renders itself intelligible, ultimately placing Dasein's relation to language as a central

and crucial function of existence:

> "Since discourse is constitutive for the being of the there, that is, *attunement* and
> *understanding*, and since Dasein means being-in-the-world, Dasein as discoursing being-
> in has already expressed itself. Dasein has language...The later interpretation of this
> definition of human being in the sense of *animal rationale*, 'rational living being,' is not
> 'false,' but it covers over the phenomenal basis from which this definition of Dasein is
> taken. The human being *shows itself* as a being who speaks. This does not mean that the
> possibility of vocal utterance belongs to it, but that this being is in the mode of
> discovering world and Dasein itself" (1953, 159).

As "discoursing being-in," Dasein is marked by the capacity for speech, not in the classical

sense, as Heidegger explains here, but in the sense that language moves *through* human beings

and provides a mode by which beings reveal themselves and discover the world. In this sense,

the existential capacity for language is not a tool, but an ontic phenomenon. Discourse is not a

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[2] There are two important words used here that are not thoroughly elaborated in this paragraph: *existentiale* and
Dasein. In the work of Heidegger, *Dasein* is the word given to the being that questions its own being, specifically
humans who have the capacity to pose the question in and through language. *Existentiale* is a condition or structure
of existence. For Heidegger, there are three: discourse (*Rede*), as is describe here, understanding (Verstehen) and
attunement (Befindlichkeit), or *being-with*. All three are critical for understanding *being* and *Dasein* in Heidegger's
work, but for the purpose of this chapter, *discourse* is the most valuable for understanding how silence appears in
Heidegger's philosophy of language.

technology but rather a mode of self-revelation and actualization central to how beings exist within the world.

In everyday communication, discourse has two constitutive factors: what discourse is about (what is discussed), and what is said as such, the actual words inscribing the act of making known. In everyday communication, speaking is always moving toward the larger sense of discourse, toward the self-revelation and opening of being, toward disclosure. Heidegger makes a distinction between *authentic discourse* that moves in this way and *inauthentic* discourse that Heidegger describes as "idle talk." Authenticity is a significant word for Heidegger, representing the fully realized expression of being. Inauthentic discourse, then, is communicative language that is not in the service of being, but rather stays at a surface level "cut off from the primary and primordially genuine relations of being toward the world, toward Dasein-with, toward being-in itself." (1953, 164).

Within this everyday communicative discourse, we see the emergence of a possibility of silence as a strategic rhetorical position. Heidegger writes that in keeping silent, one can "develop an understanding more authentically" than someone who is always speaking by exercising humility and restraint. He writes, "in talking with one another the person who is silent can 'let something be understood,' that is, one can develop an understanding more authentically than the person who never runs out of words. Speaking a lot about something does not in the least guarantee that understanding is furthered or achieved. On the contrary, talking at great length about something covers things over and brings what is understood into an illusory clarity, that is, the unintelligibility of the trivial" (1953, 159). Keeping silent offers a rhetorical position of openness to understanding that is not available to the person who is always speaking or who speaks a lot on a particular topic. We see here the important link between silence and listening—

how listening is only possible when one keeps silent. But we also see the necessity of silence for truth and understanding. Speaking represents and solidifies a sense of certainty that may in fact only be "an illusory clarity" on a particular topic and instead "covers things over," making reaching truth more difficult. Keeping silent offers an alternative rhetorical position that is not only strategic (Glenn, 2004) but also subversive in a culture that seems to demand speech without patience for the space and time necessary to pause, reflect, and engage with contradiction and nuance that emerges in the space of possibility and difference.

silent call of conscience

Unfortunately, the contemporary mode of engagement with language within the world does not encourage a silent reticence. In a time of impulse responding, rapid posting, and the 24-hour news cycle, we can see in our culture how the impulse to speak and be heard, to opine on every topic from our fingertips, causes irreconcilable deep disagreements in dialogue. Heidegger, writing in his own time, saw the inauthenticity of everyday chatter, "idle talk," that ungrounds Dasein from its connection to being. Writing on the everydayness of "idle talk," Heidegger explains:

> "The groundlessness of idle talk is no obstacle to its being public, but encourages it. Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without any previous appropriation of the matter. Idle talk already guards against the danger of getting stranded in such an appropriation. Idle talk, which everyone can snack up, not only divests us of the task of genuine understanding, but develops an indifferent intelligibility for which nothing is closed off any longer." (1953, 163)

"Idle talk," as described by Heidegger here, is communication that is already intelligible to the interlocutors. The speaker speaks with an assumption that they will be understood, and the

listener operates with the same assumption. It does not require either to "come to being" or to speak or listen in an authentic way. He continues, in communicating this way, "one understands not so much the being talked about; rather, one already only listens to what is spoken about as such. This is understood, what is talked about is understood, only approximately and superficially" (1953, 162).

The description of an incessant, groundless chatter, encouraged by the public, which everyone "can snack up," is a familiar scene today, almost one hundred years after Heidegger wrote *Being and Time*. We exist in the discursive conditions of unending content available to us for consumption. The feeds are bottomless, the scrolling infinite. Despite the benefits of a democratized online public sphere, have we gotten better at understanding? Have we gotten better at speaking? At listening? Heidegger's analysis of how discourse, the very phenomenon that enables human beings to exist at the most authentic level, can so easily become idle talk reveals to us the state of our discursive lives today. As he writes, instead of keeping being-in-the-world open in articulated understanding, the conditions of "idle talk" actually closes it off and covers our innerwordly beings (1953,163). Instead, it moves us further from articulated understanding and from authenticity.

Dasein is uprooted by this idle chatter, suspended within the 'world' of the they-self. Lost in the "they," the mode of existence corresponding to the superficiality of everydayness, either through everyday tasks, rules, standards, or idle-talk, everything in Dasein's existence has already been decided upon. Passing on in this way, Dasein is prevented from accessing the full possibilities of being, moving along in the machinery of everyday life without conscious thought or decision. As Heidegger describes, Dasein loses itself in this groundlessness and uprooted way of being. Lost in the publicness of the they and its idle talk, Dasein "*fails to hear* its own self in

listening to the they-self" (1953, 261). This condition of groundlessness occurs for Dasein not when there is an absence of language, but when the language itself is ungrounded. If Dasein is a being who understands its own being, whose being is disclosed, through language, then ungrounded, superficial, and idle language inevitably causes a disconnection for Dasein from the essence of being.

It is too easy to get lost in the "they-self" and its idle talk. Heidegger explains that if Dasein is to be brought back from this lostness of failing to hear itself, of disconnection from its being, "it must first be able to find itself, to find itself as something that has failed to hear itself and continues to do so in *listening to* the they" (1953, 261). For this listening to be stopped, for the possibility of another kind of hearing, it at first seems Heidegger is suggesting an attentive self-awareness and recognition. Returning to oneself would thus look like a simple three step process: 1. find oneself, 2. realize oneself as lost, and 3. recognize that the lostness is a result of listening to idle talk. However, that first step, finding oneself in a moment of self-awareness, is not always simple for one who is lost and distanced from the inner voice of conscience. According to Heidegger, that initial break from the trance is not something that can always be harnessed or controlled. Rather, he writes that "the possibility of such a breach lies in being summoned without any mediation" (1953, 261).

The ungrounded listening to the "they," with its chatter, gossip, and predetermined set of rules, tasks, and modes of being, is only broken by a call of conscience, which demands another kind of hearing. Heidegger describes this call as "a call [that] must call silently, unambiguously, with no foothold for curiosity. *That which, by calling in this way, gives us to understand, is conscience* [*Gewissen*]" (1953, 261). The call of conscience is described here as a silent call, a *call* nonetheless, but a call without a "foothold for curiosity." This call can only be heard, not

listened to in an intentional way so as to manifest or bring under one's control. Rather, this silent call of conscience is described by Heidegger as a summoning, which is a loss of control: "The call of conscience has the character of *summoning* [*Anruf*] Dasein to its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self" (1953, 259). As a summoning, the call of conscience denotes an external force beyond individual will, an experience that ruptures the stability of the "I" who speaks and listens. Returning to oneself, finding oneself when lost in the *they*, requires hearing a silent call, a call that "comes from afar to afar" and "reaches one who wants to be brought back" (1953, 261). "From afar to afar" refers to the distance and self-abandonment of Dasein lost in the *they*, distanced from its ownmost being.

It is important that the call of conscience is described as "a silent call." Reminiscent of ancient philosophies of enlightenment, as well as practices of meditation and vows of silence, Heidegger's notion of conscience, using the German word *Stimme*, which carries connotations of voice of conscience, inner voice, and the voice of reason or common sense, implies a deeper knowing that exists only in silence, outside of speech. Conscience, which "speaks solely and constantly in the mode of silence," lacks utterance: "It does not even come to words" (1953, 261). Yet for Heidegger, conscience still operates as part of discourse for it is experienced as a call that discloses something to understand (1953, 261). Beyond language as speech, beyond *logos* in its traditional sense, conscience communicates in silence in a way that can be heard but cannot be appropriated by the structures of language. It is not a call a linguistic sense, in the way language speaks or calls; rather, the silent call of conscience is a beckoning to return. As Heidegger explains, "the fact that what is called in the call is lacking formulation in words does not push this phenomenon into the indefiniteness of a mysterious voice, but only indicates that

the understanding of 'what is called' may not cling to the expectation of anything like communication" (1953, 263).

a silent hearing

While Dasein finds itself through discourse, speaking is considered only one mode of expression, and keeping silent appears as another means of expression and meaning making. Here "keeping silent" does not articulate meaning in the way that rhetoric scholars have tended to conceptualize a signifying silence. It is not that keeping silent is *expressing* reservation, doubt, insecurity, fear, or repression. Rather, silence enables *reticence*, an experience of discourse characterized as keeping silent. When "idle-talk" is refused and conscience is experienced authentically, Dasein is called into itself, or as Heidegger writes, "into the reticence of itself" (1953, 263). Reticence is an experience of reservation in silence, that "articulates the intelligibility of Dasein so primordial that it gives rise to a genuine potentiality for hearing and to being-with-one-another that is transparent" (1953, 159). In this mode of reservation and restraint Dasein can put down "idle talk," and enter authentic discourse, a mode by which beings are able to relate to the world genuinely and authentically and with one another.

Reticence is an important moment for silence in Heidegger's work because it reveals how primordial and essential silence is for being, giving rise to hearing and to worldliness. Hearing is described by Heidegger as an "existentially primary potentiality" (1953, 158). The verbs "to hear" or "hearing," are typically defined by the auditory experience of sound and the perceptions of the ear For Heidegger, however, hearing denotes a potentiality, a quality of being that functions as a feature of existence. Broader than the definition of hearing as the perception of sounds, hearing, for Heidegger, is more closely related to *hearkening*. If Dasein is lost again and again in idle talk, failing to hear, then what conscience demands is a hearing that is actually a

hearkening, an experience that evokes a returning and remembering. Heidegger describes

hearkening as "phenomenally more primordial than what the psychologists 'initially' define as

hearing," instead hearkening "has the mode of being of a hearing that understands" (1953, 158).

In this view, hearing represents the ontological reality that we *are* already *with* before we

perceive sounds. Rather than an action, Heidegger presents hearing as a disposition of being.

It is worth noting that Heidegger's thinking of hearing is different from how he thinks

listening, although both are important for understanding the being of Dasein and the importance

of "transparent being-with-one-another." For Heidegger, listening "constitutes the primary and

authentic openness of Dasein for its ownmost possibility of being" (1953, 158). Listening is

closely tied to the existentiales understanding and attunement, both of which enable listening as a

mode of being-in-the-world with others. It is because Dasein listens, both to itself and to Dasein-

with, that being finds its belonging in the world.

In many ways, listening here is tied to Heidegger's concept of Dasein's *worldliness*. As

Crosswhite explains in his chapter on Heidegger in *Deep Rhetoric*, worldliness is a condition of

being for Dasein because the being of Dasein is always being-in-the-world:

> Dasein is not first an entity, a 'subject,' who then faces the epistemological problem of
> establishing a relation to another entity called the 'world.' Rather, our being is not only to
> be outside and beyond ourselves but also to be as the encounter with beings in the light of
> their being in an ordered world." (2013, 183)

In Heidegger's view, Dasein, as both ontic and ontological, is an entity whose very being is

determined by its worldliness. In this sense, the traditional view of being as individual

subjectivity separated from the "world" outside the mind and from the alternate worlds inside

other minds is challenged. Instead, Heidegger's notion of being as necessarily being-with and

being-in-the-world demand a reconsideration of traditional philosophical divisions. Again, we are ungrounded.

Both hearing and listening emerge as modes of authentic engagement with the world and with others in the world, but it is the thinking of hearing (hearkening) that is of particular value to this investigation of silence in Heidegger's work. The potentiality for hearing that emerges from reticence exposes the latent silence fundamental to being and being-with. In this sense, it is not language-use that defines being, but rather it is a silent potentiality for hearing that shapes being. Vallega-Neu describes how Heidegger himself adopts this stance of silent reticence in his writing between 1936-1941 wherein he "meditates, directed toward silence and concealment, following attunements that he understands to arise from and to disclose historical beyng" (2018, x). In these poietic, unpublished, works, Heidegger demonstrates a different stance toward machination; whereas most have been a stance of resistance, in these texts, "instead of resisting machination and the abandonment of beings by being, he lets them 'pass by'" in an attempt to seek a "primordial sense of being" (2018, xi).

submitting to silence

In his later work, Heidegger expands on the idea of a silent hearing and silence inherent in language that had begun in *Being and Time*. In "The Way to Language," which first appeared as part of a lecture series in January 1959 but is published in the collection *On the Way to Language,* Heidegger explains how our relation to language is marked by experiences of unsayability—moments when language escapes us. This lecture offers a description of the event of our relation to language wherein language is not conceived as a tool ready-at-hand, but as a

phenomenological, experiential, relational event of *being.* As Heidegger describes, the experience of this relational event is overwhelming and transformational, but it is only made possible through a hearing that enables an attunement to unconcealment.

Anyone who uses language is familiar with the moments when language fails. As writers, we are often faced with blank screens, sentences left without endings, and the agonizing feeling when we cannot get the words right. When speaking, we often cannot remember the word for something, fumble over our words, get tongue-tied, or feel the words are "on the tip of our tongues" or have "escaped us." In this text, Heidegger describes these moments as the event of our relation to language, explaining that these experiences, when language evades our grasp, are when we are most related to the essence of language. These experiences are ungrounding and uncomfortable because, as Heidegger writes, they are experiences beyond our control that we must undergo. To undergo an experience, means that it "befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us" in its evasion of our use of language (1971, 57). Undergoing and enduring the moments when speech escapes speaking, when language eludes its own enunciation, is when language reveals its essential being as fleeting and uncapturable.

We often mistake ourselves in thinking language ready-at-hand, which obscures to us its essential being, and our relationship to it, as often unavailable, obscure, and uncapturable. Thus, our experience with language is most profound when we cannot "use" it effectively, in the very moments when rhetorical agency, as we understand it, is suspended—when an experience renders us arhetorical. Heidegger describes how these moments of unspeakability are the moments when language reveals its essential being:

> "Curiously enough when we cannot find the right word for something that concerns us, carries us away, oppresses and encourages us. Then we leave unspoken what we have in

mind and, without righty giving it thought, undergo moments in which language itself has distantly and fleetingly touched us with its essential being" (1971, 59).

As such, our experience of our relation to language is made visible to us in experiences of ineffability, experiences where we realize we do not have the language for what we are trying to articulate, when we realize that language is not ours to possess. It is in these moments of silence that we experience an ungrounding from language as we think it, as available to our uses, as a tool for our devices. This thinking on our relation to the essence of language as an event of silence echoes his earlier demands in *Being and Time* for reticence and silent hearing.

Here, Heidegger's work elaborates the potential for a new rhetorical position in silence that does not seek to communicate, but grounds in the ungrounded moments in which language evades. A rhetorical position that submits to silence, then, requires not a conscious attunement to the unsaid, to that which lingers in the margins rejected and ignored, but a falling, surrendering, and enduring of an experience of not knowing at the foundation of our relation to language.

How then, does submitting to silence, grounding in ungrounded uncertainty and reticence change how we think about the rhetorical subject? Or, as Heidegger asks us head-on, "in what relation do you live to the language you speak?" The description of our event to language as one bound in silence, marked by ineffability and unknowing, challenges the traditional and commonly-held presumptions about rhetorical subjectivity that think being as subjectivity expressed and shaped discursively. Instead, Heidegger leaves us with the provocation to think the rhetorical subject as a being who must be, first and foremost, in silence.

being rhetorical; a silent rhetoricity

Heidegger's invocation to question in what relation we exist to language requires a consideration of what it means to be rhetorical, meaning the ways in which rhetoric is itself ontological. There are many pathways we could take for thinking what it means to *be* rhetorical, but within the discipline, the rhetorical subject is often thought in terms of *rhetorical stance.* Rhetorical stance refers to the way that scholars and teachers have conceptualized the speaker or writer's placement within a given rhetorical situation, within the relational matrix of audience, topic, and context. In 1963, Wayne Booth described it as "a stance which depends on discovering and maintaining in any writing situation a proper balance among the three elements that are at work in any communicative effort: the available arguments about the subject itself [requires listening], the interests and peculiarities of the audience [more listening], and the voice, the implied character, of the speaker" (141). Booth's definition is pervasive in rhetoric and composition pedagogy, but it is a theory based on an imposition of sovereignty. It asks, how can I become master of a situation? How can I *know* my audience, control the presentation of my character, and represent a mastery of subject (know all available arguments), to win an argument, hold an audience captive, or maintain power in a rhetorical situation? In this definition, rhetorical stance is about deliberate language use to achieve a specific purpose. This is, of course, important and necessary in many rhetorical situations, especially in the situation of a persuasive argument, but is it the only option for *being* rhetorical?

Diane Davis offers us a different way of thinking about the ontology of the rhetor that deconstructs traditional rhetorical subjectivity toward a posthuman engagement with *différance*. Grounded in Derrida's notion of the movement of *différance* alongside Jean-Luc Nancy, Davis conceives of an ontologizing force that she describes as a "prelusive and anahuman rhetoricity,"

placing rhetorical ontology beyond the sovereignty of the human (2017, 431). For Davis, the traditional way of thinking rhetorical stance and the rhetorical subject is rooted in a radical linguisticism that perpetuates a putative (supposed, assumed, presumed) dichotomy between meaning and matter, "in which 'world' is covered by an all-encompassing discursive field" (2017, 431). This dichotomy has spurred debates about the rhetorical situation throughout the previous century. On one side, writers argue that the rhetor produces a "rhetorical text" in response to a "real world" or "material" exigency (Bitzer, 1968), while on the other the relationship is inverted with the rhetoric creating a "rhetorical text" that produces or creates the "real" situation. In this view, the rhetorical stance is the position an individual takes to create a rhetorical text either in response to or in construction of the "real world." Epistemic pedagogy of composition contends this precisely: that rhetoric *produces* knowledge of the world; that language is not only response or representation of the world, but that the world is made known *through* language.

In 1989, Barbara Biesecker argued for rethinking the rhetorical situation alongside Derrida, claiming, as Davis describes, "that *différance* 'makes signification possible,' the movement of differing and deferral through which any meaning or identity is constituted, including the identity of the subject" (2017, 432, qtd. Biesecker, 1989, 117). Rather than choosing one side of the debate, Biesecker's 1989 article collapses it, using Derrida to show how symbolic action (re)produces the identities of subjects and their relations within "potentially unlimited and indeterminate textuality (historical, discursive field)" (1989, 120). According to Davis, scholars within field of rhetoric have pushed "progressively antiessentialist interrogations of rhetoric's ontology" that have led to the "affirmation of a kind of radical linguisticism that allows for no accessible 'outside' to this discursive field, now thought to cover the whole of what

is called 'world'" (2017, 432). In Davis's view, this way of thinking about language in relation to "the outside world" has "abandoned" experience, hope, and futurity to the arbitrary positings of a discourse machine" (2017, 432). Rhetorical stance, as it has been traditionally thought, has been conceived to enact sovereignty over this "outside world," mastering the discursive in order to control, dominate, and exert power.

In order to contest this disciplinary reduction, Davis theorizes the concept of *rhetoricity* as a prelinguistic, prelusive, originary disposition of being necessary for rhetoric, for *being rhetorical.* Davis explains: "According to Derrida, any text produced by a rhetor takes place within and is written on a 'text' of which he or she is also the textual expression" (2017, 432). For Derrida, there is no "d'hors-texte" or "outside text" because the movement of *différance* that comprises *textuality* structures life and living. This is not to reduce everything to "discourse," but rather to the constant and irreducible *movement* of differing and deferral alive in everything all at once. For Derrida, the production of a text occurs "at once symbolically *and* bio-zoologically" (2017, 432). *Rhetoricity*, then, represents the "fundamental *addressivity* and *responsivity*" of this text that "grants 'all *history,*' Derrida writes, 'from what metaphysics has defined as non-living' up to 'consciousness,' passing through all levels of animal organization'" (2017, 432). Davis continues: "To say, with Derrida, that 'there is no outside the text,' is to accept that life weaves 'itself' as a tissue of traces, a delinguistified text-ile whose inextricable 'meaning' remains 'this side of or beyond all signification,' to cite Jean-Luc Nancy (qtd. 1997, 7)" (2017, 432). We are asked to think *rhetoricity* here in relation to the silence of unspeakability, ineffability, and absolute alterity. In what ways are we, at any and every given moment, already addressed and called to respond to the ineffable? Even when/if the response is not a response at all, but a listening, hearing, and letting be of silence? In what ways does the world open here?

For Davis, *rhetoricity* offers a different vision of ethics and demands a reconsideration of *responsibility* (response-ability) beyond the human. Quoting Derrida, Davis writes, "only an ethics responsive to 'life itself'... to 'the survival...of humanity and of the planet' could begin to respond responsibly to this excessive demand" (2017, 434, qtd. Derrida 2014). In her vision, this would demand a responsibility that is unconditional but without sovereignty, much like the Law of Hospitality offered (and complicated) by Derrida. Davis describes how this would not be "the limited, calculable responsibility I assume in the world through a performative power...but a boundless and incalculable responsibility through which both 'I' and world advene, a responsibility that is addressed *to* 'me' across an 'uncrossable difference' in which difference and relation are irreducible and through which, despite my powerlessness, or thanks to it, world opens, a relation to an unpredictable 'to come'" (2017, 434, qtd. Derrida 2011).

By shifting responsibility from a limited calculability confined to the subject to a limitless responsibility beyond the human, we are open to the world "stripped down to its quasi-originary condition," which for Davis, exposes "an undeconstructable and anahuman rhetoricity, the undeclinable obligation or desire...to respond to the trace of the other 'without third, mediator, or go-between, without earthly or worldly ground" (2017, 435, qtd. Derrida 2005). Without third, mediator, or go-between, rhetoricity is outside of formal language, taking on the characteristics of connective tissue, or perhaps empty space. We are reminded here of Vitanza's review in which he reminds us that "we cannot experience the event or *unspoken* except as an experience of a *return*, but in *between.* As in intercellular tissue, dis/connecting things. In a grounding of gaps, cracks, and interruptions" (2017, 796). Both Davis's conceptualization of an anahuman rhetoricity and Vitanza's thinking of the unspoken as an experience of *return* and in

between, offer ways of pointing toward, but not quite articulating, the foundational silence and ineffability at the root of being rhetorical.

For Davis, this return to a world of quasi-originary condition that reveals a preliminary rhetoricity is similar to *Zusage*, a German word used by Heidegger and Derrida to indicate a "preliminary promise," which, as Derrida explains "makes possible the very question" (1989, 94). This "preliminary promise" conditions the possibility of the question itself, offering a *yes* in response to the promise of that which is to come into question (2017, 436). For Davis, thought begins in this preliminary rhetorical exchange, one that is, by nature, prelinguistic and silent. Silent not because it is the absence or negation of speech, but because it exists within the conditional space that make speech possible, the space of silence. There is a question in the space, asked silently and in silence, to which the promise of the yes, the affirmation, must always and already take place for language to occur. This *yes* of 'pre-engagement' is, as Derrida writes, "presupposed by every language and by every type of speech act" (2008, 237). Language, speech acts, rhetoric, in its traditional sense, must then be thought of in relation to this yes that is, as Derrida writes, every word's "silent companion" (2008, 235):

> "Though you can pronounce it, 'yes,' there remains something inaudible in its articulation in a language. [As] 'language without [with/out] language,' the *yes*, 'belongs without belonging' to that whole that it simultaneously institutes and opens. ... It causes to be and lets be everything that can be said. ... It *is* without being language, it merges without merging with its utterance in a natural language. For if it is 'before' language, it marks the essential exigency, the promise, the engagement to come to language, in a given language' (qtd. Derrida, 2008, 236). Before and in excess of any specific idiom there is the *yes* and the trace of the other to which it responds...Every engagement in some language responds to the demand of a rhetorical relation irreducible to it." (2017 440)

"Language without language" quoted here is inspired by Heidegger and Levinas, both of whom track this "unconditional rhetoricity without sovereignty inappropriable by 'the said' of

language." Yet, as Davis describes, it is Derrida who observes that both Heidegger and Levinas revert to the tradition of Western grammar and language. Their view remains too limited by a focus on the human and a "certain linguistic exceptionalism that makes human language the condition for this unconditional response-ability" (2017, 441). Within their view, as Davis notes, "human being is the only being who *yesses*" in response to the originary call of responsibility. She explains that for Derrida, however, "this *yes* is at work everywhere" (441). In *Who Comes After the Subject?* Derrida writes of the "codes of traces being designed, among all living beings, to construct the unity of the world that is always deconstructable" (1991, 109). Before and beyond the human and the constructs of human language, the prelinguistic *yes* of response-ability/responsibility, the *yes* of pre-engagement, is everywhere, comprising and shaping the world.

Thinking, speaking, writing from this originary *yes* of pre-engagement poses ethical demands, as Davis explains, but also encourages us to think silence not as speech unspoken that is to be recovered and brought to language, but as before and beyond the possibility of the speakable. Derrida's concept of the *trace*, that which haunts the sign from the inside, helps us think *through, in,* and *with* silence in this way. The notion of the trace is derived from his critique of the *metaphysics of presence*, a commonly-held assumption that presence is before us and immediately available through language (*phonē*). We can see this in our everyday interactions with people in which we equate the things people say with the most true or real representation of their inner thoughts or feelings. He refers to this as the myth of immediacy of speech, or the belief that speech is the "closest to the signified" and "weds the voice indissolubly to the mind" (1976, 11). Derrida, instead, shows us how presence is never quite, or fully, present and is instead always complicated by non-presence. Indeed, the trace is a kind of proto-

linguisticality that Derrida also calls "arche-writing" (1976, 56). For Derrida, this loss of presence frees us from the myth and opens us to the heterogeneity inherent in the sign. The sign, rather than providing us a stable anchor, instead marks the place of difference. As Spivak explains in the translator's preface to the 1997 edition of *Of Grammatology*, Derrida's critique of presence in his notion of the trace shows us that "word and thing or thought never in fact become one," rather "we are reminded of, referred to, what the convention of words sets up as thing or thought, by a particular arrangement of words" (1997, xvi).

Because the structure of reference operates as a *relation* to difference—*différance*, as Derrida calls it—the trace comes to refer to that which is always silent pressing on signification from within and without, all the while eluding appropriation. Spivak describes it as "the part played by the radically other within the structure of difference that is the sign," while Davis describes it as "the looming up *here* of a nontransparent *there*, [which] gives both the sensible and the intelligible without ever giving *itself* up to representation or conceptualization" (442). As irreducible referral, the trace is the ungraspable alterity, the excess, of all language use, that threatens to crack open and ruin the stability of the sign.

What does this mean, then, for *being* rhetorical? If we think silence not like speech but like *trace*, how does this open *being* rhetorical to the yet-to-come? For Davis, the possibility of radicalizing rhetoric with the concept of rhetoricity is that it opens the rhetorical world to a "horizonless and ungatherable 'world' opened each time in the address of the other...wherever some singularity—human or not, carbon based or not—manages to address some other by leaving a trace of 'itself'" (2017, 432). In Davis's view, drawing on the work of Ronell (1994), Marder (2013), and Garzón (2007), rhetoricity includes all the ways that the planet *responds* to and "asks after" the trace of the other (2017, 437). Davis thus challenges us to think being

rhetorical not as having a capacity for speech or as having mastered the *technē* of using language to advance our own will, but as a foundational potentiality, before language and beyond the human, that both addresses and responds to the trace of the other.

To think what it means to *be* rhetorical in this way calls into question and expands the ontology that grounds Heidegger's notion of Dasein's worldliness and Dasein as the only questioning being. Instead, *being* rhetorical opens beyond the human to include the myriad of ways that humans, animals, and plants, and all living creatures creatively respond to new situations, retain memory, make use of tools, draw on past and future, communicate greetings and warnings to each other, seek and retain sensory information, and adapt to their respective environments. Not only does the distinction of rhetoric as a purely humanistic endeavor dissolve here, but also the notion of the rhetor as a self-contained subject who can effectively navigate a rhetorical situation through traditional knowledge and assessment. It is here, as Derrida writes, that it is no longer clear "who is 'who'" and the line between 'who' and 'what' disappears (1991, 115). This disappearance allows for the opening to radical difference and "infinite heterogeneities between and among human, animal, vegetal (and more) ways of thinking and being" (2017, 438). Respecting these differences, Davis writes, "requires, first of all, attending to a wild dissemination of differences obscured by the positing of a single, indivisible line between thinking and being, 'authentic response,' and 'mere reaction'" (2017, 436). We must instead, think of 'thinking' and 'being' as one process, not as two delineated or separated processes. Thus, what we consider to be 'response,' 'reaction,' or even 'intelligence,' 'sentience,' and 'consciousness,' is called into question.

moving in silence toward wonder

We are again ungrounded. Cast into the silence of unknowing wherein stable concepts have been revealed to be unstable, we begin again. Although it is uncomfortable to be caught in uncertainty, we may find here a space that is more generative than it seems. Diane Davis's concept of *rhetoricity* revealed a rhetorical ontology beyond the humanistic potentiality of Heidegger's *Dasein*, situating both rhetoric and being in a pre-linguistic and worldly silence. However, as Heidegger observes in the many ways Dasein is lost in the *they*, our everyday modes of engaging with the world disrupt this silence, covering over it with a discursive layer of noise and chatter. How, then, can we engage in something like a return to, or a remembering of, this originary rhetoricity? What might be lying in wait in silence, at the limit of language?

We turn again to the logical relationship Vitanza provides in his review of *Unspoken*: "Spoken is to Unspoken as Grounding is to Ungrounding" (2005, 795). Given this formulation, ungrounded is precisely where we want to be if we are to arrive at something like a silent rhetoricity. Is this a place where we might be able to dwell? Or is this the space between solid ground? Being ungrounded in and from language places us in a new relation to silence that opens us to the rhetoricity of the world, which opens us to knowing and to being. To think silence as the space beyond the limits of language, as the *trace* the haunts the said and sayable, is to relinquish determination, abandon definition, and submit to the free fall. In doing so, we open to the possibility that silence is more than suppression or repression, that silence might be the ingredient necessary for something like knowledge and for coming to language. What if silence is not a problem for rhetoric to solve, but rather the very thing that sustains it?

In this section, I trace the question of wonder in relation to curiosity and knowledge as explored by Mary-Jane Rubenstein in her 2015 *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics*

and the Opening of Awe. Presuming the initial and prelusive rhetoricity established by Davis in the previous section, I build on the dissolution of the rhetor as a self-contained subject—one who can effectively navigate a rhetorical situation through the mastery of determination—to expose rhetoric to *thaumazein*, or wonder, as an experience of and toward silence. In doing so, I think silence as a rhetoric toward wonder characterized by the event of silence as a stillness within, behind, and beyond language, a refusal of the "will-toward-epistemological-domination," and an opening toward the unknown that functions as both the condition of possibility for rhetoric (the condition of *rhetoricity*) as well as the goal of rhetoric.

on wonder

In *Strange Wonder*, Mary Jane Rubenstein traces the origin of philosophy back to the unsettling and ungrounding experience of *wonder*. Her text provides an analytical grounding for thinking through the value of experiencing and submitting to wonder in order to think anew and differently, ultimately guiding us toward thinking the possibilities of engaging silence as a rhetoric toward wonder. As a rhetoric, silence-toward-wonder suggests a different relation to language, one that is not aimed at power, extraction, or control. Rather than thinking language as some*thing* ready-at-hand to be mastered, harnessed, or dominated, we can think, alongside Heidegger and Davis, of a relation to language as elusive, in constant retreat, even if it is considered always available and at our fingertips.

Rubenstein traces *wonder* to the Greek word *thaumazein*, spoken by Socrates in Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus* to describe the experience of wondering "where philosophy begins and nowhere else" (2015, 3 qtd. Plato, 155d). *Thaumazein* has been translated by readers of Plato throughout history into wonder, awe, astonishment, *admiratio*, *étonnement*, and *Estraunen*, but Rubenstein most closely associates it to wonder in order to explore the event of wonder at the

beginning of philosophy. She asks: "What does it mean to locate the origin of philosophy in wonder? What does it mean to distinguish the philosopher as one who experiences wonder—or to say that a proto-philosopher [such as Theaetetus] is right on track when he is lost in it?…How is philosophy to go about seeking the very wonder that sets it in motion?" (2015, 3). Bringing into question what it means to be lost in wonder carries questions about philosophical and rhetorical engagement at the broadest sense regarding the intersection of being and knowing. In the same way that rhetoricity challenged the presumption of the language-using self who engages with the "outside world," Rubenstein's analysis of wonder questions the stability of the knowing self.

The word "wonder" derives from the old English *wundor*, which some etymologists suggest might be cognate not only to the German *Wunder*, but also with *Wunde*: cut, gash, *wound*. While the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not recognize this derivation of *wonder* (appropriately its origin is said to be 'unknown'), the OED does support a possible shared ancestry between wonder and wounding in the entry's "obsolete" listings. Among these, one finds definitions ranging from 'omen or portent' to 'an evil or shameful action,' 'evil or horrible deeds,' 'destruction, disaster'; 'great distress or grief.' Rubenstein concludes that wonder is "inherently ambivalent," and connects the varying definitions of marvel and dread, amazement and terror, to a Heideggerian mood, *Verhaltenheit* (2015, 9). *Verhaltenheit*, which is usually translated as "restraint" or "reservedness," is a mood that comprises both terror and awe without reducing either to the other (2015, 9). Whether described as *Verhaltenheit*, *thaumazein*, or wonder, Rubenstein marks this experience as the "profoundly unsettling pathos of the philosopher":

"Wonder…comes on the scene neither as a tranquilizing force nor as a kind of *will-toward-epistemological domination*, but rather as a profoundly unsettling pathos. Rather than setting him on some sure course toward the Forms, the philosopher's wonder marks his *inability to ground himself in the ordinary as he reaches toward the extraordinary*; it indicates, in fact, that the skyward reach has rendered uncanny the very ground on which the philosopher stands. And because it leaves thinking thus ungrounded, thaumazein is not merely uncomfortable, it is downright *dangerous*. Standing in thaumazein, the philosopher stands exposed to that which he cannot master; that which, in turn, threatens to disable the sort of mastery one expects of philosophers." (2015, 4)

In this passage, Rubenstein explains the challenge of wonder as a practice for philosophy. Wonder does not set one "on some sure course," nor does it allow one to "ground in the familiar" as they reach toward the unfamiliar or extraordinary; rather, wonder is unsettling, ungrounding, and disruptive to the self who desires to know. As unsettling, ungrounding, and disruptive, the experience of wonder is thus a problem for the thinker who finds grounding in curiosity, categorizing, calculating, and assimilating into developed systems of knowledge. Wonder instead functions by a simultaneous opening and closing: "Wonder either keeps itself open, exposing itself to the raging elements, or it shuts itself down, shielding itself against all uncertainty within the comfortable confines of the certain, the familiar, and the possible" (2015, 5).

Throughout the inherited Western philotheological tradition that begins with Plato and Aristotle and moves through the Enlightenment in the work of Charles Darwin, Francis Bacon, and René Descartes, the experience of wonder has been dismissed in favor of more solid ground. Particularly during the Enlightenment, a time when the observable world fell to the calculation and systematization of the observing eye, attempts to shield against uncertainty led to a consideration of wonder as ignorance, as an experience that can and must be resolved through scientific processes. All valued thought or phenomena was that which could be rendered knowable within a scientific system. Characterized by the unknown, wonder became associated

with useless, lazy thinking that distanced one from the tangible world. Or, according to Bacon, "broken knowledge," incomplete and futile. Rubenstein explains how within this tradition, "wonder becomes something to ration, rein in, [and] delimit," ultimately subjected to the jurisdiction of the thinking self who can then choose whether or not to experience wonder (2015, 14). Within this tradition, the experience of wonder was rejected and placed in opposition to what was considered more practical and tangible pursuits of knowledge.

The pursuit of knowledge as a systematic structuring of the world characterizes what Rubenstein describes this as "representational ego-mania" (2015, 27). By seeking to bring everything into the fold of systematic knowledge systems, into disciplines and epistemes, the task of the thinker was no longer to explore the unknown, but to objectify the world into calculation and representation. Driven by the impulse of curiosity and desire to know all the wonders of the world, thinkers relentlessly sought out new marvels to calculate, comprehend, or possess" (2015, 8). This relentless seeking constitutes the origin of scientific investigation and modern philosophy since Enlightenment. In Rubenstein's account, modern philosophy's rejection of wonder was "a call to wipe away the whole horizon—to drink up the open sea onto which thinking has been released" (2015, 16). While the desire to know produced much of the knowledge we have today about the planet and all that lives on it, about the human body, about medicine and the sciences, the downfall of this view of knowledge and knowing is that it limits thinking to intelligibility, turning away from all that lies beyond the structures of pre-established epistemes. Put simply by Rubenstein, "the Western philosophical tradition has codified its 'objective truths' at the expense of truth itself, covering over every absence with presence and every mystery with the certainty of full representation" (2015, 26). In doing so, modern philosophy misses everything that cannot be calculated within a system or by a formula, while

irresponsibly and violently treating the world and its inhabitants as puzzles to be resolved or objects to be possessed before moving on to something newer and more bizarre (2015, 27).

To wonder is to reject this presumed totality of calculation and representation. Instead of certainty, wonder offers uncertainty. Rather than knowledge, wonder offers the unknown. Unlike the desire to know that drives the curious thinker, wonder "wonders at that which conditions—and for that reason ultimately eludes—the methods of calculation, comprehension, and possession themselves" (2015, 8). For this reason, Rubenstein writes, "wonder is the condition of possibility for all of these [methods]" (2015, 8). As such, to wonder is to do away with mastery, certainty, and self-determination, to submit to the experience of ungrounding that prevents the "solipsistic return from secured object to securing subject" and dissolves the traditional thinking subject whose subjectivity is determined though the process of objectification of all that is 'outside' the subject. As an experience of uncertainty, wonder exposes the thinker to that which they do not know and cannot master. This experience reveals the limitations of thought, or the limitations of the system of knowledge operative in thought that demands a reevaluation and reorientation.

Rubenstein asks what it might mean to "stay with the perilous wonder that resists final resolution, simple identity, and sure teleology" (2015, 23). With this question, we are asked what a rhetoric toward wonder might look like, how we might think a rhetorical stance that aims to "stay" with wonder, or, maybe more possibly, move toward it. The possibility of such a stance would first demand a self-renunciative refusal of the desire to know, or as Rubenstein describes it, the will-toward-epistemological-domination" (2015, 4). This refusal opens the rhetor to the possibilities beyond what has been preestablished by rhetorical thought, discipline, and teaching.

It would, as Vitanza suggests, *unground* rhetoric from its disciplinary traditions and embrace unknowing and uncertainty through the very experience of ungrounding.

This experience requires a comfortability in and with silence as a prelusive space of stillness beyond, behind, and within language. We hearken back here to Heidegger's notion of *reticence*, which returns us to the reality of our being. Wonder arises in experiences of groundlessness, experiences that are marked by silence: the silence of the unknown, of alterity, of awe. One must enter into silence as a refusal of "idle-talk," an engagement with *trace*, and a submission to the unknown. In doing so, one engages silence as a way to open to wonder, to think anew and differently.

This submission into silence is unsustainable. Although many have committed their lives to contemplation or maintained lifelong vows of silence, the detachment into wonder and the unknown is not a totalizing state. According to Aristotle, "wonder *ought* to be a fleeting experience, lest it leave the wonderer stranded in intellectual complacency" (Rubenstein, 13, added emphasis). Rather, we can think of this rhetoric toward wonder as a movement or oscillation into and out of silence, a being in relation with silence. We enter silence to come out again, only to return back. In this movement, we return to language, or we return to silence with renewed perspective, shaped by the doubled movement of differing and deferring. As a rhetoric toward wonder, engaging silence does not seek to arrive at answers, but rather to continue opening again and again to the unknown, which does not arrive at a place of wonder, but may enable it to suddenly strike.

To think silence as a rhetoric toward wonder, not as a rhetoric that keeps us within the epistemes that already trap and confine us into thinking only in terms of signification or

discourse, we open to silence within the realm of deep rhetoric, thereby opening rhetoric to the transcendental possibilities that lie within silence. From here, the field of rhetoric can think anew questions of ethics and knowledge. By adopting expanded, ethical, and ontological notions of rhetoric, we can see the ways in which the triad of silence, wonder, and knowing is rhetorical and can provide a space to engage the aporias of knowing/unknowing, speech/silence. In doing so, a rhetoric of silence as such could open us, as rhetoricity does, to the ethical demand of the world. As Rubenstein describes of her interlocutors, "at their most consonant, Heidegger, Levinas, and Nancy all demonstrate that such wondrous openness to alterity can be sustained only by an onto-ethical "unworking"— a tireless refusal to ground once and for all the identity of the self, the other, our god, this nation, or that people" (205, 132). This radical openness to alterity made possible by a rhetoric of silence toward wonder makes possible an ethics of real openness to that which lies beyond knowing, beyond interpellation, calculation, or representation

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION: LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

methodological limitations

The research in this project is limited by the methodological and theoretical framework employed throughout. The methodology of this project is a combination of historical and discursive, post-structural, and phenomenological approaches that seek to trace the development of a discursive signifier that emerges within a particular context, to examine that signifier in terms of the binary opposition that produces it and that it reproduces, and then to imagine alternate ontological and epistemological possibilities for the phenomenon that the signifier seeks to capture. However, each of these methodological approaches have their own limitations. A historical, discursive approach can never capture the entire history. As I wrote in Chapter 1, history is writing, meaning it is a result of selection, exclusion, and excess. The complete history of signifying silence throughout human history has not been represented herein and expands across disciplines beyond the history of language studies. Drawing on a deconstructionist or post-structural approach that regards language as indeterminate and consistently subverting or contradicting its own assertions opens all claims made herein to the very critiques presented against other scholars. Is not seeking silence as ineffability, seeking to write the ineffability of silence, simply re-signifying silence once more? Further, a post-structural approach may reveal the reproduction of binaristic logics underlying ideological significations, but it does not offer a solution to the problems that those ideological significations seek to expose. Systematic silencing, as in the denial and rejection of people's speech persists as a serious cultural and political problem. Lastly, while a phenomenological approach enables me to write of a positive

experience of silence as ineffable and ontological, it is limited by its cultural and subjective conditions which change when reproduced. Other methodologies and disciplinary focuses could have produced a very different investigation of silence.

onward

Further research possibilities could be to take up silence as it is signified in other discourses, disciplines, histories, or cultures. There are many representations and practices of silence in human history that could not be represented here but are nonetheless important to study and present in contrast to the signification of silence in rhetoric studies. Within rhetoric and composition studies in particular, the research in this project would be enhanced by a specific focus on composition theory and praxis. When I first proposed this dissertation, it had a fourth chapter, which had to be cut in this iteration. In composition studies, scholarship on the teaching of writing, and literacy and education scholarship, scholarly attention has been given to silence within the classroom as an area of focus for teachers. How to engage the silent student? How to avoid silencing students or reproducing conditions that encourage some students to speak but not others? The potential of the critique and research of my project is for a composition theory that imagines teaching the experience of writing as an experience with the ineffable and the unknown, as an experience of exploration toward wonder. By taking unknowing as a starting point that can serve to question previously held assumptions, the learning process becomes less about the arrival to a stable and constant known and more about the process of desedimentation (Chandler, 2018). This approach emphasizes the *experience* of writing for the writer, an experience that is bookended and punctuated by experiences of silence and unknowing that students and writers often push away forcefully rather than try to inhabit. In a possible future

iteration of this work, I would consider the role of unknowing in the Composition classroom in particular, a space in which we ask students to engage in identification and difference in response to sociopolitical exigencies, and the University writ large, wherein we construct and perpetuate knowledge in service of power. Encouraging students to seek, embody, and dwell in silence as a practice of writing opens students to an experience beyond mastery and control, to one of interrelation and ethical openness.

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