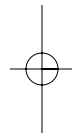
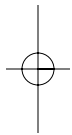




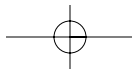
Silences in teaching and learning
Les voix du silence dans l'académie



Edited by / édité par Betsy Warland

Council of 3M National Teaching Fellows
Conseil des récipiendaires du Prix national d'enseignement 3M

Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
Société pour l'avancement de la pédagogie dans l'enseignement supérieur



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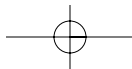
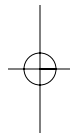
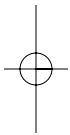


table of contents / table des matières

textes en français / French texts \ 9
acknowledgements / remerciements \ 11
 chair's introduction \ 13
 introduction du président \ 14
 editor's note \ 15
 mot de l'éditrice \ 17
 internal editor's note \ 19
 mot de l'éditrice associée \ 21
a message from 3M Canada \ 24
message de 3M Canada \ 25

invitation

en attendant Glotto, *Alex Fancy* \ 29
waiting for Glotto, *Alex Fancy* \ 33
abeyance, *Clarissa Green* \ 37

dilemma / dilemne

Debbie Schnitzer \ 41
Anna Lathrop \ 42
Suzanne Stewart \ 43
Joy Mighty \ 45
present but absent, *Bluma Litner* \ 47
le silence des Augures, *Claude Lamontagne* \ 52
the silence of Augurs, *Claude Lamontagne* \ 59

insight from elsewhere / perspectives inattendues

Susan Drain \ 69

Marcia Epstein \ 71

Kathy Madjidi \ 73

witnessing states of perplexity,
David Fancy and Sue Spearey \ 75

turning point / percée

Rebecca Nowacek \ 81

Patricia Peters \ 82

Laura Lewis \ 83

David Grimshire \ 84

that which already lies (silently) half asleep,

Arshad Ahmad \ 85

Anna Migliarisi \ 88

bridging / passerelle

Clare Hasenkampf \ 91

silence and sound in media production,

Dustin Morrow \ 92

secrets of silence in the classroom, *Lee Gass* \ 95

comment peut-on se taire

dans la salle de classe? *Lee Gass* \ 98

mathematics and silence, *Leo Jonker* \ 101

les mathématiques et le silence, *Leo Jonker* \ 105

Robert Campbell \ 110

Eugenie Tjan \ 111

in the classroom / dans la salle de classe

silent-speaking words, *Ron Marken* \ 115

paroles du silence, *Ron Marken* \ 120

silence in the classroom, *Mark Weisberg* \ 125

Alexandra Fidyk \ 130

silence! reviving an oral tradition
in mathematics education, *Eva Knoll* \ 131

Thomas Fleming \ 134

three facets of silence in dance education,
Karen Duplisea \ 136

the power of wow! the exclamation that makes and
breaks silence, *Kirsten Hardie* \ 139

dead silence, *Carol-Ann Courneya* \ 143

teaching silence: John Cage in the 21st century,
Elizabeth Wells \ 147

enseigner le silence : John Cage au 21^e siècle,
Elizabeth Wells \ 151

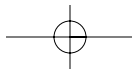
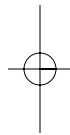
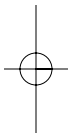
denouement / dénouement

yellow: from silence to creation, *Roger Moore* \ 157

jaune : du silence naît la création, *Roger Moore* \ 161

everyday is a story, *Louise B. Halfe* \ 165

contributors / collaborateurs et collaboratrices \ 167



textes en français
French texts

en attendant Glotto, *Alex Fancy*
traduction, *Alex Fancy*

le silence des Augures, *Claude Lamontagne*
traduction, *Claude Lamontagne*

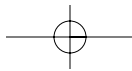
comment peut-on se taire dans la salle de classe?
Lee Gass
traduction, *Alex Fancy*

les mathématiques et le silence, *Leo Jonker*
traduction, *Jolimot Inc.*

paroles du silence, *Ron Marken*
traduction, *Claude Lamontagne*

enseigner le silence : John Cage au 21^e siècle,
Elizabeth Wells
traduction, *Aline Germain-Rutherford*

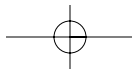
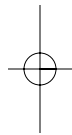
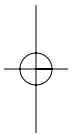
jaune : du silence naît la création, *Roger Moore*
traduction, *Aline Germain-Rutherford*



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chair's introduction

. . . there are two silences, perhaps many more, but really just two. The leaden silence, the lifeless silence which is not helpful, and the other, real silence that unites, mysteriously and undeniably, people who would ordinarily be distant from each other. It's a true moment, one of sharing In the great mirror that is theatre, vitality and boredom wait together, between two silences.

—Peter Brook, *Entre deux silences* (translation A. F.)

In the great theatre that is our classrooms, vitality and boredom also both wait, between the leaden silence and the magic silence.

I would like to express our appreciation to 3M Canada who believed in us and made this project possible; to the authors who have given voice to some of our many silences; and to Betsy Warland and Clarissa Green who have brought shape to our vision.

Alex Fancy

Chair,

Council of 3M National Teaching Fellows

introduction du président

... Il y a deux silences, peut-être y en a-t-il beaucoup plus, mais fondamentalement il n'y en a que deux. Le silence de plomb, ce silence sans vie, qui ne nous aide pas, et l'autre, le vrai silence, celui qui réunit mystérieusement et indéniablement des personnes ordinairement divisées. C'est un vrai moment, un vrai moment de partage... Dans le grand miroir du théâtre, la vitalité et l'ennui attendent ensemble, entre deux silences.

—Peter Brook, *Entre deux silences*

Dans le grand théâtre que sont nos salles de classe, la vitalité et l'ennui attendent aussi, entre le silence de plomb et le vrai silence.

Nous aimerions remercier 3M Canada dont la confiance et la générosité ont permis au présent ouvrage de voir le jour, les auteur.e.s qui ont donné voix à plusieurs de nos nombreux silences, et Betsy Warland et Clarissa Green, qui ont su incarner notre vision.

Alex Fancy

Président,

Conseil des récipiendaires du Prix national d'enseignement 3M

editor's note

Language evidences our separateness.

Silence evidences what we share.

—Betsy Warland, *Only this blue*

Every languaged moment tells us something specific. Every silent moment holds all meaning, all possibility. As teachers, we are the recognized guardians of language. Yet, in the classroom, when we find ourselves standing at the threshold of deep insight or reverence – and fall silent in awe, or relinquish the seeking to the class itself – our students learn more in those moments and minutes than they do from the entire language-directed course.

This is why we, and they, are there: in the academy. Each and every one of us hungers for insight that seizes us to the core. It may feel tender; it may feel terrifying. This is the underlying impetus for *Silences in teaching and learning*. As the book's editor, I have encountered in the editorial committee's quest for how to faithfully realize the book, as well as in the writers' texts of inquiry, a kind of reverence that has often been lost in education. In the array of silences addressed in the book – from moments of elation to those of profound replenishment to those that are deeply troubling – the necessity for respect is central.

Silences in teaching and learning is a groundbreaking book that has stepped outside of traditional academic writing, research, expertise. The very nature of silence

and its resistance to language; the fact that this is a nascent topic within the academy; the editorial request that the writers write in an unconventional form and style; and the uncertainty of colleagues' responses also make this a risk-taking book. As a teacher, writer, and editor, I am grateful for this book. And I want to express my deep regard for each writer, each editorial committee member, and my copy editor (and poet) Eilis Carpenter, who brought this book into being.

Betsy Warland

Editor

mot de l'éditrice

Les paroles sont ce qui nous sépare.

Le silence est ce qui nous unit.

—Betsy Warland, *Only this blue*

Chaque moment parlé nous dit quelque chose de particulier. Chaque moment de silence retient toutes possibilités de sens. En tant qu'enseignants nous sommes les gardiens reconnus de la parole. Et pourtant, en classe, lorsque nous nous tenons sur le seuil d'une profonde intuition, voire d'une révélation – muets d'admiration ou portés à céder la responsabilité de la découverte à la classe – nos étudiants apprennent davantage de ces quelques minutes que de tous les discours d'un cours.

Voilà ce pourquoi eux, et nous, sommes à l'université : nous sommes tous affamés de ces intuitions profondes, ces révélations qui nous pénètrent jusqu'à la moelle. Que ces moments soient pour nous tendres ou terrifiants. Voilà la raison d'être de *Les voix du silence dans l'académie*. En tant qu'éditrice, j'ai pu toucher du doigt, dans la démarche du comité éditorial à la recherche d'une manière de réaliser le livre qui soit absolument fidèle à sa vision, ainsi que dans les textes de recherche des auteurs, une forme de passion respectueuse trop souvent perdue dans le monde de l'éducation. La diversité des silences évoqués par ce recueil – de ceux qui procurent la joie, à ceux qui offrent la plénitude, à ceux qui s'avèrent profondément troublants – traduit avant tout la nécessité du respect. *Les voix du silence dans l'académie* est un livre

innovateur qui va au-delà des frontières traditionnelles des styles universitaires d'écriture, de recherche ou de spécialisation.

La spécificité du silence et son refus du langage; le fait que son étude soit encore embryonnaire dans les universités; le défi, relevé par les auteurs, de trouver une forme et un style peu orthodoxes; et l'incertitude face à la réaction anticipée des collègues contribuent également à faire de notre livre un projet audacieux. En tant que professeure, écrivaine et éditrice je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude pour ce livre, ainsi que pour chacun des auteurs, chaque membre du comité éditorial, et ma lectrice Eilis Carpenter – qui est aussi poète – grâce à qui ce livre a pu voir le jour.

Betsy Warland

Éditrice

internal editor's note

This book, *Silences in teaching and learning*, began in sound: in conversations that named topics infrequently explored in higher education; policies noticeable in their absence; groups of faculty and students ignored or dismissed. As those conversations expanded they included curiosity about other silences in higher education: pauses in the classroom, time spent pondering, healing, shifting gears. Despite the nature of the group, every person who discussed silence and what a book about it might look like, offered personal and specific desires about this aspect of their teaching life. It became clear that silence is a phenomenon with a plethora of definitions, a shape-shifter capable of numerous presentations. And that the place of silence in teaching and learning – whether it is used as a tool or considered a problem – is a powerful one. That so little literature is focussed on silence within teaching and learning was bothersome; that was a void to do something about.

From the beginning, the intention was to break a silence, that is, to create a book accessible to a wide audience: teachers in higher education, of course, but also students, administrators, parents of post-secondary learners. The book was to be a portal into the panoply of silences; its tone and presentation were to be both unsettling and inviting, like silence.

The call went out for submissions about any kind of silence in higher education and a wide range of ideas

and approaches appeared from teachers in almost every discipline. Although authors wrote about many types of silence, as noticeable were those missing, left in a continuing silence.

Writing a short piece that was to be more lyrical than (traditionally) academic pushed authors toward a style not often used in the academy. A few texts mirrored the passion, pain, or pride of *en face* discussions about silence at the 2005 STLHE meeting at the University of Toronto, or at the 2006 workshop at the University of Alberta. More offered subtler, more carefully described approaches to this complex topic. The editorial committee worked creatively with all texts and reviewers' comments to bring about an eclectic, balanced collection focussed on the poignant place of silence in teaching and learning. The resulting text is an artful creation by thoughtful teachers that, we hope, provokes more questions than it answers, invites reflections and conversations, and sparks an explosion of writing about this critical aspect of our work.

Clarissa P. Green

Internal Editor

mot de l'éditrice associée

C'est d'abord dans le bruit des conversations que ce livre, *Les voix du silence dans l'académie*, a pris forme : des conversations sur des sujets rarement explorés dans le monde de l'éducation supérieure; des règlements ou politiques qui brillent par leur absence; des groupes d'enseignants ou d'étudiants ignorés de tous ou carrément rejetés.

En s'amplifiant, ces conversations ont mis en lumière d'autres silences : les pauses dans la salle de classe, les moments de réflexion, de guérison, de changement de rythme. Malgré leurs différences, tous les membres de notre groupe de réflexion sur le silence et sur ce que pourrait être un livre sur ce sujet ont proposé des opinions et aspirations bien particulières. Nous avons vite compris la forme fugace que prend le silence, phénomène quasi impossible à cerner, qui se prête à de nombreuses interprétations, et qui s'avère, à la réflexion, occuper une place importante, voire primordiale, dans l'éducation – que ce soit en tant qu'outil à exploiter ou en tant que problème à résoudre. Que si peu ait été écrit à son sujet, nous a troublés. Nous faisons face ici à une lacune qu'il fallait à tout prix essayer de combler.

Dès le départ, notre intention fut de briser un silence, c.-à-d. de créer un livre accessible à un vaste public : les professeurs impliqués dans l'enseignement supérieur, bien sûr, mais aussi leurs étudiants, les

administrateurs, les parents. Nous envisagions un livre-portail dont la présentation et le ton reprendraient le caractère à la fois rassurant et inquiétant du silence.

Nous avons invité des textes sur quelque type de silence que ce soit présent en éducation supérieure. Une gamme très large d'idées et d'approches nous fut offerte par des enseignants venant d'à peu près tous les horizons disciplinaires. Par contre, si les auteurs s'avérèrent avoir touché une gamme impressionnante de types de silence, aussi impressionnante demeurait la gamme des types qui n'avaient pas trouvé preneur, irréductible méta-silence.

Avoir à rédiger un texte court et plutôt lyrique a forcé les auteurs à emprunter un style rarement privilégié dans le milieu universitaire. Quelques textes ont traduit la peine, la passion ou la satisfaction éprouvées durant deux discussions organisées sur le silence, l'une lors d'une réunion tenue dans le cadre du congrès de la SAPES en 2005 à l'Université de Toronto, et l'autre à l'occasion de l'atelier du congrès de 2006 à l'Université d'Alberta. D'autres textes ont offert des perspectives plus subtiles, plus soigneusement articulées, sur ce sujet complexe.

À partir des textes et des commentaires des évaluateurs, le comité de rédaction a tenté, de façon créative, d'arrêter une collection d'écrits à la fois éclectique et organisée, soulignant le rôle poignant du silence dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage. Le présent recueil qui en résulte est une création artistique, une œuvre collective qui provoquera, nous l'espérons, plus de questions que de réponses, qui sollicitera réflexions et conversa-

tions, et qui déclenchera un véritable feu d'artifice de réflexions écrites sur cet aspect fondamental de notre profession.

Clarissa P. Green
Éditrice associée

a message from 3M Canada

3M Canada's innovative culture brings technology and human ingenuity together to make and sell thousands of products used in factories, offices, hospitals and homes. This continues beyond our office doors as 3M Canada consistently looks for ways to help meet communities' needs by supporting the arts, education, health and human services.

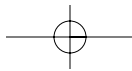
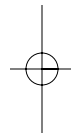
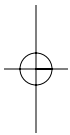
In an age characterized by short-term business and personal relationships, the twenty-three year partnership between 3M Canada and the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) is an achievement both revered and celebrated. The innovative spirit of the award brings together outstanding teachers from diverse disciplines and provinces to discuss new ideas and share insight and knowledge. 3M is honoured to make a small difference in the lives of people who mould the minds of Canada's future leaders.

message de 3M Canada

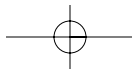
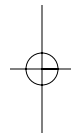
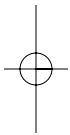
La culture innovatrice de 3M Canada favorise le rapprochement de la technologie et de l'invention humaine, permettant ainsi la fabrication et vente de milliers de produits destinés aux usines, aux bureaux, aux hôpitaux, et aux particuliers. Cette collaboration s'étend au-delà de nos portes car nous ne cessons de rechercher des stratégies pour rencontrer les besoins de la communauté, que ce soit au niveau des arts, de l'éducation, de la santé, et des services sociaux.

Le partenariat de 3M Canada et de la Société pour l'avancement de la pédagogie dans l'enseignement supérieur (SAPES), qui dure depuis vingt-trois ans, suscite l'admiration et la célébration, ceci à une époque où les relations professionnelles et personnelles sont souvent de courte durée. La vision innovatrice du Prix national d'excellence en enseignement 3M a permis à des professeurs exceptionnels, œuvrant dans de nombreuses disciplines et dans toutes les provinces, de se réunir, de participer à une réflexion commune, et de partager leurs pensées et savoir.

3M est fier de pouvoir faire une modeste différence dans la vie de ceux et celles qui forment les futurs meneurs du Canada.



invitation



en attendant Glotto

Le professeur Paul I. Glotte, que les étudiants appellent Glotto, assure des cours depuis belle lurette. Il est dans son bureau.

8 heures 40. Encore quatre copies. Dix minutes chacune. Ce sera juste, avec le cours qui commence à 9 heures 30. Quatre dont celle de Mélanie-la-bavarde. Comment est-ce qu'elle arrive à dire autant en cinquante minutes? Et son écriture est minuscule, par-dessus le marché. Est-ce une stratégie pour occulter ses réflexions? Elle n'est pas terrible, pourtant. Bon, au boulot.

Je devrais peut-être revoir celle de Jean-Paul. A la limite elle vaut un A-, mais son auteur est un paresseux. Il ne faut pas qu'il se repose sur ses lauriers. Il conserve son énergie pour mieux sprinter au moment des tests. Mais au fond il est plus capable que Sarah, qui travaille comme une brute, et mérite son A-.

Le téléphone sonne.

Ça commence... et celle-là, en plus. Qu'elle réclame la mise à jour de mon curriculum vitae d'ici la Saint Glin-Glin, ce n'est pas le moment. Les dresseurs de listes vont hériter de la terre. Qu'ils comprennent une fois pour toutes que nous sommes trop actifs pour trouver le temps de faire le bilan de nos activités. Voilà qu'elle laisse son bla-bla-bla. Encore un message à envoyer dans le vide. Je la plains, elle fait son travail, mais je n'y suis pour rien, moi.

On frappe à la porte.

Lisez mes heures de bureau, imbéciles! « Je représente la maison d'édition Lune d'or, je ne vous dérangerai qu'une petite minute. » Il n'y a que des petites minutes, espèce d'abruti! Ou alors, c'est Philippe. « J'ai tellement envie de savoir ma dernière note. » Et bien, tu n'as qu'à attendre, mon ami. Vivre c'est attendre, d'autant plus que nous sommes dans l'éducation, voilà une leçon que Philippe n'a pas encore apprise. Tu auras ta réponse dans trente minutes, en principe. Bon, qu'est-ce que Geneviève raconte?

Pas mal. Pas mal du tout. Geneviève fait des progrès.

L'ordinateur émet un bip-bip!

Tiens... c'est Jacques. « Priorité urgente. » Je doute, mon cher Jacques, que tu puisses me dire quoi que ce soit d'urgent... Je m'en doutais! Son fameux comité d'étude d'une nouvelle vision académique. Pas de nouvelle vision sans quelques nouveaux collègues! Puis les visions se font attendre, mon cher Jacques, on ne les fabrique pas sur mesure. Plus ils sont en panne d'inspiration, plus ils en bavent, de notes de service, de sondages et de circulaires à classer sous « P ».

Un B+ pour Geneviève! Et un B+ solide, en plus. Elle sera contente. Elle ne jase pas beaucoup, mais elle réfléchit bien, celle-là.

Philippe ne sera pas content si je ne rends pas les copies ce matin. Il ne reste que Samuel, Marie-Jeanne et Mélanie... Samuel commence bien.

Le téléphone sonne.

L'éditeur qui m'emmerde encore, ça, c'est le bouquet. Pas la peine de répondre, je sais que c'est aujourd'hui la date limite définitive. Est-ce que j'ai jamais raté une échéance, moi?

Oh, là, là, Samuel, tu flanches... C'est l'inattention, encore une fois. Il a besoin d'un encadrement spécial, voilà qui est sûr. L'éditeur laisse un message plutôt long. Merde!

Bip-bip! de l'ordinateur.

« J.-P. Lapointe. » Ça fait longtemps! « Lettre d'appui. » Je veux bien mais ce ne sera pas pour aujourd'hui... Décidément, Samuel a besoin d'aide. Si je leur proposais une classe de soutien? Mais ils n'ont pas le temps en masse, eux non plus. Peut-être que mes objectifs sont trop ambitieux. On veut faire une différence, mais souvent il faut se demander si on ne joue pas dans leur vie un rôle des plus négligeables. Bon, c'est le tour de Marie-Jeanne.

9 heures 10. J'ai vraiment besoin d'un café. J'allais revoir les copies pour identifier les problèmes les plus sérieux. Zut, alors!

Bip-bip!

Tiens, un courriel de Marie-Jeanne. « Je ne viendrai pas en classe ce matin parce que... » Le 'parce que', ça peut attendre. Pas la peine de lire sa copie tout de suite! A Mélanie, alors.

Bip-bip!

Un communiqué du recteur! Qu'est-ce qu'il raconte ce matin? « Un don qui fera toute la différence... » Mais il vend notre âme, voyons! Avec ce donateur-là, ça va barder, c'est sûr!

Le téléphone sonne.

Ma chère, tu sais que je pars en cours dans cinq minutes! Laisse-moi un message, j'y répondrai dès mon retour. Tu seras déçue par mon silence, mais sache que je compte décevoir pas mal de gens aujourd'hui! Philippe, Geneviève... Bon, deux minutes de réflexion avant d'affronter leurs questions, leur déception, leurs têtes.

Un très long silence. On entend au loin le carillon du campus. Silence. Bruits de voix dans le couloir, puis silence. Bip-bip! de l'ordinateur. Glotto n'y répond pas. On frappe à la porte. Glotto demeure figé. On frappe encore. Un temps. La porte s'ouvre.

- Tu ne vas pas en cours?

Silence.

- Tes étudiants t'attendent.

Après un silence.

- Ferme bien à clef en sortant.

FIN

Alex Fancy

waiting for Glotto

Professor Paul E. Glotte has been teaching for a very long time. His students call him Glotto. He is in his office.

8:40 a.m. Four more tests. Ten minutes each. It's going to be tight, with class starting at 9:30. And one is Melanie's. Melanie-the-Chatterbox. How can she say so much in 50 minutes? And why the microscopic writing? To hide her thoughts? But she's a thinker, no need for that. But I really should look at John's paper again. It's so close to an A-, but he's lazy and likes to rest on his laurels. Saves his energy for the test-day sprint. He's definitely stronger than Sarah, but she's such a worker and deserves her A-.

The phone rings.

Here we go . . . it's *her*. Bad timing! My CV update can wait till Doomsday, as far as I'm concerned. List-makers will inherit the earth. Can't they understand we're so busy we can't find time to list our publications? Blah blah blah, another junk message. She's just doing her job but—

Knock on the door.

Read my office hours! Another "I'll just take . . ." I bet. "I'm from Moonbeam Publishers, and I'll just take a minute of your time." It's all just minutes of time, twit! Or maybe it's Phillip, "I *need* to know my last grade." You have to learn to wait, my friend, especially in this business. You'll have your answer in 30 minutes. So, what's Genevieve up to?

Not bad. Not bad at all. Genevieve's making progress

The computer makes a "Beep! Beep!"

Well, if it isn't Jack. "Top priority." My dear man, I doubt you can say anything I'd consider urgent I knew it! His blessed Committee for a New Academic Vision. There won't be any new vision around here without a few appointments. Visions, my dear Jack, don't appear on command. The thirstier they are for quick-fix inspirations, the more they spit out paper: memos, polls, flyers. File under "T."

B+ for Genevieve! It's a solid B+. She'll be so happy. She doesn't talk much but she's very articulate when she writes.

Phillip's not going to be happy if I don't give back the papers this morning. Just Sam, Marie-Jeanne, and Melanie. Sam's starting out well

"Ring-ring-ring."

The editor! That's all I need. I know today's the *final* deadline! When have I ever let them down? Oh-oh, you're getting off track, Sam. Can't sustain your attention, what else is new? He needs some help. Oh great. The editor's leaving an even longer message this time. Damn!

"Beep! Beep!"

"J.-P. Lapointe." It's been a while. "Letter of reference." Sure, but not today. Sam really does need help. Perhaps I should schedule an extra session or two with him just to sort out problems. But he doesn't have any

more time than I do. We want to make a difference, but sometimes I wonder if we do. So, what's Marie-Jeanne got to say?

9:10 a.m. I'm desperate for coffee. And I wanted to go over these one last time, make a list of their major problems. Fuck.

"Beep! Beep!"

Marie-Jeanne. "I can't make it to class this morning because . . ." The "because" can wait. One paper less to read right now!

"Beep! Beep!"

A media release from the President! What's he on about this morning? "A Gift that Will Make a Difference." When this gets around, people are going to raise hell. On to Melanie . . .

"Ring-ring-ring!"

Sweetheart, you know I have a class in five minutes. I'll answer later. I know "later" disappoints you, but I seem to be disappointing a lot of people today. Phillip, Genevieve . . . two minutes to gather my thoughts before I see their subtle scowls, face their questions . . .

A very long pause.

A carillon chimes in the distance.

Silence. Voices in the corridor, then silence.

"Beep! Beep!"

Glotto doesn't look at the computer.

Knock on the door.

Glotto doesn't move.

More knocks. Silence.

The door opens.

"You're not going to class?"

Silence.

"Your class is waiting "

Pause.

"Lock the door on your way out."

THE END

Alex Fancy

abeyance

I had a teacher who understood synapses.
She used timing like a trapeze artist.

Every class began and ended in silence.
At nine o'clock she turned on the slide projector,
walked up the tiered steps,
locked the auditorium door.

The watchful eyes of 200 students,
sitting at wooden desks, followed her return to the screen
where she stood, an eerie silhouette,
in front of a 12-foot image.

At first we hated her for
 taking our time
 locking the door
 insisting we sit in silence.

We felt sent to our rooms,
punished with the click of heavy metal lock
the slap of her leather shoes on concrete
her faceless profile in front of the slide.

“Dracula’s wife!”

“Frankenstein’s’ daughter!”

We hissed to each other.

“It’s only a 100-level survey course!”

No wonder she’s single!”

In the dark room her voice
hushed in the glow of Gothic windows,
caressed the draping of Michelangelo’s *Madonna*,

wavered with Van Gogh's uncomfortable skies
quietly urged us,
"Art cannot speak for itself,
its language must emerge within us."

And posed carefully sculpted questions
that invitingly hung in the silence.

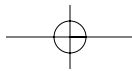
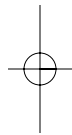
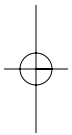
By midterm she had taught us
to pause wait connect
image to retina, brain, heart:
medium texture colour shape
size content symbol
context personality health and family of artist
politics meaning.

Our minds
sorting through
every strategy designed
to expand our knowledge, our love
of art.

At the end of the hour she returned us to silence:
a final slide
an invitation to
read, think, wonder then
the slap of shoes, click of
door unlocked.
She always thanked us for
honouring the artists who made her class possible
as we left.

Clarissa P. Green

dilemma
dilemne



Debbie Schnitzer



I ask questions: What cannot (will not?) be accommodated when product trumps process? What can the system (any system?) respond to in relation to the very multiplicity and diversity it claims to embrace? What kinds of human rights do we violate, dependent as we are on hierarchies' elitist practices, their rigid modes of representation and evaluation? What kind of factory model are we preserving? What kind of self-serving publishing industry have we created to prove our productivity so that we might stay? Rise? Supercede? How can scholarship and activism intersect among various communities in an authentic reciprocal relation? Why is so much of the "real" world terminated as soon as we enter our "hallowed" halls?



Anna Lathrop



The creation of an environment that values silence in a large lecture hall with hundreds of students *is possible*. Unfortunately, the lecture hall is far too often perceived as a place where students hide and instructors simply disseminate information. As a result, it is not uncommon to see instructors who ignore student detachment and continue to lecture above the noise of student conversation. This development simply affirms the fact that the collegial connection is absent. A lecture hall filled with hundreds of students does not preclude the possibility of complete silence. In fact, as experienced instructors will attest, when moments of enraptured silence do occur, there is very little that can equal the power of their effect.



Suzanne Stewart

As a new English literature professor, I have frequently addressed the “problem” of my quietness. At times, I have even seriously questioned my ability to pursue a teaching career. For three years, I have noted in my teaching journal the day-to-day difficulties that I encounter in the classroom: the challenge of speaking above pre-class chatter to commence the lecture with a commanding introduction; the incapacity to sustain students’ attention throughout the class without a voluminous speaking voice; feelings of physical exhaustion after a single class; and the complete collapse of my voice after extended periods of lecturing. I have identified personal qualities, too, that hinder my ability to assume a strong vocal presence as a teacher, particularly my intuitive strengths as a listener rather than a talker, greater ease in private than in public settings, and deep feelings of modesty. The “problem” of my quietness, it seems, is also readily apparent to others: students typically evaluate my “speaking style and manner” as the weakest aspect of my teaching; teaching supervisors routinely comment in their reference letters that my voice and demeanour are “soft,” “restrained,” “gentle,” and “slightly reserved”; and colleagues openly inquire how I find the strength to project my voice in a sustained manner. As instructors, we are advised to teach with integrity and to be “who we are” in the classroom, but that advice is complicated

when softness of voice and gentleness of character are seemingly at odds with a vocation that entails speaking dynamically and confidently about our knowledge. In my most discouraging moments, I have come to believe that quietness, while it is a reflection of my true inner self, is not a legitimate teacherly trait.



Joy Mighty



For many students at our institutions, the experience of learning in the context of diversity is not positive. We must find ways of making all students feel that they are part of a classroom community, regardless of their identity:

I attended a course on race relations that purported to incorporate equity concerns but had nothing on Aboriginal peoples, apparently because Aboriginal people were not considered a minority group When I received feedback from my professor on my paper, I was told to address racial groups other than Aboriginal peoples. I felt it was a devaluing of the Aboriginal experience.

—Michelle Daigle

Teaching for inclusion means using instructional methods that foster respect for differences:

A wheelchair ramp is an alternate mode of access for the physically disabled so that they may access the same benefits as others. Similarly, being allowed extra time gives the learning-disabled extra time to process what they know. My reading speed will always be slow. But having extra time gives me the chance

to compete with others. Extra time is like being provided with a wheelchair ramp. I simply ask for equal access to the experience of learning that others already have.

—William Wegenast

We must use collaborative and interactive pedagogies, consciously modelling the value of diversity in our teaching, and we must examine our teaching practices and the assumptions on which they are based, routinely asking ourselves: do our methodologies perpetuate the silencing of marginalized groups?

[University X] focuses on tradition and spirit, such as the emphasis on its 150-year-old buildings and plaques and its own flag, almost as though it were its own country. Such an emphasis on history, which includes a history of marginalization, has meant that, as a queer coming to [University X], I have felt silenced Teachers are not prepared to deal with gay issues In the absence of a process for addressing gay issues in the university, I think that we have a system that endorses hate.

—Rob Bickford

present but absent

Look at the faces of the silent, and of those who speak. Listen to a woman groping for language in which to express what is on her mind, sensing that the terms of academic discourse are not her language, trying to cut down her thought to the dimension of a discourse not intended for her.

—Adrienne Rich, *On lies, secrets and silence*

Students and faculty come to higher education, all with their personal histories. Yet teacher and student are expected to engage in a learning relationship as if the learning process were independently “out there,” disconnected from their lives. In North America and western Europe, a Cartesian view of the world has been retained and, along with it, a belief in scientific truth and objectivity as ideal knowledge, the only knowledge with which rational “man” can advance in a world which “he” will be better able to control. This has been the operating hegemony that has characterized our institutions.

What is often forgotten but imperative to remember is that universities are not natural, homogeneous, neutral sites.

When I first began teaching, there were few traces in the classroom of my embodied presence. I was expected to be an entity without context; a disembodied, thinking, living, teaching-a-particular-course presence to

a classroom filled with silent, disembodied students. These students had internalized the unstated rule that whole parts of their identity had to be silenced and concealed in the classroom. Yet neither they nor I existed in a vacuum, without a context, without a story, without a body. Still, all of us remained distant observers, silent others who were separated from our own experience, culture, and history, who left the self, the “I,” at the door once we had crossed the threshold into the classroom. As I continued to teach, substantive difficulties in my viewing the learning relationship as if it were “out there” arose. Increasingly, I felt as if I were teaching from an invisible location. It is not that I intentionally chose to disappear behind the professional voice of expertise. It was that I had always been told that it was the right way to teach. I never questioned the ideological imperatives and corresponding pedagogical laws and teaching methodologies that silence and conceal individual identities.

In my large university – now increasingly known for its highly diverse student body and increasingly diverse faculty – that “I” is composed of vital elements of different races, ethnic groups, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and learning abilities; different social, political, and economic status. This diversity that the university is inclined to tout, however, is the very diversity that continues to be erased in the classroom.

How does this happen? Academic institutions create invisible boundaries which make implicit, and sometimes explicit, what can be said in the public arena

of the classroom, and what must remain outside its bounds, unspoken. This tacit monitoring reinforces the power of scholarly authority to determine what forms of knowledge are acceptable to its scholarly authority, namely, to those in positions of power who decide what qualifies as knowledge.

The experience we must begin from . . . is that of those who live it rather than those who merely observe . . . I am suggesting that the world within the experience of actual individuals should become the place where inquiry begins.

—Dorothy Smith

There is still a deep-rooted belief that allowing space for the private in a public classroom is neither an important nor legitimate form of teaching within conventional social sciences – the discipline in which I teach. The refusal to acknowledge “the body,” or even that there is an “I” behind the words of any text read or any voice spoken in the classroom, continues to be a prevalent attitude maintained in the name of valid scientific inquiry, true knowledge, refereed authority. Patriarchal attitudes have continued to prevail with the unspoken complicity of the academy that reifies objectivity, theory, and abstraction. The limitations of a positivist, “correct” approach to teaching in the social sciences counter the growing evidence that the teaching/learning relationship is a dynamic process of inquiry, not fixed or bound by immutable pedagogical tenets.

To write “my body” plunges me into lived experience I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create.

—Adrienne Rich

In my teaching, I have learned that whenever I devalue the importance of my being embodied, I participate in silencing myself and my students.

Still, I ask myself, how do we as academics teach in a language and a mode that is not alien and alienating, which does not set up a relationship of fear between professor and student?

How we teach is often what distances and silences the very students with whom we want to engage, to learn from.

Certainly teaching that starts and stays in the abstract – talks over students rather than with students – leaves them behind. I have been left behind, positioned as ignorant by theorizations that lost sight of concrete practice and how it is related to lived experience.

I want my teaching to make it possible for my students to contest hegemonic practices that have been oppressive to them, forcing them into a decreed silence that has regulated what cannot be spoken. I want to look at the world as it is – from where we each are and have each come – rather than from outside ourselves. I am beginning to teach in a way that opens a space for stu-

dents to articulate their own knowledge, their own vision of possibility.

Bluma Litner

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New York: Norton.
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le silence des Augures

Au cours de la neuvième ou la dixième nuit, il réalisa, avec une certaine amertume, qu'il n'y avait rien à espérer de ces élèves qui acceptaient silencieusement ses enseignements, que seuls étaient prometteurs ceux qui risquaient, parfois, une objection raisonnable.

—J. L. Borges

Bien-aimé Frère Aîné,

Enfin un jour faste en ces temps sombres. J'ai retrouvé la bulle! Synchronicité prémonitoire peut-être, c'est avec le lever du soleil qu'elle a émergé des profondeurs abyssales des zones interdites de la Toile où l'avaient enfouie les sbires des prélats obscurantistes de la Grande Censure. Un miracle rendu possible par le plus improbable algorithme d'exploration virtuelle que j'aie jamais osé lancer dans le cyberspace. La version du « Recueil des bulles papales du ^{XXII}e siècle » que contient le fichier décrypté est affreusement abîmée, mais, ô joie indicible, *Silentium Augurum* semble parfaitement intacte! La voici.

Silentium Augurum

Bulle émise par le pape Pie XIII, le 27 avril de l'an 2198 de l'Incarnation de Notre Seigneur

Alors il leur dit : Rendez donc à César ce qui est à César, et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu.

—Matthieu 22:21

Édit formel

Pie, Évêque, serviteur des serviteurs de Dieu, pour que survive la mémoire du propos, proclame par la présente la nécessité critique de réserver à la sphère du Sacré toute forme de prétention au Silence des Augures (*Silentium Augurum*), et, par voie de conséquence, décrète vaine, futile et immorale, toute prétention issue de la sphère du Profane à ce dit Silence des Augures, en particulier la prétention scientifique à une lecture silencieuse, ou objective de la Réalité, ainsi que la prétention didactique à un apprentissage silencieux, ou objectif, de quelque enseignement que ce soit.

L'origine

Dans son *De Divinatione*, Cicéron explique que la première étape du rite de divination consiste en la constatation d'un silence (*silentium*) défini comme « absence de toute imperfection (procédurale) » (« *quod omni vitio caret* », *De Divinatione*, 2, 71). Comme l'explique Cicéron, cette mesure vise à assurer qu'aucun facteur humain (au-delà de l'intention augurale) ne s'est immiscé dans l'occasion fournie à la divinité (qui seule détient le secret du cours du temps) de soulever un coin du grand rideau qui voile l'avenir au regard des mortels. C'est en effet d'un silence de parfaite neutralité qu'il est question ici, un silence d'ouverture totale de la part de l'Augure, un silence d'auto-exclusion attentive en attente de Révélation, condition *sine qua non* à l'accueil d'une vérité toute nue offerte en cadeau par la divinité bienveillante.

L'Âge de l'arrogance

Au cours des millénaires qui suivent, le rapport à cet art d'accéder au pouvoir de prédire va subir de profondes mutations, avec, en tête de liste, un renversement du rapport de force entre l'autorité séculière et l'autorité ecclésiastique. C'est vers la fin du Moyen-Âge que commence à s'affirmer l'art divinatoire séculier qui va présider à ce renversement : la science empirique, ou positive¹. Les exploits de cette forme « artificielle » de divination (comme l'avait qualifiée Cicéron) mènent progressivement à la reconnaissance de plus en plus affirmée d'une possibilité pour l'homme de soulever par lui-même, sans le secours des dieux, ce lourd rideau qui lui voile l'Avenir, affranchissant ainsi l'humanité de l'autorité divine. Sous l'assaut de ces exploits séculiers en matière de prédiction de l'avenir, la pratique augurale sacrée se fait éventuellement éclipser par la pratique scientifique séculière, qui substitue à la nécessité du *silentium* sacré (assurant l'intégrité d'un message divin libre de tout biais humain), la nécessité d'un *silentium* séculier, ou silence empirique (perçu comme assurant l'intégrité d'un message naturel libre de tout biais humain), qu'elle baptise pompeusement « objectivité scientifique ». Cette substitution du silence profane au silence sacré s'infiltré également progressivement dans toutes les fibres du tissu social, nulle part plus insidieusement qu'au cœur des pratiques pédagogiques institutionnalisées. Là, dans un « rendu » dramatique de l'auto-bâillonnement qu'elle impose au chercheur scientifique, la croyance

en un possible silence profane présidant à toute forme d'acquisition de connaissance se fait bâillonnement de l'apprenant (qu'on croit devoir empêcher de brouiller, par sa parole tout aussi inévitablement subjective que celle du chercheur scientifique, le message objectif de l'expertise professorale qui lui livrera le pouvoir divinatoire que recèle toute connaissance digne d'être enseignée).

La Révolution de la Science Critique²

Avec la fin du ^{xxi}e siècle, apparaissent les premiers signes de la révolution en marche dont *Silentium Augurum* se veut la sanction morale. Se réclamant de la rationalité critique, cette révolution veut établir l'irrationalité de toute prétention séculière au silence des augures. Elle propose de reconnaître que dans la sphère du profane aucun *silentium* n'est possible, que toute acquisition de connaissances nouvelles élargissant le champ divinatoire doit passer par une parole séculière³ (qui n'est néfaste pour la quête divinatoire que si elle est formulée de façon à éviter toute possibilité de confrontation critique). Baptisés « rationalistes critiques » au ^{xx}e siècle par Karl Popper, l'un des plus célèbres d'entre eux, les précurseurs de cette lignée de pensée font l'objet, au cours des âges, d'une hostilité souvent extrême. La condamnation à mort de Socrate et le déclenchement de la Grande Querelle opposant les autorités universitaires d'Utrecht à René Descartes en sont deux exemples fameux. Moins ouvertement, mais tout aussi efficacement,

Popper, après avoir joui d'une certaine notoriété de son vivant, est refoulé pour un temps au plus profond de l'inconscient collectif par le pragmatisme obsessionnel étroit du capitalisme galopant du début du XXI^e siècle. Vers la fin de la première moitié de notre siècle, deux rationalistes critiques le ressuscitent et parviennent, sur les ruines de la faillite alors évidente du pragmatisme capitaliste, à susciter un espoir planétaire de renouveau. Il est évidemment question ici de Francisco Du Bois et de Maxim Schmidt, qui deviendront respectivement ministre de l'Éducation du Bloc nippo-occidental, et président de l'Organisation Scientifique Mondiale. La scandaleuse destitution du premier en mars 2164 suite à des manigances politiques, la démission du second, en signe de solidarité, en avril de la même année, et, le 25 décembre, l'excommunication du cardinal Agassi par Paul VII pour avoir sommé ce dernier⁴ de prendre parti pour Du Bois et Schmidt, mettent le feu aux poudres. La « Boutade de Du Bois »⁵, décochée sur les ondes du réseau Global lors du dernier débat public avant sa démission, est sur les lèvres de tous les intellectuels influents.

L'à-propos de *Silentium Augurum*

Après les bouleversements sociaux qui s'ensuivent, notamment suite au suicide de Paul VII, c'est le retour de Schmidt et de Du Bois, qui ouvre sur la période de calme relatif que nous connaissons encore aujourd'hui. Un calme qui pourrait ne plus être qu'apparent, si l'on se fie à la multiplication récente

des indices de tentative de retour en force des apôtres déchus de la prétention profane au Silence des Augures. De là la nécessité de renforcer par tous les moyens légitimes les bastions symboliques de nos forteresses morales. *Silentium Augurum* nous semble apte à jouer le rôle de première mesure concrète en ce sens.

Émis à Saint-Pierre de Rome, en ce 27 avril de l'an 2198 de l'Incarnation de Notre Seigneur, au cours de la quatrième année de notre pontificat.

Ai-je besoin de vous avouer, bien-aimé Frère Aîné, que je n'ai pas pu résister à la tentation de la lire dès qu'elle s'est offerte à mon regard médusé? Je l'ai savourée tout d'un trait, sans pouvoir détacher mon regard du fil des mots. Quel baume pour les plaies de nos âmes d'éducateurs interdits que ces mots du Frère Fondateur Agassi! Puisse leur diffusion contribuer à déclencher le Grand Soulèvement auquel nous aspirons si désespérément!

Votre Frère dévoué,

Joseph Bacquet

Ce vendredi 13 décembre de l'an 2346 de l'Incarnation de Notre Seigneur

Claude Lamontagne

Notes :

1. Science positive : « Connaissance exacte, universelle et vérifiable exprimée par des lois. » [*Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (1992), Paris : Dictionnaires Le Robert].
2. Science critique : « Connaissance toujours possiblement inexacte, seulement hypothétiquement universelle, et invérifiable, mais susceptible d'être réfutée empiriquement pour permettre le progrès, toujours d'ordre spéculatif ». [*Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (2122), Paris : Dictionnaires Le Robert].
3. Voir Agassi, A. (2178), *Elogium Verbi Saecularis* (Éloge du verbe séculier). Rome : Nouvelles Presses Vaticanes.
4. Dans une lettre incendiaire où il dénonçait « les pratiques pédagogiques obscurantistes héritées du modèle obsolète de la science séculière empirique » en les associant métaphoriquement à l'horreur d'un fait divers du début du ^{xx}e siècle, où on rapportait comment, dans un hôpital de Yekaterinburg, dans l'Oural, le personnel infirmier bâillonnait les bébés avec du ruban adhésif pour leur imposer le silence.
5. « "Tradition séculaire silencieuse", dites-vous? La langue vous aura fourché, madame la Secrétaire du Conseil, vous aurez sans doute voulu dire "Tradition séculaire licencieuse"! »

the silence of Augurs

In the course of the ninth or tenth night, he realized with a certain bitterness that those pupils who accepted his teachings in silence held no promise whatsoever, that only those who occasionally dared a reasonable objection could be held promising.

—J. L. Borges

Dearest Elder Brother,

At long last, a bright day in these dark times. I found the bull! Premonitory synchronicity perhaps; it appeared on my screen exactly at daybreak, surfacing from the abysmal depths of the Web's forbidden ancient core, where it had been buried by the henchmen of the Great Censorship's obscurantist prelates. A miracle made possible by the most improbable search algorithm which I ever dared launch in cyberspace. The version of the "Collection of XXII Century Papal Bulls," which the deciphered file contained, was very badly damaged, but, oh unspeakable joy: *Silentium Augurum* seemed whole, and perfectly intact! Here it is.

Silentium Augurum

Bull promulgated by Pope Pius XIII, in the year 2198 of the Incarnation of Our Lord, the 27th day of April.

Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's.

—Matthew 22:21

Formal Edict

Pius, Bishop, Servant of the Servants of God, for perpetual memory, hereby proclaims the critical necessity to restrict the pretension to the Silence of Augurs (*Silentium Augurum*) to the sole sphere of the Sacred, and, consequently, declares vain, futile, and immoral any pretension issued from within the sphere of the Profane to this said Silence of Augurs, in particular the scientific pretension to a silent or objective reading of Reality, as well as the didactic pretension to the silent or objective learning of any teaching whatsoever.

The Origin

In his *De Divinatione*, Cicero explains how the first step in the divination ritual consists of establishing that there is silence (*silentium*), a silence defined as “absence of any [procedural] imperfection” (“quod omni vitio caret,” *De Divinatione*, 2, 71). As Cicero makes clear, this measure aims at ensuring that no human factor (beyond the augural intention) has contaminated the occasion offered to the divinity (who alone holds the secret of the course of time) to lift a corner of the great curtain which conceals the future from the gaze of mortals. It is indeed a silence

of absolute neutrality which is meant here: a silence of complete openness on the part of the Augur – an attentive, self-excluding, Revelation-awaiting silence, *sine qua non* – to receiving a naked truth offered as a gift by the benevolent divinity.

The Age of Arrogance

In the course of the following two thousand years, the attitude towards this art of acceding to the power of foretelling will undergo profound mutations, with, at the very top of the list, a complete reversal of authority between the secular and the ecclesiastic powers. It is towards the end of the Middle Ages that the secular divinatory art which will preside over this reversal – namely empirical or positive science¹ – starts affirming itself. The exploits managed by this “artificial” (as Cicero had characterized it) form of divination progressively lead to a more and more widely recognized possibility for humankind to lift, by itself, this thick curtain which veils the Future, thus freeing humanity from divine authority. Under the assault of these secular foretelling exploits, the sacred augural practice eventually wanes to extinction, the necessity of the sacred *silentium* which it embodied (meant to ensure the integrity of a divine message free of any human bias) giving way to the secular divinatory practice’s necessity of a secular *silentium* (meant to ensure the integrity of a natural message free of any human bias), pompously renamed “Scientific Objectivity.” This substitution of the sacred silence for a profane or secular one also

progressively sinks deeper into the very fibres of the social fabric, nowhere more insidiously than in the core tenets of institutionalized pedagogical practices. There, in a dramatic rendering of the self-silencing that it demands on the part of the scientific researcher, the belief in a possible profane silence presiding over all forms of knowledge acquisition turns into silencing the learner (who, it follows, has to be prevented from distorting, by virtue of his unavoidably subjective *verbum*, the objective message of professorial expertise delivering the divinatory power inherent to all knowledge worth teaching).

The Critical Science Revolution²

With the end of the XXIst century appear the first signs of the ongoing revolution which *Silentium Augurum* means to morally sanction. Embracing Critical Rationality, this revolution aims at establishing the irrationality of any form of secular pretension to the Silence of Augurs. It proposes to recognize formally that, in the sphere of the profane, there can be no *silentium*: that all acquisition of new knowledge widening the divinatory field must involve some form of secular *verbum*³ (which can only be held fatal to the divinatory quest if it is formulated so as to avoid any form of critical confrontation). The precursors of this line of thought (named “Critical Rationalists” in the XXth century by Karl Popper, one of the most famous amongst them) often have to face, throughout history, extreme hostility: the death sentence suffered by Socrates and the Great Quarrel between

René Descartes and the authorities of the University of Utrecht being two of the most famous examples. Less openly, but every bit as efficiently, Popper, after having enjoyed some renown during his lifetime, is precipitated into temporary oblivion by the short-sighted and obsessive pragmatism of early XXIst century capitalism. Towards the end of the first half of our century, two Critical Rationalists bring his teachings back to the fore, and succeed, over the ruins of the (by then) obvious failure of capitalist pragmatism, in sparking a planetary hope of renewal. They are, of course, Francisco Du Bois and Maxim Schmidt, who are to become, respectively, Minister of Education in the Nippo-Western Bloc, and Chair of the World Science Organization. The scandalous dismissal of the former on the first of March 2164 under false pretenses and the resignation of the latter as a sign of solidarity in April of the same year, and, on the 25th of December, the excommunication of Cardinal Agassi by Paul VII for having summoned him⁴ to side formally and publicly with Du Bois and Schmidt, create havoc. “Du Bois’s Pun”,⁵ heard on the Global Network as was aired the last public debate before his resignation, is on the lips of all influential intellectuals.

Timeliness of *Silentium Augurum*

After much social turmoil, most notably associated with Paul VII’s suicide, Schmidt and Du Bois return to high offices, bringing about the period of relative calm which we still enjoy today: a period

which may well be about to end, as signs of a forceful return of the fallen apostles of the profane pretension to the Silence of Augurs are multiplying. Hence the decision to strengthen the symbolic bastions of our moral fortresses by all available means. *Silentium Augurum* seems capable of playing the role of the first concrete measure in this resolve.

Given in Rome, in St. Peter's, in the year 2198 of the Incarnation of Our Lord, the 27th day of April, in the fourth year of our pontificate.

Do I need to confess, dearest Elder Brother, that I could not resist the temptation of reading it as soon as it offered itself to my incredulous eyes? I savoured it in a single, uninterrupted read, irresistibly drawn forward by the forceful flow of the discourse. How soothing for our wounded souls of proscribed educators! May these words of Founding Brother Agassi spread, and help bring about the Great Uprising towards which we are so desperately working.

Your devoted brother,

Joseph Bacquet

On this Friday 13th of December, in the year 2346 of the Incarnation of Our Lord

Claude Lamontagne

Notes :

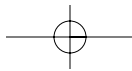
1. Positive science: "Exact, universal and verifiable knowledge expressed as laws." [*Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*. (1992). Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert.]

2. Critical Science: "Knowledge always possibly inexact, only hypothetically universal, and formally unverifiable, but open to critical empirical tests which can lead to occasions of growth or improvement of divinatory ability, always on speculative grounds." [*Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*. (2122). Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert.]

3. See Agassi, A. (2178). *Elogium Verbi Saecularis (In Praise of the Secular Verbum)*. Rome: New Vatican Press.

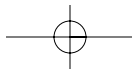
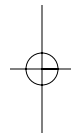
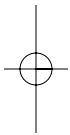
4. In an incendiary letter where he was denouncing "the obscurantist pedagogical practices inherited from the obsolete model of empirical secular science," linking them metaphorically to the horror of a short news item of the early XXIst Century, where it was reported that hospital staff in Yekaterinburg, in the Urals, gagged babies with adhesive tape to silence them.

5. "Traditional secular Silence' did you say? Surely, your tongue will have slipped, Madame Secretary of the Council, you will have meant, no doubt, 'Traditional secular License!'"



insight from
elsewhere

perspectives
inattendues



Susan Drain

I think I will start my writing classes from now on with a new assignment. Write your obituary.

In studying and writing obituary, we will confront the master narratives society prescribes for all its historical and cultural accounts, narratives still often gender- and class-bound. In other words, obituaries are fiction: selected, shaped, and crafted to tell a story, and to make that story the authoritative one. These little human accounts are the last word spoken to, against, and into the great silence that our culture maintains is death. In universities, we are doubly challenged to speak of death. For all the media evidence to the contrary, young people cannot imagine it as ever happening to them, while we elders feel it looming, and look away. We think of death as *happening* to us, not as something we *do*.

Unlike death, however, dying is not silent. Dying is articulation.

I have watched how the dying assert themselves, if we let them: they question, if we listen; they explain, if we attend. They engage not only in the articulation of speech, but in the articulation of relationship: it is not a linguistic coincidence that to remember is to reconnect the members of that entity. Against the looming silence, they articulate their own narratives of individuality and community with words, sometimes with photographs.

Sometimes they assemble mementos of work or passion. They reweave threads of family. If reconciliation is not possible, acknowledgement may suffice; loose ends are often an inevitable part of the fabric. As they articulate their own dying, their family and friends are prompted to compose and revise their own narratives.

Being a palliative care volunteer is as great a privilege as teaching, and even more humbling. Rare is the teacher who names that silence, yet without it, our world will chatter itself into oblivion. That silence demands, not *what*, but *why* are we learning. What will last? What will matter?



Marcia Epstein

In his essay on the value of silence in teaching, medical educator Raja Bandaranayake described an experience he had while in China in 1976. Following his assignment of a task to a group of students, he endured five minutes of silence in considerable bewilderment – unsure of himself, the translator, and the students.

As I was wondering how I should intervene, I noticed one participant write something on his pad. As though this was a silent signal, each of the others, in turn, followed suit. This process lasted another five minutes or so, but silence still prevailed. When it was over, one participant spoke in Chinese, others followed, and gradually an animated discussion developed, with intermittent references to their pads The group had engaged, during that initial period of nerve-racking silence, in silent brainstorming. Not for them the loud storming that most groups engage in, before performing the task at hand. Writing their individual thoughts down helped them contribute thoughtfully, not haphazardly, to the subsequent discussion.

As the story suggests, silence is like speech in having cultural norms and conventions. While it is usually regarded in current Western culture as an absence of sound, a passive state, silence is also an

activity. In the classroom, it may indicate resistance or protest on the part of students, or a consciously wielded tool for the promotion of Socratic dialogue: as educators, we use it to prevent ourselves from supplying all of the answers right away. Silence is also an element in purely receptive learning, freeing the listener from the internal distractions of evaluation and argument.

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Kathy Madjidi

In considering potential applications of silence in higher education, I propose that the solo could be incorporated as an integral aspect of student development.

In many indigenous cultures, making space for periods of silence and reflection is an integral part of education. One of the most significant examples of this is the “vision quest,” a traditional rite of passage to mark important life transitions such as moving from adolescence into adulthood. The vision quest is a sacred ceremony, a time for isolation, fasting, and the seeking of direction. Practices vary according to each culture; however, the vision quest is generally preceded by a period of intensive preparations.

As described by Black Elk, the Lakota quest begins with an *Inipi*, a sweat lodge purification ceremony. The individual is then led out to a sacred spot, and a circle of stones is placed around him or her. For the next two to four days, with little or no food or material protection, the individual must stay within this circle. Moving through emotions such as boredom, hunger, fear, acceptance, peace, and even ecstasy, each individual embarks upon a journey into the silence of their own “inner space.” Some are visited by spirit guides and offered a vision; others find new meaning and direction for their lives. For some, the meaning of this quest will not be fully understood for years to come.

As practised in Rediscovery, an Aboriginal-based cultural and outdoor education program, the vision quest is modified into a 24-hour “solo.” Youth 12 years and older are prepared through a week-long camp program for the culminating solo night. Throughout the solo, camp leaders and Elders keep a 24-hour vigil, with a campfire, prayer, drumming, and singing to surround the youth with prayer and support. For one youth, a she-wolf came and laid beside him, protecting him through the night. Many find it an opportunity to re-examine their own self-image and group roles – a camp bully might be the first to leave his or her spot early, whereas a seemingly timid participant will complete the solo and return feeling empowered.

Whether by allowing students time away from school to reflect on their educational and life objectives through an intensive experience such as a solo, or by incorporating regular structures for silence into teaching and learning in the classroom, silence provides fertile ground for students' growth.

witnessing states of perplexity

People think of meditation as some kind of special activity, but this is not exactly correct. Meditation is simply itself . . . It is about stopping and being present, that is all. Mostly we run around doing. Are you able to come to a stop in your life, even for one moment? Could it be this moment? What would happen if you did?

—Jon Kabat-Zinn

What happens during moments of silence in the classroom, moments of silence when there is clearly something occurring in the minds of students, when there is thinking, assimilation, realization? What kinds of tools can we bring to our teaching to ensure, even during the most overwhelming moment of realization, that the student's moment of silence is a rich, generative one? How might these moments provide an opportunity for students to validate, *for themselves*, as much of the affectivity of the silence as possible?

By “affective” we don't mean “emotional,” but rather affect in the sense of tapping into, as Kabat-Zinn suggests in the epigraph, the many dimensions of experience. The ones that alert us to the ways our intellect, psyche, body, expression, and processing of sensory input are deeply ingrained: unconsciously reproduced and replicated. If we elicit this awareness – bring it to

crisis, if you will – and evoke responses which break free of the ones on which we customarily are most reliant, then we can open connections between subjects that have previously not been considered or explored in a sustained way.

A good way to stop all the doing is to shift into the “being mode” for a moment. Think of yourself as an eternal witness, as timeless. Just watch this moment, without trying to change it at all. What is happening? What do you feel? What do you see? What do you hear?

Unlike some “religious” perspectives on meditation, Kabat-Zinn suggests that awareness practices are not predicated on notions of disengagement, passivity, or the pursuit of transcendent states, but that they invite practitioners to address the plenitude and complexity of their present circumstances by engaging in acts of witnessing. Students and teachers could then be understood to be witnesses to the world, the texts, and the fields with which they engage and study. In mindfulness practice, however, such acts of witnessing do not necessarily privilege the discursive, but invoke and mobilize all the senses and faculties. The point is not to attempt a totalizing understanding of our experience of “silence” in any given moment but to register – in increasingly subtle ways – the vicissitudes and potentialities of what we already almost understand.

A dialogue between mindfulness, body-mind practices, and Humanities pedagogy can serve to foreground

and recuperate valuable dimensions of Humanities education currently being eroded by the increasing corporatization of the university. At its best, Humanities teaching and scholarship resists the imperatives that index learning towards eventual moments of revelation, discovery, or mastery; it celebrates flux, open-endedness, and multivalence.

By taking a few moments to “die on purpose” to the rush of time while you are still living, you free yourself to have time for the present. By “dying” now in this way, you actually become more alive now. This is what stopping can do. There is nothing passive about it. And when you decide to go, it’s a different kind of going because you stopped. The stopping actually makes the going more vivid, richer, more textured.

Much of these forms of learning occurs in the interstices of speech, the waiting to speak, the resisting of speaking, the assimilation of a new idea.

The Humanities attends scrupulously to all that cannot be represented or articulated in language, or fixed as objects of knowledge. It grapples with indeterminacy and contingency, with what Stephen Batchelor has described as states of “perplexity” that suffuse the entire organism. Optimally, Humanities subjects engage not only the intellect, but also all the other senses and sensibilities. Ones that may be best experienced in silence. Attention to the particularities of silence can assist students to attend more fully, with less anxiety, to

questions of power, social justice, and transformative possibility.

The Humanities does so not by advancing arguments, nor by appealing principally to the emotions, nor by cosmological or ideological paradigms, but by staging crises. Leaving it to the students to engage mindfully and ethically with what they witness.

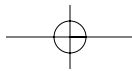
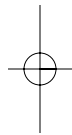
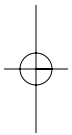
David Fancy and Sue Spearey

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turning
point
percée



Rebecca Nowacek

• —

My first semester as an assistant professor. The third week of class. Tuesday, September 11th. I have just watched the first tower fall. Amidst general alarm I fear that I have watched my friend Alyssa die. I shuffle to my classroom. Take a seat and sit silently with my students. I don't know what to say. They are all there, looking to me. I talk for a little while. Words that I won't remember tumble out of my mouth. A few students respond. Then one takes a deep breath and disagrees with me. I realize that she is right and tell her so. She nods her head. We fall back into silence. No one seems to want to leave. Then we begin to write. All I can hear is the scratching of pens on paper and the occasional snuffle. We sit together. And write.

— •

Patricia Peters



But how to shape

silence

into a

voice?

It is more a matter of listening
than an acquisition
of the elusive word;

listening to

silence on silence's terms.

This listening to
silence

is harder than listening to

words.



Is silence

forgetfulness or withheld remembrance?

If language

is expression perhaps
silence can be repression.

Fear can express itself in
silence, in a failure to ask questions,
to give answers.

Silence

is risk;

speech

is risk.

And either can be evasive.



Laura Lewis

Less predictable academic silences are those that have proven to, quite literally, take my breath away. They are moments that you grow into as a teacher as you become less self-conscious, uptight, and more present in the moment with your students. In social work, these silences are often born of personal pain, knowing, and deep reverence.

On one particular occasion an entirely female class had just watched a Canadian film that graphically documented violence against women in every corner of the globe. Scene by scene the students encountered the trafficking of women, the non-responsiveness of judicial systems, the perpetuation of victimization across generations, and the sexualization of young girls for the purposes of prostitution. At the conclusion of this film, silence gripped the room. Some of the young women were crying, others had “checked out” psychologically in an effort to protect themselves against this unrelenting reality, others were ever so quiet as they absorbed what they had just witnessed.

In moments such as these, silence is really the only adequate response. With it, that day, we paid homage to the survivors and victims of these domestic battlefields. Many of the students could relate to these scenes: could see themselves, or their families, on the screen. Silences such as these linger. Are honoured. Are committed to memory.

David Grimshire

Shhh! Be quiet. I'm listening to the teacher. I hardly notice my classmates as they listlessly squirm in their seats. Like a good typist, the teacher speaks rhythmically, pausing to reinforce every idea. Clickety-clack, clickety-clack, pause, clickety-clack.

The teacher has stopped talking! A familiar terror builds as time slows. The inevitable question is sure to follow the silence. Maybe someone else will get picked. Eyes downcast, I wait. I can spew back exactly what the teacher said but what if I have to think? Can I marshal my thoughts to provide the answer the teacher expects?

I have been asked the question.

A calm follows. I am in control of the silence, delay my answer to emphasize the difficulty. But maybe I should blurt it out to show just how much I know? Like a jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of my answer are fit together. Right or wrong, my answer will elicit a response: then the cycle starts again.

Silence fuels our communication, evokes emotion. Motivates.

that which already lies (silently) half asleep

I have observed the greatest of all mysteries human learning.

I am the eye on the “audience.” Since time immemorial, I have encountered so many students that I can see inside of them. I understand their feelings. They know that I will not judge them; that I, like them, am believed to be a *tabula rasa*. So, they behave openly and candidly before my gaze.

When a teacher breaks the silent space between the students and me, he or she hopes (and assumes) that the students’ silence is full of respect, reverence, and reflection. Well, let me share a few secrets about a classroom full of silent students. Better still, allow me to be specific about how the students really feel about what is going on inside of them.

It is easy to see that the students’ brains are usually throbbing. Some are actually hurting. Their eyes often reveal their discomfort, as do their gestures; they would rather be somewhere else. In fact, their brains hurt because someone inexplicably expects them to be transformed just by being lectured at.

Most lectures produce noise that comes in relentless waves. The brain is designed to order noise; to measure, decode, and make sense of it. Most unfortunately, teachers often ignore what we know about the brain: that it has limited processing power and restricted rates of retention. In fact, it has an attentive capacity of about 10 minutes at a stretch. And, most sobering of all, the

brain's retention can only happen if what is being said builds on, or relates to, what the brain already knows.

The stomach agrees with the brain. It too suffers from the discomforts of overflow. Conversely, both the brain and stomach know that little is accomplished if they feel empty. They both crave something delicious: something they can savour one morsel at a time.

The brain also empathizes with the backside which, despite its typical size and resilience, achingly warms seats for extended periods of time. The backside's ache is only distracted by the legs' twitchy constraints. And the arms? The brain hurries them along in frenzied note taking, leaving them disinclined to signal to a teacher when they might have a question. It all makes me glad to be flat.

Yes, I am the mirror that reflects the matter deposited from the teacher's brain. As students attempt to decipher the lecture, I continue to watch them. I observe how the tongue – that normally wags with other tongues at the slightest distraction, idle chatter, or gossip – comes to a standstill in the classroom's conspiracy of silence. For the tongue implicitly understands the futility of asking, or saying, anything, since this will make the teacher speak even more!

Breaking this silence can also elicit scorn and sarcasm from the students' peers. Even when a teacher bids them to speak – to enter his or her world – it is often a frightening place fraught with uncertainty. Much safer to just listen, or pretend to understand. To not get singled out. Better to feign boredom. Or daydream. Preserve one's dignity.

Despite the silence in classrooms, talk for its own sake is curiously regarded not only as the best indicator of learning, but of a student's abilities! A significant portion of a student's grade may be assigned on this basis. But most students remain trapped; they succumb to the ritual of silence. After class, I sense their relief as they approach the door. They can be themselves again.

Today, the teacher gathers up his papers. He seems tired. And I wonder: can silence signal comprehension, just as much as talking out loud can? Why does it take more effort to think about what should not be said than it does to think about what could be, or should be, spoken aloud?

The teacher scribbles on me – sometimes with great passion – dissolving chalk into the membranes that sustain me. He wipes me clean to ready me for the next time he displays his mastery. Then he does something unexpected. He writes with a loving hand:

“No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies [silently] half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.” (Gibran)

He reflects for a minute. Then he walks out the door.

Next time, will he listen more?

Arshad Ahmad

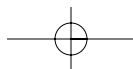
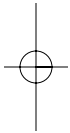
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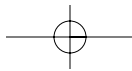
Anna Migliarisi



Let's build our own academy and make The Art of Silence the foundation course for everybody, including the janitors, the ladies at the coffee shop and, heaven help us, the administrators. Some of my favourite people at school are the ladies at the coffee shop. Have I ever told you that? They are who they are. They have nothing to prove. They are, so to speak, authentically present in the moment.



bridging
passerelle



Clare Hasenkampf



Strategic silence allows us to manage the cacophony, allows the possibility of symphony. It allows ideas a chance to resonate and echo in the chambers of our worldviews. Strategic silence gives new ideas a chance to emerge, old ideas a chance to develop a vibrato in the student's mind.



silence and sound in media production

The closest I've ever come to experiencing silence was a trip in graduate school to an anechoic chamber. The anechoic chamber is at the University of Iowa in the Wendell Johnson Speech and Hearing Center, and is used primarily for experiments conducted by that centre. I was taking a course in sound design in the cinema department, and our professor arranged for our class to visit the chamber. The chamber is isolated from the rest of the centre and is a perfect cube, measuring 30 feet on all sides. The chamber is further isolated by a series of springs that permit it to be "suspended in space," and allows for the absorption of sounds down to 60 Hz. Additionally, the chamber is kept in complete darkness, as any light source will produce sound.

The effect of this chamber is completely disorienting. When you speak, your voice seems to evaporate before you. Indeed, you can barely hear someone speaking at the other end of the chamber. My classmates engaged in a game of sneaking up on each other, an easy endeavour as one could easily be standing right beside someone and not realize it. Because I was effectively blind my sense of hearing became heightened, but the virtual vacuum of sound disallowed grasping any bearings on my environment. Instead of serenity, or any manner of out-of-body experience, I became stressed. The sounds of my own body, the heretofore inaudible squishes and gurgles that it likely makes all day long, seemed amplified. I became hyperaware of my body's inability to quiet itself.

Upon stepping out of the chamber after half an hour, my sense of hearing was utterly assaulted. That which went unnoticed before I went in – ambient sounds of traffic, birds singing, wind, voices – was now deafening. Suddenly, I heard *everything*.

As a teacher of media production, I seek to create a similar experience for my students. Unfortunately, I don't have the aid of an anechoic chamber, but I work hard to create assignments that will encourage students to engage with the sounds of the environments in which they live and tread.

In my production courses, I have my students complete an observational exercise that forces them to examine the "silence" that comes with sitting still and being quiet. I ask them to pull out their notebooks and become data recorders for 20 minutes. Sitting quietly in the classroom, I ask them to write down everything they hear – the shifting in seats, the scribbling of pens, the coughs, the sneezes, the footsteps in the hall, the air conditioner, the clanging of distant pipes, the birds and the traffic outside the window, the growling of stomachs, the whirring of AV equipment – to turn up the sensory awareness in their hearing, listen for sounds that they would normally never notice.

They are also required to describe sounds not only by identifying their sources but by their qualities: volume, depth, human and mechanical associations, continuity, rhythm, duration, reverb, echo, tone. After they are through, our discussion of these sound qualities inevitably turns into a discussion of sound signals – the

meanings associated with certain sounds like car horns and school bells – and why one sound muffles another, why one sound repeats while we hear another only once. And, most interestingly, they record their emotional responses to the sounds. Sound evokes emotional response like perhaps no other sense; most of us will recognize a voice years after we've forgotten the face that accompanies it.

In my production courses, students typically budget weeks and weeks to shoot – carefully designing and lighting each shot – and weeks to edit, score, and add visual effects, but allow just a day or two to produce and mix their soundtracks. While I was an editor in Hollywood, I learned that the best approach to the short-form projects that I most commonly cut – trailers, commercials, promos – was to edit and finalize the soundtrack first before beginning to work on the picture.

So, I tell my students that the most important tool they will have on any shoot is a set of headphones: a big, high-quality set that covers the entire ear, isolating the ears from the environment, allowing them to effectively become the microphone.

When I ask students to listen for silence and the intricacy of simple sound environments, it begins to awaken them to another way of examining the minutiae of their surroundings. And in these small details, these daily invisibilities, are the rhythms of everyday life.

Dustin Morrow

secrets of silence in the classroom

While interviewing me for my first teaching job, at a high school in California, Ernie the Principal took me to visit the classroom of Art, the teacher I would be replacing if I were offered the job.

Ernie told me that it was impossible to predict what would happen in Art's classroom, and made it clear that he considered that a very good thing. When we entered the room, three students were at the blackboard arguing about details of photosynthesis, the rest of the class was fully engaged in the discussion, and Art was lying on a bench along the window, apparently asleep.

Ernie and I stood at the back of the room while the argument raged with no sign of life from Art. After a while the discussion took a turn, as arguments tend to do, toward the personal: "That's stupid!" one student exclaimed, and several others responded in kind. Art stretched, then rolled slowly and theatrically over onto his side on the bench, propping his head up with his forearm. He remarked that, whereas at the beginning of the discussion everyone had listened carefully to everyone else, he didn't think anyone was anymore: "You might learn more by helping each other, instead of trying to prove how much you know." Then he rolled back into his napping position. Ernie winked at me and we left the room.

Back in his office, Ernie told me that although Art was the best teacher he had ever met, he had seldom

caught him actually “teaching” in all the years he had worked there. He also said that, more than any other teacher he knew, Art was always trying new things, some of which flopped badly. I never actually met Art, but for over 40 years I have considered him my hero, and one of my most important mentors.

During those few minutes in Art’s classroom, I learned one of the most valuable lessons of my entire teaching career: the less I teach them, the more they learn.

Teaching in the same room the following fall, I realized how difficult it was to keep quiet and allow my students to explore ideas on their own, without my needing to “profess” to them. Eventually, I recognized that it was easier to keep my mouth shut when my hands were busy, so I began to carve small sculptures in chalk. At the end of the discussion, as we debriefed and I congratulated the class on a job well done, I presented a tiny sculpture to a student who had contributed significantly.

After a month or so of doing this, the ritual had clearly become much more than a simple trick to help me keep my mouth shut. It was a symbol and a trigger for an important component of our classroom culture that became more effective the more we practised it (the more the students practised talking with each other and the more I practised staying out of their way). It was as if the simple act of my taking out my pocket knife impelled my students to enter deeply into discussion, perhaps a little like Pavlov’s dog salivating when Pavlov rang the bell.

Nowadays, we know that interactive engagement *among students* is the most significant factor in the development of conceptual understanding, at least by undergraduate science students. Given the apparently universal compulsion of professors to profess, I think it follows that teachers must discover ways to remain silent in their classrooms. Various manifestations of my trick of carving chalk served me well for many decades. I have used my knife to slowly peel the skins from pieces of fruit and eat them, contemplatively, and I have sketched students and colleagues.

Later, as a university professor, I took small stone sculptures with me to classes, meetings, and PhD exams and sanded them quietly and unobtrusively. And I found that meetings with obsessive note-takers were much more effective when conducted outside, walking briskly; thus my office hours became opportunities to exercise. These physical activities have helped me make room for my students to think and speak. And these activities sharpen my listening so that when I do speak, it is far more effective.

Lee Gass

comment peut-on se taire dans la salle de classe?

Alors que je me faisais interviewer pour mon premier poste d'enseignant dans une école secondaire, Ernie, le directeur de l'école, me fit visiter la salle de classe d'un professeur nommé Art, que je devais remplacer si j'étais engagé. Ernie me fit bien comprendre qu'il était impossible de prévoir ce qui se passerait dans la salle de classe de ce professeur original, et que ce n'était pas pour lui déplaire. À notre arrivée, trois étudiants étaient au tableau engagés dans un débat sur les détails de la photosynthèse, les autres membres de la classe participant activement à la discussion, et Art était couché sur un banc à côté de la fenêtre, apparemment endormi.

Du fond de la salle, nous pouvions observer la discussion qui faisait rage sans pour autant susciter le moindre signe de vie chez Art. Puis, comme c'est plus souvent qu'autrement le cas dans les débats, la discussion prit un ton personnel, avec un des étudiants s'exclamant : « C'est complètement idiot », aussitôt suivi par d'autres répondant sur le même ton. Art s'étira, se retourna lentement sur le côté dans un geste théâtral, et appuya la tête sur son avant-bras. Il fit remarquer aux étudiants que, tandis qu'au début tous avaient prêté attentivement l'oreille les uns aux autres, ce ne semblait plus être le cas. « Vous apprendriez davantage en vous aidant les uns les autres au lieu d'essayer d'étaler votre savoir », déclara-t-il. Puis il s'allongea de nouveau. Ernie me lança un clin d'œil et nous partîmes.

De retour dans son bureau, Ernie me confia que si Art était le meilleur professeur qu'il lui ait jamais été donné de connaître, il l'avait en fait rarement surpris en train d'« enseigner ». Il ajouta que, plus que tous les enseignants qu'il avait connus, Art tentait continuellement de nouvelles expériences pédagogiques, dont certaines échouaient misérablement. Quoique je n'aie jamais fait sa connaissance, Art demeure depuis plus de 40 ans mon héros et un de mes mentors les plus importants. Il m'a suffi de quelques minutes dans sa classe pour apprendre une des leçons les plus importantes de ma carrière : moins j'enseigne, plus ils apprennent.

Assurant des cours dans la même salle de classe l'automne suivant, j'ai réalisé combien il m'était difficile de garder le silence et de permettre à mes étudiants d'explorer des idées de leur propre chef, sans qu'il soit nécessaire que je « professe ». J'ai éventuellement réalisé qu'il m'était plus facile de me taire lorsque j'avais les mains occupées. Je me suis alors mis à créer des petites sculptures de craie. Lors de chaque debriefing pour clôturer une discussion, et après avoir félicité la classe pour son bon travail, je présentais une toute petite sculpture à la personne qui avait apporté à la classe la contribution la plus méritoire.

Au bout d'un mois ce petit rituel était clairement devenu bien plus qu'une simple astuce pour m'aider à me taire. C'était devenu un symbole déclencheur pour une composante-clé de la vie de la classe, que la pratique améliorait sans cesse : plus les étudiants s'exerçaient à se parler entre eux, plus je m'exerçais à m'effacer. C'était comme si le simple geste de sortir mon canif de ma poche poussait les étudiants à plonger profondément dans la

discussion, peut-être un peu comme le chien de Pavlov se mettant à saliver lorsque Pavlov sonnait la cloche.

Nous savons aujourd'hui que l'engagement interactif *entre étudiants* est le facteur qui contribue plus que tout autre au développement de la compréhension des concepts, du moins chez les étudiants de premier cycle dans les sciences. Puisque apparemment la compulsion naturelle de tout professeur est de professer, je pense qu'il s'ensuit qu'ils devraient tous rechercher des stratégies pour demeurer silencieux dans leurs classes. Divers avatars de la sculpture de craie m'ont bien servi au fil des décennies. Je me suis servi de mon canif pour peler très lentement des fruits, que je mangeais ensuite de manière contemplative, puis j'ai dessiné des portraits de mes collègues et de mes étudiants.

Plus tard, professeur à l'université, je me suis mis à apporter en classe, dans les réunions, et aux soutenances de thèse de doctorat, de petites sculptures en pierre que je sablais sans bruit, sans déranger personne. J'ai aussi trouvé un moyen efficace de m'entretenir avec les obsessifs de la prise de notes. Je tiens les rencontres à l'extérieur; nous discutons en marchant d'un bon pas, et je profite ainsi de mes périodes de disponibilité pour faire un peu d'exercice. Cette activité physique m'a aidé à offrir à mes étudiants un espace pour penser et pour parler. Et cette activité raffine ma capacité d'écoute, ce qui fait que lorsque je parle, je suis considérablement plus efficace.

Lee Gass

mathematics and silence

“Imagine a line, straight and without thickness, running along my arms in both directions, out through the classroom wall into the playground, farther and farther, on into space – a line without end, infinitely long.”

Upon saying this, the mathematics teacher stretched out his arms, and, following the line as it extended from his index finger, this 12-year-old was caught up in the vision of something perfect, something against which, for a brief moment, all else seemed flawed, indistinct, and mundane. Nothing happened in that classroom, not in the usual sense, not at that moment. There was no problem to solve, no algorithm to learn, not even a clever explanation to savour. It was above all a moment of silence. It was the moment that made me a geometer.

Mathematics is replete with problems to engage a young mind. I remember my father challenging us with mathematics problems at the dinner table. Especially good were puzzles that became simple once you shifted your point of view. One such problem was the bee flying at constant speed back and forth between the noses of two bicyclists approaching each other on a straight road. Given the initial separation of the bicyclists and their speeds, my siblings and I were challenged to calculate the distance covered by the bee as it flew back and forth over shorter and shorter distances. We imagined it was

crushed between the noses of the two bicyclists, and wondered how we could ever add all those smaller and smaller distances.

Mathematics is surprising in its power to shed light on so much. It is not the effort that unlocks the problem, but the unexpected shift in focus, the reflection, the silence. Though much of our early mathematical understanding is awakened by intuitive grappling with the physical world, it is surprising and delightful that the potentialities present in our brains from birth are so well-tuned to our experience. Eugene Wigner called this "the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics." It allows me, as a teacher, to treat a lot of mathematics as carefully-examined common sense. Plato's vision centred on ideal objects reflected in our experience by imperfect copies. Only someone who had taken the time to attend to those ideals would recognize these reflections for what they were: only he or she would be able to step back and see the whole picture, to see through to the solution of a problem.

More current views of learning stress the autonomy of the student, the time needed to construct understanding, the delight of knowing for oneself, while others stress the role of community in the education enterprise. Even so, when our understanding opens up to a difficult concept, perhaps after frustrating effort, we recognize it not as something of our own making, but as something universal, belonging to everyone. And to no one. We are then reduced to an inarticulately-uttered "Ah!" Or, to a deeply satisfied silence.

Diana Laurillard, in her discussion of attempts to discover how students learn, points out that when students are observed and overheard struggling with a mathematics problem, the critical insight is always preceded by a moment of silence. At that moment, speech would get in the way. Even inner speech seems suspended at the time of our insight. On the heels of this, the hard work of checking, justifying, correcting, and refining an idea commences, but its birth is attended by silence.

The geometer H. S. M. Coxeter, whose courses I took at the University of Toronto (1961-1963), understood the role of silence in mathematics. Though he died only recently, when I was an undergraduate, Coxeter already appeared to be from a different era. His classes seemed quaint, shockingly quiet to our eager, restless minds. There was no attempt to motivate material in terms of applications. A proof was a picture, carefully drawn in coloured chalk. To understand it required contemplation: not the usual string of “if”s and “therefore”s ending in a flourished “Q.E.D.” He would stand there. Smile. Wait till we saw the connection.

The power of mathematics is both a blessing and a curse. Since the subject is considered important, great efforts are made to teach it as quickly and thoroughly as possible: to present it as useful rather than beautiful, and – quite unlike poetry – careers depend on it. Such teaching leaves little time to listen to music, to wait for insight.

The best insights always come suddenly, as surprises, as gifts. They may come after hours of frustration, when we think we are ready to give up; when they come

we should pause to marvel that our small brains can grasp something so intricate and so simple, so bound up with the still beauty of the world.

Today's high-achiever students arrive at university ready to do all the problems in the textbook in my first year calculus class. Over-ambitious and over-extended, they have no time for reflection: no time for silence. I advise them to do just one or two questions, to persist in solving these and, when a solution has been found, to meditate on it.

Leo Jonker

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les mathématiques et le silence

« Imaginez une ligne, droite et sans épaisseur, qui courrait le long de mes bras dans les deux directions, traverserait le mur de la salle de classe et franchirait la cour de récréation pour continuer plus loin, et encore plus loin dans l'espace – une ligne sans fin, infiniment longue. »

En disant cela, le professeur de mathématiques étendit les bras, et, suivant des yeux la ligne imaginaire partant de son index, l'élève de douze ans que j'étais eut soudain la vision de quelque chose de parfait qui, pendant un bref moment, rendit tout ce qui l'entourait, imparfait, indistinct et banal. Rien pourtant ne venait de se produire dans cette classe, pas dans le sens habituel du terme. Il n'y avait pas eu de problème à résoudre, pas d'algorithme à apprendre, ni même d'explication savante à découvrir. Ce fut par dessus tout un moment de silence. Ce fut le moment qui fit de moi un géomètre.

Les mathématiques regorgent de problèmes tout à fait stimulants pour un jeune esprit. Mon père avait l'habitude de nous poser des problèmes de mathématiques à table. Nous aimions surtout les énigmes dont la simplicité jaillissait aussitôt que nous les envisagions sous un angle différent. Je me souviens d'un problème où il était question d'une abeille volant à une vitesse constante entre les nez respectifs de deux cyclistes allant l'un vers l'autre sur une route droite. Compte tenu de la distance initiale entre les deux cyclistes et de leurs vitesses

respectives, nous devons calculer la distance parcourue par l'abeille dans ses allers et retours, de plus en plus courts, entre les cyclistes. Nous imaginions qu'elle finissait par se faire écraser entre les deux nez et nous nous demandions comment parvenir à calculer toutes ces distances de plus en plus petites.

Il est fascinant de constater comment les mathématiques peuvent expliquer autant. Ce n'est pas tant l'effort, qui permet d'élucider le problème, que la façon dont, soudain, on examine la situation sous un angle différent, grâce à la réflexion, au silence. Si une large part de notre compréhension initiale des mathématiques émerge de nos rapports intuitifs avec le monde physique, il est étonnant et merveilleux de découvrir que les capacités qui semblent exister dans notre cerveau dès la naissance sont si bien harmonisées avec notre expérience. Eugene Wigner a appelé cela « la déraisonnable efficacité des mathématiques » (*the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics*). Cela me permet, en tant que professeur, d'aborder une grande partie des mathématiques comme du simple bon sens qu'on analyserait et expliquerait à fond. Selon la philosophie de Platon, les idées, formes parfaites, se transformeraient dans notre expérience en copies imparfaites. Seul un être désireux de découvrir ces idées pures serait à même de reconnaître les copies pour ce qu'elles sont. Seul l'être apte à prendre assez de recul pour voir le tableau d'ensemble peut trouver la solution d'un problème.

Les théories plus contemporaines de l'apprentissage insistent sur l'importance de l'autonomie de l'apprenant, le temps nécessaire au développement d'une

compréhension, le plaisir d'acquérir un savoir propre, tandis que d'autres privilégient le rôle de la collectivité dans l'acquisition du savoir. Cela dit, lorsque nous parvenons à comprendre un concept complexe, parfois après des efforts particulièrement frustrants, nous y voyons non pas le fruit de notre propre création, mais une notion universelle, quelque chose qui appartient à tout le monde et à personne en particulier. En faisant ce constat, nous en sommes réduits à un « Ah! » étouffé. Ou bien à un silence de profonde plénitude.

Diana Laurillard, dans son exposé sur les efforts déployés pour comprendre comment les étudiants apprennent, souligne que, lorsqu'on observe ou écoute des étudiants en train de résoudre un problème de mathématiques, le moment où ils accèdent à la solution est toujours précédé d'un instant de silence. À cet instant, la parole ferait obstacle. Même notre discours intérieur semble suspendu à l'instant de cette révélation. Le travail difficile qui consiste à vérifier, justifier, corriger et peaufiner une idée exige certes un effort d'articulation, mais l'idée elle-même ne peut naître que du silence. Le géomètre H. S. M. Coxeter, dont j'ai suivi les cours à l'Université de Toronto (1961-1963), avait bien saisi le rôle du silence dans les mathématiques. Bien qu'il soit décédé récemment, Coxeter semblait appartenir, même pendant mes études de premier cycle, à une époque différente. Ses cours nous apparaissaient comme enveloppés d'un charme suranné, dont le calme et la sérénité étaient presque choquants pour nos esprits fébriles et avides de savoir. Il n'essayait pas de nous motiver à l'aide d'applications pratiques. Sa preuve, il la dessinait à la craie de

couleur. Pour pouvoir la comprendre, il nous fallait accéder à un état de contemplation, plutôt que de nous soumettre à la sempiternelle série de « si » et de « par conséquent » aboutissant à la finale classique : « C.Q.F.D. » (ce qu'il fallait démontrer). Il se tenait simplement là, debout devant nous, souriant, attendant patiemment que nous découvriions la connexion.

Le pouvoir des mathématiques est à la fois un bienfait et une calamité. Étant donné l'importance donnée au sujet, on déploie des efforts considérables pour enseigner cette matière aussi rapidement et de manière aussi approfondie que possible : mettre en évidence son utilité plutôt que sa beauté – à l'inverse de la poésie – des carrières en dépendent. Ce type d'enseignement laisse peu de temps pour écouter de la musique, pour attendre la révélation.

Les révélations les plus percutantes nous arrivent toujours de façon soudaine, comme des cadeaux du ciel. Elles peuvent surgir après de longues heures de labeur, alors même que nous sommes sur le point de renoncer. Lorsque ces moments précieux surviennent, il faut prendre le temps de s'émerveiller du fait que nos esprits puissent appréhender une chose si complexe et si simple à la fois, une chose aussi étroitement liée à la beauté du monde.

Les étudiants d'aujourd'hui, assoiffés de performance, arrivent à l'université prêts à faire tous les problèmes posés dans le manuel au programme dans mon cours de première année en calcul infinitésimal. Ambitieux à l'extrême, trop occupés, ils ont peu de temps

pour la réflexion, pas de temps pour le silence. Je leur recommande de ne répondre qu'à une ou deux questions, de prendre le temps de les résoudre à fond, et une fois la solution trouvée, de méditer dessus.

Leo Jonker

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Robert Campbell

My faith does not keep silent. It is the subtext that informs my lectures and constructs the real take-home message of the course, a message that is in part about not losing a sense of self in a pluralistic society. The maintenance of personal identity is not about the condemnation of others. However, I cannot force students to be tolerant. I can inform them about their own religious traditions as well as those of the many different people they encounter on a daily basis. I can demonstrate openness and acceptance, curiosity and interest, wonder and awe. However, it is only through silence that I can instill all of this with integrity and genuineness. This is what my students are looking for and this is what brings them back to class day after day. I can only do this because I am silent about my faith, and it only works because my faith is not silent.

Eugenie Tjan



Silence

your hand movements
in the conservatory
to allow the butterfly
to land on your skin.

Silence your noise
pollution in the woods to
hear the birds' voices.

Silence the line's splatter

in the pond to allow
the fish to swim to
the worm. Silence

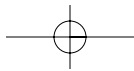
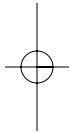
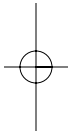
your worries to allow
a revelation to comfort
you. These silent

opportunities are rare
in today's hustle and
bustle. Too often we are
overzealous filling in our
schedules, so that we do
not have time to ponder,

to process what we are
experiencing. How, then,

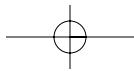
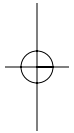
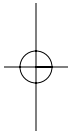
are we to learn from
the shy, quiet, humble,
unobtrusive ones?





in the classroom

dans la salle
de classe



silent-speaking words

Our students live in cacophony. Clamour, chatter, and din fill their ears, and may even injure them. To many, a moment of silence is unendurable. I cannot ask them to put their heads down on their desks and be quiet, as Mrs. Morgan commanded me to do in Grade 2. But we can educate ourselves to be models of intellectuals who trust and value silence, who practise what we have always known: when no one is speaking, someone is learning. We can create oases of silence where cool springs of insight trickle and flow.

Gerard Manley Hopkins begins his poem “The Habit of Perfection” with this paradox:

Elected Silence, sing to me
. . . and be
The music that I care to hear.

Hopkins’s silence is a proper noun – Silence – and it personifies a place of profound calm, beyond the music of the quotidian world. There, one can participate in deeper truths, make transforming discoveries.

In exceptional moments, silence resembles a site between waking and sleeping, where time is suspended.

When the mind relaxes its fitful pursuits it can, like a water-striding insect, walk tiny footsteps over the heart and feel its deepest longings, its most dreadful terrors: “like a long-legged fly upon the stream/his mind moves

upon silence” (W. B. Yeats, “Long-legged Fly”). This is the place of insight, of inspiration, of meditation. We may insist on surrounding silence when we listen to the music of Bach or Mozart because their sublime harmonies and rhythms have the power to make us ecstatic: beside ourselves, outside ourselves, and open to mysteries. The distance between that ecstasy and the ecstasy of madness is as narrow as a hair on the meniscus of silence. When we read, we hear the silent-speaking words along nerves more sensitive than any found in the ear.

Some believe having visions is less a supernatural gift than a skill, perfected by practice. In *The tyranny of talk: The multiple functions of silence in teaching and learning*, Dolly MacKinnon of Queensland University of Technology concludes:

The existing paradigm, which places silence as subservient to speech, must be inverted. If we take the *Oxford English dictionary's* definition of “talk” as “to perform the act of speech,” and replace the notion of subservience with activity, then a silence or lacuna is no longer an absence of talk, but rather, a performance of silence.

With practice, we can “learn” silence.

Stop speaking and moving long enough to make ourselves uncomfortable, to notice new connections, to incorporate new insights, however slight or subtle, into our next blocks of speaking. Give voice to wise voicelessness the way playwright Harold Pinter employs his

famous pauses in his dialogue, as soundless chambers where fears, dreams, and desires ricochet. Samuel Beckett's darkly funny *Waiting for Godot* is stitched with pauses and silences pungent and pregnant. In those spaces, Beckett dramatizes the power of silence-as-provocation:

VLADIMIR: Well, shall we go?

ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go.

They do not move.

We know many students are silent because they are shy, or because they do not know, or because they have not sufficiently prepared, or because they do not learn by speaking out. But some students are silent because they are physically or emotionally unable to speak: damaged. Some use silence as aggression. Some fear silence. Some wrap themselves in its thick, dark comfort. *The book of proverbs* says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." (18:21) The *Oxford English dictionary's* several dozen entries for "silence" and "silent" contain but four or five with positive overtones, surrounding "silence" with a phalanx of violent and dire images: *break* the silence, *overwhelming* silence, *dark* silence, silent as the *grave*. Its dominant presentation of silence is of death, suppression, dumbness, and taciturnity. Even the "want of flavour" in whisky is called "silence."

Horror can indeed stun us into silence, but so can the sublime.

In Shakespeare's *As you like it*, (Act I, Scene III) Duke Frederick compliments Rosalind, saying "Her very silence and her patience / Speak to the people." Elegant and eloquent silences offer openings, lingerings for knowledge when there is nothing to say – or a great deal to say. W. B. Yeats recounts an Irish folk tale in which a small boy responds to the condescending question of an Irish priest:

"Why is the ruby a symbol of the love of God?"

"Because it is red, like fire, and fire burns up everything, and where there is nothing, there is God."

Ron Marken

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paroles du silence

Nos étudiants vivent en milieu cacophonique. Clameurs, bavardage et vacarme leur emplissent les oreilles, et peuvent même les blesser. Pour plusieurs, un moment de silence est presque intolérable. Je ne peux pas leur demander d'incliner la tête sur leur pupitre et de se taire, comme M^{me} Morgan m'en donnait l'ordre en Deuxième année. Mais nous pouvons apprendre à devenir des modèles d'intellectuels qui donnent l'exemple en valorisant et en appréciant le silence, qui mettent en pratique ce que nous savons depuis toujours : quand personne ne parle, quelqu'un apprend. Nous pouvons créer des oasis de silence où jaillissent et ruissellent des sources fraîches d'inspiration profonde.

Gerard Manley Hopkins commence son poème « L'habitude de la perfection » ("The Habit of Perfection") avec ce paradoxe :

Silence choisi, chante pour moi
... et sois
La musique que je sens le besoin d'entendre.

Le silence dont parle Hopkins est un nom propre – Silence – et il personnifie un lieu de calme profond, par-delà la musique du monde quotidien. Là, on peut participer de vérités plus vastes, faire des découvertes transformatives.

Dans des moments exceptionnels, le silence ressemble à un état intermédiaire entre l'éveil et le sommeil, où le cours du temps est suspendu.

Lorsque l'esprit se détend, interrompant ses spasmodiques quêtes, il peut, comme l'insecte patineur, glisser à petits pas à fleur de cœur et en ressentir les plus profonds désirs, les plus redoutables terreurs : « comme l'insecte-aux-longues-pattes sur l'onde / son esprit glisse sur la surface du silence » (W. B. Yeats, « Long-legged fly »). C'est le lieu des intuitions, de l'inspiration, de la méditation. Nous pouvons insister sur un silence environnant lorsque nous écoutons la musique de Bach ou de Mozart parce que leurs harmonies et leurs rythmes sublimes ont le pouvoir de nous plonger dans l'extase : à côté de nous-mêmes, en dehors de nous-mêmes, et ouverts aux mystères. La distance qui sépare cette forme d'extase de l'extase de la folie ne dépasse pas l'épaisseur d'un cheveu sur le ménisque du silence. Lorsque nous lisons, nous entendons les paroles du silence le long de nerfs auditifs plus sensibles que tout ce qui se cache dans l'oreille.

D'aucuns croient qu'avoir des visions est moins un don surnaturel qu'une habileté, que l'on peut perfectionner par l'exercice. Dans son *La tyrannie de la parole : Les multiples fonctions du silence dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage*, Dolly MacKinnon, de la Queensland University of Technology, conclut :

Le paradigme courant, qui subordonne le silence à la parole, doit être inversé. Si nous prenons,

dans le *Oxford English dictionary*, la définition de « parler » (“*talk*”) qui en fait la « réalisation d’un acte de langage » (“*to perform the act of speech*”), et qu’à la notion de subordination nous substituons celle d’activité, alors un silence ou intervalle n’est plus une absence de parole, mais plutôt la réalisation d’un acte de silence.

En nous y exerçant, nous pouvons « apprendre » le silence.

Arrêtons de parler et de bouger assez longtemps pour sentir un inconfort, pour remarquer de nouveaux liens, pour nous permettre d’inscrire de nouvelles intuitions, pour légères ou subtiles qu’elles soient, dans le fil de notre reprise de parole. Donnons une voix au mutisme sapient à la manière dont le dramaturge Harold Pinter utilise ses fameuses ‘Pauses’ dans ses dialogues, comme des chambres aux murs insonores sur lesquels ricochent sans bruit les angoisses, les rêves, et les désirs. Le sombremenent comique *En attendant Godot* de Samuel Beckett est cousu de pauses et de silences mordants et lourds de sens. Dans ces espaces, Beckett dramatise la puissance du silence-comme-provocation :

VLADIMIR : Alors, on y va?

ESTRAGON : Allons-y.

Ils ne bougent pas.

Nous savons que plusieurs étudiants gardent le silence parce qu’ils sont timides, ou parce qu’ils ne

connaissent pas la réponse, ou parce qu'ils ne sont pas suffisamment préparés, ou parce qu'ils n'apprennent pas en prenant la parole. Mais certains étudiants demeurent silencieux parce qu'ils sont physiquement ou affectivement incapables de parler : brisés. D'autres utilisent le silence comme une forme d'agression. D'autres craignent le silence. D'autres encore s'emmitouflent dans les épaisseurs de son sombre confort. *Le livre des proverbes* dit, « La mort et la vie sont au pouvoir de la langue » (18,21). Avec plusieurs douzaines d'entrées pour *silence* et *silent*, le *Oxford English dictionary* n'en contient que quatre ou cinq qui aient des connotations positives, encerclant le terme d'une armée d'images violentes et inquiétantes : *briser* le silence, *silence bouleversant*, *silence des ténèbres*, silencieux comme une *tombe*. Sa manière dominante de présenter le silence l'habille de mort, de refoulement, de mutisme et de taciturnité. Même le « manque de saveur » du whisky est appelé « silence ».

L'horreur peut en effet nous ganter de silence, mais le sublime le peut aussi.

Dans le *Comme il vous plaira* de Shakespeare (acte 1, scène 3) le duc Frédéric complimente Rosalinde, en disant : « Son silence même et sa patience / Parlent au peuple. » Les silences élégants et éloquents offrent à la connaissance des ouvertures et des occasions de s'attarder lorsqu'il n'y a rien à dire – ou beaucoup à dire. W. B. Yeats raconte une histoire traditionnelle irlandaise dans laquelle un petit garçon répond à la question condescendante d'un prêtre irlandais :

« Pourquoi le rubis est-il le symbole de l'amour de Dieu? »

« Parce qu'il est rouge, comme le feu, et que le feu brûle tout, et que là où il n'y a rien, il y a Dieu. »

Ron Marken

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silence in the classroom

Silence in the classroom is shocking. Professor silence, that is. At least that's what my students tell me. To be present in a room where the teacher isn't speaking, to be left to their own devices, seems to many students so unusual that it can feel threatening. Yet, when a class acclimates itself to that silence, the opportunity to exchange perspectives uninterrupted by a teacher's voice can be liberating.

I don't talk much in my classes, particularly early in the term. In one course, I even avoid eye contact, making brief announcements, then bowing my head to write in a journal I keep throughout. Not that the course is unstructured; students are writing complex, challenging papers every week, and I distribute several of those papers anonymously to everyone the day before class. Consequently, people enter the class engaged, having committed themselves and having done so in their own voices. They're also curious about what their classmates have produced and how their classmates will respond to what they've written, making a rich palette for discussion.

Why don't I join that discussion? I often want to, want to contribute an idea, correct a misapprehension, share my enthusiasm. But I bite my tongue. I do that because I think Mary Rose O'Reilley is right when she says, "Students do not listen well to the answers to questions that they have not learned to ask." And when I rush in, I think that learning often stops. Here's Jane

Tompkins in one of her provocative “Postcards from the Edge,” you know, the type of postcard you write but don’t send.

Dear Students,

When I pay attention to the subject matter in class instead of you, I get excited, think of an idea that just has to be said, blurt it out, and, more often than not, kill something. As in the Dickinson poem

My life had stood
A loaded gun
In corners

when I speak the report is so loud it deafens. No one can hear anything but what I’ve said. Discussion dies. It seems it’s either you or me, my authority or your power to speak. What do I do that shuts people up? . . .

A life in school: What the teacher learned

When I talk frequently in class early in the term, I think I play into (or is it play to?) the ideology of expertise that dominates university culture, one that both our students and ourselves are comfortable inhabiting. In that culture, students learn only from their teachers, never from each other. They are skeptical, often disdainful, of their peers’ contributions, and often, secretly so of their own. They are afraid to trust their own minds.

I've found that if I can keep silent long enough, that pattern can be broken, and people do begin to trust themselves and each other, allowing a richer, more nuanced discussion to flourish.

One student put it this way in her last paper, a self-evaluation. Reporting that she had experienced much of her university education as eroding her confidence, that she had learned "to paraphrase other people's work and to hide (her) own voice behind theirs," and consequently, that she began the class uncomfortable with silence, she wrote:

As the term progressed, I became increasingly comfortable with silence I loved listening to my colleagues The Chorus of thank yous that came from some of our colleagues on the last day of class was beautiful – thank you for listening, for sharing, for laughing . . . More importantly . . . it did not seem to matter whether we all spoke up or not, I . . . felt the overwhelming sentiment in the room was that we had shared a journey together . . . all of us . . . awestruck at what can happen when (law) students express themselves with confidence

Another student put it this way:

Having a self-moderating class was also interesting, because in order to make it work, everyone . . . had to be willing to participate at some point

. . . . Having a class that encouraged students to voice their own opinions was also a novelty. I felt so much better after our class discussions regarding how isolating the experience of law school can be, how lonely, and frustrating. Knowing that so many other classmates had felt the same way I did would have been a great comfort to me in first year. Listening to the other students' opinions on the readings opened my eyes to how similar and different we all are, and gave me hope that we were bringing something unique to the legal profession.

Of course, not all students respond positively to a teacher who doesn't speak often. In a different class, one student wrote on his course evaluation, "TEACH ME SOMETHING!"

I'm not recommending that you adopt such a radical approach to encouraging learning, nor that you adopt a teaching style that doesn't fit with who you are. However, I do think that if we remember that developing confidence and trusting their own voice should be an essential component of each person's education, all of us would benefit if we reflected more on what we're doing that hinders that development and what we could do to encourage it.

I'll leave you with this observation from poet and English professor Mary Rose O'Reilley who, when asking herself what her "deepest sense of (her) task" was as a teacher, wrote: "Peaceful Listening":

What I'm trying to construct here is a theory of attention that depends little on therapeutic skill and formal training: listening like a cow. Those of us who grew up in the country know that cows are good listeners Cows cock their big brown eyes and twitch their ears when you talk. This is a great antidote to the critical listening that goes on in academia, where we listen for the mistake, the flaw in the argument. Cows, by contrast, manage at least the appearance of deep, openhearted attention.

If you are listening, if you are turning your big brown or blue eyes on somebody and twitching your ears at them, you are earning your silage. You are listening people into existence. You are saving lives. You are producing Grade A.

Mark Weisberg

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Alexandra Fidyk

The writing of poetry and the tradition of deliberate attention to consciousness are as old as language for humankind and so cannot be partitioned among disciplines. Meditation looks inward; poetry holds forth. One is for oneself; the other is for the world. However, in practice, it is never clear which is doing which, as Rabindranath Tagore observes:

When the voice of the Silent
touches my words
I know him and therefore I know myself.

We can be held together in a class first by the intent of the words, then by silence itself.

Often, after reading aloud in class a particularly affective piece of literature, silence befalls us. It takes practice to let this silence be, to not shatter its weight with an unnecessary question or comment. As I learned to let silence breathe, I discovered other possibilities could arise from it.

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silence!
reviving an oral tradition in mathematics education

Silence, in my experience, is what can link doing and creating with learning, certainly in mathematics. Mathematics is not only about knowing how to do something with numbers or space, it is also about knowing how to figure out how to do something with numbers and space.

There are four types of knowledge in mathematics. First, there are the names of objects, triangles, right angles, even numbers, centimetres: or conversely, what names and symbols mean, like 22 stands for two-tens-and-two, not two-and-two.

There are the mathematical facts: $2 + 2 = 2 \times 2 = 2^2$, the diagonals of a square are of equal length, if you multiply two even numbers you get an even number. These first two types make up “knowing how.”

Then there are ideas that help a learner (and aren't we all always learning more?) understand what she or he observes, and make conclusions: for example, when adding fractions, the denominators have to be the same. This is “knowing why.”

Finally, there are the concepts that underlie these ideas about the mathematics of what is observed. This last type on the list is the most elusive. I call it “knowing when” because it helps one to see when a situation is similar to another that the learner already understands.

Mathematics, they say, is the science of patterns. To see the patterns, and to see the usefulness of a pattern to the understanding of a phenomenon that embodies this pattern, requires “knowing when.” The difficulty in learning at that level is that being told doesn’t work. What is needed is silence. Silence is an absence. Silence has no direction. It does not say “Go this way,” or “Don’t go that way.” It says, “Go any way you like, see where it takes you.”

One of the most rewarding – and most productive – educational moments is when a learner experiences the “Aha!” If it is connected to the underlying idea of mathematics, this moment is even more precious. Learners then experience the creative mathematician in *themselves*. The problem, of course, lies in how to make these moments happen. They cannot be forced; there are ways, however, to solicit them.

They happen when we don’t *tell* the answer, when we resist the temptation to take over and tell the story ourselves. When we stay silent.

But how can we trust that they will find the right answer? The problem with the “right answer” is that it pulls relentlessly in a specific direction. It does not let the learner go in any direction she or he pleases. Self-reliant creativity is lost.

To illustrate, Andrew Wiles, well known for his solution of Fermat’s last theorem, described his experience of doing mathematics in terms of a journey through a dark, unexplored mansion:

You enter the first room of the mansion and it's completely dark. You stumble around bumping into the furniture, but gradually you learn where each piece of furniture is. Finally, after six months or so, you find the light switch, you turn it on, and suddenly it's all illuminated. You can see exactly where you were.

Groping in the dark is an integral part of doing mathematics. It is then that the light bulb moment is the most powerful. It is then that the “knowing when” develops. Takes hold. This “knowing when” enables the learner to progressively understand more and more complex mathematical situations.

“Knowing when” is essential to a trustworthy learning process; it can only emerge in learners through silence.

Eva Knoll

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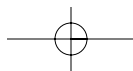
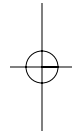
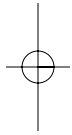
Thomas Fleming

Forensic identification officers, despite the portrayal of their professional lives on television programs such as *CSI*, often look for something that is *not* evident. Remarkably, it is often the very absence of a feature that leads to the solution of a violent crime. For professors teaching in the field of criminology, it can also be “the thing that is not said” that proves to have the greatest impact on students’ experience of learning.

How can the creative use of “the thing that is not said” help them acquire a critical, compassionately-informed understanding of murder in lecture classes? First, it requires getting students to shut off their computers, disengage from mechanical note taking, and engage in an embodied state of deeper reflection.

To bring the reality of true crime to students, it is crucial to expose them to scene-of-death photographs, recovery of human remains materials, forensic investigation methodologies, and the horrendous day-to-day reality – versus the fantasy – of serial murderers. Informed interpretation of the materials by the instructor, in concert with students, is essential, but the use of silence to support contemplation of difficult materials is also of considerable assistance. In a society full of noise pollution from all directions – and when ceaseless interpretation by “quasi-experts” is a media

staple – it is a unique and moving experience for students to reflect on these murderous and tragic realities in silence.



three facets of silence in dance education

When I am ready to start class, like the silent recognition between conductor and orchestra the moment before the concert begins, I walk up to the front of the room and stand, quietly facing the dancers. As the students see me do this, they quickly rise and find a space to inhabit in the room; all bags, extraneous clothing, and accoutrements put to the side. There are a few moments of settling, a collective “pregnant pause” of silence and calm during which I take the time to meet their gaze. Then, we begin.

In an ideal world, this would be understood as the approach to a class. Alas, it is not, so my first task with incoming university dance students is to introduce them to this moment of silence. Coming out of high school and dance school curriculum, this practice is foreign to most. It takes a few classes until it is instilled, but it is well worth the time, as it brings the students consciously and collectively to the “threshold to train”:

. . . the beauty of silence. As with the rotation of a diamond, the more we rotate silence, the more we realize the many ways it can bring new light into our lives.

– Eugene F. Hemrick

Silence is a powerful device in the arts. The threshold of silence I utilize in both technique and improvisation

class signals our point of departure or line of demarcation. Dance training takes place outside the realm of normal everyday experience and, in order to do this, we need to leave behind our everyday behaviours, the regular stuff of life, cross over the threshold into the liminal in-between realm of perception and experience. This initial silence grants us a moment in time, in the body, to acknowledge the ritual of class and to acknowledge our respect for the art form.

In the second half of class, when students are applying my technique and performance instructions into longer movement phrases across the floor, I ask the accompanist to cut out of the music for a number of bars as a means of forcing the students to think about how to use the silence. The silence may encourage the dancer to reinforce the rhythm, sharpen the focus, and consider the amount of force driving the movement in order to maintain the strength of the intention and sustain the momentum.

Silence is suddenly magnified through movement

Contrary to its common definition, silence in dance does not mean “to curtail the expression of,” but rather is used to enhance movement or emphasize expression. It also allows for some space or freedom to improvise as each dancer interprets and performs the silence. Those few bars of silence have the potential to stand out in relief through the dancers’ manipulation of time, physical space, energy, and intention. Because dance is so strongly perceived as a form of communication, the silences we

experience aurally also have the capacity to punctuate and illuminate communication in movement.

In the last few years, I have incorporated a third facet of silence by way of a formalized closure to my Modern Dance technique class. Similar to the *révérence* used at the end of a ballet class, I have instructed my accompanists to fade out the music shortly before the end of a ritual movement phrase that serves both to cool down the dancers and acknowledge all who are present. In addition to providing the threshold back into normal time and space for the dancers, the sustained stillness enhances the respect for the live music, for the musician's artistry. This final stillness is alive with the tension accumulated over the course of the last 90 minutes, and is resolved moments later with applause, which officially closes the class.

In Western culture, where ritual has been diminished, these dance class rituals of silence strengthen the significance of ritual so that it may come to have meaning not only within the context of my class, but in the larger context of recognizing other portals in our daily lives. Silence in dance class becomes a pivotal moment in the dancer's day: in a dancer's life.

Karen Duplisea

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the power of wow!
the exclamation that makes and breaks silence

The “Power of Wow!” is a learning exercise developed by a UK National Teaching Fellow and undergraduate graphic design students. The exercise embraces the “teaching with your mouth shut” approach of Finkel, in which the student voice is central to learning and the teacher remains quiet. However, with the “Power of Wow!” the student’s voice is communicated by objects. Neither students nor teacher talk. Silence is only to be broken by the exclamation of “Wow!” A genuine utterance of this single word ultimately confirms the success of the students’ work.

Silence in the context of learning has many meanings. The “shh” in the hush of the culture of education is, however, a learnt behaviour, a social protocol that we respect as part of the learning process. We are taught that silence displays a reverence for teaching, an engagement that indicates restraint, listening, and studious *doing*. Silence provides a distance, a space where the student can remain alone in thought, undisturbed. An interruption of silence may therefore be translated as an interruption of learning: an intervention that disrupts or disengages the student. It may suggest the student’s inability to listen, or a lack of interest in the teaching: it means learning lost, teaching disempowered

The library, the exam room, and the lecture hall are traditionally the domains where silence is practised yet

within these contexts silence can create tensions: tensions that can militate against learning and teaching. Silence has the power to weaken learning and teaching. It can distract the student, make passive learning easier. Silence can mask emotion as it keeps feelings in check. Silence may be taken as a sign of the uncommitted, the unquestioning, the disinterested.

The use of the word “Wow!” can have a tremendous effect upon learning when it is deliberately sought to interrupt a silence, to provoke an emotional response that communicates meaning and makes *feeling* audible.

Graphic designers speak through their design work: the design gives voice and emphasis to their messages; for example, the communication of a giggle can be graphically created through the visual *wiggle* of the word. A student’s understanding of visual language is critical to their creative practice: critical to how meanings are communicated, and how audiences read and respond to them. To develop design students’ understanding of the impact of the visual, this specific learning activity augments and amplifies their thinking in relation to how they read and respond to design.

The “Power of Wow!” exercise is positioned as the culmination of the students’ introductory studies to visual culture and semiotics. Their design discourse and visual literacy studies are tested through their exploration of how objects can speak: theory is put into practice.

Each student is requested to select an object, an image, a *thing* that will provoke the honest response of a

genuine “Wow!” from their peers. The students are encouraged to consider their choice and their audience carefully as an exercise in critical and creative thinking. The selected thing is to be kept secret until it is revealed. No introduction or discussion is required; each item is presented independently, spotlighted for the audience’s immediate response. The exhibited object is required to do the talking; the aim is to obtain the proclamation of “Wow!” Multiple “Wow!”s confirm success: an “Oh Wow!” being the ultimate accolade.

The silence adds a heightened tension and anticipation as viewers wait to be awed. An “Oh” or “Ah” does not meet the set criteria. Only “Wow!” will succeed. This activity generates significant other noise: the “Ha Ha” of laughter, the “Ah” of disbelief. But silence is resumed, self-imposed in preparation for the next revelation. Ordinary things can be incredible when placed within this context. An indoor firework or a bottled cobra can provoke unexpected exclamations: they have the “Wow!” factor. Surprisingly, a cheap (£1.00) box of 24 frozen hamburgers secured the biggest “Wow!” The relatively mundane can have big impact. Students explore the intricacies of language and their immediate, unchecked, and emotional response to a surprise: the wondrous.

Silence allows the object to take supremacy; it operates in its own “power field” (Lewin) as it transmits a force created by the groups’ interdependence to determine its “Wow!”: “The group’s task is such that members of the group are dependent on each other for achievement . . . a powerful dynamic is created” (Smith). The group realizes that design dialogues exist; objects can talk and

hold multiple meanings that have cultural variations; different meanings are translated in different contexts.

The students *listen* to objects *visually*. Understand that multiple meanings can be communicated, and that their immediate reading can produce an immediate response that confirms a design's success.

“Wow!” is made powerful through silence.

Kirsten Hardie

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dead silence

The data-rich PowerPoint presentations given by a visiting or local researcher to an audience made up of graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty members are the hallmark of basic science departments. Regular attendance at these seminars is generally mandatory for graduate students, and often a tacit expectation for post-docs and junior faculty members. The goals of these seminars are: to provide talks on a variety of cutting-edge research topics given by experts in the field; to create learning opportunities for graduate students, thirsty to broaden their scientific and professional expertise; to engage in a dialogue with senior colleagues in their fields. Good in theory, but in reality there is a deadly silence taking the place of that longed-for dialogue.

If you have attended these seminars, you may have noticed that the questions posed are almost always by faculty. Having made that observation over a number of months of attending departmental seminars, I decided to ask faculty members whether they felt their seminars were opportunities to teach students and post-docs. Their most common reply was that they hoped the audience was learning something during their seminars. When probed further, however, they commented, "I don't think of it as teaching . . . it's imparting information, showing off data," "It is an advertisement for my lab I am thinking, what can I get out of this . . . not, what I can teach."

I then proceeded to ask the graduate students and post-docs, in focus groups, two questions: (1) When you attend departmental seminars, do you ask questions? And (2) why, or why not? Both graduate students and post-docs answered with a resounding “No/Never” to the first question. To the second question, graduate students explained their silence by saying, “I don’t want to look stupid in front of my supervisor,” and “I don’t want to be seen as not knowing the fundamentals.” Post-docs said, “I don’t want to make a fool of myself by asking a stupid question,” or “Often I am completely lost and don’t even know where to begin.”

I began to question what exactly was at the root of their fear. Are basic science faculty members inherently judgmental and adversarial? I don’t think so. I do, however, think that we have lost sight of the seminar as an opportunity to teach. The average departmental seminar includes only the shortest of introductions, after which the speaker launches into detailed descriptions of data: slide after slide of graphs, histograms, molecular arrays, with few pauses for reflection. To complicate matters more, the data is often accompanied by scores of very similar UIAs (unidentified acronyms). Rarely is an effort made to create an atmosphere where the dialogue of learning is encouraged to take place.

Sparked by my intrigue about how we might make seminars more a site of educational inquiry and less a site of self-protective silence, I enlisted the help of a top-ranked senior scientist to review the focus group data. I challenged him to design a seminar which would both

engage and educate graduate students, post-docs, and faculty about a cutting-edge topic in research. He took up the challenge.

The structure and approach he subsequently used in his presentation to our seminar was as follows:

- He began with a broad introduction to the topic with an emphasis on the relevance to the students at all levels in the audience.
- He told a story which emphasized “big-picture” concepts.
- He used very few acronyms, and those he used he clearly defined.
- When he used original data he described its significance.
- He planned for only 45 minutes of delivery.
- He paused frequently, inviting questions of clarification, and left 15 minutes at the end for questions from the audience.

You may be wondering: Did it make any difference? Yes. It did. The noticeable difference during the seminar was confirmed by a questionnaire filled out after the seminar. The evaluation was overwhelmingly positive (on average 4.5 or greater out of 5). Most encouraging, the majority of questions asked during and after the seminar were from students and post-docs. Based on the comments section of the questionnaire, it was clear that when

they perceived an authenticity in the invitation to join in the dialogue, students and post-docs were energized, excited. They no longer remained silent.

Carol-Ann Courneya

teaching silence: John Cage in the 21st century

There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music.

—John Cage, *Experimental music*

John Cage was one of the most important musical and artistic thinkers of the last hundred years, and it is my pleasure each year to teach his music and philosophies in the second semester of my Twentieth Century Music course. Not only is he important to his era, he also created one of the most original and important musical works of all time. Cage's own musical turning point occurred when he entered an anechoic chamber (a room with so much non-resonant material as to create a silent environment) at Harvard University. He asked the engineer what the very high and low sounds were that he heard in the chamber and the engineer replied that it was Cage's own nervous and circulatory systems ringing in his ears. It was at that moment that Cage realized there could never truly be silence.

Changed by his experience, Cage later composed "4'33" which consists of 4 minutes and 33 seconds of, well, silence. Written in 1952, and scored for any instrument or combination of instruments, the work consists of carefully timed segments, all of which are marked "tacit,"

meaning, literally, that each performer remains silent throughout. In the premiere of 4'33", pianist David Tudor's performance was met with hostility by some, consternation by others. By now, it has become more famous simply as a musical idea than as a piece frequently performed in a concert setting. Most of my students who have been brought up in fairly conventional band or orchestral milieus have never heard, or heard of, the piece.

Typically, I give out to my students in advance listening assignments that I expect them to complete before they come to class on certain days. In the case of 4'33", I always mark carefully in the syllabus that we will be listening to the work together. A great relief to students, I imagine, this option of not having to prepare in advance but instead being able to listen in a communal environment. Perhaps they expect that I will give some informative commentary before the piece is played, or a summary after it is performed. Few know what they are in for. Invariably one or two students who have been steeped in some music history before they attend university have heard of the piece. They give me knowing glances when I announce that we will be listening to the work in our next class. I usually approach one of them and ask if they would like to perform it, even if given little rehearsal time. Rarely do they say no.

On the day of the class, I invite the chosen performer to come up to the front of the room, issue him or her a stopwatch (essential for realizing the exact proportions of the piece) and wait for the work to begin. In

keeping with some more famous performances of the piece, they “play” the work on the piano: opening the keyboard lid as the piece begins, closing it at the end to show that the music has come to a close. I imagine that the class reaction to the piece is not unlike that of its original 1950s audience – discomfort: “Is he going to play something or not?” or, “When does it begin?” – which lasts for the first 15 to 30 seconds, usually followed by giggling, the moving around of feet, hands, and bookbags as they begin to realize that in fact nothing (in their estimation) is going to happen. Ironically, our desire to fill the void of silence is so strong that almost everyone in the class provides some movement or vocalization, however small, to fill it.

After the first couple of minutes of the piece, students start to become aware of those things that Cage intended them to become aware of: that sounds surround them even when they believe there is only silence. My students, in their own way, make this discovery as 4’33” progresses. First, it is a siren or a passing, thundering truck that grabs their aural attention, then the sounds of the fluorescent lights, the quiet hum of air from the vents in the ceiling, the slight movement of a hand or foot or pencil, the sound of a vocalist or instrumentalist practising in the next room wafting through the wall. This sound of practising – normally seen as an annoyance, a distraction to the lecture – suddenly seems beautiful, appropriate, a gift. We momentarily listen to the musician, wondering where the music will go next, what will they repeat, or when will they stop performing the music altogether.

Now the students start to relax; their breathing slows, they become more and more still. They start to hear the counterpoint, the interaction of the sounds bouncing off each other. They begin to truly listen to things they have never really heard before. When the piece comes to a close, the performer takes a bow and the students applaud. In some ways it is no different from a conventional performance: the musician plays, the audience listens, the artist accepts the appreciation of the crowd. And yet, something that has never happened before has happened to these students. The discussion we have seems more nuanced, more focussed. They realize that possibly everything they had thought about music now has to be reconsidered, revisited, rethought: that, in the process of listening, they are as important as the composer or the performer. That there is not, nor will there ever be, silence.

Elizabeth Wells

enseigner le silence : John Cage au 21^e siècle

There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot... Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music.

—John Cage, *Experimental music*

John Cage est l'un des penseurs les plus importants dans le monde musical et artistique de ces cent dernières années. Enseigner chaque année sa musique et sa philosophie lors du deuxième semestre de mon cours sur « La musique du vingtième siècle » est toujours une joie. Incontournable pour son époque, il est aussi le compositeur d'une des œuvres les plus originales et importantes de tous les temps. C'est en entrant dans une chambre sourde (une pièce dont les murs sont recouverts d'isolants phoniques pour créer un environnement totalement silencieux) à l'Université d'Harvard, que Cage réalisa lui-même ce phénomène. Il demanda à l'ingénieur quelle était l'origine de ces sons aigus et sourds qu'il entendait dans la chambre sourde. Il s'agissait en fait de son propre système nerveux et circulatoire qui résonnait dans ses oreilles. C'est alors qu'il réalisa que le silence absolu n'existait pas.

Transformé par son expérience, Cage composa une pièce intitulée 4'33", une pièce de quatre minutes et trente-trois secondes... de silence. Écrite en 1952 pour

tout instrument ou ensemble instrumental, la partition se divise en segments délimités avec précision, chacun portant la mention « tacite » pour signifier que chaque interprète reste silencieux durant tout le morceau. La première représentation de cette composition, interprétée par le pianiste David Tudor, fut accueillie avec hostilité par certains, consternation par d'autres. Aujourd'hui la notoriété de cette pièce est due beaucoup plus à l'idée qu'elle représente qu'à ses fréquentes représentations en salle de concert. Ce qui explique pourquoi la plupart de mes étudiants, ayant grandi dans des milieux musicaux plus conventionnels, n'ont jamais entendu, ni même entendu parler de cette composition musicale.

J'ai l'habitude, certains jours, de donner à l'avance à mes étudiants un travail d'écoute qu'ils doivent compléter avant de venir en classe. Pour 4'33", je fais très attention à bien préciser dans le programme du cours que nous écouterons cette œuvre ensemble. Cette possibilité de ne rien avoir à préparer à l'avance, mais au contraire d'apprécier une pièce musicale tous ensemble, est, j'imagine, un grand soulagement pour eux. Ils s'attendent peut-être à ce que je leur donne quelques informations supplémentaires avant que le morceau ne commence, ou bien que je fasse un résumé sur l'œuvre après l'écoute. Très peu savent à quoi s'en tenir. Il y a toujours, invariablement, un ou deux étudiants qui, avant de venir à l'université, ont baigné dans l'histoire de la musique et connaissent cette composition. Ils me lancent des regards complices quand j'annonce à la classe que nous écouterons le morceau tous ensemble lors du prochain cours. Je demande généralement à l'un

d'eux s'il accepterait d'interpréter le morceau, malgré les délais très courts pour répéter. Il est rare que la réponse soit négative.

Le jour dit, j'invite l'interprète à venir au devant de la classe, je lui donne un chronomètre (essentiel pour respecter la structure temporelle du morceau) et j'attends que le morceau commence. A l'instar des représentations les plus célèbres, les interprètes jouent la partition au piano; ouvrant le clavier au début du morceau, et le fermant à la fin pour indiquer que la pièce est terminée. Je suppose que la réaction de la classe est similaire à celle du public initial des années cinquante; une certaine gêne au début (va-t-il se décider à jouer oui ou non? quand est-ce que ça commence?), qui dure de 15 à 30 secondes. Cette phase est généralement suivie de ricanements, de mouvements de pieds, de mains, de sacs que l'on déplace, alors que le public commence à comprendre que rien (selon lui) ne se passera. Notre désir de remplir l'espace, le vide du silence, est tellement fort que chacun émet un son ou un mouvement, aussi petit soit-il, pour le combler.

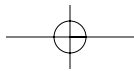
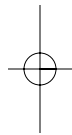
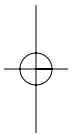
Pourtant, tandis que le morceau progresse, après les premières minutes, les étudiants prennent peu à peu conscience de ce que Cage voulait leur faire entendre : les bruits qui les entourent alors qu'ils se croyaient en plein silence. Mes étudiants, à leur façon, découvrent cette même réalité alors qu'ils écoutent 4'33". C'est d'abord le hurlement d'une sirène ou le grondement d'un camion qui passe qui retient leur attention. Puis le grésillement des néons, le ronronnement paisible de la ventilation au plafond, le léger mouvement d'une main, d'un pied ou

d'un crayon, la voix d'un chanteur ou le son d'un instrument provenant d'une salle de répétition voisine qui traverse les murs de notre classe. Alors que d'ordinaire ce bruit vient nous distraire ou perturber le cours magistral, il se transforme tout d'un coup en un son merveilleux, approprié, comme une sorte de don. Nous écoutons avec attention le musicien, nous demandant où la musique nous entraînera ensuite, ou si elle s'arrêtera.

Après quelque temps les étudiants se détendent, leur respiration ralentit, ils deviennent de plus en plus calmes. Ils commencent à entendre le contrepoint, l'interaction des sons qui rebondissent les uns sur les autres. Ils commencent à écouter des sons qu'ils n'avaient jamais vraiment entendus auparavant. Quand le morceau se termine, l'interprète salue et les étudiants applaudissent, comme on le ferait, en fait, lors d'une représentation traditionnelle : les musiciens jouent, le public écoute, l'artiste accepte la gratitude de la foule. Et pourtant, ces étudiants viennent de vivre une expérience entièrement nouvelle pour eux. La discussion que nous avons ensuite semble plus nuancée, plus ciblée. Ils comprennent maintenant que tout ce qu'ils pensaient auparavant sur la musique doit être désormais reconsidéré, réexaminé, repensé. Ils commencent à se rendre compte qu'ils sont tout aussi importants dans le processus de l'écoute que le compositeur ou l'interprète. Ils s'aperçoivent qu'il n'y a pas, et qu'il n'y aura jamais, de silence.

Elizabeth Wells

denouement
dénouement



yellow: from silence to creation

I begin the Spanish class by writing the word *amarillo* on the board. When I ask what it means, the students in my third year advanced reading class happily tell me that *amarillo* means yellow. I then ask each student in turn to explain what they understand about *amarillo*. Describing a colour is surprisingly difficult, especially in another language, so I ask the students to close their eyes, to breathe in and out, to relax, to shut out the classroom and the university, and to imagine – in silence – a world in which everything is tinged by shades of yellow.

I invite them to meditate, with their eyes closed, for two or three minutes, and then I ask them to write down all the yellow things that appeared to them in the silence of their inner space. When the tongues of pens and pencils fall silent, I ask them to describe what they have seen, and they speak to me of evening grosbeaks, American goldfinches, yellow canaries, a daisy's eye, moonlight on clouds and over water, early morning sunshine, a cat's eyes, a candle's flame, the jersey of the leader of the Tour de France, or, more mundanely, corn flakes, a fried egg, their neighbour's T-shirt.

Then I give to each student a copy of *¡Hola!*, the glossy Spanish society magazine, and ask them to scan it and keep a record of the pages on which the colour yellow appears. In an 80-page *¡Hola!* there are usually 30 or 40 shades, tints, hues of yellow, and when the students have understood the incredible richness of the colours

grasped by the camera for the human eye, we turn to a brief description of how colours are created on the computer screen, and of just how many colours the computer can actually reproduce.

Now the class moves to the central point and I circulate Juan Ramón Jiménez's poem "Primavera Amarilla (Yellow Spring)" to the students. They indulge initially in a silent reading of the poem. Here it is, in my own translation:

April arrived full of yellow flowers
The stream was yellow, the path was yellow,
and the hill, and the children's graves
and the orchard where love used to live.
The sun anointed the world with the yellow
of its fallen rays. There were gilded lilies
and aureate water, warm and sparkling.
Yellow butterflies perched on yellow roses.
Yellow garlands climbed yellow trees.
Daylight was a gift of golden perfume
in a glistening awakening of life.
Amongst the bones of the dead,
God was opening his yellow hands.

For homework, the students are requested to take scissors and cut swatches of yellow from their *¡Hola!* magazines. These swatches are then to be ordered from light to dark and placed around the outside of a Bristol board in roughly the same sequence in which we find them on a computer colour template. Next, the students centre the poem on their Bristol board, in Spanish, side by side with one or more English translations. Then I ask

them to attach a thin thread from each of the 16 occurrences of the word *amarillo*, or its synonyms (gold, golden, gilded, aureate), to the colour on their swatches that they imagine it to be. Next day, in class, we create an art gallery on the classroom walls and we walk around it in silence, contemplating the variations in colours and designs. When I re-ask the initial question – what does *amarillo* mean? – I no longer get the same answer. Light breaks where no light shone, and smiles light up the classroom.

“Intelijencia,” Juan Ramón Jiménez once wrote, “dame el nombre exacto de las cosas,” (Intelligence: give me the exact name for things). From here, if the moment is ripe, we can move to the poet’s search for *le mot juste*, *la palabra exacta*: the right word in the right place at the right time. This, in turn, can lead into a discussion on the current poverty of language and the need for students to develop language skills in their own mother tongue.

This search may take us to the logical positivism of A. J. Ayer and on to Bertrand Russell’s ideas on the meaning of meaning. Or, it can be followed by an introduction, however brief, to the philosophical roots of early twentieth-century Spanish literature. We may discuss the influence of Western philosophy as it flows from Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas to Leibniz’s “being who is capable of action” and the *l’humain se faisant* of Bergson, from whom we arrive at the “possibilities of being” of those Existentialist philosophers (Scheler, Jaspers, Heidegger) for whom humans, rather than simply exist, do and create.

This act of creation, or, in the case of Juan Ramón Jiménez, the poet's recognition of, and attempt to recapture, the creations of the divine creator, leads back to the old Platonic idea of the participation of the Supreme Being in the structure of universal beauty: a theme which is omnipresent and ubiquitous in the creative work of Jiménez, winner of the 1956 Nobel Prize in Literature.

But the key to all of this is silence: the silence of meditation; the silence of reading to oneself; the silence of contemplation; the silence of the gap between the two extremes of metaphor where the wings of the mind flutter back and forth; the silence of the classroom's narrative gap from which – and I have living proof of this in the form of the art work created by my students, at [<http://www.stu.ca/~rgmoore/posters/posters.htm>] – creativity, in its many wondrous forms, finally comes forth.

Roger Moore

jaune : du silence naît la création

J'écris le mot *amarillo* au tableau au tout début de la classe d'espagnol. Quand je leur demande ce que signifie ce mot, mes étudiants du cours Lecture Avancée de 3^e année répondent allégrement : "jaune". Je leur demande ensuite de m'expliquer, chacun à son tour, ce qu'ils entendent par *amarillo*/jaune. Décrire une couleur est étonnamment difficile, surtout dans une langue autre que la sienne, c'est pourquoi je propose aux étudiants de fermer les yeux, de respirer calmement, de se détendre, de s'échapper par la pensée de la salle de classe et de l'université, et d'imaginer – en silence – un monde jaune, où tout est entièrement teinté de dégradés de jaune.

Je les laisse ainsi méditer, les yeux clos, deux à trois minutes, puis je leur demande d'écrire tous les éléments jaunes qui leur sont apparus dans le silence de leur espace intérieur. Quand les plumes et les crayons s'apaisent et que revient le silence, je leur demande de décrire ce qu'ils ont vu, et c'est alors qu'ils me parlent de gros-becs errants, de chardonnerets jaunes, de serins jaunes des Canaries, de marguerites, de clairs de lune se reflétant sur l'eau ou se découpant dans les nuages, d'aurores ensoleillées, d'yeux de chats, de flammes de bougies, du maillot jaune du tour de France, ou, plus prosaïquement, de la couleur des corn flakes, d'un œuf sur le plat, du T shirt d'un voisin...

Je distribue ensuite à chacun un exemplaire de *¡Hola!*, la luxueuse revue espagnole sur papier glacé, et je

leur demande de le feuilleter afin de noter toutes les pages où la couleur jaune apparaît. Dans un numéro de la revue *¡Hola!* de quatre-vingts pages, il y a en général trente à quarante nuances, teintes, tonalités de jaunes, et quand les étudiants ont compris la richesse prodigieuse de couleurs qu'un appareil photo peut saisir et transférer à l'œil humain, nous discutons brièvement de la façon dont les couleurs sont produites sur l'écran d'un ordinateur et sur la quantité de teintes possibles.

C'est ainsi que nous arrivons au point central de la leçon, et que je distribue le poème de Juan Ramón Jiménez, « Primavera amarilla (Un Printemps jaune) ». Généralement les étudiants se lancent dans une lecture silencieuse du poème. Le voici, dans une traduction personnelle :

Avril est arrivé dans une multitude de fleurs jaunes...
Le ruisseau était jaune, le sentier était jaune,
et la colline, et les tombes des enfants
et le verger où, jadis, vivait l'amour.
Le soleil imprégnait le monde du jaune
de ses rayons. Il y avait des lys dorés
et des eaux cuivrées, chaudes et miroitantes.
Des papillons jaunes perchés sur des roses jaunes.
Des guirlandes jaunes grimpant le long d'arbres jaunes.
La lumière du jour était un don de parfum ambré
dans une renaissance chatoyante.
Parmi les os des morts,
Dieu ouvrait ses mains jaunes.

En guise de devoir, je demande aux étudiants de se munir de ciseaux et de découper des vignettes de jaune à partir des pages du magazine *¡Hola!*. Ces vignettes sont ensuite disposées tout autour d'un carton de bristol dans un dégradé allant du plus foncé au plus clair, un peu comme les plaquettes de couleurs sur un ordinateur. Les étudiants placent ensuite, au centre du bristol, le poème en espagnol, à côté d'une ou plusieurs traductions anglaises. Je leur demande alors de relier à l'aide d'un fil chacune des seize utilisations du mot *amarillo*/jaune, ou de ses synonymes (doré, cuivré, ambré), aux teintes des vignettes qu'ils imaginent correspondre le mieux. Le lendemain en classe, nous créons une galerie d'art sur les murs de la salle et nous déambulons, en silence, au milieu de ces variations de couleurs et de formes, pour les contempler. Quand je repose la question initiale : que signifie *amarillo*, je n'ai plus la même réponse. La lumière apparaît où régnait l'obscurité, et des sourires éclairent la salle de classe.

« *Intelijencia* », écrivit un jour Juan Ramón Jiménez, « *Dame el nombre exacto de las cosas.* » / « Intelligence : donne-moi le terme exact pour nommer les choses. » De là, si la réflexion est mûre, nous pouvons suivre le poète dans sa quête de *la palabra exacta*, *the right word*, du mot juste, au bon endroit, au bon moment. Ceci peut nous mener ensuite vers une discussion sur la pauvreté actuelle du langage et le besoin, chez les étudiants, de développer des compétences langagières dans leur langue maternelle.

Cette recherche nous amène alors à la logique positiviste de A. J. Ayer et aux pensées de Bertrand Russell sur la signification du sens. Cette exploration peut être suivie d'une introduction, même brève, sur les fondements philosophiques de la littérature espagnole du début du 20^e siècle. En outre, nous pouvons discuter de l'influence de la philosophie occidentale depuis Platon, Aristote et saint Thomas d'Aquin jusqu'à « la substance est l'être capable d'action » de Leibniz et « l'humain se faisant » de Bergson. Nous arrivons alors aux « possibilités d'être » des philosophes existentialistes (Scheler, Jaspers, Heidegger), pour qui l'humain, plutôt que d'exister, se « donne un sens » par ses actions et créations.

Cet acte de création, ou, dans le cas de Juan Ramón Jiménez, la reconnaissance du poète des œuvres du Créateur Divin et sa tentative de les traduire à travers son art, nous ramène à la vieille pensée platonicienne de l'intervention divine dans la structure de la beauté universelle : un thème omniprésent dans l'œuvre de Juan Ramón Jiménez, prix Nobel de littérature en 1956.

Mais la clé de tout ceci est le silence : le silence de la méditation, le silence de la lecture personnelle, le silence de la contemplation, le silence de l'écart entre les deux extrémités d'une métaphore où l'esprit virevolte de l'une à l'autre, le silence du vide narratif de la salle de classe d'où jaillit enfin, et les preuves tangibles en sont les nombreuses œuvres d'art de mes étudiants (voir <http://www.stu.ca/~rgmoore/posters/posters.htm>), la créativité dans ses merveilleuses et multiples formes.

Roger Moore

everyday is a story

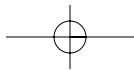
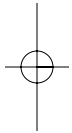
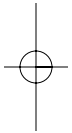
Voices skate, flow beneath ice shelves, grope through cracks
to catch each breath, freeze the voice to itself. A duck
splayed in ice still flying, its voice racing beneath slivers.
Voices from nose-blowing ravens, they grind sputum
beneath their heels, curious beady heavens crane, peer.

A kill-deer screeches
kill-deer, kill-deer, kill-deer, kill-deer.
I mutter till I too am screeching.
A bitchy wren scolds
hops branch to branch;
an unidentified summer duck laughs,
laughs at dawn and at dusk
an evil laugh.
My feet crunch the dry grass.
Shut-up I say
I want "silence"
but thoughts jab one another
to get all this in print
and I wonder what lie
my ancestors told me
about my moccasins
about silence.

Louise B. Halfe

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