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The Rhetoric of Silence in *Life Among the Qallunaat*[1]

Following the 1978 publication of Mini Aodla Freeman's memoir, *Life Among the Qallunaat*, something strange happened: the then-Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development bought three thousand copies (almost half of the print run) directly from the publisher and then tucked them away for many months, effectively limiting the book's circulation (Aodla Freeman xvi).[2] In an interview prefacing the 2015 edition of the book, Aodla Freeman comments on this embargo: "I think they thought I wrote something bad about residential schools, which I *should* have, but I didn't [laughing]" (xvi, emphasis original). Indeed, Aodla Freeman's account of her time in the two residential schools that she attended is notably forgiving of the institutions and their staff. Her brief signalling of an omission within the text—the decision to withhold the full story of her time at residential schools—although softened by laughter, nonetheless alerts readers to the many strategic silences within *Life Among the Qallunaat*.

Throughout the book, the protagonist Mini[3] routinely employs silence as a strategy for dealing with difficulty. This is something that she has been carefully instructed in since childhood: in Inuit society, she explains, silence is often a sign of self-restraint—an indicator of maturity and intelligence (8); meanwhile, complaining or tattling is a behaviour attributed to children or "soft-headed" teenagers and thus is strongly discouraged (Aodla Freeman 229). As Mini's father says to her when she departs for residential school the second time: "Do not bring home tattletales, it is ugly on you" (117). In the era of the book's 2015 republication, however, silence is more commonly imagined as a condition within which survivors like Aodla Freeman no longer have to suffer: in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian Residential Schools, wherein thousands of former residential school

students have "broken their silence," and in a time when speaking up about trauma is broadly considered to be emancipatory, healing, and ultimately *necessary* (even as the dangers of retraumatization threaten), Aodla Freeman's silences—though consistent with her rhetorical traditions—are striking, even troubling. Why maintain silence when one has the freedom to speak?

According to numerous scholars of rhetoric, the Western binary between active speech and oppressed silence is in need of reconsideration: as Cheryl Glenn argues, "[s]ilence is too often read as simple passivity in situations where it has actually taken on an expressive power" (xi). Yet while silence has rhetorical potency, its multiple interpretive possibilities still render it risky, as it can easily be missed, misread, or understood to be synonymous with passivity—even complicity. This paper therefore explores the problems but also the possibilities of *not* speaking within *Life Among the Qallunaat*, a text that strongly (and, at times, disconcertingly) foregrounds the practice of silence both as a pedagogical approach and as a moral stance. In subtly suggesting that this practice be considered—and perhaps even adopted—by readers likely more attuned to resistance via articulation, Aodla Freeman offers an alternative (and perhaps even more abiding) strategy for creating change.

Silence as a Rhetorical Strategy

In "Significant Spaces Between: Making Room for Silence," Daniel Heath Justice points out the ubiquitous emphasis on *voice* within Indigenous writing and literary criticism: "Given the fact that most of settler North America has consistently been either wilfully or circumstantially deaf to the words and perspectives of Indigenous peoples throughout colonial history, it is hardly surprising that the issue of voice is both profoundly personal as well as political in Indigenous writing and oratory today" (116). Having been strategically and deliberately silenced for centuries, Indigenous speakers and writers have brought about tremendous social transformation by taking the risk of speaking up and speaking back to settler colonialism. In the last decade, we have seen some especially potent examples via the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), which has created multiple venues (most notably, the TRC) for survivors to *break their silence*, *tell their truth*, and so to be paid compensation and/or to further their *healing journey*.[4] In this way, Canadian narratives of benevolent colonialism and/or of Indigenous dysfunction seem to have been permanently disrupted, re-cast by public, archived, and accessible testimony about the misguided premises of the residential school system, the abuses that survivors faced,

and the resulting intergenerational trauma. This rewriting of the national narrative, so heavily dependent on the willingness of survivors to speak, might be understood in Scott Richard Lyons' terms as an act of *rhetorical sovereignty*—an undertaking which, he says, "requires above all the presence of an Indian voice" (462).

Voice, or speaking, is evidently a powerful tool of emancipation, leading to the possibilities of being heard, being recognized, and being respected. Audre Lorde stresses the importance of speaking up—of sharing what is most important to her—despite the fear of being misunderstood, of being exposed, of facing censure or violence: "while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness," she writes, "the weight of that silence will choke us" (44). Her influential essay, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," posits language as commensurate with action, as an escape from or an antidote to silence, that state of oppression into which Black women (like other marginalized groups) have been forced. Language, after all, is a tool of great potency and therefore a primary means whereby oppression is perpetuated and liberation is pursued. Glenn locates this formulation as central to Western culture; given the emphasis on the sacredness and power of language in the Classical and Judeo-Christian traditions, she says, it's "[l]ittle wonder, then, that speaking or speaking out continues to signal power, liberation, culture, or civilization itself. . . . In other words, speech—and only speech—keeps us humanly together. Most language users agree: language is all, silence is nothing" (3).

While in no way attempting to downplay the very real ways in which marginalized peoples have been purposefully and unjustly silenced, or the courage of those who stand up to speak back, we have to wonder—and many scholars have—whether this representation of silence tells the whole story. As Justice writes, "What strikes me as particularly interesting (and increasingly troubling) . . . is how the idea of *silence* (or, perhaps more neutrally, *quiet*) is so often lost or vilified in the privileging of voice" (117, emphasis original). In persistently centring speech, we risk ignoring the rhetorical capacity of silence, which, as Peter Elbow notes, "is an equal part of conversation, not just the space around it. . . . The silences within speech are speech acts themselves" (180).[5] Indeed, silence, rather than being passive and impotent, can be purposeful, strategic, communicative, and compelling. It can function as a way of gaining or maintaining certain kinds of power and is not necessarily an oppressed state.

Speech, furthermore, is not always emancipatory. In the context of the IRSSA, it is clear that survivors have faced significant dangers when deciding to

speak about their experiences: in a study by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation of the impacts of the Common Experience Payment (CEP) process, "[o]ver a third of the study group shared that the CEP and reconsideration application process triggered negative reactions . . . . While for some these triggers led Survivors to seek counselling and were later seen as a step along their healing journey, for others the pain was unbearable and led to a relapse of addictive behaviours or thoughts of suicide" (36). Some—how many is not known—lost their lives as a result. The Assembly of First Nations' 2012-2013 Annual Report notes, furthermore, that the Healing Centre programs operated through the IRS Resolution Health Support Program "have experience [*sic*] a demand in services resulting from the [Independent Assessment Process] deadline as well as the TRC and Commemoration events, all of which trigger trauma that requires treatment provided by the Centres" (85). While the experiences of survivors participating in the IRSSA processes vary enormously, many of them trouble the idea of the *talking cure* that continues to dominate healing paradigms.[6]

For these and other reasons, there has been some resistance to the invitation to speak offered by the national process for Indian residential school redress.[7] The TRC's Final Report details a teaching by Mi'kmaq elder Stephen Augustine at its Traditional Knowledge Keepers Forum in the summer of 2014:

> He said "silence" is a concept, and can be used as a consequence for a wrong action or to teach a lesson. Silence is employed according to proper procedures, and ends at a particular time too. Elder Augustine suggested that there is both a place for talking about reconciliation and a need for quiet reflection. . . . We must enlarge the space for respectful silence in journeying towards reconciliation, particularly for Survivors who regard this as key to healing. (122)

These lines gesture toward the importance of silence within Mi'kmaq Indigenous rhetorical traditions, hinting at the pedagogical and even activist implications of refraining from speech.[8] But *how* does silence teach—and how might listeners attune their ears to its rich complexities, particularly in a time when institutions of all kinds are hurriedly, finally, exhibiting a desire to make space for Indigenous *voices*? When speech is expected, how might silence be effective? In thinking through these questions in an Inuit context, I turn now to Mini Aodla Freeman.

A Pedagogy of Silence in *Life Among the Qallunaat*

There are numerous and diverse kinds of silence deployed within *Life Among the Qallunaat*; in this paper, I'm interested primarily in the silence that Aodla Freeman uses when handling bad behavior or situations of conflict:

the moments when, instead of speaking back, calling out, or trying purposefully to correct, embarrass, shame, or educate with words, Mini chooses to say nothing. This, for me, is one of the riskiest and most challenging silences, as it is so easily misunderstood as passivity (or even acceptance). Yet Aodla Freeman's reflections on silence as a purposeful practice invite her readers to linger on this difficulty, to grow more accustomed to the absence of clever retorts, and to reconsider the possibilities that silence offers.

When Mini arrives from James Bay at her boarding residence in Ottawa, the other girls crowd into her room to watch her unpack, expecting to see something far more exotic than what she has brought with her:

> I am afraid that I was as disappointed with their questions as they were with my clothes. One of them insisted, "Where are your own clothes?" and I replied, there, pointing to the locker. But she kept on insisting, "Where are your, you know, clothes where you come from? Skins." She practically vomited out the word, and her face had a sick look. Well, it was too much for me. One of the girls seemed to have the knack of saving everyone from the feeling of intrusion and said, "How awful we are, watching her unpack." The others took the hint, said goodnight, and left. (4)

Notable here are the multiples layers of meaning that are spoken, not spoken, and relayed only to the reader. Aodla Freeman tells us, her uniquely privileged audience, that she feels disappointment at her floormates' questioning, that the lead questioner's desire to encounter a stereotypical "Eskimo"—"expect[ing] to see sealskin clothing, maybe along with a folding igloo" (4)—appears to be tainted with illness, the girl's blurted request betraying not only her revulsion at the thought of skin clothing but also symptomizing her rhetorical dysfunction—her inability to control her utterance. With contrasting restraint, Aodla Freeman remarks simply, definitively, that "it was too much for [her]." None of this, however, is conveyed to Mini's impertinent interlocutors—*except through her silence*—and it appears to be silence that compels one of the visitors to reflect upon the imposition and so to bring it to an end. The others take the hint, however, *not* from Mini's silence but from the somewhat-more-insightful qallunaaq's speech.

What's notable here is how, even in a state of "too much for me"—a feeling, perhaps, of being overwhelmed, shocked, at the end of one's wits—Mini is compelled *not* into an outburst or similarly demonstrative act of resistance, but simply (or perhaps not at all that simply?) into silence. And, indeed, the situation resolves itself, while allowing Mini to retain her self-control—an attribute strongly emphasized during her upbringing. Throughout her

meditation on qallunaat culture, Aodla Freeman provides commentary about her people, noting, for instance, the way in which they think about speech, and about questioning in particular. Children in the South, she says,

> were not free to be normal the way children in my culture are allowed: free to move, free to ask questions, free to think aloud, and most of all, free to make comments so that they will get wiser. As they grow older, questioning becomes a boring habit—they have gained wisdom and eventually become more intelligent. *The more intelligent they become, the quieter they are*. (8, emphasis mine)[9]

Mini demonstrates her own intelligence consistently, almost never asking the questions that she has in mind but instead observing the world quietly and carefully, not seeking explanation but rather relying upon her own mind to puzzle through and to problem-solve. This is evidence of the possession of isuma—sometimes translated as *intelligence* or *thinking*—and further explained by Rachel Qitsualik as "the innermost thoughts and feelings a person has—their mindset. A fundamental tenet of Inuit society," she says,

> was the sacred nature of isuma: that another's mind was not to be intruded upon. . . . This dynamic of respect runs throughout Inuit society and lies at its very core. Its influence can be seen in the unwillingness of Inuit to offer opinions as to what others may be thinking, or in the quiet contemplation of Inuit during a meeting or general discussion. ("Living" n. pag.)

In not responding to her rude qallunaat floormates, then, Mini models for her questioners a respectful non-intrusion, rather than attempting verbally to take control of or impose upon their minds. While this lesson in Inuit pedagogy is likely lost on them, the readers might take note.

Aodla Freeman explains elsewhere about the use of silence to deal with those who are exhibiting a lack of isuma, suggesting that when a young person is being

> makkutuk . . . a soft-headed teenager . . . [t]heir daring, noisy, impulsive and easily-led behavior eventually come to be ignored by adults, as Inuit believe that if a person who is acting like a teenager isn't ignored, they become all the more challenging to deal with. . . . Although the teenager is not ignored on a human level, his or her behavior is ignored, so that the teen will become a better citizen. *It is like telling them quietly, but with firm actions*, "We are not impressed anymore. The novelty has worn off. So grow up, show us your ability to be adults." (229-30, emphasis mine)

The silence of ignoring, here, is characterized as a form of *telling* but also as an *action*. A deliberate form of communication, it encourages a shift in behaviour without infringing aggressively, embarrassingly, on the intellect of another person, as the case might be in a direct reprimand, which the youth

may well resist. Jean Briggs notes the use of this technique in her time with an Inuit family: "Often, childish misbehavior was met by silence, not the heavy silence of gathering tension but an apparently relaxed and rational one that seemed to recognize that the child was not being reasonable but that sooner or later he would come to his senses and behave more maturely again" (*Never in Anger* 139). Indeed, the notable silence of the adult's non-response seems to frame the makkutuk actions—making them more visible not only to others but, most importantly, to the youth themselves. While a rebuke from an adult might spark defensiveness in a young person, heightening conflict and making self-reflection unlikely, silence creates a space in which the youth is allowed—and expected—to think things over. As Susan Sontag argues, silence "provid[es] time for the continuing or exploring of thought. Notably, speech closes off thought. . . . Silence keeps things 'open'" (19-20). Silence, then, functions as a sort of censure but also as an invitation for reflection and improvement. In this quiet space, the young intellect has the opportunity to re-activate; meanwhile, the adult has modelled self-restraint, and direct conflict has been avoided.

One might read Mini's silence, then—when the other girls bully her terribly at residential school (117-20); when she is kept for weeks in southern hospitals without seeing a doctor or hearing anything about why she is there (185-90); when the British mother who has hired her as a nanny suggests that Mini might make a better match for the woman's Cree husband (243); when her picture is used without her permission to sell Canada Savings Bonds (65); or when her roommate insists that Mini should wear lingerie (59-61)—as marked with disapproval, but also as remaining true to her family's teachings by allowing these individuals the cognitive space to reflect on their own behaviour. As a pedagogical strategy, this tactic gives a large amount of credit to the intelligence of the misbehaving person: in order for it to be effective, the person who has inspired the silence must (a) notice that it is occurring, and (b) reflect on it at length, eventually to gain greater self-awareness (and, as a result, better behaviour) through a process that is self-motivated—and therefore more likely to be permanent. While an angry reprimand easily inspires either resistance or meek obedience, the pedagogy of silence creates the possibility of self-actualized change.

Since the success of strategic silence is contingent on the willingness of the blunderer to reflect critically on his/her own behaviour, however, there is a very real danger that this tactic may *not* be effective when used upon qallunaat, who come from a different rhetorical tradition and therefore may

not have a clue what is going on. As Barry Brummett theorizes, "[s]trategic silence occurs when people expect talk and get none. . . . [T]hey are not strategic if they follow the rut of custom" (290). In order to be effective, then, silence must be noticeable. This is where Aodla Freeman's narration comes in, framing for the reader Mini's series of decisions not to speak. "I wanted to tell her my feelings, but I could not" she writes of her qallunaaq friend (60), and this sentiment is reiterated a dozen times: the result is a strange sort of second-hand experience of silence, wherein readers have an opportunity to reflect on the silences so often missed by Mini's interlocutors.[10] In effect, Aodla Freeman's consistent, seemingly paradoxical discussion of her own silence models this practice for her readers and so marks *Life Among the Qallunaat* as a story with something to teach.

On the Problems and Possibilities of Silence

In one of a handful of passages in which Aodla Freeman ceases to speak directly from her own experience, she creates a fictionalized parable based upon her observations of mid-century life in Iqaluit (formerly Frobisher Bay). She writes about an unidentified qallunaaq government employee—perhaps based on a particular person or an amalgamation of several—who, having spent significant time in the North, including travelling with Inuit on the land, finds his attitudes beginning to shift. Back home in Ottawa, he becomes bewildered by the plans that are described by his superiors at the Department of Northern Affairs—plans, he now knows, that are made with no real understanding of the North or of Inuit society. Aodla Freeman writes:

> Though the qallunaaq man who had begun to understand Inuit had so many suggestions to make about how to cope with Inuit, he cannot even mention one idea in front of his boss. He feels very withdrawn after having to listen to his boss's big plans. He wonders how his boss will understand him if he makes any comments on how to cope with Inuit. He becomes very quiet and cannot bring himself to try and explain the things he has seen happen when other new ways of the South are being put to work in the old North. What he says will affect his job, which he cannot afford to lose. He lets his colleagues and boss dream on with their big plans, and he agrees to them. He is trained to respect his heads—what they say is always right, what they say has to be the way. No matter how he feels and how much he understands the Inuk way, he chooses to be quiet and to sit back and listen. He is now "Inuk-washed." (55-56)[11]

During the editing of the 2015 edition, we retrieved the term "Inuk-washed" from Aodla Freeman's original typescript; the 1978 Hurtig publication had instead rendered that line, "He is now Inuit" (56). And indeed, the process of becoming accustomed to Inuit ways of thinking is not exactly the same

as *being Inuit*: while qallunaat who follow Inuit customs are typically praised, and even sometimes called Inuk, it's not safe to assume that they are considered to *be* Inuk. *Inuk-washed*, furthermore, connotes a process both of cleansing and of involuntary transformation (like *brainwashing* might); as such, the qallunaaq has been purged of some of his immature tendencies, and his behaviour is now conditioned unavoidably by his experience in the North. Paradoxically, the first-hand knowledge that should inspire him to challenge his boss's plans instead renders him silent. Although he perceives that these initiatives are, like most northern policy emanating from Ottawa, quite misguided, he tacitly agrees, saying nothing.

Although I assume that Aodla Freeman considers *Inuk-washing* to be an improvement, the silence of this parabolic government man troubles me. Surely, in this situation, a decision not to speak—no matter how inspired by time spent in the North—risks complicity with those southern policy-makers wreaking havoc on Inuit lives. That he seems to be partly motivated by the fact that he "cannot afford to lose his job" reveals that he is in fact profiting off these activities. And if respect for or adoption of Inuit ways means refusing to risk one's white-collar salary, which itself is borne up by nefarious dealings in Inuit lands, then the ethics of this imitation become questionable indeed. Is it not his responsibility to use his privilege to dissuade his superiors from their misguided plans—or, in contemporary anti-racist online parlance, to come collect his fellow white people? Why does Aodla Freeman tell this story—and why does she turn it into a parable, thereby enhancing its didacticism? Even for Mini's grandparents, there are moments when rhetorical silence must be abandoned—for instance, when the missionaries wish to speak with her grandfather Symma about collecting the children for the residential school: "Grandfather went alone," she writes, "and as he was leaving our tent, Grandmother urged him to be strong: 'For a change, don't let them take you over!' She knew him well, that he always gave in to what he called authority for the sake of keeping peace and to prevent bad feelings" (114). Surely, for the government man, this would be a good moment to follow suit and speak up?

Aodla Freeman meditates elsewhere upon this difficulty, at times debating with herself as to whether she should practice southern outspokenness or remain true to her grandmother's teachings. When her qallunaat roommates at the Hamilton sanatorium urge her to inquire with the doctors about her condition and planned treatment, she struggles: "[m]y culture told me not to ask, that in this situation I might cause the people who were taking care of me

to alter their behaviour completely, that I should accept what was happening and not force the hands that I was in to take a different course" (190). When her Moose Factory nannying job has become unbearable and she yearns for a way to leave it, Mini agonizes:

> Was I beginning to think of just me, me, me, and mine, mine, mine? Was I going to force something to happen when the very idea was against my culture? Grandmother had always said that nothing ever stays the same, good or bad. I was getting greedy for my own freedom, when I should be learning lessons from my unhappiness. (239)

I am interested in the problem that these moments may present to a new generation of readers, who may be dismayed at Mini's apparent passivity and long for her to break her silence. And while Aodla Freeman does relate some wonderful moments of wordless resistance—such as when Mini responds to the lectures of a racist piano teacher by pounding out a tune with great enthusiasm before making her wordless exit (220)—for the most part, the protagonist reflects deeply on the troubles that she is facing but never allows herself to say what's on her mind.

Rachel Qitsualik confirms that this strategy of greeting qallunaat aggressiveness with silence is a long-established Inuit practice. Citing the case of an Inuk hunter who quietly allows southern tourists to photograph him—even as it slows his work down considerably—Qitsualik explains that the hunter is acting upon the feeling of ilira: "the need to obey in order to avoid a messy confrontation. . . . an efficient and very old cultural method of dealing with strangers" ("Nunani" n. pag.). She notes that this should *not* be mistaken for passivity (or for approval); the goal, rather, is the avoidance of open conflict. Qitsualik notes, furthermore, that the technique is distinctly ineffective with qallunaat, who are not attuned to it. She suggests that Inuit must instead adapt their rhetoric in these moments and "communicate with [qallunaat] in their own way—by telling them to jump into the nearest lake" ("Nunani" n. pag.). Certainly, there are moments when Inuit have elected to adopt southern rhetorical practice for strategic purposes—but not without difficulty.[12] When the 2013 Idle No More protests were sweeping the nation, many Inuit expressed discomfort with the idea of their own people angrily calling down the government; as Laakuluk Williamson Bathory notes, "the Inuit approach to social change is not reliant on public protest and agitation and, on the contrary, focuses on patience and quiet negotiation; it is a non-Inuit thing to gather on the street with raised fists and posters" (41). As *necessary* and *justifiable* as it may be for Inuit activists to speak strongly in order to be

heard by powerful qallunaat, traditions associating "complaining" or anger with immaturity can make this a fraught and uncomfortable activity.

There is some tension here with the assertions of contemporary anti-racist and decolonial critical theory: for instance, Audre Lorde's powerful and persuasive writings about the uses and legitimacy of anger (124-33), or, more recently, Sara Ahmed's reclaiming of the feminist killjoy in *Willful Subjects,* or Glen Coulthard's lauding of resentment in *Red Skin, White Masks,* all of which emphasize the necessity of speaking up, or speaking back, with all of the anger that a profoundly unjust situation begets. My suggestion here is that scholars and activists *also* consider the legitimacy of silence and restraint as courses of action, as difficult and discomfiting as they can be. After all, while some Inuit (like Qitsualik, or like the fearless and wonderfully outspoken Tanya Tagaq) make the decision to speak strongly, others continue to employ a more restrained rhetoric. As filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril says to a group of Inuit students whom she is escorting to an anti-sealing protest in Toronto, "we don't have to behave the way other protestors behave. Just be true to yourself, remember how your parents and your grandparents would want you to behave . . ." (n. pag.). This evocation of grandparents is not a blind or uncritical adherence to tradition—after all, many Inuit cite *adaptability* as a key attribute of their tradition;[13] rather, it's an important assertion of rhetorical difference, one that challenges academics and activists more attuned to brilliant reasoning and compelling tweets. And the moments when elders' instructions or community-based practices are at odds with academic norms must be attended to with care, lest we replicate the dismissive practices of the past (and miss something important).

Does this mean that the qallunaaq government man is justified in saying nothing to his boss—in acting upon an assumed feeling of ilira? Should Indigenous rhetorics be adopted by qallunaat, and will they function in the same way? These problems remain prominent as we consider Aodla Freeman's parable. However, it seems safe to assume that the author does not equate being "Inuk-washed" with being complicit in oppression; rather, I would argue that she tells this story to reflect on the problems of silence and *also* to encourage her readers to take it seriously. What, then, are the possibilities that a rhetoric of silence offers? While I look forward to other opinions on the subject, I will imagine here, in closing, five possible benefits of silence:

1. Silence is humble—especially for qallunaat. A mid-century government man who remains silent at a Department meeting is doing something quite unexpected and unusual in *not speaking for* Inuit. As troubling as his silence

might be, it may at least function as part of a process of opening up space for Inuit to speak for themselves—and for federal power holders to listen to them.

2. Silence allows rhetorical space in which learning can take place. It opens an interpretive expanse upon which listeners must employ all of their energies to make sense of things. While this practice may not provide the same immediate satisfaction as a slicing retort, and while it may not garner as many followers on Twitter, it may impart the longer-term benefits of hard-won wisdom.
3. Silence *is* an Inuit rhetorical tradition. The linguist Louis-Jacques Dorais relays that this practice of silence is rooted in the great reverence within Inuit society for the power of the word, which—it is known—can have tremendous impacts, including being very dangerous (264). It is best, then, to be often quiet and to choose one's words with the utmost of care. Silence is not the absence of language but rather a necessary condition of using language wisely.
4. Silence can function as a sovereign space. For Indigenous agents, specifically, silence functions as one way to construct what David Garneau calls "irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality," in which one's thoughts are purposefully withheld from the eager ears of (white) settlers, who may or may not be trusted with them ("Imaginary Spaces" 26). In this way, silence might offer a kind of relief or respite from the draining practice of having constantly to speak with and back to oppressive power, and so may constitute a practice of self-care. To that end:
5. Silence is a reprieve from the responsibility of trying to change other people's minds. This, for me, is the most radical and most significant idea: that *it may not always be possible* to make people think otherwise. While in no way do I dismiss the possibility of language to make change, both activists and teachers know, on some level, that shifting another person's thinking through lecturing requires not only great rhetorical skill but also extraordinary luck, and it is successful only once in a while. Perhaps, if we question and even abandon this practice of *arguing*—of imposing aggressively (and often futilely) on another person's isuma—other means of interacting, of persuading, and of creating spaces for others to learn may become visible. While perhaps more subtle, these methods may well be more effective.

Ultimately, *Life Among the Qallunaat* suggests to its readers that the practice of silence is not inaction in the face of settler-colonial domination; rather, for Aodla Freeman, *silence is a form of action*—one that honours the teachings of her elders, that preserves her self-control, that inspires reflection, and that even respects and mobilizes the intellectual autonomy of others by

not attempting to force them to change. By highlighting the difficulties and possibilities of silence, Aodla Freeman encourages her readers to take it seriously—and so offers another possible tool in the struggle for social transformation. Although the loquacious culture of the academy makes silence a difficult practice to adopt, this may render its potential impact that much greater. And while the terms of silence—like the terms of speech—must always be rigorously considered, there is nonetheless much to be said for not saying anything.

NOTES

1 "Qallunaat" (singular: "qallunaaq") is the Inuktitut word for "white people" or "southerners." See Aodla Freeman's longer meditation on the term (86-87). Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from *Life Among the Qallunaat* are from the 2015 edition, which I co-edited with Julie Rak and Norma Dunning.
2 Now, at the time of publication, Julie Rak's and my investigation into the story of what happened to these books—and to other Inuit (and also First Nations/Métis) publications in the 1970s—is still underway. However, whether Northern Affairs officials meant to *limit* the book's circulation or, alternately, to support/enable the publication by purchasing a large order, the result was that those books did not make their way into the hands of numerous readers and that the author—having never been consulted on or informed about this activity—experienced this action as a kind of silencing.
3 I refer to the main character in the memoir as "Mini" and to the author as "Aodla Freeman."
4 These phrases abound in the TRC's many publications, as they do in other documents related to the IRSSA. See, for instance, the Assembly of First Nations' 1994 report *Breaking the Silence*.
5 Thanks to Angela Van Essen for drawing my attention to this source.
6 As Naomi Angel writes, "The testimonial genre has been criticised for over-emphasising the role of language in the process of healing. By promoting a 'talking cure,' an emphasis on testimony can overlook other forms of healing, including traditional rituals and embodied practices" (205). Notably, Bertha Pappenheim's phrase "the talking cure"—which Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer then firmly established as central to psychoanalytic practice—exemplifies the way in which the Eurowestern theory at times obscures its own cultural context, presuming instead the universal applicability of a single experience (in this case, that of Pappenheim, also known as "Anna O") (see Breuer and Freud).
7 Scholars like Dylan Robinson, Naomi Angel, and Pauline Wakeham, have delineated the ways in which some survivors at the TRC events either refused, resisted, or adjusted the strictures of the sharing panels—at times speaking to other topics (such as ongoing Indigenous rights violations) rather than providing the expected narratives of trauma (Robinson 61-63, Angel and Wakeham 110-117).
8 For more on silence within Indigenous rhetorical traditions, see Keith Basso, Cheryl Glenn (107-49), Daniel Heath Justice, Adam Jaworski (22-24, 53-56), and Dee Horne (51-70).
9 Aodla Freeman clarifies that this does *not* mean that talkative or outspoken people are considered to be unintelligent; rather, like her outspoken aunt (who appears throughout

Aodla Freeman's book), they can play a useful role in society, particularly when it comes to counseling teenagers (Personal communication).

10 While there are most definitely formal silences within the book itself—as Aodla Freeman hints when she refers to what she *could* have said about residential schools, but didn't (xvi)—they are difficult to locate without the author's help.

11 In attending to this section, I'm extremely wary of focusing excessively on qallunaat—indeed, of making the book seem to be *about* qallunaat, particularly in light of Shaina Humble's forthcoming argument about the way in which the original marketing (in the late 1970s) and re-naming of the text that became *Life Among the Qallunaat* overemphasized its qallunaat content in order to create appeal amongst white audiences. I cite the episode here in order to raise the problem that silence may, at times, seem to function as complicity.

12 Elder Emile Imaruittuq relates that during the process of negotiating the Nunavut Land Claim, when elders and politicians had to boldly speak up and argue for their rights, "we had to talk a lot about wildlife. This created a lot of fear amongst the elders. They used to tell us not to quarrel about wildlife because this was a very dangerous thing to do. We explained to them that we had to quarrel about the wildlife because we were negotiating with the qallunaat and this was a qallunaat process" (qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al. 38).

13 As Qitsualik says, "Inuit are the embodiment of adaptability itself" (qtd. in Martin 8). See also Jaypetee Arnakak on the Inuit principle of qanuqtuurunnarniq—resourcefulness, or the ability to find a solution using whatever is available—which, he says, is close to being the defining element of Inuit culture (n. pag.).

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