Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence*

RODNEY G.S. CARTER

RÉSUMÉ Ce texte examine les dynamiques du silence aux archives. Il soutient que le silence peut se définir, au moins en partie, comme la manifestation des actes posés par ceux qui détiennent le pouvoir afin d'empêcher aux marginaux d'avoir accès aux archives. Il affirme que cet enjeu a un impact significatif sur la capacité des groupes marginalisés de constituer leur propre mémoire et leurs propres histoires sociales. Les archivistes et les chercheurs peuvent lire les archives « contre le grain » et ils peuvent commencer à mettre en valeur ces silences et à donner une voix à ceux qu'on a réprimés. Cette activité peut toutefois s'avérer difficile et contentieuse et on ne peut l'aborder à la légère. Cet article examine ensuite comment le silence peut être une méthode favorisée par les groupes marginalisés qui refusent de verser leurs documents aux archives comme un moyen d'exercer leur propre pouvoir sur ceux qui détiennent le pouvoir.

ABSTRACT This article examines the dynamics of silence in archives. It argues that silences are, in part, the manifestation of the actions of the powerful in denying the marginal access to archives and that this has a significant impact on the ability of the marginal groups to form social memory and history. Archivists and researchers can read archives "against the grain" and begin to highlight these silences and give voice to the silenced. This, however, may be a difficult and contentious activity and one that should not be entered into lightly. The article then examines how silence can be a method used by the marginalized to deny the archives their records as a way to exercise their power over the powerful.

> "I'm interested for the most part in what's not happening, that area between events that could be called the gap. This gap exists in the blank and void regions or settings that we never look at."
>
> Robert Smithson, "What is a Museum?" (1967)[1]

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1 Robert Smithson, "What is a Museum: A Dialogue between Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson," in Jack Flan, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkley, 1996), p. 44.

"The technologies of silence/ The rituals, etiquette
the blurring of terms/ silence not absence
of words or music or even/ raw sounds
Silence may be a plan/ rigorously executed
the blueprint to a life
It is a presence/ it has a history a form
Do not confuse it/ with any kind of absence."

Adrienne Rich, "Cartographies of Silence" (1975)[2]

Introducing Silences

Archives are filled with voices. Individuals may visit archives in order to hear the stories of their ancestors and predecessors, to learn of the past actions of their governments, and to examine the activities of private organizations. Texts, in the broadest sense of the term, including written, visual, audio-visual, and electronic, are the currency of archives. Archival texts, however, are not fully representative of society. Even in a "total archives" environment, such as exists in Canada, where state-sponsored institutions are responsible for the records created by governments as well as by individuals and organizations, and which are charged with the role of being the keepers of memory and identity for the entire nation,[3] it is impossible for archives to reflect all aspects and elements of society.

The notion that archives are neutral places with no vested interests has been undermined by current philosophical and theoretical handlings of the concept of the "Archive"; it is now undeniable that archives are spaces of power.[4] Archival power is, in part, the power to allow voices to be heard. It consists of highlighting certain narratives and of including certain types of records created by certain groups. The power of the archive is witnessed in the act of inclusion, but this is only one of its components. The power to exclude is a fundamental aspect of the archive. Inevitably, there are distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences in the archive. Not every story is told.

2 Adrienne Rich, "The Cartographies of Silence," *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974–1977* (New York, 1978), p. 17.

3 Laura Millar, "Discharging our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1998), p. 117; Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift," *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997), p. 34.

4 See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London, 1974) and Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago, 1996). Informed by the work of these two theorists, Derrida in particular, the concept of the Archive has been subject of examination by scholars in literary criticism and other fields. From the archival perspective, see the two thematic double issues of *Archival Science* (vol. 2, nos. 1–2 and 3–4, [2002]) guest edited by Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook on "Archives, Records and Power."

This article is interested in the "gaps," "blanks," "void regions," or silences in archives.[5] It examines archival silences, including how they are manifested, the implications of silence for the groups that are excluded, and the impact on societal memory in general. If records are destroyed, manipulated, or excluded, the narratives of the groups cannot be transmitted across time. Their stories will not be heard and they may ultimately disappear from history.

Both power and silence are complex concepts. Just as silence manifests itself in multiple ways, power, too, is not simply a matter of domination. Informed by the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, this paper will begin by exploring how the powerful can introduce silences into the archives by denying marginal groups their voice and the opportunity to participate in the archives. Methods for "reading the silences" of the archives shall then be examined. Once a silence is recognized, what can be done about it in order to learn about the marginalized, or even to fill those silences? While it is generally accepted that archival silences are a negative, and that archives should include as many voices as possible, this article ends by considering how certain groups may choose silence, thereby exempting themselves from the archives. Using strategies articulated in feminist theories of rhetoric and literary theory, and informed by the work of feminist psychologists, I shall offer a wider definition of power and examine how invoking silence can be a strategy used by the marginalized *against* the powerful.

Silences haunt every archives. Silence, however, can be contested and the marginalized can be invited in, although it must be recognized that these groups may not accept this invitation. Once archivists are aware of the silences in their archives, they can take measures to try to allow for multiple narratives to fill some of these gaps, to make users aware of the silences, and to attempt to understand and respect the choice of certain groups to keep their silence.

Silence, Power, and the Archive

The powerful in society are typically aligned with the state and its apparatus, such as the military and the police. Powerful groups in society include certain racial, ethnic and religious groups, the wealthy, and the educated. The powerful can be, and are, defined by their gender and sexuality. They are not necessarily a part of the majority in society but rather can exert an influence that outweighs their numbers. These powerful groups create the records that will eventually enter the archives and use their power to define the shape an archives takes.

5 In this article I am examining silence using aspects of the European and North American philosophical tradition. Silence also plays an important role in other traditions, including Shinto, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

These groups display "power over" the weaker elements in society. Where this power exists, there is an unequal relation between the groups, an "above and below, a difference of potentials."[6] Power over is the domination or control of one group over another in a particular context and involves the ability to affect outcomes and influence others, particularly through the control of resources, including information.[7] The powerful have the ability to make lasting statements that will be heard and attended to. Their words have authority and the power of the law to back them up. Dissenting views, those of the marginal, those statements that challenge or attempt to undermine those in authority, are suppressed by the powerful. They are gagged, threatened, or otherwise forcibly silenced. This type of silencing has been called "simple and perfect,"[8] where the individual or group is denied the ability to speak, to make a statement, to voice their opinions. Jean-François Lyotard describes this behaviour as that of a terrorist, where "by terror I mean efficiency gained by elimination, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game one shares with him. He is silenced or consents, not because he has been refuted, but because his ability to participate has been threatened (there are many ways to prevent someone from playing)."[9] Those who dissent are denied the ability to operate within the discourse, what Lyotard terms the language games. They are silenced through force, given the ultimatum: either withdraw your statement or you will no longer be able to speak.

In addition to the creation of these "perfect" silences, silencing also occurs when an individual speaks but they have no authority behind them. This results in the speech act not being acknowledged and hence the words are not able to achieve their desired effect or fulfill their purpose.[10] Due to a lack of power, the statements are not heeded, they are not recognized as speech acts or as records and are denied a place in the archives.

Where groups have their own record-keeping traditions that differ from the literary tradition upon which European and North American archives are based, such as the oral traditions employed by Native North American groups,

6 Michel Foucault, "The Confessions of the Flesh," in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York, 1980), p. 201.

7 Janice D. Yoder and Arnold S. Kahn, "Toward a Feminist Understanding of Women and Power," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 4 (December 1992), pp. 382–83.

8 Miriam Meyerhoff, "Doing and Saying: Some Words on Women's Silence," in Mary Bucholtz, ed., *Language and Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries*, revised and expanded ed. (Toronto, 2004), p. 209.

9 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester, 1984), pp. 63–64.

10 Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (August 1993), pp. 315–16; Meyerhoff, "Doing and Saying," pp. 211–12.

the silencing is compounded. The speech acts, that is, the documents that are produced, are not recognized as records by the archives. South African archivist Verne Harris states that there is a dire problem of non-responsiveness in the archives to the marginal or "indigenous" epistemologies.[11] The marginal voices that do not conform, that do not adopt the "powerful Western frame of reference"[12] of the dominant group, are ignored. These voices are silenced – if not actively, then through ignorance and chauvinism.

Silence implies voice. It does not equal muteness, that is, it is not a negative phenomenon, simply the absence of sound, speech, text, or other sign.[13] Silence can be actively entered into or, as occurs where the power is exerted over an individual or group, it is enacted upon that individual or group. In the archives, silences can occur as marginal groups are actively denied entry.

Jacques Derrida sees the archive as a place of violence.[14] The archive, as a reflection of and the source of state power, is extremely selective when deciding what gets in. Only those voices that conform to the ideals of those in power are allowed into the archive; those that do not conform are silenced. Those marginalized by the state are marginalized by the archive. Archival violence is found in the use of documents to enforce and naturalize the state's power and in the active silencing of the disenfranchized. The records of the marginalized are denied access and entry into the archive as a result of their peripheral position in society.

Archivists are constantly confronted with choices about what to include and what to exclude, allowing for some voices to be heard while others are silenced. Limited resources and/or a lack of understanding ensure that all records are not given equal attention, that some will be denied a place in the archives. This can be the result of passive or unconscious decisions on the part of the archivist, decisions based upon rationalization and reorientation of archival activities due to fiscal constraints and increasing demands.[15] These decisions, combined with the active exclusion of certain dissenting voices and non-conforming records, have a drastic impact on the form of the archives and have great implications for the state of societal memory.

11 Verne Harris, "The Archival Sliver: A Perspective on the Construction of Social Memory in Archives and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy," in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh, and Jane Taylor, eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town, 2002), p. 150.

12 Verne Harris, "On (Archival) Odyssey(s)," *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001), p. 9.

13 Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence: The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance* (Bloomington, 1980), pp. 4–5.

14 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 7.

15 Millar, "Discharging our Debt," pp. 125–31.

Implications of Archival Silences

Archival silences, however they occur, have a potentially disastrous impact on the marginalized groups. Numerous commentators have identified a link between archives and memory. Indeed, the French historian Pierre Nora makes the assertion that "modern memory is, above all, archival."[16] Memory relies on the continuing existence of the physical traces produced by members of society in their activities. These traces are stored in archives. As M.T. Clanchy states in his discussion of the transition from oral to literate culture in medieval Europe, archivists act like the remembrancers of oral societies, they are entrusted as the "keepers of a society's collective record of the past."[17] Societal memory, the collective memory of the group, the nation, and the culture is dependent on the archivist and the archives. When human memory is impaired, it "affect[s] our concept of time and our ability to remember and recollect ideas and thoughts, habits and people, places and things,"[18] and likewise: when the archives is impaired, when there are silences in the archives, collective memory is similarly affected. As Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook write: "Without archives, memory falters, knowledge of accomplishment fades, pride in a shared past dissipates. Archives counter these losses."[19] Loses are prevented, however, only for the powerful, those record-creating groups with access to the archive. In the archive, as in the political life of Ancient Greece, silence is equated with oblivion; it is the opposite of memory and truth.[20] For the marginalized, losses abound, their collective memory is deficient, their great deeds and the stories of their persecution as they tell it, will not survive. As anthropologist Susan Gal states, silence traditionally is deplored as "those who are denied speech cannot make their experience known and thus cannot influence the course of their lives or of history."[21]

Archival silences result in societal memory being compromised. A universal archive, one that preserves *the* memory of a culture is an impossibility as memory is necessarily an individual thing: there are many memories[22] that often are conflicting and contradictory. Even if archivists are willing to allow

16 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring 1989), p. 13.

17 M.T. Clanchy, "'Tenacious Letters': Archives and Memory in the Middle Ages," *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980–81), p. 116.

18 Barbara L. Craig, "Selected Themes in the Literature on Memory and Their Pertinence to Archives," *American Archivist*, vol. 65, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2002), p. 282.

19 Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science*, vol. 2, nos. 1–2 (March 2002), p. 18.

20 Silvia Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), p. 82.

21 Susan Gal, "Between Speech and Silence: The Problematics of Research on Language and Gender," in Camille Roman, Suzanne Juhasz, and Cristanne Miller, eds., *The Women and Language Debate: A Sourcebook* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1994), p. 407.

22 Nora, "Between Memory and History," p. 9.

multiple voices into the archives, it will never be complete. There is simply no way of capturing the multitude of stories, although archivists must try.[23]

The ramifications of the compromised archive are startling. History, memory, and identity are all affected, as is the ability for the marginal to seek accountability. When the record only reflects the viewpoint of the powerful, there is a great void in the collective memory. Harris describes all archives as preserving a "sliver of a sliver of a sliver" of the documentary universe. What comes to the archives is an extremely small portion of those records that are created, due to the active and passive destruction by records creators, the appraisal by the archivist of what does manage to come to them, and through the physical (and even more alarming, the electronic or virtual) records' inevitable self-destruction. Harris states that if archives are our "central memory institutions, then we are in deep, amnesiac trouble."[24] While archivists are continually confronted with a lack of space to hold the millions and millions of records, and they lament the impossibility of dealing with colossal backlogs, archives actually preserve very few of the records created. What is held is, for the most part, very consciously selected, along with a smaller portion of material being acquired by chance that was not intentionally preserved but somehow managed to survive.[25] The records in the archives tell a very small part of a much larger and infinitely complex story.

In literate cultures, where access to the past is acquired primarily through the written word, when a group is faced with archival silences of themselves, it becomes difficult for the group to tell its own story, to write its own history. Archives are "how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies,"[26] so without archives, the possibility of gaining and maintaining knowledge over time is severely compromised. In the face of archival silence, it is very difficult to form a sense of collective identity. When there is no archival memory to anchor oneself to, the sense of a shared past is lacking. Knowledge of the commonalities that link individuals together is missing. This has a very direct impact on the group's ability to form an identity.

Identity is extremely important for every group, particularly the marginalized who feel the need to assert a strong identity in the face of the power structures that attempt to stamp them out. Identity can be created in a vacuum of

23 For more on this see below; see also Verne Harris, "Seeing (in) Blindness: South Africa, Archives and Passion for Justice," *Records and Information Management On-line Service* (2001) available at <http://www.caldeson.com/RIMOS/harris01.html> (accessed on 10 October 2002).

24 Verne Harris, "Claiming Less, Delivering More: A Critique of Positivist Formulations on Archives in South Africa," *Archivaria* 44 (Fall 1997), p. 97; see also Harris, "The Archival Sliver," pp. 135–36.

25 Carolyn Steedman, "The Space of Memory: in an Archive," *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 4 (November 1998), p. 67.

26 Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power," p. 2.

recorded memory, it can incorporate the lack, and the pressure of the absence shapes and informs the group's knowledge of itself. For those groups whose records are denied a place in the archives, alternative forms of transmission are adopted to share their story with future generations, such as oral traditions or the use of objects as *aide-mémoire*.[27] These forms of communications, however, are susceptible to interruption and the stories and memories upon which group identity is based are much more easily forgotten and distorted than those which are written down and preserved over the long term in an archives.

In order to transcend the limits of time, space, and the fragile nature of human memory, societies depend on archives. Archives are created to transcend the limitations of the oral. This is what Kenneth Foote states is the value of archives.[28] If archives are not created and kept, stories can, are, and will be forgotten. And with no archives there is little chance that the marginalized groups can seek redress for the wrongdoings inflicted on them. This is what Lyotard calls the "*differend*," where plaintiffs are divested of the means to argue their case, to seek accountability, and thus are further victimized.[29] As Sue McKemmish states, "the point is made that inadequate record-keeping regimes limit the ability of society's watchdogs and corporate compliance managers to enforce accountability ..."[30] This inadequacy of record-keeping systems applies to having no records created in the first place, to records that are not completed fully and accurately created, and to the introduction of silences into the archives after the records are created. Nevertheless, despite the best efforts of the powerful to keep the voices of the marginalized out of the archives, traces can still be found. The state's archives can be interrogated and the imbalance of power can begin to be corrected.

Finding Voices in Silence

Even where the state maintains strict control over the archives, where there is not even lip-service paid to notions of democracy, there is still hope to hear the voices of the oppressed. Archival silencing is not complete. The naming of the silence subverts it, draws attention to it. As Karmen MacKendrick states "if we so much as say *silence*, we have already destroyed it."[31] Derrida states

27 Clanchy, "'Tenacious Letters'," p. 115.

28 Kenneth E. Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory and Culture," *American Archivist*, vol. 53, no. 3 (Summer 1990), p. 379.

29 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Manchester, 1988), p. 13.

30 Sue McKemmish, "The Smoking Gun: Record-keeping and Accountability," *Records Continuum Research Group Publications* (1999); available at <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/publications/re cordscontinuum/smoking.html> (accessed on 25 March 2003), p. 21.

31 Karmen MacKendrick, *Immemorial Silence* (Albany, 2001), p. 5.

that within memory is forgetting. He writes that "... the archive – the good one – produces memory, but produces forgetting at the same time ... [T]he trace is at the same time the memory, the archive, and the erasure, the repression, the forgetting of what is supposed to be kept safe."[32]

Within remembering is forgetting and in forgetting is remembering. The dichotomy is broken down, the binary subverted. This is not an either/or position. The same can be said of silence. Speech and silence are dependent and defined through the other. There is no speech without silence, otherwise there would just be unmodulated cacophony; likewise there would be no silence without speech, just a universal meaningless, emptiness. As Susan Sontag wrote, "'Silence' never ceases to imply its opposite and to depend on its presence: just as there can't be 'up' without 'down' or 'left' without 'right,' so one must acknowledge a surrounding environment of sound or language in order to recognize silence."[33] According to Foucault the *lack*, the *unsaid*, determines and defines the very existence of what is said, of the enunciative field.[34] In the archive there is what might be called an absent-presence. What is present in the archives is defined by what is not. And the archival silences are delimited by the archival voices.

Traces of the silenced or silent will inevitably be present in the archives. The problem lies in identifying them. The pertinent question that arises is how can one "*prove* the absence of an archive?"[35] Where does one begin to look? How do we begin to look for absences? It is only in the awareness of silence that we can begin to remedy it. It must be acknowledged that a group is not present in the archives. St. Augustine of Hippo states "... we do not entirely forget what we remember that we have forgotten. If we had completely forgotten it, we should not even be able to look for what was lost."[36] If no traces are left, if we do not even remember that the group has been forgotten and silenced, if the group has been obliterated from archival and societal memory (the latter being dependent on the former over time), where is this recognition of silence going to come from? And who is going to identify such silences? There are no easy answers to these questions.

For the groups that are recognized as being absent, there are ways of finding their traces in the archives. One strategy that has proven quite successful is using the feminist literary tactic of "listening to silences."[37] In this strategy,

32 Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever in South Africa," p. 54. See Harris, "Seeing (in) Blindness," on the remembering/forgetting binary.

33 Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," *Styles of Radical Will* (New York, 1969), p. 11.

34 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 110.

35 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 64.

36 St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Toronto, 1961), X (19), p. 226. A slightly different translation is quoted in MacKendrick, *Immemorial Silence*, p. 109.

37 See, for example, the essays in Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, eds., *Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York, 1994).

that can be applied to any marginalized group, texts are examined for their omissions, lacunae are interrogated, and the representations of women's silence are explored. It is inevitable that the marginal infects the centre, that its presence is felt critiquing the structures of power.[38] As a result of this infection, or infiltration, the voices of the marginal may be heard. This method of textual examination, of listening, can be aligned with what Schwartz and Cook describe as reading archives "against the grain."[39] Foucault defines it as archaeology that can be used to illuminate the "discontinuities, ruptures, gaps" of the discourse.[40] However one identifies it, all these strategies look for what is not there in the records that are in the archives. They use the records created by the powerful to subvert that privileged position.

One fruitful location for finding the voices of the marginalized is in what Terry Cook calls the citizen–state interactions.[41] Cook sees this interaction to be the most important aspect of society to document, and one of the categories of "sharp" interaction is marginalization, where the state imposes its will and its force onto the populace. These interactions are found in, but are not limited to, prisons, hospitals, mental institutions, residential schools, ghettos, and concentration camps. Indeed, often the only extant historical information on persecuted minorities, the lower classes, the poor, and the humble is found in the records created by the state and their apparatus in the active marginalization and suppression of these groups and individuals.[42] As Chris Hurley accurately points out, "historically, tyrants have more regard for good record-keeping than democrats. Totalitarians are notoriously good recordkeepers."[43] It is rather ironic that it is through the records created in the acts of repression that the voices of the oppressed remain. This is what literary theorist David Greetham calls the "poetics of exclusion," whereby the repression does more to save the archive, the knowledge of the marginalized, than would have ever been possible otherwise. He writes: "the poetics of exclusion works, like the mind of God, in mysterious ways, ways in which it is impossible to establish either permanent principles of exclusion or methods of ensuring what we deem to be excluded will remain so." Greetham continues by stating that acts of active suppression "may seem to contribute to the formulation of such a poetics, except for the irony that the more overt (and the more successful) the

38 Krista Ratcliffe, *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions: Virginia Woolf, Mary Daly, and Adrienne Rich* (Carbondale, IL, 1996), p. 120.

39 Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power," p. 14.

40 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 169.

41 Terry Cook, "Mind over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa, 1992), p. 50.

42 Lawrence Stone, *The Past and Present Revisited* (New York, 1987), p. 58.

43 Chris Hurley, "The Evolving Role of Government Archives in Democratic Societies," *Association of Canadian Archivists Bulletin*, vol. 27, no. 2 (November 2002), p. 6.

cultural exclusion the more the prurient and intrinsic value of the excluded may become."[44] Silence is never absolute. The act of repression is what may provide the key to enlightenment and knowledge, not only of the act of marginalization, but of the very existence of the marginalized themselves.

When a silence is discovered, there is the automatic desire to fill it with records. MacKendirck states that silence evokes a terror in us all. She writes that the "fear that silence evokes, the ancient fear, is the fear of time and the absence of time, time which is never more than the coming of absence, time which is not gathered into memory, but fragmented in the return."[45] In order to alleviate this fear of time and the void, archivists attempt to find the means to fill the gaps. Helen Samuels argues that in forming a documentation strategy it may be necessary to intervene in the records creation process to ensure that quality records are being created and that, if necessary, archivists should create records themselves.[46] Luciana Duranti suggests that as archivists have the mission, as "social memory keepers," they are "responsible for facilitating public memory making." Through this process of seeking out what is not in the archives, Duranti goes as far as to suggest that this will ensure the integrity and impartiality of the archives.[47] Barbara Craig argues that it is of importance for social memory that the archivist be an active documenter, inscribing into memory the activities and ideas of groups and individuals. Archivists, Craig asserts, are "responsible for acknowledging those with no documentary voice."[48]

Verne Harris, too, states that it is important to fill the gaps in the archival memory, in the interests of justice. It is vital to "invite every 'other' in."[49] By bringing oppositional voices in, the conception of the archive can be ques-

44 David Greetham, "'Who's In, Who's Out': The Cultural Poetics of Archival Exclusion," *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Spring 1999), p. 19.

45 MacKendrick, *Immemorial Silence*, p. 19. Gudrun M. Grabher and Ulrike Jessner, "Introduction," in Gudrun M. Grabher and Ulrike Jessner, eds., *Semantics of Silences in Linguistics and Literature* (Heidelberg, 1996), posit that silence is felt to be unbearable as it "conjures up a premonition of the ultimate silence, which is death" (XI).

46 See Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past?," *American Archivist*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Spring 1986), p. 122, and "Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 136–37.

47 Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," *American Archivist*, vol. 57, no. 2 (Spring 1994), p. 341. Rather than ensuring the impartiality of the archive through the facilitation of public memory, I would argue that while this allows for more subjective viewpoints in the archive, it does not make it more objective. There is no such thing as an impartial archive.

48 Craig, "Selected Themes in the Literature on Memory," p. 288.

49 Verne Harris, "Getting the outsiders in," *The Witness (The Natal Witness Group)*, 4 November 2002, available at <http://www.witness.co.za/showcontent.asp?id=10772&action=full> (accessed 15 November 2003), p. 5.

tioned and problematized. Harris writes that "bringing the hidden, the marginalized, the exile, the 'other' archive, into the mainstream," allows "that archive to trouble conceptualizations of the 'mainstream'."[50] However, inviting the marginal in is a very different thing than inserting ourselves into the records creating practices or creating the records ourselves. As Derrida states, "what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way,"[51] meaning that through the alteration of the record-keeping process the act which leads to the record's creation itself is changed. When captured by an archivist, through an oral history project for example, the stories, histories, and records may no longer have the function or meaning intended by the original record creator. While the aid of an archivist in recording the stories of groups that lack a voice of their own may be welcomed by the group, there is a danger that in undergoing transcription, the record may not, in fact, be representative of the marginal group. The newly created records may be biased or distorted through the processes of creation, which may be alien to the group that the archivist is attempting to assist. As a result of misinterpretation, misunderstanding, or due to the subjectivity of the archivist, the archivist may actually be working to the detriment of the marginal group. And in the cases where the archivists themselves create the record, we must question, as Pierre Nora does with regard to oral histories, whose will is it being served: the interviewer or the interviewed, the silenced speaker or the archivist?[52] Furthermore, in cases where only pieces of evidence remain, where the statement is partial, and archivists endeavour to fill the gaps, we must ask if the fragment is not the preferred method of transmission.[53] While archivists may have the best intentions in attempting to fill in the gaps they may be doing these groups a great disservice.

Harris warns that archivists must not further marginalize the marginalized, we must resist the urge to speak for others, we must not romanticize them, and we must attempt to avoid reinforcing the marginalization by naming it.[54] Indeed, Derrida warns of the dangers of citing examples of marginalization as it may further obscure other, anonymous, victimized groups, adding to their marginalization.[55] It must be kept in mind that by seeking out the records by or about certain groups does not mean that there are not other marginal groups that equally deserve a chance to be represented in the archives. Furthermore, we must recognize that not everyone wishes to be heard and that the assumption that marginal groups would desire to be included in state archives can be construed as arro-

50 Harris, "The Archival Sliver," p. 143.
51 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 18.
52 Nora, "Between Memory and History," p. 15.
53 Greetham, "'Who's In, Who's Out'," p. 18.
54 Harris, "Seeing (in) Blindness," pp. 42–45.
55 Jacques Derrida, "On Cosmopolitanism," in Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (New York, 2001), p. 5.

gance on the part of the archivist.[56] While we must extend the invitation to include all groups, we must recognize that the invitation may not be accepted. It is essential that archivists not undermine the right of groups to remain silent.

Invoking Silence

Groups may choose to act outside the archive, to subvert it, and not to concede to having power exerted over them or their records. Women, one of the groups who have been traditionally and consistently marginalized, have in recent history reacted against the patriarchy and the patriarchical nature of the logocentric archive, the "patriarchive."[57] This view of the archive identifies them as institutions that have traditionally favoured textual documents of government, industry, the Church, and other male-controlled enterprises to the denigration of all other records. After being excluded from active life, from texts, and from the archive for so long, feminist rhetoricians have asserted the power of silence in denying the archive women's voices. The traditional view of silence as oppression and exclusion is reversed. Patricia Lawrence states that "women's silence ... may be read as a strategy of resistance and choice – a ritual of truth."[58] Silences are asserted as a statement of power by the marginalized. As Adrienne Rich states in the poem "Cartographies of Silence," silence must not be equated with absence: it is a forceful strategy of resistance. The use of silence as power is not unique to women, but their strategies are perhaps the best articulated.

This power is not "power over" where power is exerted by one group over another. Rather, this type of power may be seen as being "power with," "power as capacity," or "power to," that as opposed to focussing on controlling others, deals with personal empowerment and control over the individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It seeks not to diminish the power of others in order to increase the power of the individual, but rather it may be democratic and co-operative, seeking to increase the power of others at the same time as asserting and increasing their own power.[59] This is the power to

56 Harris, "Getting the outsiders in," p. 10.

57 Sonia Combe, as quoted in Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 4. note 1. On the "*logos*-centric" archives, see Joan M. Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs: Descriptive Standards, Linguistic 'Othering', and the Margins of Archivy," *Archivaria* 54 (Fall 2002), pp. 142–71, esp. pp. 167–68.

58 Patricia Lawrence, "Women's Silences as a Ritual of Truth: A Study of Literary Expressions in Austen, Brontë, and Woolf," in Hedges and Fishkin, eds., *Listening to Silences*, p. 156.

59 Yoder and Kahn, "Toward a Feminist Understanding of Women and Power," p. 384; Maureen A. Mahoney, "The Problem of Silence in Feminist Psychology," in Sue J.M. Freeman, Susan C. Bourque, and Christine M. Shelton, eds., *Women and Power: Leadership Redefined* (Boston, 2001), pp. 68–69; Robyn Fivush, "Voice and Silence: A Feminist Model of Autobiographical Memory," in Joan M. Lucariello, Judith A. Hudson, Robyn Fivush, and Patricia J. Bauer, eds., *The Development of the Mediated Mind: Sociocultural Context and Cognitive Development* (Mahwah, NJ, 2004), p. 83.

speak or to be silent, to have control over one's own person and possessions, to co-operate or to resist. Resistance need not be recognized by the powerful for it to be an assertion of power by the marginal. They do not need to meet any subjective criteria of effectiveness or to disrupt the activities of the oppressors. Acts of resistance should not be discounted if they do not conform to traditional, male forms of heroic resistance.[60] Indeed, without even being recognized as such by "the other actor or institution," feminist political theorist Davina Cooper asks if "resistance simply depend[s] on the subjective interpretation of the resistor, that is, their perception that conflicting interests exist and that their behavior impedes the wishes of the opposing forces?"[61] The silences need not be identified to be an act of resistance. It is not necessary that they are noticed in order to be considered an assertive act of power.

According to feminist rhetorical theory, there is a difference between natural and unnatural silences: natural silences are those entered into by choice, often to allow for reflection and personal growth. Unnatural silences occur when the individual or group is silenced, through the use of power, both overt and covert.[62] Those silenced by power "are not people with nothing to say but are people without a public voice and space in which to say it."[63] Unnatural silences must be combated by the archivist, but natural silences, those where the marginalized can assert their own power, must be respected. The natural silence of the marginal, however, is a different thing than a deliberate silence inserted into the documents by the powerful in order to mask wrongdoing. The silences created to avoid culpability, so that it is impossible to hold the powerful accountable for their actions – like those unnatural silences of the marginal – must be combated by the archivist. The decision of which silences to investigate and which to leave alone will most likely not be arrived at easily. The identification of a marginalized individual's or group's silence as being entered into freely or as the result of silencing by force, may be difficult to establish. It is up to the archivist to make such a decision, one that can only be arrived at through a process of investigation and discussion, necessarily guided by a respect for the wishes of the group and a sense of justice that opposes continued oppression.[64]

60 Davina Cooper, *Power in Struggle: Feminism, Sexuality and the State* (Buckingham, 1995), pp. 126–30; Robin Patric Clair, *Organizing Silence: A World of Possibilities* (Albany, 1998), pp. 147–52.

61 Cooper, *Power in Struggle*, p. 127.

62 Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Introduction," in Hedges and Fishkin, eds., *Listening to Silences* (New York, 1994), p. 3.

63 Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ, 1981), p. 15.

64 Verne Harris has repeatedly sent out an archival "call for justice." See Harris, "Seeing (in) Blindness," and Verne Harris, "The Archive is Politics," in Marion Beyea, Reuben Ware, and Cheryl Avery, eds., *The Power and Passion of Archives: A Festschrift in Honour of Kent Haworth* (Ottawa, 2005), esp. pp. 122–25.

Silence is not necessarily a mark of victimization. It can, in fact, be a form of self-assertion; it can be an active resistance.[65] William Shakespeare recognized how a woman's silence could be a powerful thing. In *King Lear*, Cordelia's silence leads to the undoing of Lear. Helga Ramsey-Kurz describes Cordelia's silent power:

> Cordelia's unyielding refusal to express her feelings for Lear in words, which so confounded the royal father, does not submit to the standard interpretation of silence in literature as a metaphor for disempowerment. Her reticence renders Cordelia an opponent of Lear far more powerful and, structurally, far less dispensable or "paraphrasable" than Goneril and Regan, who may disarm the king with their speeches and thus conduce to his destruction but receive the (seemingly) just punishment for their perfidy in the end. It is Cordelia's silence that deprives Lear of his sanity and ultimately causes his death.[66]

Silence is rhetorical device that is extremely effective. When speech is demanded by an authority figure, silence is the ultimate assertion of one's freedom. It is very far from the traditional interpretation of submissiveness. Rather, silence can serve a variety of functions, it can "make the other person worry, wait, wonder, work harder. Silence can be used to make the other person worry about filling the gap, making peace, starting up the conversation or the negotiations again."[67]

Silence is extremely important as part of the politics of women's lives. The key to understanding the power of silence, as it is used by the African-Caribbean Canadian poet M. Nourbese Philip, is to recognize that "silence marks lack of neither language nor identity. Rather, it is a form of communication that those who rely on the hegemonic word of private authority cannot hear ..."[68] Philip, along with other minority writers, is aware that she exists outside the dominant discourse, and as such she is invisible and inaudible, even when she adopts the forms and patterns of the (white, male) power structures. The marginalized do not conform to the enunciative formations and are therefore free to speak as they wish, but with the recognition that they will have little impact on the power structures and on the discourse. Philip writes:

65 Cristianne Miller, "M. Nourbese Philip and the Poetics/Politics of Silence," in Grabher and Jessner, eds., *Semantics of Silences*, p. 157.

66 Helga Ramsey-Kurz, "Telling Silences: Aspects of Female (In)Articulateness in Some Contemporary British Women's Novels," in Grabher and Jessner, eds., *Semantics of Silences*, p. 161.

67 Cheryl Glenn, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Carbondle, IL, 1997), p. 177; see also Ratcliffe, *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions*, p. 122.

68 Miller, "M. Nourbese Philip and the Poetics/Politics of Silence," p. 151.

the text – the silence at the heart of. My text – I writing my own silence…and if you cannot ensure that your words will be taken in the way you want them to be – if you sure those you talking to not listening, or not going to understand your words, or not interested in what you are saying, and wanting to silences you, then holding on to your silence is more than a state of nonsubmission. It is resisting.[69]

In the face of those who wish to ignore, dismiss and silence, to be silent is to be political. Silence becomes an absent-presence, that renders the opposition confused and unclear on what to do. As women, along with other marginalized groups, have been disenfranchized, enslaved, imprisoned, or otherwise rendered powerless, they resort to different strategies to fight back. Silence is a particularly useful one that is at once subtle and infuriating to opponents.

Silence also forces active participation by the readers/listeners. The audience cannot be passive in the face of an active silence: they must investigate, interrogate, and attempt to understand the contexts that gave rise to the silences.[70] If, as Derrida states, the consignment to the archive allows or even necessitates forgetting, then the resistance of the marginal to enter the archive is fully understandable. By remaining outside the archive, the narratives must remain alive.[71] There is a vitality that comes with their silence: to be consigned to the archive means they can/will be forgotten. It is only through continual transmission within the group that their stories, and hence their identity, will remain vital. When the narratives are no longer of any use to the group, or when the group is no longer able to pass on their stories, they die. While this may be a loss to future generations and society at large, it may be the desired outcome for the group who does not fear being forgotten. The active assertion of silence has implications, as described above, on the memory and identity of the group, but these must be respected. Archivists must do their best to welcome as many voices as possible into the archives, to move beyond only exerting power over others and to share power with groups.

Subverting, Contesting, and Accepting Silence

Archivists in mainstream institutions can play a role in aiding those groups whose records are excluded (both willingly and through force) from their institutions. Heeding Harris' call to justice, archivists must be willing to accept their roles as political players and acknowledge that they cannot be impartial custodians. They must confront and challenge the oppression that is evidenced in the records if they are not to become complicit with the contin-

69 M. Nourbese Philip, "*Dis Place* The Space Between," in Lynn Keller and Chistanne Miller, eds., *Feminist Measures: Soundings in Poetry and Theory* (Ann Arbor, 1994), p. 307.

70 Miller, "M. Nourbese Philip and the Poetics/Politics of Silence," p. 158.

71 Derrida, "Archive Fever in South Africa," p. 42.

ued marginalization.[72] Through their unique knowledge of the records in their collections, archivists have the opportunity to make injustices known, to read the archives against the grain, flagging silences and identifying the presence of the marginalized within the records of the state and its apparatus.

Through the creation of finding aids and other publications, as well as both physical and virtual exhibitions, archivists can make the records relating to marginal groups visible to a wider public. Existing projects may serve as examples to other groups who may wish to undertake similar investigations into the records relating to their group. Archivists can invite members of community groups into the planning and administrative processes, allowing them a voice in decisions regarding access, use, and display of records relating to that group, and to participate in the contextualization of the documents through the use of "liberatory descriptive standards."[73] Archivists can draw attention to archival silences, and begin to address those silences where individuals and groups have had power exerted over them.

Through outreach programs, minority and marginalized communities can be made aware of archival institutions that would welcome their records. By engaging in dialogues with community groups, those not currently represented in the archives could be alerted to what these institutions can offer, which may include space in the archives for the records of the group, the organization of oral history projects, or advice and assistance in establishing their own archives. Documentation strategies initiated by archivists can establish what groups are or were active in a particular community or geographic area, and can begin to ensure that these groups are represented in the archives.

There are options other than silence and the inevitable relegation to oblivion for those denied entry by the powerful into mainstream archives. For those whose records are refused or who, in maintaining their own silence, refuse the archives their records, there remains the possibility for groups to work outside the mainstream and to establish their own archives or other memory institutions. The assertion of power through the creation of archival silences at the state level in no way means that groups cannot work within their own communities, locally, nationally and internationally, to preserve and share their own stories.

Groups that do not see themselves adequately represented in mainstream archives, unable or unwilling to preserve the documentary memory of marginalized or minority groups, have successfully established their own archives. This allows for the survival of their records along with the ability to tell their story from their own perspective while maintaining control over their own

72 Harris, "The Archive is Politics," pp. 122–23.

73 Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings," *Archival Science*, vol. 2, nos. 3–4 (September 2002), pp. 279, 284–85.

documentary heritage. The Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) are two Canadian examples of institutions founded in order to combat silences in the state archives through declaring the community's control over their own records. Pat Leslie, the founder of the CWMA, stated in an 1985 interview that it was "clear to me that public archives, with few exceptions, have not been noted for their preservation of materials from groups working for social change ..." and that the goal of the CWMA is to put "women back into history, the way we see ourselves, an through our own eyes."[74] The CLGA's (then known as the Canadian Gay Archives), amended Statement of Purpose (1982) began by stating:

> A conspiracy of silence has robbed gay men and lesbians of their history. A sense of continuity which derives from the knowledge of a heritage is essential for the building of self-confidence in a community. It is a necessary tool in the struggle for social change.
>
> The Canadian Gay Archives was established to aid in the recovery and preservation of our history ...[75]

There is an awareness within both these groups of the importance of maintaining an archives. They were failed by the state archives and, therefore, set about to establish and maintain their own institutions, their own stories, for their communities and for future generations. These groups, however, do not have to work alone.

Independent archives, working outside the state, do not need to work in a vacuum. They can draw on the expertise and advice of the wider archival community, particularly through connections made in the various national and regional archival associations. Also, state funding, through Canadian Council of Archives grants for example, may be available to these groups and accepted without jeopardizing a group's independent status. The marginal archives can become a part of the larger Canadian Archival System, and take advantage of the monetary and informational resources available through such a system while maintaining control over its own records.[76]

74 Quoted in CWMA/ACMF Collective and WIC Board of Directors, "The Canadian Women's Movement Archives/Les Archives canadiennes du mouvement des femmes," in Margaret Fulford, ed., *The Canadian Women's Movement, 1960-1990: A Guide to Archival Resources* (Toronto, 1992), p. 21.

75 James A. Fraser and Harold A. Averill, *Organizing an Archives: The Canadian Gay Archives Experience* (Toronto, 1983), p. 60, Appendix A. See the CLGA Web site for the current mandate, last revised in 1998, CLGA, "Our Mandate," *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives – Keeping our stories and histories alive* available at <http://www.clga.ca/About/mandate.htm> (accessed on 19 August 2005).

76 On the development of the Canadian Archival System, see Millar, "Discharging our Debt," esp. pp. 122–25.

As spaces of power, the archive is riddled with silences. Archives, and in particular national ones, are sources of inequity and exclusion, by the very act of defining their scope, be it the nation, the province or state, or the subject area.[77] Defining the archive limits and silences. The parent organization defines the collecting mandate and implies or explicitly states who and what is excluded. This must be accepted by archivists, but worked against at the same time. Archivists have the ability to highlight the contestation of social memory, disclose the absences,[78] make it known who is excluded, and do our best to offer them a place, if they would have it. By examining the gaps, those "blank void regions" that are never looked at, archivists can begin to address past injustices and fill the archives with a polyphony of voices. Archivists must recognize that not everyone wishes to be represented by their institutions. While we must extend the invitation to work with and include all groups, we must recognize that there are groups who choose to work outside the archive. It is essential that archivists not undermine the right of groups to keep their own silence.

77 Greetham, "'Who's In, Who's Out'," p. 14.
78 Harris, "Claiming Less, Delivering More," p. 139.