

Hushed Realities: Examining Mental Health and Feminine Silences in Sally Rooney

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Sharanya Ramachandran

Research Scholar, VELS University, Chennai, India

Dr. X. Disalva

Research Guide, VELS University, Chennai, India

Abstract

*This paper critically explores the various ways silence represents the mental anguish of women in Sally Rooney's novels, *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*. The study investigates silence, both inner and outer, as a narrative and psychological mechanism reflecting the intricate emotional challenges faced by women in modern society. Specifically, this paper examines silence's role in understanding mental health and gender, showing how it's both a reaction to social expectations and a path to self-knowledge. In Rooney's work, Marianne and Frances, in particular, cope with relational and personal difficulties by using silence to control their emotions, avoid vulnerability, and deal with miscommunication. Using feminist literary theory and psychoanalytic critique, this research analyzes pivotal silences in key texts to explore their role in shaping the protagonists' emotional experiences. This analysis demonstrates silence's paradoxical role: it's more than just a lack of speech, it both conceals trauma and fosters resilience. The study demonstrates silence's ability to articulate the unsaid in women's experiences by analyzing it alongside other contemporary women's literature. Examining silence reveals societal constraints on expressing emotions, but also highlights opportunities for self-understanding and emotional clarity, thereby adding to our understanding of women's mental health in literature.*

Keywords: Mental Health, Emotional Challenges, Relational Difficulties, Feminist Literary Theory, Resilience, Self-knowledge, Contemporary Women's Literature

Sally Rooney, an Irish novelist, has gained recognition for her exciting writing style, which is illustrated in her books *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*. Her honest and nuanced portrayal of modern-day relationships seized readers' attention worldwide. Sally Rooney sets her novels in contemporary Ireland, exploring the complexities of love, friendship, identity, and mental health among young adults. In this rapidly changing world, her characters struggle with a sense of detachment and struggle to communicate openly, resulting in a pervasive sense of isolation that becomes the challenge of survival.

Rooney's characters are not just figures on a page but a mirror reflecting our internal struggles. She skillfully handles the silences, pauses and unspoken tension that shape their interactions. One would always notice the themes of class, power and vulnerability that run through her works. Mental health is a central theme in Rooney's novels; her characters are involved in a 'silent struggle'. Anxiety, depression, and self-worth issues plague them, but instead of expressing these feelings, they suppress them. This internalisation of all the feelings, unvoiced pain and the weight of the uncommunicated feeling makes them engaged in an interminable, silent struggle.

Silence in Women's Literature

Silence has been a recurring motif in women's literature, a theme that resonates across cultures and periods, representing oppression and resistance. Literary critics understand silence as a restriction on women's voices, experiences, and freedom, using it to convey women's psychological struggles. Silence often serves as a metaphor for the limitations because of cultural and societal restraints and resistance that challenge normative expectations. Classic and modern women's literature, from Virginia Woolf to contemporary authors like Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison, has shown how the silent spaces in their lives shape a woman's self-perception and identity. Silence continues to play a nuanced role in echoing the internal struggles associated with mental illness and identity. Current-day authors like Ottessa Moshfegh, Han Kang and Sally Rooney use silence for female characters to handle trauma, steer self-worth issues, or confront emotional disconnection. Painful but protective, silent spaces provide woman's refuge from societal judgement, allowing them to confront their inner struggles in moments of quiet reflection.

In Sally Rooney's works, silence plays a predominantly substantial role in depicting the mental health challenges faced by young women. Her characters' inner turmoil results in the silent spaces they create for themselves. This silence conveys a depth of feeling, the gap between thought and language that words may be inadequate to express. The novel gains its substance when it illustrates the complexities of mental health and emotional vulnerability in a culture that still stigmatises open expression of psychological distress. In this light, reading Sally Rooney's novels adds an undeniable layer to exploring female identity and strength.

This paper explores the multifaceted role of silence in Sally Rooney's *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*, analysing how silence functions as both a narrative and psychological device to capture the complexities of female emotional experiences, societal pressures, and mental health challenges.

Silence in Feminist and Psychoanalytic Theory

In feminist theory, silence is not just a tool of repression but a space for empowerment. Patriarchy manifests its repression as silence, discouraging women from expressing anger, desire, or discontent. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argued that patriarchy confines women to their domestic spaces, denies them a public voice, and obscures their identities. When people silence women or prevent them from speaking, they restrict their ability to express themselves. They will have to internalise their thoughts, repressing their perspectives. However, feminist scholars also interpret silence as resistance. It becomes a tactic that allows women to keep inner strength and autonomy in the face of societal pressures. Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, the proponents of *écriture féminine*, view silence as an act of resilience. It provides women with a protective space to build an inner world that can resist external expectations.

According to psychoanalytic theory, silence can be a sign of unconscious repression, where buried traumas, conflicts, or hidden desires stay concealed from awareness. Sigmund Freud's concept of repression shows that silence can be a defensive mechanism that shields the psyche from painful or socially unacceptable thoughts. When people gain these unarticulated feelings, they will experience symptoms of mental distress, such as tension, depression, or a pervasive sense of isolation. For female characters in the literature, silence can imply that they cannot reconcile their inner lives with societal expectations, reflecting mental turmoil that they cannot easily express.

For female characters confined by societal expectations, we can view silence as a symbol of their repressed emotions and thoughts. In Rooney's works, silence can make up the internalisation of societal messages that discourage women from brazenly expressing vulnerability or seeking help for mental health struggles. For her characters, silence becomes a result of repression stifling emotional desires and internal conflicts and a coping mechanism, letting them shield themselves from societal scrutiny.

People widely view silence as resistance. Female characters hold inner autonomy by refusing to articulate certain emotions or observe predicted narratives. This unvoiced interiority can be a manner to preserve and manipulate their identities and defy the expectations imposed on them using society or even

by their relationships. It operates as a coping mechanism, providing a space to process indescribable and misinterpreted experiences. By remaining silent, characters can create a frontier that protects their emotional vulnerability from a world that may not empathise with or validate their internal struggles. In Rooney's novels, this is evident when characters like Marianne in *Normal People* and Frances in *Conversations with Friends* use silence to navigate complicated dynamics with others, revealing the approaches silence serves as both self-protection and self-statement. This silence is not passive; instead, it actively shapes their identities and displays their resilience. Within feminist and psychoanalytic frameworks, silence is way more significant than the absence of speech - it becomes a significant expression of the tensions, defences, and resistances at play within women's psychological and social lives.

Judith Butler: Performativity and Societal Norms

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler defines the theory of performativity as a framework for understanding how societal norms shape and constrain gendered behaviour. According to Butler, gender is not always an innate identity, but a series of repeated acts and performances that align with socially built norms. Within this framework, people may interpret silence as a refusal or deviation from expected performances. Butler argues, "Gender is not something that one is, it is something one does, an act... a 'doing' rather than a being" (Butler 33). When women characters choose silence over conforming to scripted emotional expressions, they not only subvert the roles society has assigned to them but also show a powerful form of resistance. They use silence to withstand the performative needs of femininity, inspiring us with their strength and resilience.

For example, in Rooney's *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*, female characters like Marianne and Frances often struggle with societal expectations around relationships and self-expression. We can interpret their silence as a refusal to perform or a challenge to the traditional script of female compliance, vulnerability, or verbal or emotional expression. In Butler's phrases, silence turns into an agency that lets those women define themselves outside the restrictions of social norms and contest the concept that they have to talk or behave in traditions that align with external expectations. This defiance of societal expectations gives us a sense of their rebellion and empowerment.

Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis, the Semiotic, and Silence

Julia Kristeva's ideas of the semiotic and the symbolic, outlined in her work *Revolution in Poetic Language*, give a psychoanalytic lens for decoding silence as self-expression that bypasses traditional language. Kristeva distinguishes between the semiotic the pre-linguistic, bodily, and emotional component of language and the symbolic, representing established socially regulated language. Kristeva views the semiotic realm as related to feminine expression and closely connected to the unconscious, emotions, and physical drives. She observes, "The speaking subject is always split; it articulates itself only on the basis of an open set of enunciative and denotative positionalities" (Kristeva 136).

In Kristeva's framework, silence allows for a retreat into the semiotic—a space where emotions and inner conflicts exist beyond the constraints of structured, socially acceptable speech. This silence permits characters to express aspects of their identity and mental health that might be unspeakable inside the symbolic order. For female characters in Rooney's novels, silence should, for this reason, constitute a connection to this semiotic realm, expressing emotions of alienation, trauma, or internal struggle in a manner that resists articulation within normative language. Silence becomes a practical formula of self-expression that preserves their complex internal worlds from being shrunken to socially intelligible, simplified narratives.

Silence in Contemporary Women's Literature

Silence, authors like Han Kang, Ottessa Moshfegh, and Sally Rooney skillfully wielded a recurring motif in contemporary women's literature as a potent narrative device. This strategic use of silence serves to delve into the intricate realms of trauma, psychological well-being, and resistance to societal norms. These authors

have adeptly employed silence to unveil the profound mental landscapes of their characters, positioning silence as a response to societal pressures and an expression of inner turmoil.

Han Kang: Silence as Trauma and Resistance

In Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, silence manifests as the protagonist Yeong-hye's psychological turmoil and resistance to societal and familial control. After a harrowing dream, Yeong-hye decides to stop consuming meat, a resolution that her circle of relatives cannot apprehend and aggressively attempts to change. As she becomes increasingly alienated from her surroundings, Yeong-hye retreats into close to complete silence. Her withdrawal from speaking symbolises her rejection of the oppressive social norms and familial expectations that confine her. Silence, for Yeong-hye, is both a symptom of her mental distress and a manner to exert control over her frame and life.

Kang uses silence to highlight the characters' defiance of conformity over individual autonomy. Kang actively resists those who force her to conform to existing norms, and silence serves as a coping mechanism for her trauma. Rooney's motif aligns with this portrayal of the characters' struggles with societal expectations and their search for agency in a world that often stifles female expression.

Otessa Moshfegh: Silence as Alienation and Self-Protection

In *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, by Otessa Moshfegh, the protagonist's decision to 'hibernate' for a year and retreat into silence is a poignant portrayal of her coping with the emptiness in her life and the mental health struggles she faces. By effectively sedating herself, she attempts to purge painful memories, private traumas, and her disillusionment with the world around her. Instead of confronting her emotions, she chooses to create a self-imposed isolation, aiming to numb herself completely. The protagonist's use of silence is a powerful depiction of her attempt to escape societal expectations and protect herself by insulating herself from the pain.

This mirrors how Rooney's characters use silence to address inner conflicts and societal pressures. Like Moshfegh's protagonist, Rooney's characters, especially Marianne in *Normal People*, frequently withdraw into silence instead of articulating their vulnerabilities. This illustrates how silence becomes a guard against a world they feel might not apprehend or empathise with their experiences.

Sally Rooney's use of silence in *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends* aligns with this broader trend in contemporary women's literature, where silence is not simply the absence of speech but a powerful form of self-expression, defiance, and coping. Like the protagonists in the works of Han Kang and Otessa Moshfegh, Rooney's characters use silence to manage mental health challenges, guard themselves against societal judgments, and negotiate complicated personal relationships. Rooney's depiction of silence as a nuanced response to internal and external pressures positions her work in a more significant motion, where authors use silence to give voice to women's mental and emotional struggles in a frequently unempathetic society.

Mental Health and Communication

Societal expectations profoundly influence the relationship between mental health and communication, particularly for women who face stringent norms regarding emotional expression. Traditional gender roles often demand that women appear composed, nurturing, and self-sacrificing, discouraging open expressions of anger, frustration, or vulnerability. These traditional gender roles force women to repress their struggles, placing a significant emotional burden on them instead of allowing them to voice them. This leads to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional isolation.

Communication is decisive in mental well-being by facilitating emotional regulation and self-awareness. However, societal constraints restrict woman's ability to express their genuine emotions, resorting to silence as a coping mechanism. While silence can function as resistance or self-safety, it can also perpetuate feelings

of invisibility and deepen inner conflicts. For instance, silence often replaces conversations about trauma, fear, or dissatisfaction that would hinder women from gaining access to social or emotional aid that could ease their mental health challenges. Feminist and psychoanalytic theories emphasise the twin function of silence in women's lives as both a tool of survival and a symbol of repression. Silence, often interpreted as passivity, can be an effective form of communication, expressing resistance to patriarchal norms or refusing to conform to societal expectations of vulnerability. The research underscores the significance of creating supportive spaces that validate women's emotional experiences. It is essential to challenge societal norms that stigmatise emotional expression and silence. Women can only achieve improved mental health, resulting in emotional clarity, self-acceptance, and reduced feelings of isolation when they communicate without fear of judgment.

Methodology

Textual Analysis

This study delves into the texts of Sally Rooney's *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*, closely analyzing the key instances where silence significantly impacts emotion and narrative. The analysis of key scenes shows how Marianne and Frances use silence to cope with vulnerability, miscommunication, and social pressures. Rooney's minimalist prose is a key focus of the analysis, highlighting the unspoken tensions and suppressed emotions in her characters, and allowing readers to perceive deeper psychological and emotional aspects.

Feminist and Psychoanalytic Frameworks

To decipher the intricacies of silence, this study uses feminist theory and psychoanalytic critique. Feminist scholars, including Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, view silence as a product of societal oppression and a means of resisting patriarchal structures. Beauvoir's concept of women's domestic confinement illuminates how societal structures restrict women's roles, silencing their wider aspirations and feelings. Meanwhile, Butler's performativity theory offers critical insights into how silence can defy repetitive acts enforcing gender roles, providing a mode of resistance against expected emotional and behavioral conformity.

Drawing on Kristeva's semiotic and Freud's concept of repression, psychoanalytic theory examines silence as a manifestation of internal conflict and past trauma. Kristeva's semiotic framework reveals how silence can express pre-linguistic, unarticulated emotions beyond typical language, unveiling the unfiltered core of human experience. Through its silence, the work unveils the characters' subconscious conflicts, giving us access to their unexpressed longings and painful experiences. Meanwhile, Freud's theories of repression show that silence protects the mind from painful or unacceptable thoughts, both hiding and revealing deep psychological distress. These lenses together highlight silence as a protective barrier and a means of communicating unspoken truths, clarifying how Rooney's characters handle internal struggles and external pressures.

Silence as a Response to Societal Pressures

Sally Rooney's novels *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends* are apprehensive about the emotional lives of younger women steering through the challenges of identity, relationships, and societal expectations. In her novels, silence is a powerful tool her characters employ to react to the overpowering pressures of conforming to societal norms. These norms include expectations of emotional availability, the need to be socially agreeable, and the pressure to navigate complex social situations easily. In this exploration, silence will become a mechanism of emotional self-regulation, a shield against vulnerability, and a subtle resistance to oppressive structures.

In the early chapters of *Normal People*, Marianne's frequent silences highlight her social isolation. Marianne's classmates detest her for being an outsider at school, causing her to withdraw into silence as a

defence against their spitefulness. This silence is not always a sign of passive resignation but, alternatively, a decisive rejection of the social norms that demand conformity, particularly the stress placed on women, to be socially agreeable or fascinating. It is resistance that the characters employ to navigate the challenges they face.

“She said nothing, just nodded. It was easier to avoid speaking.” (Rooney 12)

Society places a heavy burden on women, especially young women, expecting them to navigate complex social situations easily. This is evident in Marianne’s resolve to remain silent at this moment. Her silence here is a scheme of self-protection. Rather than participate in the superficial interactions expected of her, Marianne uses silence to avoid the emotional vulnerability that might come with attempting to confirm. Throughout the novel, Marianne employs silence as a protective tool as she grapples with more profound emotional trauma and feels estranged from those around her. It is a tool she uses to shield herself from the emotional burdens she faces.

Emotional and verbal abuse is what Marianne receives from her family, which makes her further plunge into silence. Marianne responds to her family’s emotional abuse by becoming silent. She is guarding herself from the hurtful words of her family by not further invigorating them with any emotional response. By being silent, she is isolating herself, and it also functions as a coping mechanism. It is a coping mechanism she uses to deal with the emotional abuse she faces.

“Marianne said nothing, her hands folded in her lap, her eyes staring at the floor.” (Rooney 81)

This scene poignantly exemplifies how silence becomes a survival tactic in situations of emotional violence. In a world that often demands silence from women in the face of overwhelming emotional burdens, Rooney’s character illuminates the complexities of female emotional life.

In *Conversations with Friends*, Frances’ silence plays a decisive role in her complex dating with Nick. Despite her emotional investment in Nick, Frances frequently relies on silence to create space between them, navigating their relationship’s ethical and emotional complexities. Silence allows her to withhold vulnerability and command her emotions, specifically inside the context of a relationship. Societal judgment weighs that down.

“She doesn’t say anything, only looks at him.” (Rooney 135)

In this second, Frances opts to remain silent to safeguard herself. People may interpret her silence as resistance to societal expectations about love and infidelity. It is this silence that is enabling her to maintain emotional detachment and distance. By now not speaking, Frances avoids confronting the emotional weight of her movements and desires, illustrating how silence can serve as a shielding mechanism in the face of external judgment.

Frances’s tendency to withdraw into silence, especially when she refuses to discuss her affair and feelings towards Nick, often irritates Bobbi, her most intimate friend. We expect friends to confide in each other. However, society pressures Frances to express herself verbally in this situation. Bobbi’s attempt to make her speak illustrates this.

“Bobbi asked her if she was okay, but Frances did not answer immediately. She just looked away.” (Rooney 102)

When Bobby seems to confirm Frances’s societal expectation of being open and communicative, in contrast, Frances uses silence as a form of emotional self-preservation, avoiding vulnerability and the risk of judgment. Frances’ silence here will become an act of resistance in opposition to the emotional investment that others expect from her.

Silence as a Reflection of Mental Health Struggles

Sally Rooney’s novels *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends* explore the problematic intersections of silence and mental health. Silence regularly mirrors the characters’ inner struggles as they wrestle with hopelessness, alienation, and despair. It demonstrates emotional distress and a coping mechanism, reflecting

the characters' powerlessness or refusal to articulate their ache.

One of the most poignant moments in *Normal People* occurs when Connell exits Marianne's life, leaving her to survive the emotional void in silence. Marianne, who already struggles with self-confidence, withdraws inward, not able to express the depth of her depression.

"She didn't cry or text him again. She just stayed in her room, quiet, and let the days pass." (Rooney 149)

In this moment, Marianne's silence reflects her profound emotional ache and feelings of abandonment. Rather than confronting Connell or seeking solace from others, she internalises her distress, illustrating how silence becomes a way of handling emotional wounds. Societal norms, which encourage women to be strong and independent, especially in romantic relationships, also discourage them from expressing neediness or vulnerability, which contributes to her withdrawal.

Marianne's silence in her abusive familial relationships speaks volumes of her internalised trauma and lack of self-worth. Her silence is not simply a lack of words but a conditioned response to years of abuse.

"She learned not to argue back. She would sit at the table in silence, staring at her plate, waiting for the shouting to stop." (Rooney 92)

This moment underscores how Marianne's silence reflects her coping mechanism for enduring emotional and physical abuse. This conduct, a learned behaviour, protects her from further damage and simultaneously undermines her existence. The abuse she endures includes verbal assaults and physical violence, which she learns to endure in silence. This suppression later manifests in her relationships, where she struggles to establish boundaries.

In *Conversations with Friends*, the diagnosis of Frances' endometriosis serves as a turning point, leading her to confront her bodily and emotional vulnerabilities. Frances consciously silences herself or does not confide in Bobby or Nick, which she feels would shield her from emotional exposure.

"I lay in bed and did not answer my phone. It was easier not to explain anything." (Rooney 252)

By averting communication, she attempts to control her narrative, fearing that sharing her struggles may make her appear weak or burdensome. The emotional withdrawal shows the physical pain that she goes through. Frances often uses silence in her interaction with Nick to guard herself from vulnerability. After an emotional exchange in which Nick expresses his feelings for her, she feels overwhelmed and avoids Nick, permitting silence to fill the gap.

"I did not respond to his messages. I thought if I avoided him long enough, the feelings might go away." (Rooney 176)

Frances' silence reflects her apprehensions about intimacy and emotional exposure. Her choice to stay silent is a way of self-maintenance and reflects her internal conflict. By keeping Nick away, she attempts to suppress her feelings, which deepens her isolation.

Silence as a Containing Force and Reflective Space

Silence in Rooney's novels becomes a space for unspoken feelings. A realm where the characters can reflect their struggles and a lens through which readers can deduce their inner conflicts. The collaboration between silence and talk illustrates the characters' vulnerabilities and attempts to traverse the complexities of intimacy, trauma, and identity.

Marianne's silence throughout the novel reflects her introspection and ongoing struggle to recognise her worth. Even after the toxic relationship, we see her retreat inward, allowing her to reflect on her trauma.

"She said nothing, staring at the floor as if all the words she might say had dissolved inside her." (Rooney 132)

Her silence gives her space to contain and reflect on her emotions. Rooney uses this silence to spotlight the mental toll of her experiences, connecting it to Frances's moments of quiet self-contemplation in *Conversations with Friends*. In *Conversations with Friends*, Frances often chooses silence during moments of emotional engagement. She uses it as a space to process her feelings and maintain control over her

vulnerability. This deliberate use of silence reflects her introspective nature, a trait that is central to her character and her struggle to navigate complex relationships.

“I stayed quiet, letting the silence stretch out between us, not because I had nothing to say, but because I did not know if I wanted to say it.” (Rooney 153)

For Frances, silence is not a sign of weakness but a power she wields to decide when and where to share her mind. It showcases a dimension of containing her thoughts. It is self-imposed and empowering, a testament to her strength and resilience.

Implications for Gendered Emotional Realities

Sally Rooney’s novels offer a sharp critique of the cultural expectations imposed on women regarding emotional and verbal exchange. The set role for women is to be the caregivers and anchors of relationships. The novels also condemn women for being vulnerable and openly sharing their feelings. They are caught in an impossible position to balance openness and restraint. In *Normal People*, Marianne’s silence poignantly reflects the cultural pressures she is under. From her abusive family environment to her romantic relationships, Marianne’s feelings are often dismissed or used against her. This societal pressure forces her into a retreat of silence, evoking a sense of sympathy for her plight.

“It did not seem to matter what she said or how she behaved. She understood that her role in the family was fixed.” (Rooney 78)

This understanding of her “fixed” role highlights the futility of verbal exchange in a world that has already determined her value. For Marianne, silence becomes a method of self-renovation, protecting her from rejection or grievance whilst subtly resisting societal expectations that call for her emotional labour without reciprocation.

Similarly, Frances in *Conversations with Friends* showcases her anxiety about the balance between vulnerability and self-restraint. Frances is acutely aware of the societal consequences she will face if she reveals her feelings, especially those she has for Nick. This awareness adds weight to her decisions, making the audience feel the gravity of her situation.

“I wanted to inform him how I felt, but I knew it might only make me look weak. So alternatively, I said nothing, letting the silence grow among us.” (Rooney 187)

This moment displays her inner conflict, torn between her aspirations to be with Nick and her fear of being understood as delicate or needy. She is being understood as fragile, which means letting society understand her as weak. Silence, thus, is a tool for her to retain her autonomy and preserve her emotional well-being, allowing her to express her feelings on her terms and without fear of judgment.

Conclusion

In Sally Rooney’s novels, silence is a complex, multifaceted tool that reveals the unspoken aspects of her characters’ lives. Their mental anguish and internal conflicts, marked by feelings of inadequacy, alienation, and desolation, are captured within it. In *Normal People*, Marianne’s silence reflects the profound emotional wounds inflicted by abuse. For Frances in *Conversations with Friends*, it acts as protection from the world’s criticism.

Silence, in addition to being a response to personal problems, also functions as a tool for social resistance. The protagonists defy expectations by refusing to conform to gendered ideas about emotional expression. Rooney analyzes cultural narratives that expect unwavering accommodation and emotional availability from women, revealing the difficult choice of silence for self-preservation.

The protagonists’ silence is key to their journey of self-discovery. Rooney’s characters explore their desires and limitations through self-reflection and isolation, battling societal pressures. By depicting silence as both repression and a moment for contemplation, Rooney reveals how women manage their internal worlds while facing outside pressures.

While this study highlights the significance of silence in expressing women's mental health, identity, and resistance, more research is needed to understand its wider effects. Analyzing silence alongside intersecting identities like race, class, and sexuality may reveal more about its literary purpose. Furthermore, a cross-media analysis of silence in film, theater, and digital storytelling could illuminate its shifting role in contemporary cultural expression. Further investigation will enhance our understanding of silence's literary and psychological impact and enrich discussions on artistic representation, gender, and mental health.

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