Silence

Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Adam Jaworski
(Editor)

13953

Mouton
de Gruyter

Studies in Anthropological Linguistics

10

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Mouton de Gruyter
Berlin · New York

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Interdisciplinary Perspectives

edited by

Adam Jaworski

Mouton de Gruyter
Berlin · New York 1997

Mouton de Gruyter (formerly Mouton, The Hague)
is a Division of Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin

∞ Printed on acid-free paper which falls within the guidelines of the ANSI to ensure permanence and durability.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Silence : interdisciplinary perspectives / edited by Adam Jaworski.
p. cm. – (Studies in anthropological linguistics ; 10)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 3-11-015459-5 (alk. paper)
1. Silence. 2. Linguistics. 3. Communication. I. Jaworski, Adam, 1957– . II. Series.
P95.53. S55 1997
302.2–dc21 97-11161
CIP

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Silence : interdisciplinary perspectives / ed. by Adam Jaworski.
– Berlin ; New York : Mouton de Gruyter, 1997
(Studies in anthropological linguistics ; 10)
ISBN 3-11-015459-5 Gb.

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Disk conversion and printing: Arthur Collignon GmbH, Berlin. – Binding: Lüderitz & Bauer GmbH, Berlin. – Printed in Germany.

Rodzicom ... For my parents

Acknowledgements

To all the contributors to this volume, I extend my thanks for sharing their exciting work with me, and for putting up with the spells of my editorial silence.

I am grateful to Jacob Mey for his useful, detailed comments on the final draft of the manuscript, to Nik Coupland for advice on the project at various stages of its completion, and to Barrie Wynn for his comments on style. Many thanks to Bernard Nolan, who undertook the much appreciated job of multiple proof-reading of the manuscript and of compiling the index.

At a personal level, I am – as always – greatly indebted to Ania and Maja for their continuous encouragement. I am happy to acknowledge here their assistance, love and friendship. Special thanks to Sonia for all the loud noises and the humour.

My parents have always been a source of great and unfailing support. I dedicate this book to them, with gratitude.

Cardiff, February 1997 *Adam Jaworski*

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Part One: Introductory

Introduction: An overview

Adam Jaworski

Silence is a diverse concept and its study merits an interdisciplinary approach. This book views silence in many different, partly overlapping ways. For example, silence is discussed as an auditory signal (pause) in a linguistic theory, as a pragmatic and discursive strategy, as a realization of a taboo, as a tool of manipulation, as part of listener's "work" in interaction, and as an expression of artistic ideas. Silence is discussed here across a wide range of genres and domains; for example, in professional discourse, in family conversation, in the ritual talk of a religious order, as well as in literature, and beyond language, in music, painting and cognition. The use of silence is analyzed intra- and inter-culturally, and it is demonstrated how its use and understanding can be taught in a university course.

Because the concept of silence is so wide-ranging, and because this collection tries to capture this richness, it is appropriate to introduce here the idea of *silence as metaphor for communication*. This will allow us to go beyond the simple view of silence as "absence of sound." Instead, we can see silence as a unifying concept for tackling diverse communicative phenomena: linguistic, discoursal, literary, social, cultural, spiritual and meta-communicative. Of course, there will also be room for silence understood as pause, non-speaking, etc., but these will not be the only and dominant conceptualizations of silence here.

If we treat silence as a metaphor, we can use it to define various communicative phenomena. For example, we can say that a pause in discourse, a question left unanswered, a refusal to greet someone, a whisper which is not to reach a third party, avoidance of a topic in conversation, deafening noise, irrelevant talk, or a frozen gesture of an artist on stage are all different instances of "silence". And so, instead of the risky attempts to specify what silence *is*, we can look at different communicative practices and then decide if the label or metaphor of silence is the appropriate one for their description.

In this way we can generate many representations of silence and then subject them to different kinds of analysis. Depending, therefore, on whether the silence is linguistic (e. g., pause), visual (e. g., monochrome

painting) or kinetic (e. g., stillness), whether it occurs on a continuum with talk or with sound (noise) in general, whether it functions as a medium of face-to-face or mass communication, we can approach it from many different angles, points of view, frameworks, philosophical and cultural traditions.

It is the goal of this collection to capture the diversity of ways in which silence can be studied. The seventeen chapters which follow relate to different communicative situations and also, to ideas and phenomena which are conceptualized as silent or are made manifest through silence. The chapters are also varied methodologically, in order to underscore the richness of the forms of silence, their meanings and functions.

The book is divided into eight general thematic and methodological parts. The first part, *Introductory*, consists of the present overview of the book and a further chapter by Jaworski "Aesthetic, communicative and political silences in Laurie Anderson's performance art", which examines a range of forms and functions of silence in the literary context of Anderson's performances, and relates them to the work reported in the subsequent chapters.

The second part, *Linguistics and pragmatics*, contains two chapters which tackle silence from the point of view of two specific frameworks: linguistic markedness theory and politeness theory.

In the chapter "Silence and markedness theory", Sobkowiak applies the linguistic theory of markedness to the examination of silence conceived of as an auditory signal (pause) in contrast to speech. He demonstrates that on four counts of the markedness criteria – function, distribution, content and form – silence is the marked member of the pair speech-silence. According to Sobkowiak, in pragmalinguistic terms, silence does not perform as many functions as speech (e. g., it lacks the metalingual function), it is not as widespread in communication as speech, the meaning of silence is more ambiguous than that of speech (i. e., it is more "context-dependent"), and the relative cognitive difficulty with which silence is accepted and processed in communicative situations is far greater than that of speech.

Sobkowiak argues that in the study of silence, markedness theory can be usefully combined with other theories, e. g., relevance theory (Sperber–Wilson 1986) to provide explanations and make predictions about the same sets of data. No doubt, the list of hypotheses generated by Sobkowiak in his markedness-oriented study (see his concluding section, p. 56) will have to be clearly addressed in future research on the pragmatics of silence.

Sifianou's chapter "Silence and politeness" focuses on the place of silence in Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) theory of politeness. In doing so the author brings up the interesting and important question of the pragmatics of the "Don't do the FTA" superstrategy, i. e., "remain silent", which was introduced by Brown and Levinson in their original work (1978; 1987), and was accepted by their numerous followers, but which is only rarely discussed in the pragmatic literature (Bonikowska 1988; Besnier 1989). Sifianou, however, argues that silence does *not* only serve as a realization of the "Don't do the FTA" superstrategy. Silence can also realize other superstrategies (namely "Positive Politeness" and "Negative Politeness" strategies); and obviously, remaining silent can be "impolite" (or face-threatening) too. Finally, the author discusses some differences in the valuation of silence in "positive" and "negative" politeness societies, with Greece and England as typical examples of the two (see also Sajavaara–Lehtonen, this volume, on silence and politeness in Finnish).

The third part of this volume, *Discourse analysis*, contains two chapters which are firmly rooted in the methodological framework of conversational analysis. Both chapters, however, represent different conceptualizations of silence and different types of data analysis.

In "Silence and the acquisition of status in verbal interaction", Watts examines silent pauses in a family dinner conversation. His detailed microanalysis of conversational data is based on his own "network/status" model of verbal interaction and deals with intra-and inter-turn pauses (see also Stucky 1994). This approach allows him to perform a detailed pragmatic analysis of silent pauses in naturally occurring speech. The author also suggests a plausible combination of his approach to the study of discourse with the study of relevance theory (see also Sobkowiak, this volume).

Watts's particular interest lies in how interactional silences are used by participants to manipulate their own and others' conversational status within a group; how the decision to say or not to say something, when to speak and when to refrain from speaking can have an elevating or denigrating effect on the speaker and the listeners with respect to their respective positions of power, domination and control. These are extremely pertinent problems in the area of the pragmatics of silence (see, e. g., Gilmore 1985, Kurzon 1992, Toolan 1989; Hall–Sarangi–Slembrouck, this volume; Dendrinos–Ribeiro Pedro, this volume; see also Ng–Bradac 1994 for a recent, general discussion of power in language).

Coupland–Coupland depart from the idea of silence as pause in their chapter "Discourses of the unsayable: Death implicative talk in geriatric medicine". Their qualitative analysis of discourse in a geriatric medical setting focuses on the ways in which patients explicitly mention death and dying, and on the ways in which doctors ease the patients' (and their own) tension thus created. On the one hand, the Couplands deal with the breaking of the silence of the death/dying taboo by speakers in later life, and on the other, demonstrate how doctors in a geriatric clinic repress these themes. An important point to be stressed here, however, is that the doctors' "silencing" of the patients on the death/dying theme is not done to reinforce the societal taboo (which in some contexts is also observed among elderly speakers (Rowe 1992)), but to help the patients construct new, acceptable versions of life and living in later life. Viewed from this perspective, silence shows that its interpretation is susceptible to change over a person's lifetime, similarly to the changing use and valuation of silence over time in history (Burke 1993).

This chapter not only concentrates on the description of how the speech of elderly patients breaks the silence around the death/dying taboo, but at a more general level, the authors themselves break this taboo in their sociolinguistic lifespan research. Thompson (1989), quoting Patterson (1981) observes that "90% of the books on ageing published between 1956 and 1976 devoted less than 5% of their space to the topic [of death and dying]. Indeed, 65% of those books devoted less than 1% of their space to the issue" (Thompson 1989: 339–40).

Part four, *Narrative analysis*, comprises two studies which examine different types of linguistic material in different methodological attitudes to what constitutes silence.

Kallen's chapter "Silence and Revelation in the English Traditional Ballad" follows a rich tradition of literary pragmatic studies of silence (e. g., Hassan 1967, 1971; Tannen 1990), and deals with nineteenth century material which is narrative in structure and normative in social significance. In the structure of the ballads, silence operates on two levels: 1. the narrator tells the story to the audience and breaks the silence of the events antecedent to the time of the narration, and 2. the characters create silences for each other by not revealing certain facts or events to each other. Kallen refers to these two types of silence as *antecedent* and *created*, respectively, and discusses several variations within them.

On the normative plane, the ballads whose function was not only to entertain but also to teach, contain different precepts issued for social control. Generally speaking, the ballads condemn silence as a negative aspect of communication, and (in Kallen's words) as "a problem to be

overcome" (on different beliefs about talk and silence cross-culturally see Giles–Franklyn-Stokes (1989) and Giles–Coupland–Wiemann (1992)). When silence occurs in the ballads it is to conceal a horrible crime, for example, or – ultimately – to signal death. Silence is dangerous if characters ignore important sounds of warning. Thus silence should be avoided or broken if it occurs.

A different type of a narrative is explored by Hall–Sarangi–Slembrouck in their chapter "Silent and silenced voices: Interactional construction of audience in social work talk". Their fine-grained analysis of a social worker's representation of a child protection case reveals how the parents are silenced by not being allowed to speak, and, further, by having their points of view excluded from the social worker's representation of the story. In this piece, which combines critical discourse analysis and reflexive ethnography (see Bilmes 1994 for a discussion of silence following a similar tradition), silence is shown to have a manipulative dimension since through the discourse in which it occurs it is capable of constituting social actors' identities (see, e. g., Coupland–Coupland–Grainger 1991, and Coupland–Coupland, this volume).

Part five, *Ethnography of communication*, represents the methodological tradition which has probably been the most productive and influential in the area of silence and communication research to date (e. g., Basso 1972; Saville-Troike 1985; Enninger 1987). The two chapters appearing under this heading link also up with two other major areas of work on silence: gender (e. g., Cameron 1985; Gal 1989; Lakoff 1992; Kramarae–Houston 1991) and ritual/religious language (e. g., Bauman 1983; Ciani 1987; Jaksa–Stech 1978; Davies 1988).

Dendrinos–Ribeiro Pedro's "Giving street directions: The silent role of women" presents data from an empirical, ethnographic study carried out in Greece and Portugal. It shows how in mixed-sex couples who are approached by a stranger for directions the woman is silenced or assumes the silent position. The opposition of talk and silence is equated here, not only with the powerful position of men and the powerless position of women, but also with the traditionally public domain dominated by the former, and the private one occupied by the latter. Silence is an "ideological practice" which creates and perpetuates gender roles of the communities in question.

The contribution by Szuchewycz, "Silence in ritual communication", is an example of ethnographic work which demonstrates that silence is experienced in a multitude of forms and that for worshippers (members of the Irish Catholic Charismatic Renewal) it is an active state through

which the only true communion with God is possible. This point is interesting, not simply because silent worship is contrasted here with verbal (or noisy) worship, but because the charismatics' different types of silence are contrasted one with another.

The sixth part, *Cross-cultural communication*, brings a formal connection between the present volume and the highly influential collection of articles on silence by Tannen–Saville-Troike (1985). The first of the two chapters in this section by Sajavaara–Lehtonen "The Silent Finn Revisited", is a sequel to their earlier work published in the 1985 anthology (Lehtonen–Sajavaara 1985).

Sajavaara and Lehtonen are concerned with debunking the negative stereotypes surrounding the notion of the reticent Finn. The authors argue that in so far as Finns use silence in different communicative situations, it is often to achieve the same communicative goals which are realized through talk elsewhere. For example, in American English, getting to know a new person takes place through talk, whereas in Finnish, in addition to formulaic talk, observation and silence are likely to occur (see Basso 1972 for a similar use of silence in a different culture). Sajavaara and Lehtonen demonstrate how the negative stereotyping of Finns (or any other group) due to their use of silence is simplistic and inaccurate (cf. Scollon 1985). Nevertheless, they do not argue for a uniformly positive view of silence. They state that silence (or speech) is neither positive nor negative; it simply works in achieving certain communicative goals for some but not for others. In other words, silence is a feature of different conversational styles (Tannen 1984) dominating the politeness strategies of a community (Sifianou, this volume), its meaning (as well as its "valuation") depending on speaker characteristics, setting, discourse goals, and so on (see Tannen 1993).

The other chapter is written from a cross-linguistic perspective and tackles an extremely relevant but largely under-researched aspect of silence in listenership (although see related work in McGregor 1987, 1994; McGregor–White 1986). In "Cross-cultural back channels in English refusals: A source of trouble", Houck and Gass identify listenership as part of interactive work. They show how Japanese and American listeners differ in carrying out their jobs and how these differences are reflected in Japanese-English interlanguage. Silence can be defined here as an active part of the listener's non-verbal behaviour which contributes to the production and interpretation of discourse.

The seventh part of the book, *Beyond language*, reinforces the interdisciplinary nature of the volume. The four chapters gathered here discuss silence in music, cognition and the visual arts.

Edgar's treatment of silence in his philosophical-anthropological chapter "Music and silence" ranges from the meanings and functions of "concrete" silences in music, to the way "metaphorical" silence encapsulates and defines sound. He discusses the process of making music as the creation of silences by discarding unwanted sounds and leaving only the desired ones.

Edgar makes further connections between music and silence by demonstrating how music is used to express meanings which cannot be expressed through talk. In other words, music/song is a genre for the expression of meanings which cannot be heard in ordinary talk (e. g., the "protest" song). Finally, the author turns to what can be seen as the mirror image of the previous notion: the replacement of music by silence, either as an act of political suppression, or as objectification of music into text (notation) or analysis.

The next chapter takes us further away from the realm of sound and concentrates on the connections between the verbal and the visual. Starting from the premise that language is closely bound up with perception and human perception is largely visually oriented, Kwiatkowska in "Silence across modalities" connects sensory perception, cognition and language. She analyzes Magritte's painting *Man with a newspaper* and demonstrates how the removal of an element from the painting (the man reading a newspaper) creates a visual silence which closely resembles acoustic silence. According to Kwiatkowska, visual silence is commonly encountered in everyday situations whereby "we do not see what we expect to see, and register this absence as a figure against the less important ground". For example, a book missing from the shelf creates a visual silence which is a signal and a prompt for action.

Hafif moves on even deeper into the world of visual silence. Her chapter "Silence in painting: Let me count the ways" offers a unique glimpse from the point of view of a painter and art critic, of the silences which frame paintings and which emanate from them. The ambiguity of abstract, and especially of monochrome painting, is linked with the ambiguity of the non-verbal element in language. Silence is a gendered form of expression of many feminist/gay artists as a re/action to the dominant language of male/straight art. In and of itself, however, silence (monochrome) is neither masculine nor feminine (neither gay nor straight). At a "higher", human level, silent (monochrome, abstract) painting is reflexive and spiritual (see Kuspit 1986), avoiding the literalness of the material world.

In the final chapter of this part, "Silence and communication in art", Withers adopts a more anthropological position toward the interpretation of art. She analyzes several well-known Renaissance paintings and identi-

fies their silence through their visual ambiguity, their timelessness and their mysticism (compare the relation between ambiguity and silence in architecture discussed in Ehrenhaus 1988). Withers contrasts silent paintings with what she calls "talkative", often intentionally didactic paintings, and like Hafif, stresses the appeal of the former to our Spirit, with the latter appealing to Reason. There is also a connection between Withers's notion of the silenced character in a painting (e. g., Icarus in Breughel's *The fall of Icarus*) and Kwiatkowska's notion of visual silence, where the central figure of the painting is barely visible or gone from the scene.

Part eight, *Teaching silence*, brings a sole contribution "Teaching 'Discovering silence'" by Patten, who as a poet and teacher, shares his insights, experiences and frustrations concerning teaching silence as an undergraduate course. His aim in the course can be described as trying to enable the students to experience silence across modalities (Kwiatkowska, this volume), and to enhance and sensitize their communication with others and with the world in general through the medium of silence (see also Scollon–Scollon 1987 for explicit advice on how to interact with others more effectively through "slower", i. e., more silent, communication).

Patten's chapter is exciting because it takes us on a very personal, yet accessible trip. We encounter the author's silently rich (richly silent?) world of natural objects like leaves and stones, or of human artifacts like poetry, painting, photography, chamber music, and eastern philosophy (cf. Bruneau 1994, 1995; Bruneau–Ishii 1988), and wonder if there is a place for us in this world with our communicative styles, perceptions and sensitivities. Upon reading this chapter, one is also tempted to think of his/her own syllabus of a potential course in silence which would include one's own examples, fascinations and fears.

And finally, part nine, *Epilogue*, offers a chapter by Jaworski "'White and white': Metacommunicative and metaphorical silence." This piece examines a wide range of the uses of the word "silence" and its synonyms at the level of metacommunication, i. e., in how it is used to refer to various forms of language use and to communicative situations in general. Throughout the analysis, I look back at the other chapters included in this collection in order to reflect on the diverse treatment which the concept of silence has received here.

The slogan in the current British Telecom advertising campaign "It's good to talk" is, as is usually the case with advertising slogans, not entirely accurate (see, e. g., Blum-Kulka–Olshtain 1986). The reader of this book will probably realize that sometimes it is, and sometimes it is not, good to talk. Silence is a rich conversational and expressive resource. I hope that the talk about silence in this book will make this point a convincing one.

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Aesthetic, communicative and political silences in Laurie Anderson's performance art

Adam Jaworski

1. Introduction

This chapter has two aims: descriptive and theoretical. The former will be realized through a discussion of the rich and creative uses of silence by the performance artist Laurie Anderson. The latter will be concerned with providing links between the multifaceted notion of silence in communication, as realized by Anderson, and several traditions of researching linguistic and non-linguistic communication, some of which are represented in this book. In other words, instead of providing a more abstract overview of the concept of silence, I will demonstrate the diversity of this concept *in context*. Anderson's silences will be related to the work reported in the subsequent chapters, which should help the reader find a more unified perspective for the diverse contributions in this book.

2. The database

My analysis of Anderson's silences is based on the "live" and studio recordings of her performances, as well as on the documentation of her stage work in print (Anderson 1984, 1991, 1995; see also selected discography following the references).

3. A little background

Laurie Anderson was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1947 as the second of eight children. She grew up in a wealthy, middle-class family where storytelling was a common and highly valued activity (Kardon 1983), which is probably why of all the labels attempting to capture the essence of her multi-media productions she prefers the "storyteller" (Howell 1992).

As a young girl Anderson received classical training in playing the violin. She moved to New York in 1967 to study art and art history at

Barnard College and Columbia University. She started displaying her art in the early 1970's, first in New York galleries and later in other cities in North America and Europe. Since that time she has also worked as a performance artist in public (car parks, streets) and artist spaces (galleries, museums). Her work embraces different media: sculpture, print-making, book illustration, photography, "language objects" (e. g., tapestries made of woven stripes of newspapers), film, video, CD-ROM, and – most notably – performance.

The work for which she is best known is referred to as "performance art," which in her case is a combination of story-telling, singing, stand-up comedy, dance, film, slide projection and music. Most of her performances have a strong narrative component, and the story, anecdote, fable or myth are central to most of her production. Language is the primary medium in Anderson's performances mainly through the use of her own voice which she modulates greatly, including electronic manipulation, so that she can construct multiple identities of her stage persona: man, alien, child, herself, another woman, character from a fairy tale, and so on. She also plays a whole range of instruments: conventional (acoustic), electronic and invented (e. g., tape bow violin in which the bridge is replaced with a tape playback head and the horsehair of the bow is replaced with a prerecorded tape).

For about a decade Anderson's activities revolved around the New York avant-garde art scene. In 1981 she released a single "O Superman" on an independent label (110 Records) in New York. Unexpectedly, the record became a number 2 hit on the British pop charts, which brought her fame and a lucrative contract with Warner Brothers. The financial backing of the record industry allowed her to complete an eight-hour performance piece *United States*, premiered in New York in 1983. Since that time Anderson has performed in large concert halls all over the world and has released a four-disc album with a "live" recording of *United States* and six other albums of songs, stories and music.

4. Language in performance (frame)

So far I have used the term "performance" in the sense of artistic mode of expression invoking artist spaces, concert halls, paying audiences, commercial recordings, etc. Now, I would like to introduce another, more technical understanding of this concept, following Bauman's (1977) work on verbal art such as story telling, reciting poetry, or ritualistic chanting.

In this context, performance is understood as a *frame* for linguistic communication and Bauman (1977) contrasts it with the "literal" frame. The literal and performance frames are his interpretive devices referring to, roughly speaking, "ordinary" and "poetic" talk, respectively. These two frames are contrasted with one another and also with other frames, such as "insinuation," "joking," "imitation," "translation" and "quotation." Following Tannen (Tannen 1993 [1979]; Tannen–Wallat 1993 [1987]), I will assume that these frames are hierarchically structured, multilayered and that, for the purposes of this chapter, performance and literal frames are higher level frames potentially comprising all those listed by Bauman (see above) and various others (e. g., chatting, gossip, reciting, lecturing, and so on). Lower level frames can be embedded in the two higher level frames. Indeed, Bauman himself states that frames can be used singly or in combination one with another. This multilayering of interpretive frames allows Kallen (this volume) to discuss silence in Scottish traditional ballads on two levels: narrator's silences addressed to the audience (in the "performance" frame), and characters' silences addressed to one another (in the "inner" frame).

However, with regard to the performance and literal frames, Bauman argues that neither of them is superior, more "normal" or indeed more frequent than the other. The performance frame is available to all speech communities and allows for a display of particular communicative behaviour, shared as part of their communicative competence by all members of a speech community. The observation of the parity between the two frames is of paramount importance for the ideas developed in this chapter.

5. Silence as an unmarked linguistic form

Linguistic forms carry different meanings in different frames. For example, the utterance *Nice shirt* between two friends will have one meaning in the chatting frame as opposed to the teasing frame. Likewise, different linguistic forms will be appropriate or permissible in some frames but not in others. For example, other things being equal, proverbs are more likely to occur in the gossip frame than in the academic lecture frame.

Anderson's language use, as that of a professional performer, needs to be located in the communicative performance frame of the community (or communities) which participate in her work. Placing Anderson's language in the performance frame is crucial to the understanding of her silences because, as I would like to argue, silence is more likely to occur,

and is better tolerated, in the performance frame as opposed to the literal frame. Naturally, there is much variation in the use of silence within frames across different cultures. To take a classic example, when two Western Apaches meet with a third person, they observe each other's behaviour (including listening to the talk of the newly met person to others) while remaining silent between each other (Basso 1972). Among other ethnic and national groups it will be perfectly normal and expected to engage in much (small) talk with a newly met person (Laver 1982).

Sobkowiak (this volume) argues that silence is the marked member of the pair: speech – silence. Due to the communicative deficiencies of silence (e. g., in its limited use for the meta-linguistic and referential functions of language), it is not expected in communicative situations as often as speech is (the intuitive "meaning" most frequently associated with silence being that it signifies non-communication (Scollon 1985; Jaworski 1993, and this volume, chapter 18). Likewise, we cannot talk of the same elaboration of the form of silence as that of speech (length and intensity of silence being only partially useful descriptors here).

Although, as Sobkowiak convincingly suggests, the approach to treat silence as marked works quite well within the framework of linguistic markedness theory, it can be questioned in the ethnographic, cross-cultural perspective (Saville-Troike 1985) by citing examples of "ordinary" (unmarked) situations which in some cultures do call for silence (compare the example of meeting strangers in different cultures quoted above). Sobkowiak's argument against the ethnographic refutation of his position rests on the principle of "markedness reversal", whereby linguistic forms which are marked in unmarked contexts (e. g., silence in an informal conversation between two friends) become unmarked in marked contexts (e. g., silence during a funeral). This is probably also how markedness theory would account for the presence of silence in many contexts described in this book, for example, in worship (Szuchewycz, this volume), self-exploration in a university classroom (Patten, this volume), in art (Hafif, this volume; Withers, this volume), or for the avoidance of silence through the thematisation of what is commonly perceived as a taboo topic: death and dying, in the context of a geriatric medical consultation (Coupland–Coupland, this volume).

However, even though markedness theory seems to work well for the phonological and grammatical aspects of language, at the pragmatic level of language use this theory tends to impose a somewhat "deviationist perspective" (Bauman 1977: 17) which favours some modes of language use as more "standard" than others. The pragmatically and ethnographi-

cally oriented chapters in this book attest to the multifunctional role of silence in interaction, for example, as a device enabling the speaker to gain (or lose) conversational status (Watts, this volume), to manage interpersonal relations (Sifianou, this volume), or to maintain group (national) identity (Sajavaara–Lehtonen, this volume). And as Houck–Gass (this volume) demonstrate, a close examination of the seemingly passive and "silent" state of listenership unravels much variation in this area. Different styles of listenership can even be a source of trouble if, for example, too much or not enough back-channelling is used by the listener.

Considering all contexts for the use of silence, it might indeed be rather difficult to explain to an artist, priest or teacher that what they engage others in on a routine basis is in some way "marked" behaviour. Therefore, even if silence does not perform all communicative functions to the same extent as speech (e. g., the referential function), in analysing silence from a pragmatic point of view it is more productive to adopt Bauman's framework, which "recognizes that the members of every speech community have available to them a diversity of linguistic means of speaking, none of which can serve a priori as an analytical frame of reference for any other" (Bauman 1977: 17).

Given these considerations, I would like to argue that with respect to speech and silence, different interpretive frames may favour either one or the other as their underlying linguistic forms, and that different communicative situations can be described on two separate scales of *verbosity* and *silence*, where the assessment of a form with reference to both scales will depend on the the degree of perceived verbal or silent element, as regulated by the type of interpretive frame in which the linguistic forms in question appear.

This is a significant modification of my earlier view (Jaworski 1993) which suggested that linguistic items fall on *one* scale marked at its extreme points by most prototypical, culturally specific instances of speech and silence. However, as the two categories (speech and silence) seem to not only complement each other, but also form a contrasting pair, it is fair to acknowledge their difference analytically by placing them on two different scales. Such operationalisation of speech and silence is consistent with the suggestions from social psychology that separate masculinity and femininity scales, for example, be used in gender self-assessment studies (see Smith 1985: 95–96).

The actual shape of the scales of verbosity and silence is far from being clear, although I believe that it is probably not very exciting to dwell

upon their *possible*, decontextualized format for too long. Instead, one can treat such scales more theoretically as a key to the understanding of the dialectic of speech and silence. Let me illustrate this point with the help of three simple, constructed examples. Imagine that A and B are partners and that having worked for a few hours on a Sunday morning A says to B something like: *Shall we go for a walk this afternoon?*. There are a number of ways in which B may accept this invitation and join A for a walk. For example, B may say:

(1) B: OK, if you want, we can go for a walk.

This response would score highly on the verbosity scale and lowly on the silence scale. B's utterance repeats the propositional content of A's utterance and emphasises his/her desire to go for a walk.

However, if B chose to respond to A with something like:

(2) B: OK.

his/her response would be less verbal (lower down the verbosity scale) and more silent (higher up on the silence scale). The propositional content of A's utterance is ellipted here. Additionally, if *OK* is produced with a rise-fall or "enthusiastic" intonation, the implied (unsaid) meaning will be that of full agreement and willingness to cooperate, whereas if the intonation of *OK* were falling, the implied meaning would be that of reluctance in accepting the suggestion.

Finally, if B reacted to A with total silence:

(3) B: [silence; B leaves his/her desk and picks up a coat]

the response would be at the lowest point of the speech scale and the highest point of the silence scale.

It is my argument that in different interpretive frames, linguistic forms will differ with regard to the degree of expected verbosity and silence. Somewhat ironically, it is with this assumption in mind that the idea itself of markedness inversion can be viewed as not totally without merit. When it is combined with the notion of embedded frames, we can argue that the dominant surface linguistic form in one frame can become the marked linguistic item in another frame. Provided that no linguistic form in a contrasting pair like speech – silence, is defined a priori as marked or unmarked, normal or deviant, etc., this approach to interpretation of meaning allows us the freedom of viewing linguistic items in a dynamic, flexible, non-essentialistic way by defining their meanings and functions based not so much on their linguistic properties but with reference to their context of occurrence: the interpretive frame.

6. Anderson's silences

Although obviously much of Anderson's linguistic performance rests on the use of speech, silence must be recognized as a non-deviant linguistic form which adds to her overall style, together with the use of other conversational signals and devices: word choice, formulaic language, repetition, discourse markers, tone and quality of voice, and so on. In this section I will examine how some of her pieces are punctuated by a slower tempo of speech, and by pauses for stylistic, aesthetic and dramatic effect. I will also discuss Anderson's use of silence as "theme," as a marker of interpersonal relations and as a metaphor for death, as a tool of political control; and I will show how the notion of silence is extended into the visual medium.

6.1. Silence as a keying device in performance frame

According to Bauman, the keying of the performance frame is dependent on the use of a fairly stable means of "culturally conventionalized metacommunication" (Bauman 1977: 16). Bauman's list of such resources to key performance includes the following: special codes, figurative language, parallelism, special paralinguistic features, special formulae, appeal to tradition, and disclaimer of performance. Out of this list, special paralinguistic features involve: rate, length, pause, duration, pitch contour, tone of voice, loudness, and stress (p. 20). I will presently concentrate on silence as a keying device in Anderson's performances.

Let us first examine Anderson's silence in music, which bears many resemblances to her silences in language. Anderson's firm grounding in the New York avant-garde art scene of the 70's, especially in the minimalist tradition propagated in music by Philip Glass and in the visual arts by Sol Lewitt places her music within the "experimental" tradition. Edgar (this volume) argues that silence in experimental music has a different place than in traditional or non-experimental music.

While in the latter type, silence forms part of what constitutes an arrangement of anticipated sounds, in experimental music, silence is part of the keying process. All the sounds and silences, anticipated and accidental, included in the musical notation and outside of the "score", belong to the musical piece. For example, when Anderson plays her violin solos and duets, the harsh and steady rhythm and the repetitive character of these almost tuneless compositions give an impression of the sound being firmly embedded in resonating silence. In the "Violin Solo" (*United*

States) the sound does not stand out by itself, it is not autonomous, but it is secondary to silence, which is broken, defined and enhanced by the sound.

Seven pauses punctuate this short (1min 50s) musical piece. Their duration (in seconds, from the first to last pause) is: 2, 3, 5, 14, 2, 8, 2. The tempo of playing is fast, the music is loud, all of which contrasts sharply with the pauses. It seems that it is part of Anderson's musical experiment to pause several times and to extend one of the pauses up to 14 seconds, in an attempt to hear and define silence *through* sound. However, the audience's reaction clashes with the intended effect; their response is not wholly silent: they laugh nervously and some clap their hands all of which dies down again when Anderson starts playing again. It seems very much like the case of the audience providing the artist with the wrong back-channelling cues (Houck–Gass, this volume).

"Violin Solo" and several other musical pieces start and end rather abruptly. At the end there is no gradual fading of sound into silence like in much traditional music (compare, for example, the well-known, final piano chord in the Beatles song "A Day in the Life", which is sustained for a whole minute and forms a perfect continuum of sound and silence). In Anderson's music, sound and silence are contrasted sharply, but also reside more closely one to another. Silence is not left out of this piece: its role is not merely to frame the piece, i. e., to give the listener time to anticipate a piece which is about to begin or to contemplate its reception when it is finished (see Edgar, this volume, for a more detailed discussion of these issues). Instead, sound defines silence as much as silence defines sound. It is in this sense that silence can be said to be a keying device here. (Similar keying devices have been used by other minimalist composers, such as Steve Reich and Michael Nyman.)

Anderson's spoken pieces can end as abruptly as the musical ones. Here again, silence does not merely separate two stories one from another, but actually forms the last, integral part of the piece in question. In other words, the final silence in a song or story is part of its formal makeup, a keying device marking it as a performance piece; as Cubitt (1994: 283) observed: "many of [Anderson's] anecdotes come to their ends not with a narrative wrap-up but with silence: a deaf couple's attempted conversation that ends in 'What?'" This ending is similar to the use of final silence in *haiku* poetry, in which silence belongs as much to the poem as it defines (keys) it *as* haiku.

Another example of such use of silence is found in the conclusion of the song "Puppet Motel" (*Bright Red*), in which the motel stands as a

metaphor for cyberspace. The sudden conclusion of the song is reinforced verbally by the phrase *shut down* (which is also used by Anderson in other pieces, e. g., "Finnish Farmers" in *United States*):

> *Puppet Motel* (conclusion)
>
> Boot up. Good afternoon. Pause.
> Oooo. I really like the way you talk.
> Pardon me. Shut down.

There is no closing ritual here. No linguistic or musical formula negotiating the end of interaction. Silence is the "normal" state in which talk occurs. Reverting to silence marks a return to the familiar world from the alien world of cyberspace.

6.2. *Silence of involvement: pausing for aesthetic and dramatic effect*

In everyday communication, pauses are used for rhetorical purposes as much in the ordinary frame as in the poetic frame. In other words, pauses add to the poetic character of everyday talk and create involvement (see Tannen 1989). The poetic potential of silence is fully exploited by Anderson. Pauses, slow tempo of speech and soft voice mark iconically silent states such as death or the physical separation of two people. These silences have also the effect of drawing the audience into the subject matter of Anderson's pieces and into the performance.

Much of Anderson's work (especially in her early performances) is a commentary on life in New York. According to Tannen (1985: 102) the features of New York conversational style, which is one of high involvement (see also Sifianou, this volume, on high involvement and independence styles), are as follows:

1. Fast rate of speech
2. Fast rate of turntaking
3. Persistence – if a turn is not acknowledged, try, try again
4. Marked shifts in pitch
5. Marked shifts in amplitude
6. Preference for storytelling
7. Preference for personal stories
8. Tolerance of, preference for simultaneous speech
9. Abrupt topic shifting

One of the earliest Anderson pieces "New York Social Life" (*United States*) exemplifies many of these traits in an apt parody of New Yorkers' speaking style which creates instant involvement through fast, formulaic talk, overlapping talk and repetition of newly used phrases. However, in the performance frame, speaking to the audience, Anderson often creates involvement through the opposite means: slow tempo of speech and extensive use of silence.

In interpersonal communication between two or more people in the literal or ordinary frame, inter-turn pauses may signal conversational disfluency or they can be used strategically by speakers to gain conversational status (Watts, this volume). But speaking to her audience in the performance frame, Anderson can afford to produce long silences with little threat to disrupt the flow of her talk. Likewise, many other performers (for example, stand-up comedians) use long pauses for humorous effects and to create rapport with their audiences.

One of the pieces in which all of these elements come together to very dramatic effect is "White Lily" (*Home of the Brave*), in which the final pause (before the last line) extends to 4 seconds. (In the following texts shorter pauses of up 2 seconds are marked by a dot in parentheses and longer ones by two dots):

White Lily

What Fassbinder film is it? (.) The one-armed
Man walks into a flower shop and says: (.)
What flower (.) expresses (.)
Days go by (.)
And they just keep going by (.) endlessly
Pulling you (.)
Into the future (.)
Days go by (.)
Endlessly (.)
Endlessly pulling you(.)
Into the future. (..)
And the florist says: (..)
White Lily.

This short, highly evocative piece exploits several profound topics: the dialectics of life and death, and the passing of time with its cycles and infinity. The slow tempo of speech and frequent repetition of a few

phrases are the stylistic means adding on to the theme of endlessness and cyclicity of time. Death is symbolized by a white lily (also visually). Of course, death connotes ultimate silence (which is a theme exploited in many literary genres, e. g., see Kallen, this volume) and the pauses in this piece do not only add weight to the lyrics but also parallel their meaning and anticipate the piece's conclusion. It is the white lily, and no other flower, that draws "you" to the eternal silence of death.

At the end, the piece comes to another kind of stasis. The drama of death is acted out by the performer who leaves the stage and a still silhouette of the artist holding a white lily comes onto the screen behind where she stood. The effect is that of ambiguity (shadow is a trace of a person but not the real person), stillness and silence (see Withers, this volume, on ambiguity and silence in art).

In "Looking for You," (*United States*) the slow rate of speech and long pauses of up to 6 seconds are also related to the theme of the piece: the ambiguity of the relationship between the speaker (narrator) and her partner. Following a well-known article by Basso (1972), Braithwaite (1990) pointed out that much ethnographic research on silence links its use to ambiguity of status between participants (see also Jaworski 1993; Withers, this volume):

> *Looking for You*
>
> I wanted you (..) and I was looking for you (..) but I couldn't find you (..)
> I wanted you. (..) And I was looking for you all day. (..) But I couldn't find you. (..) I couldn't find you.

In this short monologue slow tempo of speech, soft voice and long pauses create an overall effect of interpersonal silence. It conforms to the pattern of silence marking the ambiguous status of the participants. We cannot be sure if the talk is addressed to a present or former partner or lover, somebody who is there or who is no longer present; if the latter is the case, the monologue may be an internal representation of otherwise unspoken thoughts.

The piece which immediately follows "Looking for You" – "Walking and Falling" – adheres to the same "silent" style of delivery, and it continues with another ambiguous theme: the juxtaposition of two seemingly opposing activities identified in the title. Pauses appear throughout the piece, including a prominent 2 second pause in the last line:

Walking and falling
You're walking (.)
and you don't always realize it (..)
but you're always
falling. (..)
With each step,
you fall
forward
slightly (.)
and then
catch yourself
from falling. (..)
Over
and
over, (.)
you're falling (..)
and then catching yourself (.) from
falling. (..)
And this is how you can be walking (..)
and falling (.)
at the same (..) time.

6.3. *Silence as a marker of interpersonal relations: closeness vs. alienation and distance.*

In a well-known taxonomy of the functions of silence Jensen (1973) stated that each of his proposed functions be viewed as having a positive and a negative value. The following table summarizes Jensen's list:

Table 1: Functions of silence (based on Jensen 1973).

function	positive value	negative value
linkage	bonding	separation
affecting	healing	wounding
revelation	dissemination of information/ (self)exploration	concealment of information/ censorship
judgmental	assent/favour	dissent/disfavour
activating	thoughtfulness/work	inactivity

This view of silence is consistent with Wolfson's (1988) theory of the "bulge," which proposes that with regard to the dimension of distance between interactants (from intimate to distant), people employ similar linguistic forms at the extreme ends of the continuum. These linguistic forms are usually less elaborate than those which are used with casual acquaintances and friends. For example, apologies for relatively small offenses tend to be rather brief and formulaic between extreme intimates and strangers, but they are likely to be far more profuse between people whose distance occupies the position towards the middle of the range.

The reason for this differentiation in the behaviour of intimates and strangers on the one hand and of the casual acquaintances and friends on the other is that the relationships at the far ends of the continuum are not in need of constant renegotiation. They are fixed and stable. Elaborate verbal behaviour is therefore needed between people who rely on verbal assurances that their relationships are kept at the accepted level of involvement and independence (see also Holmes 1995).

This is probably why silence is often felt to be very awkward between casual acquaintances, but not between intimates and strangers. As in Jensen's linking function of silence, the intimates feel bonding through silence while strangers can use it safely as a separating measure (Saville-Troike 1985). But the opposite pattern for the use of silence can also be found. Innermost secrets, for example, are more likely to be shared with close intimates (e. g., a spouse) or total strangers (e. g., the priest in a confessional). In both cases the speaker can be sure that the secret will not be disclosed to others, and that revealing it will not alter the nature of the fixed relationship between him/her and the addressee (whether it is the intimate bond with the spouse or a distant "non-relation" with the priest). In casual relations, secrets of great personal importance are usually silenced.

The bulge theory interpretation of silence applies to Anderson's performances, as the themes of closeness and alienation feature in her work very prominently. For example, the song of two lovers titled "In Our Sleep" (*Bright Red*) consists of repetitive sequences (minimally variable in their order): *In our sleep as we sleep/Listen to the drums beat/As we speak*. The lyrics manifest great closeness between two people (the song is a duet with Lou Reed). Their convergence is total no matter whether they remain silent ("in our sleep") or whether they are engaged in talk ("as we speak"). Speaking and sleeping are con/fused and the lives of the two lovers are fully synchronised ("listen to the drums [hearts?] beat") in talk and in silence.

On the other hand, the tipping of the balance in a relationship between two lovers results in talk which is needed to renegotiate the lost equilibrium. Furthermore, talk can be insincere and deceitful. Consider the following excerpt from the song "Language is a Virus" (*Home of the Brave*), whose title is a quote from William S. Burroughs:

Language is a Virus

He said: I had to write that letter to your mother.
And I had to tell the judge it was you.
And I had to sell the car and go to Florida.
Because that's my way of saying
That I love you. And I
Had to call you at the crack of dawn
And list the times that I've been wrong.
Cause that's just my way of saying
That I'm sorry.
Language! It's a virus!
Language! It's a virus!

Apologies and reassurances of love are indicative of a troubled (ambiguous) relationship. Additionally, "his" talk does not sound sincere; it is like a disease or a "virus". As Sontag (1966: 17) observed: "Behind the appeals for silence lies the wish for a perceptual and cultural clean slate" (see also Patten, this volume).

And finally, at the other end of the spectrum, when distance between two people grows and comes to the point of separating them, silence, again, is called for as the expression of the division in the relationship. Consider the following excerpt from the song "Speechless" (*Bright Red*) invoking the idea of emotional distance, isolation and dominance symbolized by an inability and unwillingness to talk:

Speechless (fragment)

We were goin' nowhere.
Just driving around.
You did all the talking and me
I didn't make a sound
If I open my mouth now
I'll fall to the ground
If I could open my mouth
There's so much I would say

Like I can never be honest.
Like I'm in it for the thrill.
Like I never loved anyone.
And I never will.

"Speechless" is one of Anderson's most personal songs. It tells a story about real people and a real relationship. In her own words, this is not only about "distance" in a relationship, but also about power and dominance. In an interview, Anderson states that "Speechless" talks about someone who "really can't talk 'cause the other person is the dominant one, it's a battle to the death: who gets to say things – that's where the power is. If you can't articulate your feelings and thoughts, you're almost not there. You're at the mercy of whoever else – they can say who you are and define you ..." (Green 1994: 72).

In sum, Anderson uses the notion of silence as a metaphor (albeit indirectly) for different types of relationships: intimate ("In Our Sleep") and distant ("Speechless"), while talk between lovers/partners signals the need to renegotiate their relationship ("Language is a virus").

6.4. Silence as metaphor for death

As has been mentioned above, Anderson used silence in "White Lily" to reinforce the image of death. In one of her interviews she stated that people are collections of stories. If a person dies, all the stories in that person become silent. This motif is present in the concluding part of the song "World without End" (*Bright Red*):

World without End (fragment)

When my father died we put him in the ground
When my father died it was like a whole library
Had burned down.

6.5. Political silences: dominance, oppression and censorship

Anderson's performances make frequent references to various political issues and map out what can be called different forms of political silences. Her artistic sensitivity is closely attuned to the communicative processes in the social and political sphere and the use of silence in these macro-contexts is one of the themes which features very prominently in her discussion of political dominance, oppression and censorship. The full

account of Anderson's political silences merits a separate study (Jaworski forthcoming); here I will only highlight a few themes which are most relevant to this book.

In "Politics and Music" (*Empty Places*) Anderson suggests that politicians' speeches are "quite sophisticated musical compositions" which are devoid of any content but make people feel that "they've got to *do* something with it." And this "music" sets them on the move and, as in the case of Hitler's speeches, the people have got "to get out/they've got to go someplace," and eventually they go to Poland.

Anderson continues this piece with a parody of Ronald Reagan's speeches whose silences are construed through irrelevance, unintelligibility and evasion:

> *Politics and Music* (fragment)
>
> But of course the all-time American master of this art form was
> Ron Reagan. And when Reagan wanted to make a point,
> he would lean right into the mic
> and get softer
> and softer
> until he was talking like
> this
> And the more important it was,
> the softer
> and the more intimate
> it would get.

In "Large Black Dick" (*Empty Places*) Anderson comments on the censoring (silencing) of an exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs for their alleged pornographic imagery. Censoring of an individual artist is connected here to the idea of silencing minorities and oppressed or socially disadvantaged groups (see also contributions by Dendrinos–Ribeiro Pedro, this volume; Hall–Sarangi–Slembrouck, this volume). At the same time, Anderson herself breaks a taboo (a form of cultural silence) over homophobia and fear of AIDS, and reassesses otherwise repressed topics (Coupland–Coupland, this volume):

> *Large Black Dick* (fragment)
>
> So the Senator [Jesse Helms] looked at the artist's photographs
> and they were pictures of men
> with no clothes.
> And chains, black leather, and crosses.

But the picture that bothered the Senator the most
was a very large black dick sticking
out of a business suit.
So he made a law that said:

We're not going to look at this.
And you're not going to look at it, either.

Finally, in the song "Hey Ah" (*United States*) Anderson links the loss of a language with the loss of ethnic identity. In this piece, a Cree Indian is asked by some anthropologists to perform a traditional Cree song. However, the task is not as simple as it may seem:

Hey Ah (fragment)

... and he starts to sing but the only words he really seemed sure of were "Hey ah ... he ah hey ... hey hey hey ah hey ... hey ..."

And as he goes on singing *hey ah hey*, the Cree Indian thinks of his lost language, lost songs and lost identity. Edgar (this volume) argues that replacing silence with music may serve important social and political goals of a group. When the music and songs of an oppressed group are gone, one important means of re-asserting its sovereignty is lost.

6.6. Visual silence

Visuals form an integral part of all Anderson's performances. Her preoccupation with language and verbal play (e. g., punning) extends to her use of slides, drawings, films, video and computer graphics. In the piece titled "EngliSH" (*United States*) she is punning on the names of different languages, suggesting (quite rightly) that silence is an integral part of each one of them: "SH SH SH EngliSH ... FrenSH ... SpaniSH ... DeutSH... YiddiSH ... RusSHian ... SHinese ... PoliSH ... SwediSH ... FinniSH ... FinniSH ... FinniSH ... FinniSH ..."

As Anderson goes on listing the languages, a large projection screen behind her goes slowly blank and the lights are gradually dimmed. Eventually, the whole stage becomes entirely black, which creates a sense of "visual silence," described by Hafif (this volume) in relation to monochrome painting (see also Jaworski 1993).

The title of Anderson's 1989/90 tour was *Empty Places*. For an artist who is so concerned with communication as is Anderson, this title suggests void, social space and isolation: the silence of non-communication. In her notes about the performance series Anderson wrote:

> Like many other people, I slept through the Reagan Era politically. When I woke up, everything looked really different. Homeless men and women were living on the streets of New York, hundreds of thousands of Americans were dead or dying of AIDS, and the national mood was characterized by fear, intolerance, and straight-ahead greed. Suddenly everything seemed deeply unfamiliar. Was this really my country? I decided to write about this new place, not because I had any solutions, but because I needed to understand how and why things have changed (Anderson 1991: 113).

In this passage Anderson states how shocking the new social and political scene of America of the late 80's was for her. When she woke up from her "dream" she was greeted by the silence of unfamiliarity of the place which she thought she knew so well. Anderson transposes this silence into spacial-visual images (see Kwiatkowska, this volume) of unpopulated streets in "her" city at night:

> Empty Places begins with hundreds of images of New York City which I shot at night ... empty warehouses, bombed-out buildings, abandoned car lots gleaming in eerie dim street lights. Shark light. I didn't shoot people even if I found them (Anderson 1991: 113).

In this commentary on her own work, Anderson makes us aware of a form of silence which Kwiatkowska (this volume) labels as "cognitive" silence. It is the silence created by an image which is expected but no longer present. Its absence (created silence) becomes meaningful by signifying, for example, loss and alienation.

7. Conclusion

The above discussion of silences employed or made manifest by Anderson in her performances has made it clear that silence is a multifaceted linguistic construct, with a range of forms, serving different functions and whose meaning can be extended into the visual domain. To account for this formal and semantic richness of silence, one needs a wide-ranging approach, or set of approaches such as, for example, those represented in the various contributions to the present volume.

Theoretical frameworks do clash over their assessments of silence. For example, Sobkowiak's use of markedness theory and my preference for a frame analytic approach accord silence different statuses. In the former treatment, silence is a secondary, *marked* linguistic item, whereas in the latter, depending on the frame, silence can be the dominant linguistic

form. It keys literary performance (Kallen), avoids imposition (Sajavaara–Lehtonen; Sifianou), worships god (Szuchewycz), and creates listenership (Houck–Gass).

Silence provides communicators with either face threatening or face saving behaviour. In the state of clear, unambiguous relations, silence is a marker of stability of the relationship. When the interpersonal bond is weakened, silence can be used as a manipulative resource (Watts) or a serious face threat (Sifianou). In crisis, talk is needed to negotiate relationships anew, but talk is often perceived as insincere and corrupt ("Language Is a Virus").

Silence can also create involvement between communicators. Anderson uses it in the performance frame to create bonding with her audience. Given the international success of Anderson's work (also among non-English speaking audiences) one can assume that the skilful use of silence, pausing, soft voice and slow tempo, are indeed very effective rhetorical resources. More work on the patterns of listenership (Houck–Gass) as a "silent" but active aspect of interaction is needed to better assess involvement from either the addressee's or the audience's point of view.

Silence can also be used in more metaphorical terms. For example, it is common to conceptualize death as "ultimate silence" ("White Lily," "World without End," see also Kallen), and talking about dying, saying the "unsayable," is also associated with *breaking* silence (Coupland–Coupland).

Struggle for domination in face-to-face interaction involves the use of silent pauses (Watts). Silencing alternative voices and points of view is an effective method of constructing and maintaining preferred conceptions of the world in power-based communication ("Politics and Music"; Hall–Sarangi–Slembrouck; Dendrinos–Ribeiro Pedro). Likewise, censorship ("Large Black Dick") suppression of one's language, music and culture ("Hey Ah"; Edgar) are effective means of silencing the voices of the oppressed.

It was my intention to open this book with an overview of the concept of silence in order to reflect on the multitude of its interdisciplinary patterns and its place in peoples' communication, relations, attitudes and creativity. The range of possible approaches to the study of silence is probably as wide as to the study of language itself. Therefore, my contribution (just as the volume it belongs to) makes no claims to exhaustiveness in discussing silence, but it does hope to add in some way to our understanding of human behaviour.

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Part Two: Linguistics and pragmatics

Silence and markedness theory[1]

Włodzimierz Sobkowiak

Silence is the unbearable repartee.
G. K. Chesterton

1. Introduction

Fricatives are marked relative to plosives. Plurals are less frequent than singulars. Infixing is highly unusual as a word-formation method. SVO is the most common syntactic ordering. A conversation is normally composed of non-overlapping pairs of adjacent turns. These are some typical claims generated by the markedness theory. The main aim of markedness theory (MT), as seen by its proponents and practitioners, is to offer hypotheses on the relative naturalness and commonness of linguistic entities: representations, systems, processes. After appropriate verification the hypotheses serve as a basis for the construction of an evaluation metric for particular grammars on the one hand and the theory of language (universal grammar) on the other. In both its functions MT closely collaborates with (and, according to some, is indistinguishable from) the theory of language universals.

In this paper markedness theory will be applied to a rather specific entity, which is best discussed in the framework of linguistic pragmatics and discourse analysis: silence.

Sketching "the outlines of a linguistics based on markedness/naturalness theory" in 1981, Willi Mayerthaler had precious little to say about pragmatic markedness. As will become clear from the subsequent discussion, there may be good reasons why pragmatic/discoursal entities have seldom been analysed from the point of view of markedness theory. Communicative silence is an example *par excellence* of this conspicuous tendency. And yet, as I will show in this paper, markedness theory can formulate descriptive, explanatory and predictive assertions on silence which are at least equally revealing as those proposed by other theories concerned with human communication: discourse/conversational analysis, ethnography of communication or relevance theory.

After a brief historical sketch and a discussion of some methodological problems inherent in most current writing on markedness, I will attempt a markedness analysis of communicative silence to test a hypothesis that silence in human communication is indeed heavily marked. I will briefly discuss the possible pragmatic consequences of this state of affairs.

2. Markedness theory

The idea of markedness goes back to the Prague school of linguistics, in particular to N. S. Trubetzkoy. It was originally conceived of as applicable to phonemes standing in a privative opposition to each other, i. e., when one phoneme is differentiated from the other by an additional relevant feature, e. g., voicing, nasalization or rounding. The phoneme which possesses this distinctive mark is called "marked", the other is called "unmarked". Trubetzkoy later supplemented this material criterion of phonemic markedness with a distributional diagnostic: in positions (defined syntagmatically) where the given phonemic contrast is neutralized it is the unmarked phoneme which actually appears. Voiceless obstruents crop up word-finally in German, Russian and Polish, for example.

The descriptive and explanatory potential of markedness was quickly noticed and exploited by other members of the Prague circle, Roman Jakobson in particular, who extended markedness to morphology and semantics. Only much later was markedness theory successfully applied to syntax (cf. Greenberg 1978). Expectedly, new "content" criteria of markedness were added to the classical formal and distributional ones: marked elements are more semantically determinate and elaborate but less prototypical and iconic. All these criteria will be discussed in detail below as diagnostics of the relative markedness of silence.

Now I would like to discuss some of the methodological issues which are crucial for the proper understanding of markedness claims in general and those relating to silence in particular.

2.1. Relativity

Like language universals, markedness assignments are seldom, if ever, absolute. As was mentioned above, both language-specific and cross-linguistic claims are legitimately included in markedness theory. An example of the former would be Chomsky and Halle's (1968) marking conventions predicated over the phonology of English in the famous chapter nine of

the *Sound Pattern of English*. Language universals would be a substratum of the latter. Across-the-board markedness pronouncements informing the evaluative component of universal grammar are thus mitigated by intralinguistic sub- and counter-regularities. This is one sense in which markedness is bound to be relative.

Another – and more trivial perhaps – sense of markedness relativity is evident in cases of those oppositions which are not strictly privative in the Trubetzkoyan formulation, i. e., where properties are distributed more gradually over the opposing categories: plural is marked relative to singular (both intra- and inter-linguistically), but unmarked relative to dual. A three-term opposition like this would be dubbed "equipollent" in Trubetzkoy's parlance.

Yet another sense in which one can speak of relativity of markedness values is expressed by Battistella (1990: 45) in the following way:

> No single diagnostic is a fully reliable indicator of marked/unmarked status for every opposition. *We cannot count on all indicators pointing to the same conclusion.* Though they cannot serve as an algorithm for determining unmarked status ... the diagnostic criteria provide guidelines for determining which of a pair of opposed elements is the more dominant, unmarked term [my emphasis – WS].

The following discussion will amply demonstrate that while assignment of markedness status to the communicative-silence vs. speech opposition is indeed not algorithmically categorical, the various criteria will make it possible to ascertain relative markedness values because, by and large, they "will have converging results" (Moravcsik–Wirth 1986: 3).

Finally, on a micro-scale, local inversion of markedness assignments occurs in specific contexts. For example, voicing is marked in consonants generally, but unmarked in a marked subclass of sonorants. Notice that here the context is defined paradigmatically (homosegmentally) by reference to a feature of this same consonant. Thus, voicing is unmarked in sonorants, but reversed again to marked in the (syntagmatic) context of a preceding voiceless obstruent: sonorants are devoiced (and liquids affricated) in *smack, trip, clay, sneak*. Similarly, the otherwise marked velarity is relatively unmarked in the syllable-final position. Markedness inversion is thus bound to contribute to the overall relativity of markedness values.

2.2. Logic

Elsewhere (Sobkowiak, forthcoming), I dissect in detail the logic of markedness argumentation. Here, I will briefly discuss one methodological issue of markedness theory which has occasioned an enormous amount

of confusion and misunderstanding. As is often the case, the culprit turns out to be the inherent and unavoidable fuzziness of human language, in this particular case the ambiguity of words extensively used in logical inference: "why", "because" and "therefore". Consider the following observation of Herbert (1986: 32), made with reference to Zipf's principle of least effort:

> The circularity of the reasoning behind this principle is also well-known: it asserts that there exists a general preference for "easier" (unmarked) sounds and *therefore* these occur frequently in human language. However, at the same time, the status of "easier" sounds can *be determined* only by reference to those sounds which occur most frequently [my emphasis – WS].

In other words: some sounds are frequent *because* they are unmarked, and they are unmarked *because* they are frequent. The vicious circle is immediately broken, however, once we realize that the first "because" is used explanatorily, but the second heuristically or argumentatively. In Botha's (1981: 188 and 281) words, the first "because" introduces reasons for being, the second – reasons for knowing (the distinction harks back to Hempel, ultimately). The former is used in scientific explanation, the latter in scientific discovery or justification. In the present context we can say that markedness is used to explain observed sound frequency, but that frequency is used as a diagnostic to discover or justify markedness assignment.

It is only when "because" (and likewise "therefore") is used in its explanatory sense in both implicational directions that misunderstanding arises. Researchers who are particularly prone to collapse the two meanings of "because" are those working in the "autonomous linguistics" tradition. This is because when they reach the stage of argumentation where markedness is an explanandum there appears to be no linguistic law or regularity that could be used as an explanans: after all linguistics is supposed to be autonomous and must not take recourse to extralinguistic explanation. There is just one way out – to fall back on strictly linguistic regularities as explanatory of markedness. These would have been used as markedness criteria in the first place; hence a vicious circle.

In the non-autonomous approach, markedness patterns are ultimately explained by extralinguistic causes: contingencies of human anatomy and physiology (mostly phonetics and phonology, but also semantics), semiosis (from phonology upwards), cognition and culture (from morphology upwards), and finally what Cooper and Ross (1975) picturesquely, but adequately, refer to as "world order": the overall structuring of our earthly habitat.

Thus, markedness theory furnishes the much-desired common ground where both parties can meet and confront their findings. To autonomists markedness is an explanans, to non-autonomists it is an explanandum. It is no wonder that this difference of methodological perspective has proved to be extremely fruitful heuristically. Cognitive grammar appears to be the most recent substantial harvest on this fertile ground. Linguistic pragmatics was one of its predecessors there.

Even though I count myself among the non-autonomists, in what follows I will not explore markedness (of silence in particular) as an explanandum. Rather, I will look at how markedness functions as an explanans and/or a projectans for communicative silence, i. e., at its explanatory and predictive uses. Frequency, neutralization, prototypicality, etc. of silence will hence *not* be used to explain its marked status (which they ultimately cannot do, due to the vicious circle mentioned above), but rather as diagnostics in empirical tests of such status.

3. Markedness of silence

3.1. Types of silence

Being basically sympathetic to the non-essentialist refusal to attach theoretical importance to definitions, I will abstain from lengthy definitional quibbles. Let me remark, however, that silence appears to be a linguistically non-autonomous concept *par excellence*: it is best defined acoustically and/or pragmatically. As a matter of fact, the five definitions of silence in the Webster Collegiate fall rather neatly (though unevenly) into these two rubrics:

1. the state or fact of keeping silent; a refraining from speech or from making noise (pragmatic/acoustic),
2. absence of any sound or noise; stillness (acoustic),
3. a withholding of knowledge or omission of mention (pragmatic),
4. failure to communicate, write, keep in touch, etc. (pragmatic),
5. oblivion or obscurity (pragmatic).

As was noticed by Jaworski (1993: 71), English does not lexically encode the semantic difference between acoustic/prosodic and pragmatic silence. This may have been one reason for the notorious failure of some English-speaking authors to distinguish the two senses. To Bruneau (1973: 18), for example, "Silence is to speech as the white of this paper is to this print". According to Maltz (1985: 131), "There's only one kind

of silence but many kinds and degrees of noise". These pronouncements are not even true of the less pragmatic varieties of silence. Perfect acoustic silence exists only as an ideal model, like ideal gas or perfectly black body. Similarly, there are many kinds of prosodic or generally nonpropositional silence (cf. Saville-Troike 1985: 6; Johannesen 1974: 35).

One author who is close to stating the dichotomy explicitly is Johannesen. Endorsing Picard's implicational argument, Johannesen (1974: 26) claims that "Silence can exist without speech, but speech cannot exist without silence ... Silence takes on meaning only in a surrounding context of verbal and nonverbal symbols." Notice that the mention in the first sentence is that of acoustic silence, while that in the second refers to communicative silence.

Other languages fare much better in distinguishing the two types of silence. French, for example, while failing to distinguish the two meanings in the noun *silence*, has a dedicated verb *se taire* 'shut up', in addition to *garder le silence* 'keep silent'. In German, the semantic difference between *Schweigen* on the one hand and *Stille* on the other (similarly for the adjective and verb) is additionally confounded by stylistic factors. Finally, both Russian and Polish make a systematic distinction between the two senses: *молчание, milczenie* ('silence' as 'refraining from speaking') on the one hand, *тишина, cisza* ('quiet', 'keeping silent'), on the other. It is the *communicative silence* (CS) or *Schweigen*, *молчание*, *milczenie* that is in the centre of this investigation.

In the available literature CS is, of course, further classified into a number of subcategories. However, the subcategorization schemes of silence are usually subjective, non-exhaustive and overlapping. One dichotomy is into *formulaic* and *non-formulaic* silence, the former being "a customary act of saying nothing in reaction to specific stimuli" (Jaworski 1993: 59 ff). Another divides CS into *interactive* and *sociocultural* (Bruneau 1973). Still another taxonomy, used to analyse conversational turns, distinguishes *gaps*, *lapses* and *attributable* silence (Sacks–Schegloff–Jefferson 1974). Gilani–Bucci–Freedman (1985) throw in *pre-narrative* silence. One could go on citing other examples.

For the purposes of this investigation, I will loosely define communicative silence as that which is deliberately produced for communicative purposes in what is perceived by both parties as a communicative situation. Notice that this is a more qualified definition than that of (1) above, or that of "meaningful absence of speech" (Jaworski 1993: 66), in that it emphasizes the volitional, teleological, substitutive and contextual aspects of CS.

3.2. Markedness criteria

The central thesis of this paper is that communicative silence is a pragmatically marked member of the opposition silence-speech. Notice that the only level of linguistic structure on which this opposition can be meaningfully considered is the pragmatic level. It would be pointless to relate the discussion of the markedness of CS to morphology or syntax, for example, unless one were prepared to operate with an extremely wide definition of silence, under which, for example, zero morphological encoding of a semantic category (*sheep*, sg. – *sheep*, pl.) were regarded as a token of silence. Similarly, relative markedness of VC-type syllables is asserted relative to the phonological level of English. In general, markedness claims about representations, systems or processes are only meaningful in their proper domains.

As I mentioned above, such an investigation is best construed methodologically as testing a hypothesis of a relatively marked status of communicative silence. Thus, I will be presenting "reasons for knowing" rather than "reasons for being" (Botha 1981: 281). Reasons for knowing are nothing more than supportive arguments familiar from all types of scientific justification. My reasons for knowing (or, to be less categorical and slightly more modest: reasons for believing; cf. Sparkes 1991: 81) that communicative silence is relatively marked *vis-à-vis* speech take the form of a number of markedness criteria properly satisfied by CS.

Markedness criteria are traditionally divided into four classes, which reflect the four aspects of all linguistic signs: content, form, distribution and function (non-symbolic signs, e. g., phonemes, will of course be devoid of content). The two "classical" Trubetzkoyan criteria alluded to above, overt formal marking and neutralization, would fall into the formal and functional class, respectively. Jakobsonian semantic marking would relate to content. Frequency arguments appeal to essentially distributional criteria.

Opinions differ widely on whether and which criteria are logically and empirically more basic and predictive. Greenberg (1966) opts for frequency, for example. In Sobkowiak (forthcoming) I devote more attention to this controversial issue. Here, I will assume an essentially flat, non-subordinated arrangement, both across the four classes and within them.

3.2.1. Functional criteria

Speech is capable of fulfilling all six of the classic Jakobsonian "functions of verbal communication" (Jakobson 1960: 357): referential, poetic, phatic, metalingual, emotive and conative. 'Normal' speech is thus clearly

an unmarked situation. Silence, however, is functionally deficient. It is by now commonplace in pragmatic literature that the referential or locutionary force of CS is nil. While CS is of course not devoid of meaning or contextual sense, it remains referentially void (as is clear from Saville-Troike 1994, for example). On the other hand, it does retain the illocutionary force of speech (an aggregate of emotive and conative functions in Jakobson's terms, I presume) in that it is fully capable of actualizing the common speech acts of apologizing, refusing, complaining, questioning, etc. It is through this potential that silence can have positive and negative social consequences: cohesive or divisive (linkage function in Jensen's 1973 parlance), informative and revelational. The linkage role of CS in social and communicative interaction partly overlaps with the phatic function in Jakobson's (and Malinowski's) parlance.

How about the remaining two functions? CS can function poetically, both in the narrow sense of applications to poetry, and in the wider, stylistic, sense as a device used for getting attention, emphasizing, creating suspense, rhetorical structuring, etc. But, barring a very loose interpretation of the term, CS cannot function metalingually, i. e., it cannot be used to comment on, or express a query about, the structure of language itself.

Thus, along the functional dimension CS is clearly deficient relative to speech on at least two counts: referential and metalingual. If we assume that functional versatility is the normal, or unmarked, state of affairs in human communication (as we are persuasively led to believe by "communicative linguists" working in the tradition of Hymes and Halliday), then CS is functionally marked relative to speech.

Consider now another functional criterion of markedness with obvious distributional correlates: neutralization. Neutralization is properly conceived of as a functional phenomenon: in certain contexts the contrastive or differential function of a linguistic unit is suspended, an opposition is neutralized. In the classic Trubetzkoyan formulation, neutralization was a markedness diagnostic of phonemes defined in the phonological domain only: in neutralizing contexts only unmarked terms of a privative opposition surface. This account is of course severely oversimplified in that it does not address the complex issue of archiphonemes, but it will suffice for the purposes of this discussion.

How can we apply this criterion to CS? In order to answer this question one must first define what might properly count as a context of neutralization in this case. For reasons which I specified above, this would have to be defined pragmatically rather than phonologically or

syntactically. It clearly does not make much sense to enquire whether the opposition CS-speech is neutralized word-finally or in a subject noun-phrase. But how does one define pragmatic context in a systematic way? The most promising pragmatic framework in this respect, at least from the point of view of present discussion, appears to be conversational analysis, in particular the approach of Sacks and his followers (e. g., Sacks–Schegloff–Jefferson 1974; cf. also Capella 1979, 1980, 1981) which is still widely practised by discourse analysts.

The essence of this approach is that it construes conversation as composed of a series of basically non-overlapping adjacency pairs of speech turns, called "first" and "second pair parts". While the details are of course vastly more complicated than this simple linear arrangement of pairs would predict, it does provide us with a well-defined concept of pragmatic context in which neutralization of a pragmatic opposition can be anchored.

The question now stands: is CS-speech opposition always actualized in both first pair part and second pair part? In other words: is it the case that CS can uniformly appear in either of the two contexts? The answer quite clearly is *no*. While there are many examples in the literature of CS used in the second part of an adjacency pair (see, e. g., Coulthard 1992: 74 or Jaworski 1993: 4, 35, 86, 92), CS in the first part is unheard of[2] (pun intended), the usual qualification of "no para- or extralinguistic accompaniments" applying, of course. If the first pair part is indeed a neutralizing context for the CS-speech opposition, and if CS is regularly excluded from it, as appears to be the case, then CS is the marked member of the opposition by this criterion. This argumentation, while suggestive, is not wholly demonstrative, of course. To make it more persuasive, we would need a much better taxonomy of the pragmatic category of context than we now have. There is a renewed interest in this notion in recent pragmatic literature (e. g., Kasher 1991, and Duranti–Goodwin 1992).

Consider what happens when neutralization arguments are not properly anchored in a solid account of pragmatic context. Jaworski (1993: 59) argues in the following way: "One will say nothing to a person, even a friend or a relative, who passes gas, has a dripping nose, or coughs out some phlegm and swallows it. The only available formula in situations like these is to remain silent".

This would look like a typical example of neutralization: in a specific context only silence is allowed, the opposition is neutralized in favour of silence. If this is so, silence is to be judged as unmarked by this criterion.

What is deficient in this argument, I believe, is that, lacking an appropriate definition (which is *not* meant to equal the essentialist "correct" definition) of pragmatic context, it is not at all clear why the embarrassing circumstances described above should count as communicative situations or contexts. And if, as I believe, they do not count as such, the above examples of "silent routine" cannot be subjected to the neutralization criterion.

3.2.2. Distributional criteria

The mechanism of neutralization is directly (but not solely) responsible for the restricted contextual distribution of the marked term of an opposition. Restricted contextual distribution in its turn, i. e., the relatively small number of contexts where the marked term appears, can (but need not) affect its frequency. It will affect the frequency of a term adversely if the few contexts where the term appears have low textual frequency as well. In other words, there is positive correlation between contextual distribution of a term and its frequency only when the type- and token-frequencies of its contexts correlate. A term distributed in few contexts can still be fairly frequent if these exact contexts have high token frequency in the language, as is the case with e. g., the marked phoneme [ð] appearing in the highly unmarked and frequent "function words" of English: *the, they, this*, etc. Failure to appreciate this subtle point leads directly to the type/token fallacy (Schwartz 1980: 319 ff).

Consider the following example, suggested by Jaworski's (1993: 61–2) remark on funeral silence. It is reasonable to assume that in the pragmatic context of funerals (at least in the Western culture) CS is more expected than in some other contexts, although speech is of course by no means excluded. For this distributional preference to translate directly into boosted overall frequency of CS in human communicative interaction the token frequency of this context would have to be relatively high. Luckily, the way the world is structured it is rather low; hence the overall frequency of funeral silence is also low.

Incidentally, Jaworski points out that some Polish obituaries run a *no condolences, please* note at the bottom, a clear "request for formulaic silence" (Jaworski 1993: 62). This is, I believe, a very telling sign of the marked status of silence even in this, otherwise rather silence-prone, context. After all, we do not request something that is routinely provided.

"Funeral context" can hardly be treated as a technical term standing for a class of entities in some rigorous taxonomy. As I mentioned earlier,

outside of conversational analysis, there appears to be no comprehensive and widely-accepted taxonomy of pragmatic contexts, either in linguistic or extralinguistic terms. Lacking such a taxonomy, any distributional claims about CS remain utterly unverifiable, even intuitively. How can we demonstrate, for example, that silence is heavily distributionally restricted in human communication if all we can refer to are such hopelessly impressionistic labels as: public speech, invitation, monologue, advertisement, challenge, utterance, follow-up, cycle, leave-taking, and other odds and ends from the cluttered pragmatic attic. That other fields of pragmatic research are also badly in need of an operational, but theoretically grounded, taxonomy is obvious from Poyatos's work in paralanguage and kinesics (e. g., 1983, 1984).

All one can tentatively offer in this situation is an intuitive judgement to the effect that the number of communicative situations where CS is preferred or expected is globally rather low. *Homo loquens* is talkative and CSs are distributed very sparsely: even "discovering that one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say *that*" (Sontag 1966: 42; her emphasis, quoted after Bruneau 1973: 21). And the axiology of the ancient proverb: *Speech is silver, but silence is golden* clearly reveals the underlying assumption about the rarity of CS; only rare elements are precious.

This distributional claim correlates nicely with another intuitively plausible statement based on the celebrated implicational criterion of markedness: the use of CS implies the use of speech for communication, but not vice versa. In other words, there may be systems, contexts, cultures, etc. where only speech is used for communication, but systems which would employ CS to the exclusion of speech are impossible ("speech" including all its modalities, of course, e. g., sign language). It is in this sense that Maltz's (1985: 131) categorization of silence as a derivative concept can be accepted. The implicational criterion of markedness, whereby the precedent of the valid implication (implicans) is the marked term, has been applied to different levels of linguistic structure, both cross- (implicational language universals) and intra-linguistically, and is highly valued for its discriminating potential. Examples include phonology (the existence of [ü] implies [i], but not vice versa, hence the former is marked), morphology (existence of negatively prefixed adjectives implies affix-less basic forms, but not vice versa; exceptions: *uncouth, inept*), syntax (non-indicative implies indicative, but not vice versa), pragmatics ("new" implies "given", but not vice versa).

Both assertions, that of distributional scarcity and that of implicational precedence, have an obvious link with frequency claims. *Ceteris*

paribus, a distributionally and implicationally marked term of an opposition is both type- and token-wise less frequent than the unmarked term. While, to the best of my knowledge, no appropriate tests have ever been conducted on the frequency of CS relative to that of speech in human communication, the common intuition is again rather clear: CS appears to be rather infrequent. This observation, in turn, translates into a subjective judgement of commonness and expectation. Sacks observed, for example, that the absence of a speech-encoded second part of an adjacency pair "is noticeable and noticed, ... people regularly complain 'You didn't answer my question' or 'I said hello, and she just walked past'" (Coulthard 1992: 70).

All this is not to deny that, just like universal linguistic markedness is made relative by language-specific tendencies, so is the across-the-board pragmatic markedness of CS tempered by culture-specific factors. Jaworski (reacting to Enninger 1985, 1987; Maltz 1985; and Basso 1972) is at pains to show that our pragmatic *horror vacui* is ultimately due to ethnocentric myopia. Quaker worship and Amish and Apache culture are discussed as examples of extensive use of CS. While I have no argument with the claim that silence is more widely used for communication in these communities than it is among Europeans or Anglo-Americans, the three examples appear to me to be clear cases of markedness inversion, as exemplified phonologically above (cf. Leach 1976: 63ff for similar conclusions). If indeed CS is unmarked relative to speech in the three communities (and I doubt that anybody is prepared to seriously assert this), this does not invalidate the claim of universal markedness of CS. As a matter of fact, it positively supports it. Consider the following memorable example of Mayerthaler (1988: 36; slightly edited for ease of presentation): "In Europe (and elsewhere), people normally wear swimsuits on the beach. Thus "swimsuit" is unmarked, "nudity" marked. In the special context of a nude beach, however, people with swimsuits are conspicuous; here "nudity" is unmarked, "swimsuit" marked. Obviously the markedness value in the marked context of a nude beach is inverted".

The parallel with the Quaker/Amish example is clear. Now, if in the marked context of those cultures the otherwise marked status of silence is inverted (like the status of nudity on the nude beach), it is prima facie evidence that in the unmarked context (normal circumstances) CS is indeed marked. As far as I can see, the context of Western culture in which we live is universally unmarked by a number of criteria which I will not explore here. This assertion is in principle verifiable, and as such escapes the criticism of subjective ethnocentric bias.

A similar argument based on markedness inversion could be constructed on a smaller, pragma-linguistic, scale: if in the marked context of a rhetorical question no speech-coded answer is expected, the lack of speech is shown to be marked in the unmarked context of ordinary questions in particular, and second adjacency-pair parts in general. Whether it is indeed the case that no explicit answer is generally expected in reaction to an incontrovertibly rhetorical question, however, is not at all clear. For example, silence as answer to a reproach framed as a rhetorical question seems to be rather dispreferred (as noticed by Wardhaugh 1985: 198–9). I am not aware of any empirical pragmatic study of rhetorical questions which would throw some more light on this issue.

So far I have looked at what could be referred to as synchronic distributional criteria of markedness. Another criterion which is also essentially distributional in nature is that of diachronic change. It is usually formulated somewhat like this: "In language development (with the exception of borrowing and hypercorrection) the unmarked prevails" (Mayerthaler 1988: 3). On a micro-diachronic scale, i. e., in language acquisition, it is noticed that the unmarked is normally acquired before the marked. These hypotheses have been so thoroughly tested that they are now by and large accepted as common truths, even if there are certain problems (e. g., the universally unmarked dentals are not the first sounds to enter a child's phonological system; cf. Brasington 1982: 90).

So how does the markedness status of CS change phylo- and ontogenetically? Again there is practically no research that addresses such questions. With reference to historical change, Steiner (1967) and Scollon–Scollon (1987) seem to be assuming that the present age and civilization have seen an unprecedented growth of speech, both in terms of quantity and tempo. A come-back to the old, leisurely conversational style is advocated. It is of course difficult to judge, in the absence of authentic sound recordings dating back more than three score years just how much more CS is marked today than it putatively used to be. Scollon and Scollon's impression of the quickening pace and higher density of communication may be due to our present communication technology rather than to actual changes in communication itself. Their suggestions, then, remain unverifiable, but intuitively appealing.

As far as language acquisition is concerned, it is commonplace that communicative use of silence is a skill which comes relatively late in child development. Jaworski (1993: 26n3) points out that children continue to exhibit very low tolerance of CS at otherwise advanced stages of communicative competence. It is hypothesized that this effect is ultimately

due to children's inability to cope with ambiguity, which is also responsible for their failure to appreciate puns until early school age (Shultz–Pilon 1973). Thus, at least by the ontogenetic criterion CS is quite clearly marked relative to speech.

On the whole, then, while the evidence is at times suggestive rather than demonstrative (though in principle available), it appears that the distributional criterion in its many varieties corroborates the marked status of CS. Some of the distributional criteria mentioned above (culture prototypicality, ambiguity) directly appeal to others, which I choose to discuss under the rubrics of content and form. It is to these markedness criteria that I now turn.

3.2.3. Content and form criteria

In the most general formulation the content/form criteria depend on the relative complexity of the representation, system or process assessed: this term of an opposition which is relatively more complex is – by this token – regarded as relatively marked. Now, linguistic complexity is a multifaceted phenomenon. It is perhaps most easily defined on the phonetic/phonological level: the overt formal marking of a phoneme with an added articulatory gesture was one of Trubetzkoyan classic diagnostics of markedness. In morphology, the relatively marked term will carry additional material (prefix, infix, suffix), or exhibit some structural change (umlaut, ablaut). In syntax, the general amount of structural complexity is a relatively well-understood notion: multiple embedding, for example, is judged to be more syntactically complex than no embedding at all; elaborate gender and number concord systems (like in French or Polish) are regarded as more complex than common gender and restricted number concord (like in English). In semantics, categories exhibiting a larger number of semantic marks are relatively more complex, as expounded in the early papers of Jakobson: *colt* is more complex than *stallion*, and the latter is more complex than *horse*. Finally, in pragmatics, "preferred second [pair part]s are *unmarked* – they occur as structurally simpler turns; in contrast dispreferred seconds are marked by various kinds of structural complexity" (Levinson 1983: 307; his emphasis).

While formal complexity of an entity is a relatively well-quantifiable measure, content complexity is much less so, which is one reason why the complexity criterion of markedness is least understood in its applications to semantics where the formal diagnostic is inapplicable. The situation has improved with the advent of Rosch's prototype theory and

Langacker's cognitive grammar, which among their primary aims had the definition and analysis of such notions as cognitive complexity, processing effort, prototypicality, etc. For many linguistic applications the notion of cognitive complexity has turned out to be more revealing than that of traditional compositional semantics. In the latter, the *whale* would not have been any more semantically complex as a mammal than the *horse*.

The general guideline (bypassing for now all the unavoidable problems and complexities) is that the more formally and/or semantically complex, the less cognitively prototypical an entity is, the more marked it is. This yardstick can now be applied to communicative silence.

Silence must be ranked as the overall least formally complex communicative entity. Indeed, except for size (duration), it has no formal exponents: no segments, no morphemes, no words to go by, just nothing (hesitation markers and audible breath-taking do not code CS, of course). By this token, then, CS should be regarded as (formally) unmarked compared to speech. Similarly, although nobody would deny that CS carries content, it would probably be agreed that in terms of content complexity CS is indeed unmarked relative to speech.

There are of course considerations that complicate these markedness assignments. In terms of form, for example, it is not clear whether it makes sense to talk about relative formal complexity in this clearly limiting case of no form at all (just as it may not make sense to talk about the colours of darkness or about the humanity of an embryo). The answer depends to some extent on one's adopted ontology and epistemology. These are complex issues into which I will not go here.

In terms of content, to assess the intuitive judgement about the relative semantic simplicity of CS we would need a better understanding of the very notion of semantic simplicity/complexity. Similarly, a better taxonomy of CS types would be needed before another complexity criterion could be meaningfully applied, that of paradigmatic complexity (Moravcsik–Wirth 1986: 7) or syncretization. This criterion (which is ultimately due to Jakobson 1939) is usually formulated as avoidance, or neutralization, of subtype elaboration in the marked category. In other words, a category which is marked on some criterion has fewer subtypes than the related unmarked category (hence is, in some paradoxical sense, simpler). For example, "in English the masculine-feminine distinction in third person pronouns exists in the singular but is neutralized in the plural" (Schwartz 1980: 315). While it seems to be a safe conjecture that CS is indeed rather poorly subcategorized compared to speech (and by this

token would appear marked), we would need a more comprehensive and rigorous pragmatic (rather than ontological – see Dauenhauer 1979) taxonomy of CS and speech before the hunch could be forged into an argument. It is in trying to disentangle such content vs form puzzles that a cognitive approach may be more helpful, as mentioned above.

Communicative silence is quite clearly non-prototypical as a method (strategy, device) used for human communication. This is nothing more than a cognitive restatement of the distributional claims from an earlier section. CS shares this status with such other methods as sign language, gesture, facial expression, body posture, Morse, table manners, social customs, and other deliberately manipulable communicative codes. Speech would clearly be in the centre of the cognitive category "human communication" (with all the above-mentioned provisos duly taken into account). Relative prototypicality, just like relative frequency, as discussed above, will affect subjective commonness judgements and expectations. As noticed by Scollon (1985: 26) – who does not necessarily endorse this belief – "Smooth talk is taken as a natural state of the smoothly running cognitive and interactional machine". CS is thus cognitively and psychologically marked compared to speech.

With zero form and potentially rich content, CS belongs to the least semantically determinate pragma-linguistic signs. While in strictly logical terms human language has been shown to be multiply ambiguous (which makes it a rather poor vehicle for logic or computer applications), most of this ambiguity is skilfully filtered out in perception by our linguistic and cognitive competence. Some of it, however, persists long enough into the decoding process to be noticeable. We may ultimately be able to decode CS thanks to contextual clues, but this procedure requires a lot of processing effort, because CS carries with it very few assumptions which could be used in getting at its communicative relevance at the given stage of conversation (cf. Sperber–Wilson 1986; Jaworski 1993: chapter 3.5.2): "What's her silence supposed to mean?". Johannesen (1974: 29–30) lists an exemplary list of twenty possible answers to such a question, including ignorance, avoidance, agreement, doubt, boredom, etc.

Ambiguous or indeterminate stimulus will produce further complications in generating the response in the form of hesitation, confusion, errors, back-tracking, etc.: "What shall I say now?", "This can't be what he meant", "I'd better ask her again". Thus, the semantic indeterminacy or multi-ambiguity of CS runs directly counter to the semiotic principle of uniform symbolizing, i. e., "one meaning – one form" (Mayerthaler 1988: 26), and qualifies CS as relatively marked. This is not to claim, of

course, that speech is unambiguous both linguistically ("What does he mean by saying this?") and pragmatically ("Why does he open his mouth right now?"), but rather that of the two terms of the opposition CS is by far more marked on this criterion.

Finally, consider another useful (meta)criterion of markedness, which is a combination of two simple criteria of formal and content complexity. It has been noticed a number of times (Anttila 1972: 92; Lapointe 1986; Mayerthaler 1988: 17; Battistella 1990: 35) that relatively more complex content tends to be coded in a relatively more complex form. This principle of constructional economy, or iconism (which has little to do with phonetic iconism) has been found operating on all levels of linguistic structure, with the obvious exception of the sound level. Semantic plurality will typically be more featured morphologically than singularity (affixation, umlaut); non-indicative moods will be coded more elaborately than indicative; a suggestion will display more form than an order.

Now, by this iconicity criterion CS is again more marked than speech: whatever the amount of content which CS is supposed to signal (and it is rather difficult to gauge), it is uniformly coded into zero form. More content, then, does not generate more form, as is the case with speech (with the admittedly controversial proviso that CS duration is not regarded as a facet of form, as mentioned above in section 3.2.3).

4. Conclusion

In a wonderfully oxymoronic epigram, that collector of linguistic trivia W. R. Espy (1972: 14), pronounces: "I have nothing whatever to communicate, and words are the best means of non-communication I know". The effect of this *bon mot* depends on the popular appreciation of the communicative potential of silence as well as of its marked status in the context of human communication. Words are normally the prototypical communicators, silence – the prototypical non-communicator. But this situation may be reversed: when we have "nothing whatever to communicate" we should avoid silence, because in a communicative situation (like writing a book, or stand-up comedianship) silence is in fact communicative, while speech can be made noncommunicative ("Don't just talk, say something").

In order for the body of markedness claims to deserve the status of scientific theory proper, they would have to offer more than simple explanations, or postdictions, of such paradox-generated humour or of how

markedness-based expectations can be deliberately and meta-pragmatically violated. They would have to function heuristically and predictively with reference to other theories and data which were so far outside their domain. For example, they would have to "link with phonological rules ... or figure crucially in establishing universal principles of syllabification" (Cairns–Feinstein 1982: 195).

While some of these postulates have been realized in phonology and morphology, the more abstract levels of language have so far been much less fortunate. As far as I know, mine is the first extended attempt to apply markedness theory to a pragmatic concept. While the aim of this paper is primarily to assess the relative markedness of communicative silence *vis-à-vis* speech, the discussion suggests certain hypotheses and predictions which markedness theory could offer for testing in the field of discourse analysis.

For example, if CS is indeed marked, as argued (for) here, markedness theory would predict that in the pragmatically marked contexts (rhetorical questions, funerals, face-threatening situations, and the like) CS would be expected due to markedness inversion. In fact, such contexts would provide for a methodologically most welcome situation whereby more than one theory would make predictions about the same data in the same circumstances. Extensive confrontation and cross-testing is then possible which can, ideally, lead to the selection of the "better" theory. With reference to CS the two theories could be markedness theory and relevance theory, for example; it is with the latter that Jaworski approached silence in his 1993 monograph.

Some other markedness-based predictions on the pragmatics of CS include: being the relatively marked term of the opposition CS-speech, CS (1) will be lost (misused) earlier than speech in aphasia, (2) will be acquired with more difficulty than speech in second language acquisition, (3) will be avoided in baby- and foreigner-talk, (4) will be dispreferred in less formal styles of speech, (5) will cause pragmatic failure more often than speech, (6) will be cognitively conspicuous and hence available for deliberate meta-linguistic and meta-pragmatic manipulation, as ambiguity is for puns, and slips of the tongue are for many other types of speech play (e. g., spoonerisms or tongue-twisters; cf. Sobkowiak 1988, 1990, 1991).

In connection with (6), notice that deliberate insertion of an extended period of silence (i. e., not hesitation, or transient confusion, or memory lapse, etc.) in an otherwise highly informationally predictable (redundant) point in the flow of utterance can have dramatic rhetorical effects, as

skilled public speakers and singers know very well. Laurie Anderson, an American singer, is particularly expert in this skill. One of her most memorable feats was inserting a fully two-second-long pause in the following context: "And this is how you can be walking and falling at the same ... time" (see Jaworski, this volume, chapter 2).

Notes

1. I would like to express my gratitude to Adam Jaworski, my friend and colleague, for his invitation to contribute to this volume as well as for constant encouragement, criticism and advice which he so generously offered. I am also grateful to other readers of the first draft of this paper, in particular to participants of the conference on New Trends in Semantics and Lexicography held in Kazimierz, Poland, on 13–15 December 1993. Omissions, errors and imperfections of both form and content remain my own responsibility.
2. However, see Kallen's chapter in this volume in which he describes the significance of silence in traditional, Scottish ballads in conversational terms whereby silence can be understood as the first part of an adjacency pair to which the narrator's preferred response is breaking it with the telling of a story (*Editor*).

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Silence and politeness[1]

Maria Sifianou

1. Introduction

The role of silence as a meaningful component of human interaction has only very recently attracted the attention of linguists, whereas it has been a concern of anthropologists, psychologists and philosophers for much longer. Viewed merely as the absence of talk, silence left linguists with more or less nothing worthy of investigation. Moreover, in many Western cultures, silence has a rather negative connotation, since talking simply for reasons of sociability (Malinowski's (1972) "phatic communion") is desirable behaviour for competent language users. However, as the increasing number of publications on the issue aptly demonstrate, silence is a complex and diverse phenomenon, "more important and widespread in communication than may be commonly admitted" (Jaworski 1993: 167). Consequently, full understanding of the process of communication requires understanding of the structure, meaning, and functions of both silence and speech (Saville-Troike 1985: 4).

Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) analysis of politeness phenomena, this chapter will investigate the forms which silence can take to express politeness in interaction cross-culturally, especially with reference to Greek and English societies. Before proceeding with this more specific task, I would like to discuss first some general points which are germane to the issue of silence.

2. Silence in interactions

The complex nature of silence and its inherent ambiguity has been stressed by a number of scholars (see, for instance, Jaworski 1993; Tannen–Saville-Troike 1985; Philips 1985; Enninger 1987; Sobkowiak, this volume). Silence, like speech, can take a variety of forms and perform a variety of functions. The term "silence" itself is used to refer to various phenomena, ranging from the absence of any noise to brief almost inaudible silences (pauses) within or between speech turns. In its broad sense, silence usually

refers to the absence of something which should be present, as in the "silence" of a government on a particular issue or the "silence" of a person who has not kept in touch. Between these two extremes, one can discern silences which, like speech, carry illocutionary force and have perlocutionary effects (Saville-Troike 1985), as for instance, silence in response to an invitation or offer, or silence substituting for assent to a request for permission, service and goods (see Davidson 1984).

In this chapter I am concerned with such silences as appear at the level of conversational interaction. This type entails the presence of at least two parties who can potentially interact. This restriction excludes mandatory silences, such as in religious activities where the mere co-presence of participants is unlikely to create an interaction, or in solitary activities where the absence of others forces people into silence.

When two people meet, the extent to which they feel socially obliged to produce or avoid silences varies culturally, situationally and individually. In other words, the participants' decision to initiate or contribute to an interaction is determined by: (i) cultural norms, i. e. which of the two, in general, the particular society values more: taciturnity or volubility; (ii) situational norms, i. e. what the particular context requires (e. g. on a bus, or at a party); and (iii) individual traits, e. g., some people are more talkative than others by nature or may feel in a more loquacious or taciturn mood at a given time (see Scollon–Scollon 1983: 170; Jaworski 1993: 22). To account for cross-cultural variation, Saville-Troike (1985: 4) talks about "silence used for structuring communication". This type of silence does not communicate any specific messages but rather serves not only to structure communication but also to organise and regulate social relationships in speech communities. However, as Jaworski (1993: 63) states, one should not discard the possibility of a universalistic approach to the study of silence, if realized on a more abstract level.

Silences as part of an interaction can occur before, during or after a chunk of discourse and are basically of two different but interrelated types. The first consists of brief pauses and hesitations which occur within and between turns, which are normally seen as giving interlocutors time to think before their next contribution. The length of such silences is culturally specific, and as they usually occur subconsciously, they tend to go unnoticed (see Jaworski 1993: 12–16). These are what Saville-Troike (1985: 6) calls communicative silences; they usually have a conventional and affective meaning, but no propositional content.

In this chapter I am primarily concerned with the second type of silence, i. e. longer silences which, on the one hand, acquire their meaning

from their particular position, length, etc. and on the other, cast light on the verbal utterances produced. This second type Saville-Troike (1985: 6) calls communicative silences which carry meaning and illocutionary force; they are performed by actors who vocalise nothing and may or may not use any visual clues. This latter form of silence is usually produced consciously, promotes or fails to promote interaction in different ways, and can reflect a variety of both positive and negative attitudes and values. For instance, deliberate abstention from talk in an on-going interaction may indicate consideration for the other person or lack of it. Thus, it can be a way of preventing disagreement and conflict or it may, on the contrary, indicate that there is conflict. This is the type of silence that is described in Greek as *evγloti siopi* "eloquent silence".

3. The politeness of silence

3.1. Strategic politeness

Politeness is a vast and complex issue, and current theories view it as a means of avoiding conflict.[2] Despite the rich literature on various aspects of politeness phenomena, to my knowledge, the issue of silence in relation to politeness has barely been considered. The two most extensive and influential studies on politeness phenomena (Leech 1983; Brown–Levinson 1987 [1978]) give silence very little attention.

Articulated within a more general pragmatic framework, Leech's (1983) theory of politeness focuses on the common conceptualisation of silence as disagreeable behaviour. Along with Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and its maxims, Leech envisages a Politeness Principle similarly supported by a number of maxims. He discusses the possibility of a "phatic" maxim, which could be formulated as either "avoid silence" or "keep talking", in order to account for the necessity to avoid silence in interactions. The need for the inclusion of such a maxim is motivated by the fact that in some societies, lengthy gaps and silences in interactions are not easily tolerated. However, since phatic communication has broader ramifications than just "keep talking", Leech (1983: 142) considers it more adequate to deal with the avoidance of silence not in terms of a distinct maxim but as a special case of the maxims of agreement and sympathy, since the topics chosen in phatic communication tend to be uncontroversial and sympathetic towards the addressee. Thus, the implication of this treatment is that silence is largely an undesirable conversational practice which should be shunned in some way or other.

Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) seminal work on politeness phenomena offers a better basis for the exploration of the relationship between silence and politeness. They provide a detailed account of the different devices people employ to express politeness, but they touch only in passing on the issue of the politeness (or lack of it) encoded in silence. Nevertheless, they provide a springboard for the examination of the matter.

Fundamental to their theory is the notion of "face", which they define following Goffman (1967: 62) as the public self-image that every person wants to claim. Face is made up of two related aspects, which they call "positive" and "negative" face: the former relates to the desire to be liked, appreciated and approved of by selected others, whereas the latter expresses the desire to be free from imposition. It is in the mutual interest of both participants in an interaction to attend to each other's face.

Brown and Levinson claim that almost all verbal activities entail a threat to either the positive or the negative aspect of face of the addressee and/or the speaker, and are thus face-threatening acts (FTAs). The extent of threat entailed is not inherent in the particular act, but is rather determined by the cumulative effect of three social variables – the social distance between interactants, the relative power differential between them, and the intrinsic weight of imposition entailed by the particular act. All these factors together determine the amount of threat in an act and influence the choice of the appropriate alternative by the speaker.

Brown and Levinson propose five major alternatives or (super)strategies (see Figure 1 below) for dealing with face-threatening acts.

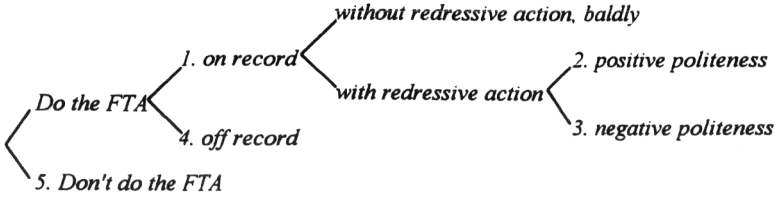

Figure 1. Possible strategies for doing FTAs, from Brown & Levinson, 1987: 69

The very first decision the speaker has to make is whether to perform the act or remain silent. He or she has to weigh two conflicting desires very carefully: the desire to avoid or minimise the risk of loss of face against the desire to communicate the face-threatening act and achieve his or her goal. When the risk of loss of face is judged as extremely high, most speakers will seek to avoid the threat (5). According to the predictions of the

theory, this is the most polite strategy, because if the speaker remains silent, the potentially threatening act is not just mitigated but avoided altogether.

If the speaker decides to perform the face-threatening act, there are various ways of doing so. The speaker may decide to perform the act *baldly on record, without redressive action* (1). Such direct utterances, like "Open the window", are normally considered to be the least polite since they pay no attention to face considerations.

Redressive action means action which counterbalances the potential face-threat; it is achieved by using additional linguistic elements and/or structural elaboration. Such action can take two forms, depending on which aspect of face the speaker feels is most important. If the positive aspect of face is emphasised, i. e. the need for approval and agreement, the speaker will resort to *positive politeness* strategies (2). For example, if the speaker says something like "I know you are a gem and you will lend me the £5 I need", the redress involved conveys the speaker's desire to reinforce solidarity by emphasising the positive self-image that the addressee wants to claim. If the negative aspect of face is more important, i. e. the need for freedom of action, the speaker will indicate reluctance to impinge on the addressee by resorting to *negative politeness* strategies (3). For example, if the speaker says something like "I'm really terribly sorry for disturbing you but would it be possible for you to lend me £5?", he or she makes explicit the recognition that the act trespasses on the addressee's privacy. In all the above cases we say that the speaker goes *on record* for the performance of his or her act, because the message conveyed is relatively clear.

The last major alternative for the speaker is to go *off record* (4), i. e. to use a vague, ambiguous or indirect utterance. For example, if the speaker says something like "Gosh, I'm out of cash", he or she leaves the decoding of the exact message (i. e. whether a simple statement or a request has been made) to the addressee.

The numbers used in the diagram underscore one of the major claims of the theory, namely that the strategies are hierarchically ordered, so the higher the number, the greater the risk of loss of face presented by the situation, and thus the more polite the strategy. The first four super-strategies (1–4) are supplemented by a wide variety of more specific strategies, and their linguistic manifestations are discussed in great detail by Brown and Levinson. The fifth choice (5) is excluded from the discussion because it offers "no interesting linguistic reflexes" (Brown–Levinson 1987: 72). Although this exclusion is understandable, it is surprising that a comprehensive theory of politeness would ignore what is assumed to be its strongest manifestation.

In the remaining part of this section, I will first focus on this particular strategy and discuss the claim that to remain silent is the most polite strategy for handling face-threatening acts. Then I will examine the extent to which the other strategies can be realised by silence too. Before proceeding, a few points concerning the social variables mentioned earlier are in order.

3.2. Social variables

The main social variables which determine the choice of the particular linguistic strategy (interpersonal power, social distance and force of imposition) also play an important role in a speaker's decision whether or not to remain silent, and thus will be influential in lending meaning to the particular stretch of silence.

In encounters with participants of unequal status, the superior's silence may indicate domination, whereas the inferior's silence may indicate subordination. As Mey (1993: 297) observes in relation to psychiatric institutional environments, "the only correct way of complaining [for patients] is not to complain". However, the inferior's silence may also indicate defiance against the superior's authority, as for example when a student refuses to answer a teacher's question, which Gilmore (1985: 155) calls "stylized silent sulking". Likewise, Tannen (1993: 176) suggests that silence in itself is not necessarily a sign of powerlessness, just as volubility in itself is not necessarily a sign of domination. It is the interaction of the two which attributes meaning to each form of behaviour.

In relationships where there is little or no social distance between interactants, one can act without being requested explicitly to do so and can comply with a request without responding verbally. It is also appropriate to remain silent instead of saying something negative which may hurt the interlocutor and which may be difficult to retract. One may also remain thoughtfully silent for some time and then say something which sums up his or her concern for the interlocutor. As Jaworski (1993: 38) observes, extreme emotions and states like affection, reverence and attention are often expressed through silence.

On the other hand, when there is social distance, doing things for others without being requested to could be perceived as an imposition, since these actions may require reimbursement. In formal contexts, a request usually calls for a verbal response along with the execution of the act. However, in distant relations remaining silent over something negative (face threatening) in relation to any party involved may be preferred to doing the FTA.

The significance of vertical (power) and horizontal (solidarity) social distance in determining the form of social interaction cannot be questioned. However, as it has been argued (Baxter 1984; Holtgraves 1986; Brown–Gilman 1989; Ide 1989), these social variables alone are inadequate for explaining the choice of politeness devices and should be supplemented by psychological ones, such as affect or liking, which will have a direct influence on the degree of *perceived* imposition in doing the FTA. This should be distinguished from familiarity, because familiars or even close relatives do not necessarily like one another and, consequently, they may not be concerned with satisfying the needs of one another's face. We could advocate this liking/affect factor as being equally important in determining the amount and meaning of silences produced. If the interactants like one another, then any silence produced will have a positive indexicality, signalling consideration rather than power or powerlessness. On the other hand, if they do not like each other, any silence produced will have a negative indexicality.

3.3. The "Don't do the FTA" superstrategy

As mentioned earlier, one of Brown and Levinson's basic assumptions is that their politeness superstrategies are intrinsically ranked, with off-record strategies being more polite than negative politeness strategies, which in turn precede positive politeness ones. This ranking has been convincingly challenged by a number of scholars on various grounds. For instance, Scollon and Scollon (1981) argue that positive and negative politeness are different phenomena and cannot be ranked on a unidimensional scale. Brown and Gilman (1989: 165) propose collapsing these two into one superstrategy of face-redress. In a different vein, Blum-Kulka (1987) argues that for an utterance to count as polite, a certain interactional balance between pragmatic clarity and non-coerciveness is required. This balance is achieved with negative politeness strategies, but it is destroyed with off-record utterances, since they place high inferential demands on the addressee. Brown and Levinson, however, insist, though with some reservations in their second edition (1987: 18), that to date there is no definitive convincing evidence that their ranking is wrong.

To my knowledge, no discussion concerning this ranking of politeness strategies has considered the fifth superstrategy, "Don't do the FTA", which according to the predictions of the theory encodes the highest degree of politeness.

A number of important problems arise in connection with this strategy and its placement on the politeness scale. The FTA in the injunction "Don't do the FTA" embodies only some acts which encode a heavy threat to the *addressee's* face, but it cannot include those which threaten the *speaker's* face. This is one of the consequences of the problematic nature of the notion of FTA and of the conceptualisation of all communicative acts as face-threatening. Avoiding requests, threats, warnings, suggestions, advice, for example, which Brown and Levinson perceive as acts threatening the addressee's negative face, can indicate consideration for, and thus politeness to the addressee. It is harder to see how the same could be true of compliments and offers. Such acts may encode face-threatening aspects for the addressee's negative face, but they also have face-saving or even face-enhancing aspects, in some cultures perhaps more than in others. It is for this reason that if a compliment is judged as appropriate or is expected but not produced, the person concerned may fish for it or even express dissatisfaction about its absence. In other words, if acts like compliments and offers are regarded in a particular society or context as face-threatening because they may make their utterers incur debts, then silence is a more polite option than the production of such acts. If, however, the acts are primarily interpreted as face-enhancing, then substituting them with silences cannot be the most polite option.[3]

In attending to the positive face wants of the addressee, the avoidance of expressions of disagreement, disapproval, contempt or any similar act is certainly an effective politeness strategy (but see Blum-Kulka 1992 on the value of sincerity in Israeli society; cf. also Katriel's 1986 work on "dugri" speech). In other words, remaining silent in order to avoid the threat to the addressee's positive face seems to confirm the high politeness value of the "Don't do the FTA" strategy.

On the other hand, it seems extremely difficult to understand how the avoidance of acts regarded as putting the *speaker's* face at risk is the most polite means of tackling such face-threatening situations. For instance, expressing thanks is assumed to offend the speaker's negative aspect of face because it involves accepting a debt and sacrificing freedom of action. Similarly, accepting thanks or apologies are acts which threaten the speaker's negative aspect of face in that he or she may feel constrained to minimise the addressee's debt. However, the failure to perform such acts is certainly not more polite than performing them. Silence in such circumstances may signal embarrassment or shyness, but it cannot convey politeness. The same seems to be true of acts threatening the speaker's

positive aspect of face, such as apologies or admissions of guilt or responsibility. In such cases, silences could be perceived as strategies saving the speaker's face but not as encoding the highest degree of politeness in any absolute sense.

Another reservation to be made about Brown and Levinson's (1987: 10) theory is that it relies heavily on speech act theory, which is based on a speaker-oriented analysis. This is evident in all their strategies, but becomes most problematic with the "Don't do the FTA". It is unclear whether this strategy refers only to an option a speaker has as the initiator of an exchange, or whether it includes face-threatening responses by addressees. It is understandably polite to avoid committing an act which you believe would be extremely damaging to your interlocutor's self-image (speaker-produced silences). But it is unlikely that silence instead of a response to a face-threatening act is always the most polite way of handling such a situation (addressee-produced silences). Since silences are highly ambiguous, such responses can be perceived as either acceptances or rejections, although in general they tend to be interpreted as rejections (Davidson 1984). Thus, addressee-produced silences are "dispreferred seconds" (term borrowed from Conversational Analysis), since the preferred move would be the acceptance. However, if rejection is the addressee's intention, then silence may make the situation less threatening for both the speaker and the addressee.

Consequently, I would like to suggest that within the framework of this theory, the "Don't do the FTA" superstrategy is of a different nature from all the others, applicable only in some face-threatening contexts. For a speaker, to avoid initiating a situation which is face-threatening for the addressee can be seen as encoding a high degree of politeness; the same strategy may encode little or no politeness when the speaker's own face is at risk.

Overt polite behaviour reflects underlying motives, but it is not always easy to detect what the exact motives are. They may reflect the interaction of politeness motivations and psychological factors, such as embarrassment or shyness. For instance, a person who is developing a headache but does not request a painkiller may be motivated by either not wanting to impose on the other person or by more general personality traits. A personal experience may make this point clearer. When a student knocked off and broke a vase in my office in the presence of many others, his failure to offer any form of (verbal) apology may have been motivated, irrespective of our status difference, not by impoliteness but rather by embarrassment.

An interesting point which emerges here is that this type of silence, "Don't do the FTA", expresses politeness when talk is not necessarily expected. In other words, when a prospective speaker avoids performing a seriously face-threatening act, the other participant has no access to what is going on in the interlocutor's mind. If, however, there are contextual clues as to the possibility of a request, for instance, then the addressee is given the opportunity to make an offer and thus appear considerate and generous.

So far I have tried to show that the "Don't do the FTA" superstrategy is of restricted applicability. I would now like to consider its relationship to the other superstrategies.

3.4. Silence as a manifestation of the other superstrategies

Remaining silent can be a manifestation of either negative, positive or off-record politeness. When silence reflects recognition and respect for the addressee's negative-face needs not to have his or her freedom of action interfered with, it is a manifestation of negative politeness (Tannen 1985: 98). This is the kind of silence used to demonstrate deference to socially superior or older people. In addition, through silence and/or negative politeness, speakers can protect themselves from potential intrusions; or as Saunders (1985: 173) puts it, through silence and formal courtesy, people preserve emotional neutrality. Thus, strangers on public transport systems who refrain from initiating verbal interaction maintain their social space (Saville-Troike 1985: 4). A more specific case where silence can be interpreted as a negative politeness device involves instances in which someone performs a self-face-threatening act, for example, makes a *faux pas*. While it is positively polite to tease or joke about this (for solidarity reasons), it is negatively polite to ignore the action and remain silent (Brown–Levinson 1987: 104; Jaworski 1993: 60).

The rapport benefit of silence, that is, its positive politeness manifestation, relates to being understood without using words (Tannen 1985: 97). This form of silence can be manifested either by just listening carefully or by not asking questions and letting the speaker say as much as he or she wants to. The function of silence in such contexts is very similar to that of ellipsis, which becomes comprehensible because of the existence of shared mutual knowledge and indicates solidarity and common ground (Brown–Levinson 1987: 111). In sum, silence can be used to attend to both the addressee's negative and positive face.

Silence can also be associated with off-record politeness, which is realised as non-conventional indirectness. As Tannen (1985: 97) states, "silence is the extreme manifestation of indirectness" because it is not a matter of saying one thing and meaning something else, but a case of saying nothing and meaning something. Remaining silent thus appears to be most closely associated with off-record politeness, because both positive and negative politeness are usually enacted through the elaboration of redressive action. Furthermore, silence is an extremely ambiguous form of communication (Jaworski 1993: 85), like off-recordness. The similarity between silence and indirect forms is also evident in certain types of silence which have been conventionalised and thus, in context, are clearer and less ambiguous than others (Jaworski 1993: 85), just like off-record utterances (Sifianou 1992: 118). Furthermore, as suggested above, silence in some contexts can give the receiver the opportunity to make an unrequested offer; this is one of the motivations of off-record indirectness, as has been argued elsewhere (Sifianou 1993).

If Brown and Levinson's ranking of politeness strategies is correct and off-record utterances encode a high degree of politeness, then the close relationship between silence and off-record indirectness places silence among the most polite strategies. The explanation could be similar to that offered by the theory in the case of off-record devices as encoding a high degree of politeness: that silence allows the actor to evade responsibility for having committed a particular act and at the same time to reduce the degree of imposition, since the interpretation of the silence is left to the addressee. However, apart from the contexts (cultures) in which off-recordness is considered to be very polite, there is another, somewhat paradoxical account of off-record strategies. Blum-Kulka (1987) noted that off-record strategies (including silence) can be extremely ambiguous, placing high inferential demands on the addressee, which could place them among the least polite forms.

In conclusion, although one form of silence (that of "don't do the FTA") has been attributed the highest degree of encoded politeness, this ranking seems inadequate in explaining the multifaceted role of silence in interactions. I thus suggest that remaining silent is basically a manifestation of positive, negative or off-record politeness and not a distinct and separate superstrategy. Viewing silence from this angle may constitute a better explanation for the variety of forms it can take and the variety of functions it can perform. However, our knowledge of politeness phenomena is still limited and our knowledge of silence even more so, and, consequently, my suggestions are very tentative. Despite this caveat, it seems

plausible to suggest that in societies where negative politeness prevails, silence could be better understood as a means of safeguarding personal territory, whereas in societies with a more positive politeness orientation, silence could be seen as implying the existence of shared common ground or its complete absence. In the next section, I will examine silence in a cross-culturally oriented perspective.

4. Silence in a cross-cultural perspective

It is hardly breaking fresh ground to say that within any culture, there are norms and values regulating the amount of talk or silence required in particular contexts. "Speaking at the wrong time (interrupting) or being silent at the wrong time has impolite implications" (Leech 1983: 139), even within the same culture, let alone cross-culturally. For instance, it has been widely reported that most Americans and Europeans regard talk as desirable and use it for referential as well as for social/affective purposes. This view is quite strongly expressed by Hayakawa, quoted by Laver (1975: 220), who states that "it is completely impossible for us in society to talk only when we 'have something to say'". Even within Europe, Mediterranean cultures show lower tolerance for silences than do Northern European cultures. By contrast, in many Asian cultures, people believe that talk is desirable only when there is something to be communicated. Moreover, there are societies where many interactions are performed without the exchange of any words, as when people sit in silence to express mutually positive attitudes towards each other (Enninger 1987; Philips 1985; Sajavaara–Lehtonen, this volume).

There are also norms determining the meaning of particular instances of silence in each culture. For instance, in England people prefer to join groups silently, so as not to interrupt any interactions going on. This can be interpreted as indifference by most Mediterranean people, for whom it is appropriate to exchange at least a brief greeting, which, however, can be interpreted as an interruption by the English. Thus, for a given context, norms differ as to what is appropriate polite behaviour. In England, silence serves the negative politeness ends of avoiding intrusion and therefore has a positive value, whereas in Greece and other Mediterranean cultures it has a negative value since it is viewed as a distancing device (cf. Tannen 1985: 98). Even within the same culture, as Leech (1983: 141) observes, such contradictory implications of silence can lead to a pragmatic impasse; for example, a newcomer to an interaction may

feel it rude to interrupt, while participants may feel it is impolite not to give the newcomer a chance to join in. The result may be "an uncomfortable hiatus in the conversation" (Leech, *ibid.*).

Although silence can realise both positive and negative politeness, it is seems that it does more clearly reflect the latter. This claim should not be taken to mean that it cannot have positive politeness ramifications, as it can also indicate shared common ground, as we have already seen. However, involvement is frequently and more easily realised through socially appropriate "noise", and distance and formality through socially appropriate "silence," for example, as in the case of Greek men's use of silence in mixed-sex groups (Makri-Tsilipakou 1991: 82; see also Dendrinos–Ribeiro Pedro, this volume).

The issue I would like to consider in the remaining part of this section is that societies with a negative-politeness orientation will value silence more than societies with a more positive-politeness orientation. More specifically, I would like to argue that English society when compared to Greek is relatively more "silent". Nevertheless, it should be noted that silence here is associated with the appropriate amount and type of talk in the particular context rather than complete absence of talk. These points have been emphasized by Scollon and Scollon (1995: 39), who similarly view volubility as a strategy of involvement (positive politeness), and taciturnity as a strategy of independence (negative politeness).

Silence cross-culturally can be viewed from the idealized, conversational rule "no gap, no overlap" (see Sacks–Schegloff–Jefferson 1974), which according to Lakoff (1990) does not constitute an observable phenomenon. People do pause between turns and they do talk together. However, the length of such "gaps," the types of "fillers" and the amount of overlapping talk are culture-specific. In some societies, gaps and silences are preferred to what is considered to be "idle chatter". In others, such idle chatter is positively termed as "phatic communion", which means communication for social rather than referential purposes, and communities vary with respect to the types of preferred phatic communion (see Laver 1975).

Greek social life is centred around the in-group, which means that personal freedom and individual privacy are of secondary importance (Triandis–Vassiliou 1972: 329). Greeks do not seem to enjoy isolation and solitary activities. On the contrary, generally speaking, they love being with others while working, eating or even relaxing (Mackridge 1985: 338). Furthermore, there are specific cultural norms which direct speakers to express rather than conceal their emotions (Triandis–Vassiliou 1972:

319). Such norms and attitudes explain why Greeks like to be involved with others, and this is mainly achieved through talking. Ethnographic evidence (Lee 1959; Friedl 1962) shows that talkativeness and effusiveness are highly valued in Greece. "Speech is of extreme importance to the Greeks, since it establishes and fosters the all-important personal relationships" (Lee 1959: 145). Thus, silence cannot be easily tolerated in interpersonal relationships with the exception of firmly established ones, e. g. among intimates. Actually, as Herzfeld (1983: 154) observes, "potential and actual enemies are separated from one another by lines of silence".

For most Greeks, exuberance and talkativeness are indicative of a pleasant, open and sincere person who is worthy company. In contrast, a taciturn person is sometimes described as a decorative piece of furniture and is frequently regarded as indifferent, unfriendly, snobbish and even sly and dangerous. Such views reflect Malinowski's (1972: 150) rule that "taciturnity means not only unfriendliness but indirectly a bad character", a rule which, although it varies across cultures, remains quite powerful. In Greek society, indifference is not neutral but insulting behaviour, indicating hostility (Triandis–Vassiliou 1972: 316).

Even children are not expected to follow the well-known Western adage that they should be seen but not heard (Friedl 1962: 81) – except when they become a nuisance and are subsequently silenced as a form of punishment. This does not mean that children are not instructed that there are occasions in which they should remain silent. On the contrary, they are taught to use silence for self-protection in order to distance themselves from strangers. They are also expected to use silence as a sign of respect for older relatives when they are talking, or to express their concern when others are angry. (Such motivations of silence correspond with what Burke (1993: 136) termed "silence of respect or deference" and "silence of prudence".) Nevertheless, children tend to be talkative because they are part of the in-group and are constantly being talked to and are expected to respond from a very young age. Children are admired and praised when they can participate intelligently in adult conversations.

The high value placed on talk does not mean that there is no place for silence or that silence is not meaningful in Greek society. If "clues to culturally defined connotative meanings of silence may be found in proverbs" (Saville-Troike 1985: 10), then the following Greek proverbs are revealing of the fact that, although talkativeness is desirable behaviour, one should use it in moderation.

(1) *i siopi ine χrisos*
the silence is gold
'Silence is golden.'

(2) *i γlosa kokala δen eχi ke kokala tsakizi*
the tongue bones not have and bones breaks
'The tongue has no bones but it can break them.'

(3) *ta pola loja ine ftoχja*
the many words are poverty
'Too much talking indicates poverty (of mind).'

(4) *ta siγana potamja na fovase*
the slow rivers to be afraid of
'One should be afraid of the slow rivers.'

(5) *skilos pu γavγizi δe δagoni*
dog that barks not bites
'A dog that barks does not bite.'

The first proverb, which interestingly enough is found in many cultures, points directly to the high value generally attributed to silence, while the rest of the proverbs are more specific to talking. The second one points to the destructive powers of excessive, empty, idle talking, especially in tense situations, implying that one should know how much talking is enough. The message of the third one is similar, warning against unnecessary prolixity and garrulity, as they reveal intellectual poverty. By contrast, the fourth and fifth proverbs point to the greater danger lurking in a silent person than a talkative one, in that silence can mask real feelings and hide evil intentions. In other words, silences can be more threatening than arguments, even fierce ones. The existence and use of these proverbs suggest that, as in any other society, it is not talk or silence as abstract entities which are valued, but the amount, the content, the timing and the manner in which talk and silence are produced. Garrulousness and idle chatter can be more negatively viewed than taciturnity, even in a society which is said to be more talkative than others.

By contrast, English society is more individualistic, with the face saving concerns of self overriding those of the group. For example, the English may find it more constraining to express their negative emotions or troubles in front of other people, and they insist on their privacy and respect the privacy of others (Wierzbicka 1985: 164; Hannah 1987: 198) to a greater extent than is usual, say, in Mediterranean societies. Such

valuations clearly reduce the need and scope for certain forms of talk, for example, gossip and neighbourly chatting.

Tannen (1984) has introduced the concept of a conversational style continuum, with high-involvement and high-considerateness placed at its two ends. Greeks can be seen as possessing a high-involvement style (Tannen 1984: 29) which means, among other things, that they prefer discussing personal topics, shift topics abruptly and introduce new topics without hesitation. Furthermore, they use a fast rate of speech and rapid shifts in turn-taking and produce cooperative overlap, but they avoid interturn pauses, since silence shows lack of rapport (Tannen 1984: 30). Many of these devices grow out of and reflect a certain intolerance for silence.

By contrast, the English are assumed to follow a high-considerateness style, which means preference for impersonal topics and sticking to one topic at a time. Overlapping talk is not easily tolerated, as it indicates competition for the floor. On the paralinguistic level, a slower rate of speech and lengthier pauses characterise this style. Many of these devices grow out of and reflect intolerance for noise (see also Dendrinos 1986: 43).

The assumption made at the beginning of this section, that talkativeness rather than silence will characterise more positive politeness societies, seems to be justified and emanates from the very definitions of the two basic forms of politeness. Positive politeness is approach-based, whereas negative politeness is avoidance-based (Brown–Levinson 1987: 70). It is harder to approach people through silence or exchanges involving neutral topics, whereas it is easier to safeguard territories and social distance through silence. It has been suggested by Leech (1983: 141) that it is a presumptuous act to involve others in an interaction. But many positive politeness devices are characterised by a certain degree of presumptuousness (Brown–Levinson 1987: 126). In this way, speakers indicate knowledge of the addressees' desires and their own willingness to satisfy them. Furthermore, avoiding silence through phatic communion of the more personal type and/or the exaggeration characteristic of positive politeness serves to establish or consolidate the necessary shared common ground. However, another type of presumption is involved in not wanting to interact with others. This lack of interaction entails reliance on shared mutual knowledge for the execution of acts with very little or no verbalisation, which indicates a deep bond between interactants. As Scollon and Scollon (1995: 39) point out, "there are silences which can be interpreted as high involvement".

5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explore the relationship between silence and politeness. The two major theories of politeness phenomena barely touch on the issue of silence. Leech (1983) views silence as rather undesirable, mostly impolite behaviour which should be avoided, and briefly considers ways in which his theory of politeness could be extended to accommodate the need for lack of silence. Although it is true that it is polite to avoid remaining silent in certain contexts, this is an extremely partial treatment of the phenomenon of silence.

In sharp contrast, Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) regard silence as the ultimate expression of politeness, although they offer no discussion of it. However, their stance has provided the basis for the exploration of silence in relation to politeness in this chapter. I have argued that Brown and Levinson's superstrategy "Don't do the FTA" is inadequate to account for the multifaceted functions of silence, since this strategy relates to a very restricted number of instances. I have suggested that instead of treating silence as a separate superstrategy, the theory could be enriched by subsuming facets of silence under the other superstrategies, since it appears capable of realising positive, negative and off-record politeness. Given a particular context, silence, like forms of talk such as ellipsis, can realise the desire to avoid imposition or can indicate shared common ground.

Like talk, silence enables people to communicate both polite and impolite messages, but it is not talk or silence *per se* which lead to such implications. It is usually the absence of what is conventionally anticipated which loads both speech and silence with negative meaning and impolite implications.

Looking at silence cross-culturally, it is instructive to consider the predominant values of a society as they relate to talk and silence. In some societies, talk helps to release emotions, anxiety and tension and enables people to maintain balanced social relationships; verbalised uncertainty is non-threatening. In others, the release of emotions, anxiety and tension indicates aggression and should be avoided, and uncertainty is better tackled with silence (see Wardhaugh 1986: 234).

I have further suggested that societies with a negative politeness orientation will value silence more than societies with a more positive politeness orientation. This assumption is deduced from the very definitions of positive and negative politeness. Whereas negative politeness is centred on the addressee's desire to remain unimpeded, positive politeness focuses on the desire to belong to groups of people who share one's views and

values. This claim should not be taken to mean that silence has no place in a society with a positive politeness orientation or that talk is reduced to an absolute minimum in one with a negative politeness orientation. It simply means that polite interactions will require different amounts and different types of talk and silence in the two kinds of societies and that the two societies differ in what they understand the interpersonal function of language to be. Laver's (1975) distinction between neutral or uncommitted and personal or committed kinds of phatic communion offers a basis for the discussion of these differences, and Tannen's distinction between high-involvement and high-considerateness styles seems to provide further supportive evidence.

Notes

1. I would like to express my gratitude to the editor Adam Jaworski for his kind invitation to contribute to this volume on silence, which gave me the opportunity to consider an exciting aspect of politeness. Special thanks are due to my colleagues Eleni Antonopoulou, Bessie Dendrinos, Sophia Marmaridou, Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra and Angeliki Tzanne for their instructive comments on various aspects of this work. I would also like to record my gratitude to Irene Philippaki-Warburton for her valuable advice on this work and her constant and multifarious support, and to Peter Trudgill and Jean Hannah for having been, once again, an unending source of guidance, editorial assistance and support. Needless to say that all infelicities which remain are my own.
2. One could argue against this conceptualisation common among theorists (Lakoff 1973; Leech 1983; Brown–Levinson 1987 [1978]) which views politeness primarily as a means of avoiding conflict in interaction. Politeness is not just a means of restraining feelings but also a means of expressing them, and communication is not a kind of "fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavour" (Kasper 1990: 194), as the predictions of most theories would have us believe. Compliments and congratulations, for instance, are usually polite means of expressing positive feelings and solidarity with the addressee, at least in some cultures. However, Brown and Levinson (1987: 66) discern primarily face-threatening aspects even in such acts. Of course, whether an act is interpreted as face-threatening or not depends greatly on the speaker's judgement of the situation. Nevertheless, viewing almost all communicative acts as entailing threat and loss of face would leave speakers with little choice but to remain silent in many more instances than they actually do in order not to offend others and thus be polite, and would restrict communication to primarily referential functions. Consequently, we could suggest that it may be a good thing that people are not so frequently extremely polite.

3. As has been demonstrated in many pieces of research (see, for example, Herbert–Straight 1989), complimenting behaviour cannot be adequately understood outside the socio-cultural milieu in which it occurs. So attributing primarily face-threatening aspects to compliments may just reflect an ethnocentric bias in Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, or it may even result from the particular definition of compliments. The issue of variable definitions of speech acts cross-culturally has been addressed, among others, by Jaworski (1994).

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Part Three: Discourse analysis

Silence and the acquisition of status in verbal interaction

Richard J. Watts

1. Introduction

Whenever people interact verbally, power is exercised. One person acts, another reacts, and either interpersonal balance is achieved or imbalance is created. If I ask someone the time, I attempt to exercise power over that person by getting her/him to act on my behalf. The addressee can always ignore me, in which case my attempt fails. If I receive an appropriate response, my attempt is successful. On the other hand, by requesting information which I do not possess I reveal that, in this respect, I am less powerful than her/him. At least in Western cultures, my question is also an imposition on the addressee, and I can signal my awareness of the imbalanced situation by prefacing the question with a plea to be excused, by being indirect, by hedging, etc. If I receive an appropriate response, the balance of power is thereby restored.

We are so thoroughly used to negotiating power in verbal interaction that we become aware of doing so only when things go wrong, and it is at such points of imbalance in the interaction that silence becomes very significant. In the present paper I shall investigate instances of silence in verbal interaction among three family members. I shall argue that, while inter-turn and intra-turn silences need not always be interactionally significant, certain types of silence certainly are.

The model that I shall use for my analysis is one which I have developed in a number of publications (cf. Watts 1991, 1992, 1994) and which I call a "network/status" model. Since readers may not be familiar with this type of analysis, I shall explain it in section 2, and in that section I shall also suggest that my original assessment of the function of inter-turn and intra-turn silence as a marker of network shift was not quite correct. In section 3 I shall adapt the model to take account of the various roles that silence may play in verbal interaction and go on in the rest of the paper to justify the correction by presenting the data from which my own small analysis is selected in section 4 and providing an analysis of the extract in section 5. In section 6 I shall conclude the paper with an evaluation of the efficacy of the model as I have applied it to the phenomenon of silence in family discourse.

2. The network/status model of verbal interaction

In order for one individual to exercise power over another, s/he must have acquired at least an equal amount of social status to that other person. Social status can be acquired institutionally, i. e. for the purposes of the interaction in which they are involved one person's status as a member of a specific institution is perceived by both participants to be greater than that of the other (institutional status), or interactionally, i. e. given no assumptions concerning institutional status or given the assumption that both participants are of equal institutional status or with no knowledge of institutional status, status is acquired through certain acts carried out by one participant or the other (discourse status).

It is with discourse status that I am mainly concerned at present, although institutional status may always play a significant role in establishing discourse status. For instance, in the present paper I shall be looking at verbal interaction between three adult family members in which interactional status appears to be at a premium. Nevertheless, two participants are third generation family members and their relationships to the third, a second generation member, are mother and stepfather, and this fact may play a significant institutional role from time to time.

In terms of the verbal interaction in which individuals are involved, status is gained or lost by carrying out various kinds of verbal activity. Let us consider some examples. If speaker A orders or requests speaker B to carry out some action, whether verbal or non-verbal, and B complies, then A gains in status. B, however, does not necessarily lose status. If B refuses to comply, then A loses status. Once again, however, B's status does not necessarily change. If A requests information which s/he does not possess, and B provides that information, A neither gains nor loses status. If A requests information which s/he already possesses and can reasonably assume that B knows this to be the case, compliance on B's part would give A status. If the information requested in such a situation can be judged to be true or false, a false answer would cause B to lose status.

If speaker A asserts something, i. e. gives "descriptive information about situations, events, and actions in the world" (Schiffrin 1987) with a commitment to the "truth" of that information, then s/he has set up an argument position and gains in status by doing so. Any support of this position by A or any other member of the group will increase status still further. If the position is countered by B, A will lose the status s/he previously gained and B will gain status.

Agreement with A's position or support, or any part of these, by B will give A greater status, and, by the same token as above, disagreement will entail loss of status. Various forms of minimal listener response during A's ongoing turn at talk will also give her/him more status.

A position which is low on a scale of relevance[1] to previous utterances will entail loss and increase of status in various ways. If the immediately previous speaker's position is left uncommented on and other participants take up the new speaker's position and develop it, then this participant gains in status and the previous speaker loses. On the other hand, putting a non-relevant position is a risky thing to do, since it may simply be ignored. If this happens, the speaker loses in status. Similarly, an intervention into an ongoing speaker's turn may be risky from the point of view of status. If the person intervened perceives the intervention as being interruptive (see Watts 1991 for a discussion of the notion of interruption) and the interrupter is successful in directing attention away from the ongoing speaker, then s/he will gain in status and the person interrupted will lose. Otherwise, as in the case of non-relevant positions, the situation will be reversed.

There are clearly several other instances in which discourse status may be gained or lost, but for the moment those discussed above will suffice. If we translate gain and loss of status into a simple points system, it becomes possible to quantify status and to plot its increase and/or decrease through a whole interaction. Thus, a gain in status can be quantified as +1, a loss as −1 and no change as 0.

However, things are not quite as simple as I have made them out to be. One crucial question concerns the evaluation of a discourse strategy across cultures. My judgements on the value of verbal actions such as those discussed briefly above are typically Western European, possibly even typically British or, since I have been living and working in Switzerland for twenty-six years, typically Swiss German. As I have shown elsewhere (Watts 1992), they may even be typically male. Gumperz–Jupp–Roberts (1979) suggest that the nature of the response to questions put by interviewers of job applicants, e. g. whether the responses start with general information and home in on the specific information required by the interviewer or vice versa, is also culturally determined.[2] Nevertheless, after playing samples of my own recorded data to native speakers and non-native speakers and asking them to judge which participant is perceived to be dominant at which stage in the overall interaction, I have found that their assessments are fairly uniform and correspond well with the status values I have assigned.

Before we proceed, it is necessary to be absolutely clear about how the term "status" should be understood. In Watts (1991: 176) I make the point that "in a more abstract sense, a member's status is the degree to which her/his self-image[3] or positive face[4] corresponds to the perceptions of the other members". Thus, if a member of a group has a conception of herself/himself which does not match the conception that the other members have of her/him, s/he will be regarded by them either positively or negatively, i. e. s/he will gain or lose discourse status. If there is a match between the individual member's conception of herself/himself and that which the rest of the group has of her/him and if this is a feature of every member of the group, then that group will appear harmonious and egalitarian.

Now, it may be a feature of feminine discourse, particularly discourse among friends (Coates 1989), that this form of non-status social interaction is common. It may also be the case that discourse management among women aims at maintaining an egalitarian, supportive form of interaction in which there is very little status gain or loss. But even in the type of discourse in which co-participants are involved in sharing experience and creating space in which to verbalise their own individual affective responses, to dramatise and thus share their experiences, to give sympathetic support where it is needed by other members of the group, etc., a notion of individual, perhaps even group face or self-image, is still an important aspect of social interaction. In this kind of discourse, which, I maintain, can also be found amongst men, the group is probably more significant than the individual, or, rather, the individual attains a self-image (or, in my terms, discourse status) by virtue of belonging to the group. This will entail the possibility of the group identity being endangered by group members, which would surely lead to forms of social sanction by other group members and produce loss of discourse status.

One may also criticise the need to quantify discourse status by assigning points, as this appears to suggest that verbal interaction is simply a matter of amassing oneself as much status as possible. However, the notion of emergent network to which I shall shortly move shows that status, understood as I have outlined it above, fluctuates quite considerably throughout a whole interaction. A gain or loss in status during one network is easily offset in the next. In general, I believe that social interaction in which the co-participants perceive themselves as institutionally equal is constructed so as to maintain social equilibrium as far as possible.

In all male groups (and often in mixed sex groups) one certainly does gain the feeling that co-participants are trying to score against one an-

other. It also appears to be the case that the institutional value of discourse strategies in Western societies is weighted disproportionately in favour of those which are competitive rather than those which are cooperative (cf. Cheshire–Jenkins 1991; Jenkins–Cheshire 1990; Watts 1992). Perhaps a reweighting of values in favour of discourse strategies preferred by women would yield a different picture of the interpersonal relationships in a mixed sex group. Perhaps the analysis of groups of women should drop the notion of discourse status altogether, or at least redefine it to take account of the success or non-success of the interaction of women in their speech communities. For the present stretch of discourse, however, a status analysis is appropriate and yields interesting results. Before considering it in detail, however, we need to evaluate the function of silence in assessing discourse status; the present paper will focus more specifically on this problem.

The status values themselves are of little significance if they are not correlated in some way with the nature of the contacts between the interactants in a discourse. Oral verbal interaction (and probably most verbal interaction in written form as well) is not only characterised by its local organisation (cf. Atkinson–Heritage 1984) but also by its periodicity. Topics for talk of various kinds are tabled,[5] either formally or informally, and are dealt with in periods of interactive talk of varying lengths. If they are not dealt with exhaustively, they may be retabled with a different thematic orientation.

In examining oral interaction of different kinds these periods of topical talk are quite easily recognisable. The interactants are aware of when a topic change or reorientation has been tabled and can choose to take it up or not. If they do not, of course, the person who tabled the topic change loses status. Opening moves, or gambits (Keller 1979; Coulmas 1981), are metapragmatic terms which signal the speaker's intention to table or refocus a topic. They may occur in the form of discourse markers such as *now*, *right* or *okay* and signal a rupture in the continuity of the discourse. They frequently occur as a prefacing clause to a new position, e. g. *What I don't understand is ...*, *The thing is ...*, *What I want to know is ...*, or they may also occur as a question to the other interactants which expects no answer, e. g. *Did you hear about ...?*, *You know why?*, *Do you know X?*. As we shall see in the next section, silence also plays a role here.

On the assumption that periods of topically coherent talk are identifiable and constitute discrete units for analysis in verbal interaction, we might now ask ourselves what happens within the time space taken up by such a unit. Clearly, the interactants act towards and react to one

another verbally. They create verbal links with one another as the period of talk progresses. The links that are created can be represented as a network of interpersonal relationships which can then be analysed for each period of talk in exactly the same ways as social networks are analysed in social anthropology and sociolinguistics. The density of the network, the centrality of each participant in it and the degree of connection of the individual participants can be computed. The nature of the links can be examined. Are they unidirectional or reciprocal? What is the content of the links, i. e. what is their propositional content and their illocutionary force?

The term that I have coined in looking at periods of topical talk from this point of view is an *emergent network*, and my point is that when we interact with others we are constantly involved in series of emergent networks, in each of which we gain, lose or maintain discourse status. However, if status is lost in one network, it may be gained in the next. The basis for exercising power is continually negotiated from one emergent network to the next and can be plotted not only by status alone but also by the centrality of the individual in the network.

It is perfectly possible for an individual participant in a verbal interaction to be a central figure in a large number of emergent networks and yet to gain very little overall status or even to lose status. On the other hand, it is also possible for a peripheral figure to gain status. The relationship between these two values can be important in assessing the power that an individual has and may exercise during the interaction.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that my notion of network is different from the usual notion of social network in a number of significant ways. A social network is constructed as a description of the social links between individuals on the basis of observation, questioning individuals, etc. It is thus a static notion of a given pattern of interpersonal relationships holding at a specific point in time. An emergent network is dynamic in that it is built up through time and is the result of the interactional negotiation of the members. It is also short lived. It may, of course, capitalise on the relationships that exist between the participants prior to the interaction, i. e. in their social network, but it can also account for links between participants who have not previously been in social contact with one another.

In the data extract presented in section 4 there are seven emergent networks. However, since there are only three participants, network density scores will have a restricted range of three, 33.3%, 66.6% and 100%, of which only 66.6% and 100% actually occur. This will also lead to a

restricted range of only four possible centrality indices of 4, 3, 2.6 and 2 (if only two participants are on the floor). This greatly reduces the significance of network scores, and in my analysis of the extract in section 5 I shall concentrate exclusively on the notion of status.

The interpretation of a brief data extract in section 5 will serve to elucidate the efficacy of the model. However, we still need to ask in section 3 what role silence plays in assessing network centrality and status.

3. The role of silence in a network/status analysis

The significance of the length of inter-turn silence has been discussed by a number of scholars. Jefferson (1973) provides evidence to suggest that inter-turn silences of longer than 1.5 seconds lead to a perception of conversational dysfluency in North American verbal interaction. It would appear that any inter-turn silences of less than 1.5 seconds are not registered as in any sense unusual and are incorporated into the perception of fluent discourse. Maynard (1980) argues that an inter-turn silence of over 1.5 seconds is an indication to the co-participants in the interaction that the floor is vacant for the tabling or reorientation of a topic. Scollon–Scollon (1981) show that for American and Canadian Athabaskan Indians interactional fluency is only guaranteed if turns are always followed by a silence of around 2 seconds; in other words, their conceptualisation of appropriate behaviour in verbal interaction requires that length of inter-turn silence. Basso (1972, 1979) argues similarly and uses the discrepancy between the verbal behaviour of North American Whites and that of North American Indians to argue that it forms the principal basis for the whites' conceptualisation of Indians as being surly and uncooperative.

It was this rough estimate of a one-and-a-half second silence between turns which I also took as being one of the signals of a network boundary. My assumption (cf. Watts 1991: 177–178) was that, at least within Western European and North American white culture, a silence of more than 1.5 seconds between turns tended to indicate that a new topic could be tabled or an old topic refocused without the speaker having to signal the fact verbally with a discourse marker or a discourse gambit. But there were a number of problems with this assumption, which I shall deal with in this section, and, in effect, it was always possible to recognise the boundary of an emergent network without considering how long the inter-turn silences in my data extracts were. What, then, is the significance of the length of inter-turn silences? How do they differ, if indeed they do,

from intra-turn silences? Is an inter-turn silence of less than 1.5 seconds always imperceptible and thus uninterpretable to participants in verbal interaction?

My first modification of the network/status model is that in a verbal interaction in which the primary activity of the social interaction is talk,[6] an inter-turn silence of around 1.5 seconds is indeed a convenient boundary between perceived fluency and dysfluency in Western/North American cultural frameworks. However, just as Jefferson (1983b) suggests that a turn transition place is a "place" and not a point, i. e. an area of the interaction in which a shift to another speaker is possible, so too must we recognise that 1.5 seconds is probably the central point in a continuum which ranges from around 1.3 to around 1.7 seconds. This does not mean that an inter-turn silence of less than this always goes unnoticed. The data that I shall interpret in section 5 show that this is not the case.

My second modification is that in a talk-centred verbal interaction any inter-turn silence above this rough borderline will be open for interpretation. The silence, in other words, will be in some significant sense meaningful. In a verbal interaction in which some other social activity than talk is primary, an inter-turn silence above the borderline is highly likely to be interpretable in terms of the social activity in which the participants are involved, but not as a meaningful segment of that which is being said.

My third modification is that an intra-turn silence beyond the borderline of 1.3–1.7 seconds in talk-centred interaction will be accompanied by a number of paralinguistic and non-linguistic features which are meant to signal to the co-interactants that the ongoing speaker has not yet completed her/his turn. Whether or not that silence is in any way interpretable will depend very largely on the type and intensity of the accompanying signals.

My fourth modification returns to the notion of discourse status dealt with in section 2 and maintains that any interpretable silence may be used to add to or detract from the status of the silent speaker and/or her/his addressee. My argument is, therefore, that any silence in verbal interaction that is interpreted as communicatively meaningful will contribute towards the status of individual co-interactants in the emergent networks in which it occurs. Strategic use of silence may, in other words, significantly strengthen the status position of a participant and help to give her/him a position from which power may be exercised.

In section 5 I will illustrate through a close analysis of a short stretch of verbal interaction how silence can play an important part in the acquisition of status. To begin with, let us look in the next section at the data to be analysed.

4. The data extract and the social context in which it is embedded

The following data extract will serve as the basis for my analysis in section 5 of the different functions of silence. It is the beginning of a dinner-time conversation held between myself (R) and my parents (my mother B and my stepfather D) in early April 1983:

(1) Three-party dinner-time conversation, participants B, D, R

NETWORK 1

1 R: ???
2 B: Right. (0.9) Now :er(.): d'you want (0.5) sweet pickle or (.) pickled onions?
3 D: Sweet.
4 0.7
5 B: Right. There you are my dear.
6 D: Ta.
7 9.0
8 R: ??? (1.6) couple of pickled onions.
9 D: <clears throat>
10 B: hmm
11 11.5

NETWORK 2

12 B: Y'all right?
13 R: Yeah. Fine.This is mixing it. Cheers.
14 0.8
15 B: My gosh!
16 R: This is really mixing it.
17 D: [laughter]
18 R: Anyway.
19 B: He's full up with St Peter (1.3) and now he's got red wine.
20 D: And I've got Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
21 R: mmhmm
22 2.9

NETWORK 3

23 R: He's Armageddon.
24 0.5
25 B: mm
26 R: What were we talking about Armageddon yesterday?
27 2.1
28 B: Well Mabel's been to the[place where–
29 R: [Where the last battle's[(1.0) meant to–
30 D: [I don't know what
31 you'm agettin' but ah'm a gettin'–
32 0.7
33 R: Oh[god!
34 B: [laugh]
35 2.0

36 B: Where the last battle's supposed to take place.
37 3.5
38 R: mm
39 B: I don't know. I don't believe any of that.
40 6.6

NETWORK 4

41 B: Now what is this pork like cold?
42 0.8
43 R: mm I haven't tried it yet.
44 B: mm
45 3.2
46 D: Chewy.
47 1.1
48 B: Is it? mm
49 2.8
50 R: Yeah.
51 1.2
52 D: [coughs]
53 B: ??? is it.
54 1.6
55 D: [coughs]
56 B: Oh.
57 R: Doesn't melt in your mouth [but it's still (1.0) got a good taste to it.
58 B: mm
59 1.3
60 B: ???–
61 2.1
62 D: [clears throat]
63 6.3
64 R: ohhh (3.0) That's very nice.
65 B: Good.
66 3.5
67 D: I told you my knife didn't tell me wrong yesterday.
68 B: No.
69 24.8

NETWORK 5

70 D: Gordon is going to Bennett.
71 0.5
72 B: Gordon's going to Bennett's. Yes.
73 R: mm
74 B: Gordon Bennett. (0.6) :erm(.): to- (0.8) [clears throat] (0.9) you know, make
75 a bit of cash so they can pay M. and S. back quicker.
76 2.4
77 R: Wha- what does that mean in concrete terms? Does that mean/ does he/ he
78 does apart from his own work?[(1.5) He goes out working on spec as it
79 B: Yus.
80 were[???
81 B: mm
82 0.9

83 B: Well he's got/ he knows this (.) old gentleman his mother used to (.) do
84 cleaning for 'em[(0.6) years ago.
85 R: mm
86 1.6
87 B: But Ray 'n'/ they've got quite a bit of money. (1.9) 'e's a widower. He's
88 got quite a large nice house in Truro. (1.9) Well it's/ (1.3) He-
89 he'll/ he pays, you know for (1.3) painting.[(1.0) He does kitchen,
90 R: mmhmm
91 bathroom, bedrooms and all outside and/[(0.6) at various times.
92 R: mmhm
93 R: Does he pay him well?
94 B: mm
95 2.0
96 B: He'll probably (3.6) get about sixty quid this week for that. (0.7)
97 Well it's not/ (0.8) it's under the going rate, for instance.[Let's put
98 R: Sixty
99 B: it that way.
100 R: quid for one week?
101 1.1
102 B: mm
103 R: mmhm
104 1.7

NETWORK 6

105 R: Well how much did they borrow from M. and S.?
106 B: I don't know. [clears throat] (2.7) About a couple of hundred,wasn't it
107 David? Something like that.
108 4.8
109 D: [clears throat]
110 R: Well that's not very much, is it? I mean (.) couple of hundred?
111 4.3
112 B: Sally doesn't like owing money. She wants to pay it back as soon as
113 possible.
114 6.8

NETWORK 7

115 R: mm (1.5) Well who does like owing money?
116 2.9
117 B: mm
118 4.3
119 D: Who does?
120 R: mm
121 0.9
122 D: I can think of a few people.
123 0.9
124 R: I don't.
125 0.9
126 D: Whom I can name.
127 0.8
128 R: Who like owing money?
129 0.5

130 D: Yeah.
131 R: For example?
132 1.3
133 B: [low chuckle] Don't. [low laughter]
134 R: Go on.
135 1.7
136 R: Who?
137 5.8
138 B: [low laughter] Go on. You can name him if you want to.
139 2.2
140 D: Brother Les.
141 5.9
142 R: Okay. All right. Fine.
143 6.8
144 D: It was his proud boast that the shopkeepers of Basildon (0.7) ???–
[Break in the tape]

At the time of the recording B and D were living in a village in Cornwall. D is B's second husband and is ten years younger than her and fifteen years older than R. This is important from the point of view of my relationship to D, since I have always regarded him almost as an elder brother. D had gone to the same grammar school as me, and even had three or four teachers who taught me as well. He was able to help me when I found certain subjects difficult to handle. His institutional status was thus never that of "father". My relationship with B has always been very liberal. We might therefore conclude that institutional status plays a very marginal role indeed in extract (1). There is, however, one small, but important exception which concerns "brother Les" (line 140) and which will occupy us in section 5.

Immediately prior to the recording B, D and R had been playing shove-halfpenny, a traditional pub game which requires a great deal of skill and precision, and drinking some of the home-made barley wine brewed by R's Uncle Wally, which he calls "St Peter". It is important to note that R won the round of shove-halfpenny matches despite the fact that he had had no practice at the game for a number of years and that D is recognised, and indeed regards himself, as the family expert at the game. Since the day was a Monday, the traditional dinner was cold meat from the Sunday joint (in this case pork) with pickles and boiled potatoes. The drink served with dinner was a French red table wine, and at the beginning of the dinner all three participants, but particularly R, were already a little tipsy.

My visit to my parents followed on from a linguistics conference that I had attended at the University of Hull. Since I live and work in Switzerland, I generally combine a visit to friends and relatives with any academic work I may have in Britain. We had also visited my aunt and uncle

the previous day and been given some of Uncle Wally's St. Peter as a present. During the following week I also intended visiting my sister Sally and her family.

The tape-recorder was a small Sony walkman, which was placed on a sideboard behind the dinner-table and switched on as soon as B had brought the food in from the kitchen and sat down to serve up. D sat facing R, and B sat along the side of the dinner-table between D and R. All the participants were aware that a recording was being made, and this clearly had an effect on the reactions of R and D in Network 7, which ended with the recorder temporarily being switched off. Generally speaking, however, the reactions of family members throughout all the recording sessions (cf. Watts 1991; chapter 1) were as they would normally have been, although comments were sometimes made about the recorder or what was being recorded. The presence of the recorder was simply built into the social context and treated accordingly (cf. Wilson 1987 and 1994 for a discussion of the effects of the recording apparatus on the reactions of the participants).

The extract is divisible into 7 emergent networks as follows:

1. The verbal interaction in the first 10 lines of the transcript (including inter-turn silences) is focused entirely on the social activity of dishing out the meal and offering pickles.
2. In line 12 B asks R whether everything is in order. The focus of the verbal interaction thus shifts to the personal well-being of one of the participants, presumably because R has already drunk quite a lot of St. Peter and is now drinking red wine. R correctly infers that the topic has shifted to what he is now drinking and develops the topic a little, with D using the topic to make a joke about the name of the barley wine.
3. R reorients the topic slightly in line 31 in order to introduce the concept of Armageddon which Mabel (Wally's wife) had referred to the previous day. D, however, uses the word "Armageddon" as the basis for a word-play joke.
4. In line 41 B, who had the final turn in Network 3, shifts the topic back to the social activity of eating and asks about the quality of the cold meat. Assessments of the meat continue until line 68, after which there is a very long silence of over 24 seconds.
5. D breaks the silence by tabling a totally different topic. He does this once again by using a word-play. R's brother-in-law's surname was Gordon, and he had been doing some extra work decorating the house

of a Mr Bennett. There is a mild curse frequently used in the family to which he is referring here, viz. "Gordon Bennett!", and he can reasonably assume that B and R will infer that he is tabling the decorating work as a topic. It is indeed picked up and developed by B. It continues until line 103.

6. R's question in line 105 represents a refocusing of the topic. But, as we shall argue in section 5, it deliberately refocuses onto a taboo topic. R knows this perfectly well. He meets with a lack of cooperation on the part of both B and D to continue the topic despite a second question put in line 110.
7. In line 115 R asks another question which refocuses the taboo topic. It is followed by a silence of 2.9 seconds, a non-committal minimal listener response *mm* by B and a further 4.3 second silence before D takes up the challenge of R's question.

Network 7 is that on which I shall concentrate attention in the following section. N1 has a density of 66.6% with B the most central participant. N2 has a density of 100%, which results in no participant being more central than any other. N3 and N4 both have a density of 66.6% with R the central participant in N3 and B the central participant in N4. N5 and N6 also have a density of 66.6% with B the central participant in both. In N7 density is at 100% and no participant is central. From the point of view of network centrality B is central to four networks and R to one. D is never a central participant. There is, however, a very real sense in which R and D are perceived to be in competition with or even to be antagonistic towards one another in Network 7, and this antagonism can only be shown by returning to the notion of discourse status explained in detail in section 2.

5. Silence and the acquisition of discourse status

In this section I shall investigate in some detail the inter-turn and intra-turn silences in the stretch of verbal interaction presented and, wherever possible, link them to the notion of discourse status introduced in section 2. In relation to the modifications made to the network/status model presented in section 3, we shall have to distinguish between networks in the interaction in which the participants are more concerned with some other social activity than talk, i. e. in the present instance where they are

more concerned with the activity of eating dinner, networks in which talk-centred activity dominates, and those in which attempts are made to introduce viable topics for talk but where, in effect, the dominant activity is still that of eating dinner.

The major modification made to the model is that it is only in those networks in which talk-centred activity dominates that silences longer than 1.3–1.7 seconds which do not function as network boundary markers may be interpretatively significant. As we shall see, however, this principle may also need further revision. Silences shorter than 1.3 seconds may also be perceptually salient and lend themselves to interpretation in terms of discourse status if they coincide closely with other discourse features, in particular with that of speech rhythm, as we shall see in the analysis of Network 7.

I shall first consider Network 1, which is a clear example of non-talk-centred social activity. I shall then discuss Networks 2 and 3, which contain (failed) attempts to table topics which would divert attention away from the activity of eating dinner. Network 4 is an abortive attempt to table a topic based on the assessment of what the participants are eating and ends in a very long inter-turn silence of 24.8 seconds. I shall then turn my attention briefly to Networks 5 and 6, before I concentrate in more detail on what happens in Network 7 and the very salient uses of silence in that network.

5.1 Status and silence in Network 1

The two long inter-turn silences in Network 1 in line 7 (9 seconds) and line 11 (11.5 seconds) occur in verbal interaction which is focused entirely on the social activity of the participants serving themselves, or having themselves served, with the variety of pickles to go with the cold meat. It is therefore not talk-centred. The 11.5 second silence also appears to close this activity before the next sequence of talk, and one can imagine the participants engaged in helping themselves to the pickles before beginning to eat the meal. The 9 second silence in line 7, however, is, as we shall see, problematic.

Before we consider it in more detail, let us first consider the question of discourse status in this non-talk-centred sequence of verbal interaction. Nothing which is uttered in Network 1 would allow any of the participants to gain status points. No requests are made, no positions put and no supportive minimal responses are made.

Nevertheless, B does have a form of institutional status, in that she is the person who has prepared the meal and is invested with the authority to serve it to the others. She is, in a sense, in charge of the situation; she possesses the institutionalised power to offer the choice of pickles to the two other participants. However, this power is not gained through what she says in Network 1. I thus conclude that discourse status does not play a role here. Nevertheless, the 9 second inter-turn silence between D's turn in line 6 and R's turn in line 8 does not mark the end of the network. Even though the beginning of R's turn is not clearly audible, it is obvious that he is responding to B's offer in line 2. So it would appear that, whatever happened during the 9 second silence, there is nothing in what is said that would indicate anything significant about the participants' attitudes towards one another.

On the other hand, something does indeed appear to be amiss. It is not clear from the transcription of the audio recording whether B's offer in line 2 is addressed to both R and D, or merely to D. If the latter is the case – and the interaction between lines 3 and 6 would favour this interpretation – then why is it that R is excluded?

Section 4 attempted to contextualise the stretch of interaction. One of the principles of classical conversation analysis is to derive interpretations from the local organisation of verbal interaction. An analysis of the local organisation has left us with an anomaly, which can only be solved by looking at the interaction within the wider social and historical context of beliefs and assumptions which members of this particular extended family may or may not share with one another. It is therefore significant to consider what happened immediately prior to beginning the meal.

The participants had been playing a round of shove-halfpenny matches and drinking (particularly R) Uncle Wally's home-made barley wine. R was the overall winner, but the generally acknowledged family expert at the game is D, who is very proud of his expertise. In view of the fact that R is not quite sober, it could quite easily be the case that D harbours feelings of resentment towards him. This would account for B openly offering the choice of pickles to D and then serving him, whereas R has to serve himself. Placed within this wider frame of assumptions shared by the participants, the 9 second silence suddenly becomes meaningful. It indicates that R has been excluded from B's offer (whether intentionally or not must remain an open question), and it effectively lowers R's discourse status. It also sets the tone for the next few networks. There is at least a degree of under-the-surface tension, particularly between R and D, which culminates in the open conflict in Network 7.

5.2 Attempting to find a discourse topic: Networks 2 and 3

Networks 2 and 3 are characterised by two attempts to introduce a discourse topic, both of which are thwarted by D and B. B's question in line 12 is aimed at R and refers to the fact that R is not quite sober. It gives R the opportunity of putting the position *This is mixing it* twice, once in line 13 and again in line 16. In line 15 he receives a response from B (*My gosh!*) and in line 17 from D (laughter). Although he gains 4 status points, the topic of drink is not developed at all. In fact the network is brought to a close by D's joke in line 20, which is supported by R in line 21, thus giving D two status points. The only silence which deserves mention here is the intra-turn silence of 1.3 seconds in B's turn, which is not interpretable as a marker of turn completion since B uses a high rising intonation pattern on *Peter*, indicating that she has not completed her turn but is cognitively planning the next part of it. Note, however, that the antagonism between R and D is still latently present in this network.

The silence of 2.9 seconds in line 22 is a marker of network completion, but there are three inter-turn silences in Network 3 of longer than 1.7 seconds which need interpretation, the 2.1 second silence in line 27, the 2 second silence in line 35 and the 3.7 second silence in line 37. R's assessment of D in line 23 is an attempt to capitalise on D's joke in line 20 in order to introduce the topic of Armageddon. His position does not immediately draw a response, and he is thus unable to increase his discourse status. His refocusing of the topic by putting it as a question addressed directly to B fails to draw an immediate response from B. The 2.1 second silence between the question and the response appears to indicate a deliberate reticence on the part of B to develop the topic, which detracts from R's discourse status.

R's attempt to appropriate B's response and D's flippant interruption in lines 30–31 to joke R by creating a wordplay out of *Armageddon* (*ah'm a-gettin'*) further decrease R's discourse status to −3. D receives appropriate responses from both R and B in lines 33 and 34, which increases his status to 2.

At this point the network could be taken as closed, but B waits for 2 seconds before reformulating R's interruptive utterance in line 29, which was probably what she had intended to say to complete her turn in line 28. This merely highlights R's low discourse status. Once again the network could be taken as completed at the 3.5 second silence in line 37, but R attempts to use the same strategy as B. The strategy fails with B's total dismissal of the topic in line 39, which again diminishes R's status to −4.

Throughout the first three networks of this stretch of interaction, R's discourse status has been systematically lowered by both B and D, the use of inter-turn silences of over 1.7 seconds being one of the discourse strategies employed. No topic has found favour with all the participants, and the overall impression is not only that the discourse has not progressed at all, but also that there is a great deal of latent tension between R, on the one hand, and, in particular, D, on the other. In Network 3, tension also develops between R and B. It is thus not surprising that there is a lengthy silence of 6.6 seconds before B again focuses on a topic which is closely linked to the social activity of eating dinner, viz. the quality of the cold meat.

5.3. Redirecting the discourse: Network 4

During Network 4 there are a number of inter-turn silences longer than 1.3–1.7 seconds, a silence of 3.2 seconds in line 45, of 2.8 seconds in line 49, of 2.1 seconds in line 61, of 6.3 seconds in line 63 and of 3.5 seconds in line 66. In addition there is a silence of 3 seconds in line 64, which may either be interpreted as an intra-turn silence, or even as an inter-turn silence, meaning that R in fact takes two turns at that point rather than just the one. The utterance *ohhh* is an affective response to tasting the cold pork, and as the following utterance *That's very nice* verbalises R's reaction more specifically, the two utterances have been taken as one turn.

As in Network 1 there would not appear to be any reason for positing the acquisition of discourse status in Network 4. R's assessment in line 57 *Doesn't melt in your mouth but it's still got a good taste to it* and D's position in line 67 *I told you my knife didn't tell me wrong yesterday* might warrant the assumption that R and D increase their discourse status marginally, but this is not the salient point about the network. A return to the neutral activity-focused topic leads to a temporary relaxation of the tension felt during the first three networks.

The silences can be explained as a consequence of the fact that the participants have begun to eat the meal. Note that when B asks D and R what they think of the meat, R explicitly points out in line 43 that he hasn't yet begun to eat it. D's reaction in line 46 to B's request follows a 3.2 second silence, indicating that he has just begun to eat. The almost complete lack of a need to postulate the acquisition of discourse status in this network correlates with a greater concentration on the activity of eating the meal. This renders the inter-turn silences uninterpretable from

the point of view of the actual discourse. Note also the very long silence of 24.8 seconds separating Network 4 from Network 5, in which the participants can be presumed to be eating.

5.4. Agreeing on a topic: Networks 5 and 6

The general topic of earning extra money to pay back debts, which runs through Networks 5, 6 and 7, is introduced by another somewhat facetious remark by D. The term Gordon Bennett is a mild swearword commonly in use in this family's discourse. But Gordon is also the surname of R's brother-in-law and Bennett is the surname of the old man for whom R's brother-in-law does some house painting and decorating in his spare time. The reason for him doing this, as B mentions in lines 74–75, is to earn a little more money to pay back a debt.

As far as B and D are concerned, nothing more needs to be said on this subject, and the 2.4 second silence in line 76 could be taken as the boundary marker between two networks. R, however, is not in the picture either with respect to the extra work that his brother-in-law is doing or with respect to the debt that they want to pay back, and he reactivates the topic of the network by explicitly asking for more information. Throughout the rest of Network 5 B is given space and time to elaborate on who Mr Bennett is and what sort of work R's brother-in-law does for him. R gives her a lot of support in the form of minimal responses (lines 85, 90 and 92) and keeps the topic going by asking in line 93 whether Mr Bennett pays him well. The inter- and intra-turn silences are marginally over the limit of 1.7 seconds, with the one exception of the 3.6 intra-turn silence in line 96. However, since B has been given the green light to explain the situation in detail to R and he has not yet received all the information he needs, the silences indicate merely that B has a prerogative over the conversational floor. In using this prerogative to the full she gains a discourse status score of 7.

In line 105 R refocuses the topic slightly to the amount of money his sister and brother-in-law have borrowed, and in doing so he enters a rather dangerous area. He knows that this is the case, and he could choose to drop the topic entirely. But his loss of discourse status over the first three networks leads him to challenge B and D on what he knows is a very explosive topic.[7] He is, in other words, on the offensive.

In Network 6 this becomes clear from the length of inter- and intra-turn silences. In lines 106–107 B's 2.7 second silence does not indicate that she does not know how much is owed but rather that she is very

unwilling to state the sum. She hands the floor to D, who waits for 4.8 seconds before simply clearing his throat. R immediately challenges the significance of the amount, but has to wait for 4.3 seconds before B gives a response (*Sally doesn't like owing money*) which plays completely into R's hand. The effect of the two lengthy silences of 4.8 and 4.3 seconds is to increase the tension between R and B/D, which was what R intended with his question in line 105. They both increase R's discourse status and help to put him in a position of power from which he can choose to launch the controversial topic of Network 7.

5.5. Open conflict: Network 7

Even without knowledge of the shared background assumptions of the participants, Network 7 is easily recognisable as conflictual. R's question in line 115 is a deliberate provocation, a kind of verbal bait set to intimidate D into a response. R knows which family member "likes" owing money and knows that D and B know this too. The outside observer is able to make these assumptions at the latest after D's retaliatory question *Who does?* in line 119 and R's confirmation in line 120 (*mm*) that he is looking for a concrete response.

However, D manages to avoid naming the person R is thinking of, despite R's continual baiting, until B, in line 138, gives him the freedom to name him – *Go on. You can name him if you want to.* After D finally does so in line 140, R backs down. It is as if he does not really want to provoke the argument that is simmering just below the surface, and in line 144 D, probably quite relieved that R has not chosen to carry the controversy further, refocuses the topic in what would be a new emergent network to give support for his position that "brother Les" likes owing money. Interestingly enough, it is also at that point that the tape is switched off. R clearly considers that any information concerning the dispute between his brother and D and B, which in effect also involves himself, should not be recorded. For personal reasons I shall refrain from giving the reader all the details of this dispute. The background assumptions are certainly important to gain a full understanding of the situation, but it is the way in which the conflict is managed which is significant to the substance of the present paper. The analysis of the interaction thus far has shown that R is unable to build up discourse status. In Network 6, however, he manages to table a topic which could lead to interpersonal conflict, and in line 115 this is the tactic he chooses. Does he do so because he has so far felt disadvantaged in the interaction and is therefore

prepared to risk tabling the taboo topic of owing money to regain discourse status? Or is it simply because his victory at shove-halfpenny prior to the interaction and his mild state of inebriation make him reckless? If so, why does he give way to this recklessness? Does he wish to establish a position of power with respect to D? Does he wish to reopen a discussion of the problem involving his brother and to justify his own part in the dispute?

There is no clear answer to the question as to why he introduces the taboo topic at the point that he does. In all probability, each of the above questions could be answered in the affirmative. What is very interesting, however, is how the conflict is carried out between R and D and the significant role that inter-turn silences play in structuring it. The network can be subdivided into 4 sections with respect to the distribution of inter-turn silences. The first section from line 115 to line 118 is characterised by relatively long silences of 2.9 seconds in line 116 and 4.3 seconds in line 118. R's question in line 115 is directed equally at D and B, and the 2.9 second silence can be interpreted as doubt on their part as to how to deal with it. They sense what R is after here and are loath to accept what constitutes an open challenge. B's minimal response in line 117 is totally non-committal. It can be interpreted as a refusal to allow herself to be baited, but the 4.3 second silence which follows would allow D to change the topic. By doing so, he would damage R's discourse status still further and could not be sure that R would not simply retable the topic and insist that the subject be discussed. His strategy is to repeat part of R's question. It is a challenge to R to state whether he really wants to continue or whether it would not be preferable to redirect the topic.

In line 120 R immediately confirms that he would like to continue, thus opening the second section of the network which lasts until line 130. The salient feature of this section is the regularity with which D and R allow for relatively short, but very significant inter-turn silences of between 0.5 and 0.9 seconds in lines 121, 123, 125, 127 and 129. In a normal verbal interaction silences as brief as this would not be accorded much interpretive significance. In this case, however, they separate each turn cleanly from the next. If we look at the structure of the discourse in terms of speech rhythm, each silence occupies roughly the length of a metrical foot, which is deliberately left unoccupied by linguistic material. It is as if the silent feet mark off space between the two opponents, space which they need to size one another up before the next utterance, the utterances themselves being like the probing jabs of boxers that are not meant as proper punches, but are rather used to test the defences of the opponent.

When we reach line 130, we still do not know explicitly who D is thinking of, although by now we can infer that both R and D are focusing on the same person.

R's utterance in line 131 is like a proper punch and is not separated by an inter-turn silence. It is a direct challenge to D to state who he means, and it signals the beginning of the third section, which lasts till line 136. B's turn in line 133 is directed at R and is a plea for him to stop provoking D. At the same time she is also amused at D's refusal to name the person; she is perfectly aware of who is being referred to. R's injunction to D to name the person explicitly is, to use the boxing metaphor once again, a further blow. He receives no response and after a 1.7 second silence he repeats the blow, this time focusing very clearly on the unnamed identity – *Who?*

The fourth and final section of the network begins at the long inter-turn silence of 5.8 seconds in 137 and continues until line 142, in which R relents in order to prevent a rather violent controversy and a possible family crisis. At this point in the analysis the reader will have to take my word for this assessment. In brief, the shared knowledge of all three family members converge on an incident (which also involved R) at which relationships were temporarily severed between R's brother and his parents. The peripheral problem concerned a loan made by D to R's brother, which the latter never paid back. The deeper problem, however, concerned an accusation made by D immediately after the incident that R had not supported B against his brother, as D feels he should have done. Needless to say, D and R were (and still are) in disagreement on this point. The development of the topic of borrowing money in Networks 5–7 shows that R wishes to open up the discussion once again, possibly in order to justify his behaviour at the time of the controversy. In line 142 he changes his mind and backs down.

If we now look at the inter-turn silences in line 137 (5.8 seconds), line 139 (2.2 seconds) and line 141 (5.9 seconds), we note that they are not only much longer than the inter-turn silences in the second section of Network 7 but also that they are well over the limit of 1.3–1.7 seconds for fluent talk-centred speech which does not contain a topic change (cf. the discussion in section 3). They thus require interpretation. Note that in the original family dispute there were two points on which D based his personal assessment of the behaviour of the family members involved and his consequent severing of relationships with R's brother. The first point was the loan that was never paid back – which in effect was really the peripheral problem – and the second point was R's brother's treat-

ment of B. This problem went much deeper since it also involved R. R's brother had accused B, essentially truthfully if a little dramatically, of having rejected him during his childhood by devoting most of her energy to the relationship with D. R had simply tried to calm his brother but had not denied the latter's accusations. Since B was therefore the centre of the dispute, she is the only person who can break the deadlock in the discourse. Her low laughter in line 138, which in fact accompanies rather than precedes her injunction *Go on*, is an indicator that she is aware of the tension and of the responsibility which she now has. Even after she has enjoined D to name R's brother, it still takes D 2.2 seconds to do so. The final 5.9 second silence in line 141 is the crucial point at which R decides not to take the topic further.

During the network R has gained a great deal of discourse status. If it was his purpose to win back the status that he had lost at the beginning of the interaction, he has more than succeeded. He has in fact achieved a position of power from which he can pressure B and D into reopening the discussion of the family dispute. But the risks are far greater than any gains he might achieve. The gravest risk he runs is that of disturbing the delicate distribution of rights, obligations, duties, etc. that are considered to be present in this section of the family. Certain differences of opinion, particularly those concerning the family dispute, have been pushed conveniently into the background. In Network 7 he begins to foreground these once again but finally shies away from the consequences, viz. a renewal of the dispute and a temporary rupture of relationships between himself and his parents. He is, after all, their guest, and his visits from the continent are rare enough without making interpersonal contact even more difficult. The costs of continuing the controversy are far greater than the gains he could make by justifying his actions at the time of the dispute.

6. Conclusion

Throughout Network 7 the inter-turn silences fulfil different functions, whether they are well below or well above the 1.3–1.7 second limit for fluent verbal interaction. Those functions are partly interpretable in terms of what is said by the participants, by the progress of the topic and the interpersonal reactions throughout the network. They can only be fully interpreted, however, by assessing the interaction against a shared background of knowledge from which each participant will have inferred different kinds of assumption.

This last point indicates that silences in verbal interaction, particularly those between turns at talk, will yield far richer interpretations if the interaction in which they occur is submitted to an analysis in terms of relevance theory. However, a relevance theoretical approach to verbal interaction still depends on knowledge of the sets of assumptions already held by participants, which will form a basis against which alterations can be made in accordance with newly processed information. The application of relevance theory to real discourse data has not, to my knowledge, been attempted in interactional sociolinguistics, but it offers a very fruitful, promising area of further research.

My own model of network/status analysis of discourse is helpful in many ways in allowing the researcher to gain a closer perspective of how power is acquired in ongoing discourse and how it is distributed throughout the total interaction. Clearly, an asymmetric social situation in which participants with different levels of institutional status interact would require the analyst to devise ways of taking that asymmetry fully into account. However, the family interactions which form part of my own data reduce institutional status to a minimum. The model also allows a certain amount of rather basic quantification which can be correlated not only with the kinds of qualitative analysis carried out in ethnographically oriented work but also with the subjective reactions of participants and third persons after the event.

What has emerged from the present analysis is that inter-turn silences, particularly those of more than 1.7 seconds' duration, contribute in significant ways to the acquisition or loss of discourse status. This was very clear at the beginning of the extract presented for analysis, in which R's status diminished, and also at the end of the extract, in which the long silences offered the participants the opportunity of continuing the conflict and of losing or gaining personal status but at the same time of risking a dangerous rift in the harmonious interpersonal structure of relationships between the family members, or of not responding and allowing the topic to be changed, a very face-damaging thing to do. The silences were, in other words, meaningful both to the participants at the time when the interaction took place and to the researcher in reconstructing not only what was happening, but also why and how.

The analysis of Network 7 also revealed the need to consider more closely the discourse significance of very short silences. During the analysis I made the point (although I did not, for reasons of space, elaborate on it) that a rhythmic analysis of discourse would need to take account

of short, almost imperceptible silences at the prosodic level of the syllable and the metrical foot. Couper-Kuhlen (1989, 1990, 1992) has shown quite convincingly that applying a prosodic analysis of discourse data can also greatly enrich the interpretation of discourse.

The close analysis of discourse, including silence, that I have offered here is not simply a different form of conversational analysis. If it were, I would be concerned only with the local structural organisation of talk, the mechanisms of turn-taking, floor occupation and topic introduction, etc. Throughout my close analysis I have pointed out the need to see the extract within a far wider social framework. It is important to know what occurred prior to the interaction, to assess the possible states of mind of the participants when the interaction begins, to consider events of great importance to the participants themselves, e. g. the family dispute which lies at the bottom of the conflict in Network 7 is in many ways the driving force behind the interaction, but had taken place at least one and a half years prior to it.

The analysis of silence, like the analysis of the rest of the discourse, is informed here by several ideas from social anthropology, the most important of which are the following:

1. the ethnographic analysis of an extract of social interaction which ultimately consists in building up the web of intertwined observations that can never be exhausted, but might yield a set of patterns and structures on which hypotheses can be developed,
2. the notion that connections between human beings relate those human beings to one another in sets of networks at different levels of social activity, including apparently unimportant talk,
3. the idea that individuals, although they stand in different relationships to social groups in different types of human society, nevertheless are still individuals with some sense of who they are and what their own value is,
4. the significance of kinship relationships for forms of human behaviour, even though, taken out of the kinship system, individuals might never associate with other individuals who are their kin.

I began this paper with a brief explanation of where I stand as a researcher in relation to the notion of power. I shall close it in a similar way. In effect, one might suggest that using language is a way of exercising power, or at least an attempt to do so even if the attempt fails. This does not mean that because we can manipulate language, we are all

automatically seeking to dominate over others. Power simply means the potential to get others to do things that we would like them to do. That is not, in itself, something evil; we are, after all, also the potential objects of power for others. It does mean, however, that we have to learn how to deal with this potential in a large number of what Bourdieu (1982) calls different language markets. Silence is as much a part of our manipulation of the conventions of each marketplace as talk, and since much of discourse is silence, it deserves to be given as much interpretive attention as talk – or at least the relationship between talk and silence in linguistic and sociolinguistic research should not be uniquely tipped in favour of talk.

Notes

1. The notion of relevance which is being used here is that which has been put forward by Sperber–Wilson (1986). As I shall not use relevance theory explicitly in my analysis, I shall refrain from going into detail here and simply refer readers to the reference above.
2. However, see Kandiah (1991) and Sarangi (1994) for alternative analyses of their data.
3. The term "self-image" is taken from Goffman (1959).
4. "Positive face" should be understood as the term is used by Brown–Levinson (1978), though I am not using it here in relation to the notion of politeness.
5. I understand the term "topic" as do Keenan–Schieffelin (1983), viz. as "the propositional structures presupposed by what [the participants] utter" (Watts 1991: 49) for which there will be a primary focus, that which Keenan–Schieffelin call the "question of immediate concern" to the participants.
6. I shall henceforth call this type of interaction "talk-centred discourse/verbal interaction".
7. So far in this article I have given an explicit indication of the exact value of an individual's discourse status in order to convey some indication of the power of the network/status model of discourse analysis. On the assumption that the reader is familiar with the way in which increase and decrease of discourse status is computed, I shall henceforth not give any further precise measurements so as to allow her/him to concentrate on the basis of the argument involving the significance of silence.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions

Sequences of talk have been transcribed according to the following conventions:

1. Overlapping speech is marked by vertical alignment of text linked by square brackets.
2. Brief (unmeasurable) pauses are shown as (.). Longer, measured pauses are timed in seconds, for example 2.9.
3. Hesitation is marked with /.
4. Indecipherable or inaudible sequences are marked with ???.
5. Commentaries on prosodic or paralinguistic features are given within square brackets.

Discourses of the unsayable: Death-implicative talk in geriatric medical consultations[1]

Nikolas Coupland and Justine Coupland

1. Introduction

The starting point for Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* is that the fear of death, at least in adults, is universal. Death, Becker argues, is the "worm at the core" of psychological life (1973: 15). It may be at its most detectable at the developmental stage, around 10 years of age, when children's first awareness of mortality, of more or less guaranteed permanent absence, shows itself in nightmares and profound anxieties (1973: 20). But the relative waning of such episodes does not mean that the fear itself abates or is overcome. Becker's thesis is that we engage in a systematic repression of our death-fears, "blotted out by frenetic, ready-made activity" (Becker 1973: 23). We live as if we are immortal, whether or not we make a version of this claim overtly in professing of some sort of religious faith.

Becker claims that we cannot confront the full weight of the human paradox: that we are unboundedly creative and reflexive beings but physically incorporated in decaying bodies that betray their evolutionary link with the lowest forms of animal life. What he considers to be the "healthy" response is repression of death and mortality. Repression is to be seen as "normal self-protection and creative self-restriction" (Becker 1973: 178).

There are several positions from which Becker's thesis might be critiqued. One is the view that he arguably over-dignifies humankind, relative to other beings, with innate sensitivities and spiritual potential; our day-to-day experience of human moral behaviour may not support this idealised view. A more fundamental problem is that Becker gives us no means of *witnessing* repression, and he himself acknowledges that silenced or repressed fears and *absent* fears may have similar behavioural correlates. On the other hand, there is no need to equate repression with simple absence, or silencing with literal silence (Jaworski 1993). After all, repression is classically interpreted to be a "defence mechanism", a set of

processes by which some profound realities are blocked from consciousness or have their implications obscured or attenuated. A perspective which takes language to be primarily a mode of social accomplishment can appropriately be directed at understanding *how* repression is achieved – or resisted – during social interaction, in the discursive acts of individuals or whole communities. This is the general agenda that our chapter addresses: where and how can the repression of death-fears, and forces in opposition to repression, be shown to have a sociolinguistic dimension?

Becker's thesis also lacks an adequately differentiated lifespan perspective. His central claims are in fact strongly echoed in some recent theoretical treatments of social ageing that we shall introduce below. But his perspective seems to be predominantly that of the young adult whose mental health depends on the feasibility of not confronting mortal fears. On the other hand, *late* life – our concern in this chapter – offers many challenges to the device of healthy repression. Approaching the end of what tends to be called "the lifecourse" forces a new perspective on mortality. As we age, the evidence of our ageing, incorporated selves can less plausibly be ignored. If Becker's general position is at all correct, late life potentially offers profound challenges to our psychological health and morale when we are forced to demythologise and "de-repress" death. And cycles of repression and de-repression will predictably characterise talk which involves older speakers.

This is not at all to endorse the social stereotyping of old age in western societies and to claim that old age is necessarily and fundamentally associated with declining health and incapacity, or with psychological instability. Much of our own previous work has in fact been devoted to exploring and critiquing this core aspect of societal ageism (Coupland–Coupland–Giles 1991; Coupland–Coupland 1994; Coupland–Nussbaum 1993; Nussbaum–Coupland 1995). But how we orient to our own mortality is a crucial aspect of the experience of social ageing. Butler (1963) and Erikson (1982) have argued that in old age, the awareness of the end of life triggers key psychological tasks, such as developing integrity and life reviewing. Marshall (1975) portrays late ageing as increasingly involving a sensitivity to time, with the present shaped by an extensive past, limited future, and preparation for impending death (cf. also Rawlins 1995). Munnichs (1966, 1992) has stressed that the growing awareness and acceptance of death are major developmental tasks of adulthood and a crucial part of the dynamic of ageing. Yet older people's attitudes to death, to the awareness that their life is coming to an end, have received little attention in their own right. A few researchers have

commented on how readily older people discuss death (Lieberman–Tobin 1983; Schneider 1987). However, Coleman (1995) points up a general deficit in the literature, which, paired with societal taboos about discussion of death, leaves discursive manifestations of attitudes to death in a variety of social contexts as yet largely unexplored.

The representation of death – whether involving repression and silence, overt confrontation, or a mass of partial and variable negotiated stances – should be of central concern to lifespan theorists. Below, we review some recent social gerontological literatures which have endorsed Becker's basic psychoanalytic model. Then we review some specifically linguistic and interactional studies which illustrate how death and ageing itself are indeed subject to repression and silencing. Finally, the main body of the chapter is devoted to considering the thematisation of death in one specific context – geriatric medicine. We give an account of the discursive means by which death is made salient by elderly patients in more or less explicit ways, and is sometimes deflected and palliated by doctors. The analysis suggests, most obviously, that Becker's claims about repression are put too generally: domains such as geriatric medicine do sustain discourses about death as an inherent element of their constitution. But, more importantly, the data suggest that repression is indeed an appropriate term to characterise some of the systematic discursive work that doctors themselves do in relation to themes of death, mortality and the end of the lifespan, even in this geriatric medical context. Beyond the immediate discourse analyses, we want to suggest that studying repression as a set of local processes within medical interactions gives insight into contemporary ideologies of ageing and elderliness.

2. Ageing, ageism, repression and silencing

Some recent critical theoretic writings have isolated *denial of ageing* not so much as a psychoanalytic universal but as the cornerstone of contemporary social ageism in the west[2]. Perhaps the richest contemporary perspective is Woodward's (1991) interpretation of *Aging and its Discontents*. Working in the post-Freudian psychoanalytic tradition, and building her accounts primarily around literary representations, Woodward argues that the dominant contemporary western response to old age and ageing is, once again, repression. Working outwards from personal anecdotes about the unwatchability of elderly nude forms, she argues that the repression of old age is in part a Freudian legacy, since "Freud repressed

the subject of aging in his construction of a powerful discourse of subjectivity and generational relations so firmly anchored in infancy and early childhood" (Woodward 1991: 9). This is a tradition that predisposes us to "reproduce dark if not tragic portraits of aging" (Woodward 1991: 10) which she shows are commonplace as literary representations. This is one facet of the supposed pathology of "gerontophobia", as discussed by Bunzel (1972) and Levin–Levin (1980). (We say "supposed" because it is at least possible that pathologising fear and hatred of ageing and the elderly is one ageist strategy for legitimising discrimination.)

Cole's (1986) historical contextualisation of ageism connects well to Woodward's ideas about contemporary repressive responses. Cole contrasts a pre-industrial and essentially religious mythology of old age, which was able to infuse spiritual meaning into late life, with a secularised and far more materialistic conception. The nineteenth century generated a dualistic vision of old age, still prevalent, which contrasted decay and dependency with health, virtue and self-reliance (Cole 1986: 123). Effectively, Cole argues, this was the birth of the modern myth that old age is intrinsically no different from youth, except in its supposedly deviant (frail and decremental) forms. The consequence is a western ideology that silences old age, largely in that we no longer perceive old age to have a legitimate place as a distinct period of lifespan occupancy with its own spiritual agenda.

In fostering the alternative myth of a normatively healthy and "youthful" old age, and very largely as part of an "anti-ageist" ideology (Coupland–Coupland 1993b; Coupland–Coupland–Giles 1991), we may be cutting away old age's established territory, creating an ideological vacuum in which older people must strive to exist. As Cole also argues, we thereby actively construct the "deviant" cases of ill health and frailty as marginal, and certainly as less acceptable. Elderly frailty, if we can extend Woodward's idea, is *unwatchable* in this more profound sense and liable to be silenced in contemporary western discourses of ageing.

The analysis has much in common with Guggenbuhl-Craig's treatise on the "pitfalls of the health/wholeness archetype" (1980: 21). In a human environment where (Guggenbuhl-Craig says) we need to accept ill health and infirmity as the *normal* condition, if we assert and assume that good health and vitality in old age are not only viable but normative, we store up dissatisfactions and prejudices for ourselves and our ageing identities.

It is again consistent with societal repression of ageing that the condition of old age itself should be fraught with uncertainties and contradictions. And Hagestad (1985) has independently argued that the social role

of, for example, grandparenting is a highly ambiguous one nowadays – integral or peripheral to "the family"?; a time of opportunity or constraint?; and so on. Featherstone–Hepworth (1990: 144) generally support the contention that postmodernity is "producing a reversal in those processes of industrialisation and modernisation which brought about the institutionalisation of life stages...(the prescription of, for example, rules concerning childhood and development, schooling, careers, marriage, retirement)." They cite Meyrowitz's (1984) claims that in contemporary western society children are becoming more adult-like and adults more childlike. The impact of this general position is that a society which silences old age and infirmity leaves us casting around, in later life, for warrantable social identities and accounts of our own place and purpose. These ideas may help us understand some of the origins of low levels of life satisfaction and even of mental health in old age.

The silencing of the elderly would appear, then, to resemble the silencing of other oppressed social groups, including women (Jaworski, personal communication). A group's status is rendered ambiguous and determined in relation to a powerful group – young people/men – seen as a reference point or norm. On the other hand, ageist silencing is an internally driven process, a systematic antipathy, at least potentially, to our own development, to states of our own being. Ageism, under western cultural conditions, certainly deafens us to the minority status of many older people – the "elderly" outgroup. But it is also a *self*-silencing process, limiting our access to understanding ourselves, until the need arises to confront our own ageing. Geriatric medicine is one context which offers opportunity to break the silence.

3. Sociolinguistic perspectives on the silencing of death

These ideas present an agenda for discourse analytic research that has only recently been embarked upon. Woodward's anecdotal experience is as follows:

> It is my experience that when people do speak personally about their own experience of old age or their own fears of aging and death, especially when they are old, the common response of others is to reject what they say. Nervous anxiety is masked by a denial of another's subjectivity in a way that appears to be reassuring but is in reality silencing and repressive. (Woodward 1991: 3)

In fact there are consistent claims made in diverse literatures about current western society's avoidance of death as a conversational or literary

topic. Allan–Burridge (1991: 157) suggest that "death has become the pornography of modern times". They see death taboos as motivated by fears, including fear of the loss of loved ones, fear of the disintegration of the body, fear of uncertainty, fear of malevolent spirits and the fear of meaningless death.

In our own empirical work on intergenerational talk, we have found that young adults' responses to elderly people's talk about their troubled lives quite often indicate the listener's own discomfort. Literal silence and minimal back-channelling are common, and younger speakers occasionally "lighten" the key of these conversations by strategically "looking on the bright side" of an otherwise worrying or unhappy circumstance (Coupland et al. 1988). An alternative strategy is shifting topic to elicit a different, more positive aspect of the elderly person's life circumstances. If we interpret these responses as young conversationalists not allowing troubles tellers to present troubles in fully elaborated ways, they do constitute a form of discursive silencing. Similarly, young adults' responses to own-age-telling by older people ("I was seventy-eight last February") do very commonly involve expressions of surprise and denials ("gosh, you don't look it!") (Coupland–Coupland–Giles 1989).

Henwood et al. (1993) show how young people discussing audio-recorded instances of elderly troubles talk either overtly or covertly discredit the speakers' motives for telling problems, and recast these disclosures as discountable elderly conversational routines. Grainger–Atkinson–Coupland (1990) have commented on the means by which nurses systematically deflect the troubles reported to them by their elderly patients in long-stay hospitals. In a far more striking sense, these data again represent the denial of elderly experiences of problems and discomfort.

This accumulation of evidence from studies of intergenerational talk does suggest that, in our own cultural context, the more troublesome aspects of late life are subject to silencing and euphemisation, both in lay and professional situations. These studies have also begun to reveal the discursive resources that social actors have (for example, topic constraint, deflecting, minimising, reformulating) for actively constructing certain negative experiences of late life as "less problematic." They can contribute to our understanding of the local management of age- and health-identities in and through discourse (cf. Coupland–Coupland 1994). They are also a small part of the research agenda for discursive lifespan studies, of the sort argued for by current theorists of self-identity, citizenship and selfhood (including Gergen 1987; Giddens 1991; Harré 1983; and Shotter

1993). For the purposes of the present chapter, we begin to see the potential for a rhetorical analysis of silencing strategies in the linked domains of troublesome ageing and death.

4. Age and health in geriatric medicine

Various aspects of our recent work have centred on a set of more than 100 medical consultations at a Geriatric Outpatients Clinic at a large hospital in Wales[3]. The discursive practices of geriatric medicine display many facets of contemporary cultural beliefs about ageing and of course about the relationship between ageing and health. We have given a general account of how this relationship is reflected in the talk of older patients themselves (Coupland–Coupland 1994) and considered the "anti-ageist" strategies deployed by doctors in their sporadic attempts at countering the low aspirations of their patients (Coupland–Coupland 1993). These analyses are in many ways relevant to the processes of repression and de-repression as we characterised them above.

One very secure generalisation from our data is that patients' talk about their own health or well-being regularly implicates their advanced age, and so, indirectly, the end of their lives. As we have previously suggested, in older people's talk age often functions discursively as an *account* for frailty, as it does in extract 1 where the patient suggests that *you* (that is "he") *can't expect much at eighty-eight.*

Extract 1:

Doctor A, registrar, male, in his thirties
Patient 10, female, aged 88

After the physical examination, P10 and Dr A have been talking about P10's recent hospital stay

Patient: everything was done for me I was well looked after (.) you can't expect much at eighty-eight can you (chuckles at length) still I see some of them are flying across the world at ninety (.) true (laughs)

Doctor: [that's r
that's right

Patient: [ ] (laughs) (more seriously) so I don't know (.) (coughs) as long as I can get this *breath*ing (.) better (.) bit *eas*ier you see

Doctor: yeah
Patient: you want a bit of (.) I know we got (.) a I I g er how can I say er (.) while I'm here you want to sort of have a bit of ease with it don't you that (.) will *ease* it don't you
[ ]
Doctor: that's right

This instance is analytically important, however, because it also shows some of the potential rhetorical complexity of such attributions. The patient formulates the age-health association but then immediately qualifies it, partly through laughter (is it to be heard as a formulaic utterance and as a version which is not entirely seriously intended?) and more explicitly by voicing the contrary, counter-stereotypic version of health-in-ageing: *still I see some of them are flying across the world at ninety.* Nevertheless, the instance is typical at least in that the patient has thematised old age as the site of low health expectations and (rather literally) limited horizons, whatever her eventual implied position in the dialectic about the rights and wrongs of this claim.

In the second extract, another patient achieves a formulation of his *not* having any complaints to report through a rather similar account of the salience of age.

Extract 2:

Doctor A, registrar, male, in his thirties
Patient 09, male, aged 71

Doctor: we've been seeing you here because of a thrombosis you had in the right calf
[
Patient: that's right yes yes
Doctor: ah (.) and you had that (.) about two or three months ago
[
Patient: *yes*
Doctor: have you had any further problems?
Patient: *noth*ing at all no pain nothing at all
Doctor: have you got *any* complaints at the moment?
[
Patient: (breathes in loudly) (thoughtfully) um (3.0) well (1.0) I *don't* feel (1.0) er how can I put it? (.) (louder and faster) well at seventy-one you you you

you *ev*erything seems important doesn't it so I *think* I'm alright *yes* yes ((you can write it down I'm alright))
[
Doctor: (slight laugh) OK (.) who's at home (.) Mr Cameron?
Patient: my wife
Doctor: and is she alright?
Patient: yes yes

This patient implies that there may be reportable symptoms or experiences which he will not in fact report, in the context of his being seventy-one: *well at seventy-one you you you you everything seems important doesn't it.*

In earlier papers we have argued that there is in fact a systematic pattern of self-disenfranchisement in elderly patients' accounts of their own circumstances in these and similar data. That is, in their verbal representations of "how they are", older people often subscribe to an ideology of health-in-ageing which disadvantages them relative to younger people. Their self-identities appear to be mediated by the expectation that late life is a time of predictable constraint on what is achievable – in terms of personal health and social circumstances. It is part of an apparatus of age-self-stereotyping through which elderly patients attribute major as well as minor perceived problems to age itself, which is assumed to be an ineluctable and graduated march of time.

Sequences from many other consultations show similar formulations by other patients. For example:

> *(sighs) (2.0) it's old age this is nothing else (2.0);*
> *I get out of breath (.) more easily than I used to...but er (1.0) well that's old age;*
> *oh well I mean as you get older your appetite isn't the same;*
> *well for eight eighty-three I'm not bad am I?.*

The last of these articulates a positive relationship between how the patient feels she is and her age (what we have previously called the "disjunctive" formulation of age-health identity – see Coupland–Coupland–Giles 1989). In each of the other cases, the patient takes age to function as an account for some undesirable or problematic circumstance – lowered expectations for medical care, tiredness, dizziness and falls, breathlessness and loss of appetite.

Patients themselves may, on the other hand, argue that what we have called "self-disenfranchisement" is "realism" and a willingness to con-

front "the facts" of troublesome old age. Returning to Becker's conceptualisation, we could argue that these elderly patients are making moves – hesitant and ambiguous though some of them undoubtedly are – towards a *de-repressing* of death. They are entertaining a discourse which obliquely references the inevitability of dying which, we have suggested earlier, is rather rare in public domains of contemporary western life.

The question then arises of what ideological stance is taken by the institution of geriatric medicine, in response to elderly patients' talk about their own health-in-ageing. In the consultation data we can identify sequences of talk where doctors and patients negotiate – again with varying degrees of explicitness – the moral responsibilities of practitioners and patients alike. Extract 3 is one such instance.

Extract 3:

Doctor C, consultant, female, in her forties
Patient 71, male, aged 81

This patient suffered blackouts two years previously and has been attending the clinic every few months ever since. He presents with occasional feelings of fatigue.

Doctor:	right (.) er right (.) now (.) any problem? (.) anything I can?
Patient:	problem?
Doctor:	mm (.) anything I can't erm (.) anything that (.) erm
Patient:	oh about myself you mean?
Doctor:	yes yes
Patient:	well (.) er (.) I get tired (.) rather quickly but I course I (.) I'm not getting younger am I? I mean
Doctor:	well nobody gets younger but (.) that's not the reason that you should get tired
Patient:	well I'm hoping it is (laughs briefly)
Doctor:	[(laughs briefly)

In the UK, modern geriatrics as a movement has committed itself to an *anti-ageist* ideology, geared to counteracting an earlier tradition of care for elderly people that it recognises as discriminatory and ageist (Anderson 1991; Swift 1991). The particular clinic at which our recordings were made very clearly allies itself to the anti-ageist ideal, as our interviews with all doctors who participated in the observational phases of the work confirmed (see Coupland–Coupland, 1993). We can therefore anticipate that the work of the clinic, beyond addressing patients' clinical and socio-

environmental problems, will include ideological work in opposition to the predictable formulations of health-in-ageing brought forward by patients themselves. In the views of at least certain professionals, clinical consultations are established in advance as potential arenas for conflictual discourses of ageism and anti-ageism. And these issues are in fact central to the geriatric enterprise because elderly patients' understandings of their own health-in-ageing are crucial to their self esteem, life satisfaction and health. What we see in extract 3 is the doctor explicitly challenging (what she presumably considers to be) the latent ageism in the patient's attributing his tiredness to old age: *well nobody gets younger but (.) that's not the reason that you should get tired.*

But in relation to the literature on repression, an ideological dilemma arises here. What in fact *is* the proper function of geriatric medicine? Is it to counteract a pernicious auto-ageism in the self-identities of elderly patients, or to support them in demythologising and de-repressing the "realities" of later life? In a geriatric medical setting, attributing health problems to age is hearable not only as self-handicapping and defeatist but also as a challenge to the goals of the medical enterprise itself. On the other hand, doctors will be wary of dismissing concerns that seem to be deeply held by their patients and which may influence key decisions to be made about health regimens and lifestyles[4]. The clear point to emerge from our data is that the alternative "states" of the dilemma cannot in any case be sustained as pure abstractions in the practice of geriatric medicine. Any ideological stance needs to be articulated or resisted as part of the local, negotiated practice of talk itself, and in particular instances. The patient's last turn in extract 3, *well I'm hoping it is (laughs briefly)*, is an interesting instance. Through this turn, the patient acknowledges the doctor's attempted stance against the attribution of tiredness to old age. He also offers resistance to it by implying there are benefits to him as a patient in attributing his tiredness to old age (presumably since other conceivable accounts may be more threatening). But he also hedges his resistance through laughter, perhaps implying that he is at the same time reflexively aware of (and so sceptical of) the self-deception entailed.

5. Thematising and de-thematising mortal risk

There are many opportunities in these consultations for death to surface much less obliquely than in the instances we have considered above. Many patients being seen at the clinic have been dangerously ill; some

are currently suffering life-threatening illness. Some are suffering deterioration in their health and may need to undergo major surgery. In some cases, patients are at risk not only from their medical conditions but from the drugs they are taking to control these conditions. Issues of mortality are therefore often a salient dimension of the consultations. But as before, doctors do not and can not adopt a uniform and all-embracing strategy for orienting to patients' mortality in their talk. In fact, both doctors and patients show they have discursive resources for attenuating or even denying the reality of mortal risks.

Extract 4:

Doctor H, registrar, male, in his thirties
Patient 41, female, aged 87, accompanied by her son

Son:	oh I tell you what I wanted doctor (2.0) oh it's in my mind now (.) has my mother got a pacemaker in now?
Doctor:	*no* (.) she only needed it for a *short* period
Son:	oh
Doctor:	because the trouble with her heart was related to her heart *attack* her heart attack which got better and as I said (.) it hasn't left the heart as strong as it was before but it doesn't need (.) (to patient) you *don't* need a pacemaker

In extract 4, Doctor H's reference to "getting better" suppresses any implication of there being a current threat to the patient's life. In fact, he offers the claim that the patient's heart attack itself *got better* as his account for why she no longer needs the pacemaker. "Getting better" expresses a valuable ambiguity, subsuming the more literal sense of an "improving" health state (leaving the degree of "badness" unspecified) as well as the far more conventional sense of "(totally) recovering from an illness". To the extent that the doctor's utterance *her heart attack which got better* is hearable in the second sense, the doctor has denied the persistence of any risk of a further heart problem.

In their accounts of necessarily high-risk conditions for elderly patients, doctors can construct benign versions of these circumstances, which patients often do not challenge. Because we do not have access to the discursive record of past encounters between doctors and patients, or to the chains of inference by which each party draws significance from what is said, we cannot argue that death-risks are in fact excised from these exchanges. But at the level of text, we find a pattern of indirectness in the use of referring expressions which suggests repression.

Extract 5:

Doctor H, registrar, male, in his thirties
Patient 36, male, aged 80

The doctor is discussing a proposed drug regime with the patient.

Doctor:	I'll be quite honest there's a number of factors that indicate that you need to take it
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	one of them is that you've had a stroke before (.) you've had a clot in the leg and clots in the lung
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	so there is a *ten*dency in your blood to clot and cause these problems
Patient:	hmm
Doctor:	however the tablets themselves er that we've got you on
Patient:	mm
Doctor:	carry a certain risk as you know
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	and that's why we've had to avoid mixing them with other medications apart from what we've prescribed
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	and um it's inconvenient to keep coming back here to the clinic
Patient:	hmmm
Doctor:	so it's a *diff*icult decision
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	weighing it all up (.) I think we can stop them
Patient:	mmm
Doctor:	and (.) what we'll do is we'll dis*charge* you to the care of your own doctor
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	but at the first (.) in the slightest evidence of any further clotting problems
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	er thrombosis in the leg or any of these chest problems or whatever
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	you *may* need to restart them and perhaps even then consider continuing them

In the course of extract 5, Doctor H refers to blood clots and clotting five times; he explicitly refers to the previous stroke (cardio-vascular accident) the patient has suffered. His assessment of the clear risk of further strokes is offset by an alternative, unspecified *certain risk* that he says the tablets carry. Doctor H tells the patient that he has *a **ten**dency in [his] ... blood to clot and cause these problems*, where *these problems* clearly refers back to the previously specified *stroke*. The stroke is thus the problem locus, although the doctor later refers to *any further clotting problems*. Even this apparently on-record sequence therefore sustains an ambiguity about what reportedly concerns the doctor and should concern the patient. While clotting of the blood is in itself "a problem", and so is a second occurrence of a stroke that further clotting might occasion, the ultimate term in the hierarchy of risk is of course death itself. But the first two terms are expressable in consultative discourse and the third is apparently not.

Extract 6:

Doctor G, houseman, male, in his thirties
Patient 86, male, age 87

The doctor has examined the patient and has just returned to the room from consulting with another doctor.

Doctor: right (.) your heart is beating away quite *fast* there (.) it doesn't seem to be very well controlled the heartbeat is a little bit fast (.) it's *not* actually causing any problems at present but if it continues to go that fast then you *might* have more breathing problems than you already have from having a bad chest as well as a heart that's not working *quite* as well as it did when you were younger (.) what we should do really is we should increase this to four tablets ... but we have to watch that we don't poison you with these tablets (.) we have to be er quite *care*ful with these but what we'd *like* to do is see whether increasing the tablets will help your heart rate (.) we'd like you to take four of these instead of three (.) do you want me to pop that on the bottle just to remind you

The situation being negotiated in extract 6 seems similar in that a choice has to be made whether or not to treat a high-risk medical condition with a high-risk treatment regime. At least, the high-risk nature of the drug regime is suggested by the doctor's reference to not wanting to *poison* the patient and the need to be *quite **careful***, although he does not

identify the specific potential effects of increasing the drug dosage. On the other hand, assessment of the risk entailed by the patient's heart-rate is more difficult. At the beginning of the extract, the doctor represents the patient's heart as *beating away quite* ***fast*** *there*, where *quite fast* is hearable by lay people as a neutral or even a positive attribute. Contradicting this inference, the comment that the beating *doesn't seem to be very well controlled* formats *beating quite fast* as a potential problem, confirmed by the comment that *it's* ***not*** *actually causing any problems at present*. Its status as a problem is heightened when the doctor then invokes dysfunction, referring to the patient's heart as one that *is not working quite as well as it did when [the patient was]...younger*. But the word *quite* again mitigates the implied risk and the reference to health-in-ageing offers an interpretation along the lines of "it's only old age", of the sort that we considered earlier in this discussion.

As an aside, we should note the doctors' depersonalisation of their own agency, in extracts 5 and 6. Doctor G's conference with another doctor outside the consulting room before this extract begins may partly explain his use of plural *we*, as in *what we'd like to do is see whether increasing the tablets will help your heart rate (.) we'd like you to take four of these instead of three*. But it is the same usage that occurs in extract 5 where Doctor H refers to *the tablets themselves er that we've got you on* and which has been analysed in other studies as doctors' establishment of an institutional over a personal identity (Drew–Heritage 1992: 30). In the context of discussing high-risk alternatives, the institutional *we* is positively functional for doctors in rendering responsibility for life or death outcomes attributable to the wider institution (Silverman, 1987: 58). The distribution of doctors' use of personal "I" versus institutional "we" in the negotiation of higher and lower risk facets of medical practice deserves further study.

Degrees of repression in doctor-patient consultations are most open to analysis when we have privileged access to doctors' professional opinions. On rare occasions, the data contain doctors' formulations of medical problems and treatments when the context of their talk first excludes and then includes patients as participants. An instance is captured in extract 7.

Extract 7:

Dr D, houseman, male, in his twenties
Patient 107, male, age 67

The patient is diabetic, with both legs amputated. Dr D has just taken the patient's blood pressure and found it to be, as on the previous visit,

on the high end of normal. Dr H enters the room to confer with Dr D about another patient and Dr D involves Dr H in the decision to put the patient on a drug to control his blood pressure.

Doctor H: (quietly, to Doctor D) I didn't have his notes when I saw him last time and I had no idea what was going on ((actually)) (louder) hello Mr B
Patient: good morning Doctor H
Doctor H: (loudly) I saw you last time but unfortunately I didn't have the benefit of all this information (flicking through the notes, quietly to Doctor D) I see now yes I agree (more quietly again) the thing about diabetes is if you don't control blood pressure they rapidly go into renal failure
Doctor D: (quietly) right his ((2 sylls)) was up...
(Doctor H advises Doctor D on a drug regime)
Doctor H: (louder) we'll see him again in about four to six weeks
Doctor D: right
Doctor H: OK?
[
Doctor D: OK I'll explain that (.) yes (.)
(Doctor H leaves room) right (clears throat) (louder) I've just had a word with Doctor H about your blood pressure (.) um it's (.) high (.) high at such a level that (.) it should be treated because otherwise (.) um it can damage your kidneys if it stays that high=
Patient: =mm
Doctor D: um (.) and the treatment is to have one tablet twice a day (.) which we'll start off today (.) um and then we'll ask your own doctor to check the blood pressure in two weeks time that's just to make sure it's come down and then we'll see you again here in *four* weeks to check how things are OK? (.) but um (.) if we control the blood pressure and control the diabetes that should stop things progressing you know getting worse OK? (1.0) have you got any questions? or (.) anything else you want to
[
Patient: no

In this extract, the risk of this patient *rapidly going into renal failure*, as formulated by Doctor H to Doctor D, is translated for the patient into *it can damage your kidneys if it stays that high.* This version of the problem, and the subsequent observation that *it should be treated*, show the

doctor hedging as to its acute status. Although Doctor D imposes the outcome that the patient should begin the treatment immediately (*we'll start off today*), his account does not make it clear that the doctors agreed there to be an urgent need to reduce the patient's blood pressure. Similarly, Doctor D's explanation to the patient that *if we control the blood pressure and control the diabetes that should stop things progressing you know getting worse OK?* constructs his problem as one that is becoming gradually more severe. However accurate this assessment may be, it is again at odds with the earlier version accepted between the doctors that the problem is already acute.

Patients, on the other hand, sometimes confront their own death and even flaunt it in a discourse of heroic survival.

Extract 8:

Doctor F, consultant, male, in his forties
Patient 54, female, aged 74

The patient has been reporting a range of debilitating health problems to the consulting doctor, including hip immobility.

Patient: well I thought well I I wouldn't stay away I went up and I showed them and er oh he said stop treatment for a fortnight and it come all right but this last month I've had terrible pain with it and sometimes I've got to push my leg around to (2.0) to sort of sit down you know
Doctor: [ease the pain]
Patient: and the last time I went to therapy up there
Doctor: where did you go where do you go to therapy?
Patient: [in the H (hospital)
Doctor: in the H (hospital)
Patient: er I had to go to learn to try and get upstairs and to do this knee they said they can't do nothing about this knee
Doctor: mm
Patient: and um (.) that the muscles were very *weak* (2.0) and I come out with two sticks they said I had to use two sticks (.) but I um I put the one aside and I'm trying to manage with the *one* (.) but as far as I know Dr W wanted the chest and that done
Doctor: mmm

Patient:	and in the meantime (laughs slightly) I should be *dead* not that I (.) um *this* arm and shoulder went completely paralysed (.) I couldn't move it (.) unless it was cause I (.) but
Doctor:	when was that?
Patient:	no a month ago
Doctor:	mmm
Patient:	and um (.) and er Doctor J come down (.) and he said it's due to the osteoarthritis?
Doctor:	yes
Patient:	and that they couldn't give me an injection because it would be too *ris*ky=
Daughter:	[yes
Patient:	=and er and (.) they (.) there's er still er it's *all* pins and needles across here

In earlier work we have documented sequences of older people's accounts of their health, social and affective problems in lay settings under the heading of "painful self-disclosure" or "PSD" (Coupland–Coupland–Giles, 1991). Extract 8 shows a series of chained PSDs, cataloguing problems associated with the patient's arthritis of the knees, arms and shoulders. She projects these troubles as chronically disabling (*they said they can't do nothing about this knee; **this** arm and shoulder went completely paralysed*) and painful (*I've had terrible pain*). She hints that she has had to endure her lot because the treatment for her condition posed an even worse threat: *they couldn't give me an injection because it would be too **risky***. In this context, her remark that she "should be dead" is an extreme case formulation of her circumstances: her case is so severe and so hopeless that, perhaps, she has no right to live.

But again, a closer look at the discursive construction of this claim is revealing. The relevant utterance is *(laughs slightly) I should be dead not that I (.) um*. Two devices qualify the patient's claim to heroic stature: the initial laugh and the aborted self-contradiction *not that I (.) um*. They introduce a fleeting suggestion of self-parody into the claim and the possibility that, however genuine the troubles being reported, the patient is to an extent "troubles resistive" (Jefferson, 1984). This instance therefore repeats a pattern we observed earlier: patients tending towards more overt discourses of mortal risk than doctors, but armed with resources for qualifying and down-playing the risks they thematise.

Confronted with narratives of mortal risk from elderly patients, doctors may find difficulty in reimposing their mitigated versions of this

theme. In extract 9, the patient's dramatic narrative of being *rushed into hospital* and of being *on the danger list* seems to present just this difficulty.

Extract 9:

Doctor H, registrar, male, in his thirties
Patient 46, female, aged 82

Patient: erm I was ill going up on the bus to Newtown (.) and (.) my daughter called (.) the local (.) her own doctor (.) to see me because I was ill (.) and (.) he (.) doubled the dose of (drug name)...and the result was I was dehydrated
Doctor: and that's why you went to Newtown hospital
Patient: [ ] I and I I was rushed into ho into er (1.0) into Newtown and I was on erm (1.0) on the *dan*ger list
Doctor H: oh I'm sorry to *hear* that
Patient: *yes*

The doctor's *oh I'm sorry to* ***hear*** *that* is a formula normally invoked in responding to modestly bad news. It is mismatched to the immediately preceding element of the patient's account: *I was on erm (1.0) on the* ***dan****ger list*, possibly because it was verbally planned during the one-second pause of the previous turn and addressed the disclosures made up to that point. Whatever, it is difficult to construct an alternative response which would meet the medical exigencies of down-playing professed mortal risk without being audibly dismissive of the patient's version of it.

6. The gift of life

The frequently discussed authority of medical professionals (cf. Coupland–Coupland–Robinson 1992) has many interactional buttresses. In some analyses, doctors' authority is attributed to their high-power interactional styles (e. g. controlling information flow, eliciting information to suit their own agendas, evaluating patients' responses in third-position moves, etc.). But however sociolinguistically aware patients may be of the discursive resources open to them, as consumers, to redress this power imbalance, doctors can still derive authority from their generally superior knowledge base in the medical domain. In geriatric encounters, the diagnosis of medical problems can at times appear close to legislating on life and death.

In our data doctors often deal with patients who are extremely anxious about their current state of health and their life prognoses. Doctors can be in the position of being able to reassure patients that they will live, as in the following extract.

Extract 10:

Doctor B, senior registrar, male, in his forties
Patient 82, female, aged 90

P82 has been complaining of pains in the hip, and occasional but long standing pains and distension in the abdomen

Doctor: what I'd like to do if I can (.) is to examine the tummy for you would that be alright?

Patient: (sharp intake of breath) let me tell you doctor I'm not having any operation

Doctor: (nodding) right

Patient: because I'm *too old* to be operated on (.) I think (.) and in the position I am *here* now if I had an operation (.) which I think it needs if I'm being perfectly fair (breathes in sharply) there's *no* one to wait on me hand and foot

Doctor: right

Patient: I have *no*body down here in Wales whatsoever my two daughters are in Australia

[ ]

Doctor: right

Patient: and I've no one here so I'm (.) I should just take a dose of *pois*on sooner than do that cause no one waits on me I do my own washing everything ((I must be honest)) (.) so (.) I would be grateful if you would help me with this tummy

Doctor: right

Patient: I can't get any clothes near me (chuckles)

Doctor: well the first thing is to find out what the *cause* of it is (.) and then we can take it from there...(examination follows)

Doctor: let's talk about the tummy first

Patient: mhm

Doctor: OK (.) now you have this pain (.) in the tummy

Patient: (quietly) yes

Doctor: and you've had it a good many years (.) almost 50 years (.) (breathes) um (.) examining you (.) I can't find any (.) definite abnormality *in* the tummy the tummy is just a *litt*le bit distended but (.) that (.) is very often (.) normal (.)

Patient: for my age

Doctor: well nothing to do with *age* I mean a lot of people just happen to have (.) floppy (.) muscles in the tummy

Patient: [ ] yes

Doctor: and they therefore tend to have

Patient: thank you doctor

Doctor: [a sort of distended tummy now (.) I don't see any sign at all of any serious illness in the tummy (.) and the fact that this pain has been there for so many years (.) makes it *very* unlikely that this pain is due to anything serious like cancer

Patient: (breathes) I see

Doctor: for example (.) people with (.) say cancer of the bowel would not live longer

Patient: [ ] ((surely))

Doctor: than a few years from when they begin to have trouble from it

Patient: [ ] thank you doctor

Doctor: (.) and it's not *poss*ible (.) for somebody to have pain due to cancer and for that pain to be there for fifty years=

Patient: =I see

Doctor: and the other thing which I find reassuring is that your weight is steady ... (doctor discusses the details of the patient's weight) couple of pounds *more* in fact rather than a couple of pounds less

Patient: yes

Doctor: yup so again all that is very reassuring (.) now the only way I could positively guarantee you that you didn't have cancer is to do special tests of the bowel but I don't think there's any (.) indication to do that in other words um you there's nothing there to suggest that you might even have cancer and (.) my advice would be just (.) you know to (.) try to put up with this pain as you've been putting up with it for the past 50 years

Patient: [thank you very much I will thank you very much I'm very grateful to you

Doctor: I can't guaran*tee* you that you don't have a tumour
[ ]
Patient: no
Doctor: (.) no more than I can guarantee myself that *I* don't have one (.) all I can say is that there isn't any indication under the sun of anything like cancer being there ...
I don't think there's any need to see you back here again but if Doctor Z (the patient's GP) is worried about anything or if you're worried about anything we'll then we'll always be pleased to see you at any stage
[ ] [ ]
Patient: yes yes
Patient: oh it's wonderful (.) isn't it lovely? oh it's lovely (.) really
Doctor: so (.) very nice to see you and I'll mention it to
[
Patient: thank you thank you *very* much doctor
Doctor: Doctor E as well
[
Patient: thank you very much (.) I hope I haven't bored you too much have I?
[
Doctor: *no* no not at all not at all but er (.) everything is fine anyway ((and thank you)) for coming
Patient: thank you very much
Doctor: bye bye now
Patient: bye bye ((I like)) saying bye bye
Doctor: (laughs briefly) that's right

(The doctor then dictates a letter to the patient's GP confirming he thinks cancer is unlikely)

In extract 10 the doctor gives a careful and tightly structured account of his diagnosis that the patient does not have cancer. He runs through some reflexively marked analytic episodes, involving "examining the tummy" and "talking about the tummy", to the point where he can cautiously express a negatively framed opinion: *I can't find any (.) definite abnormality* ***in*** *the tummy.* He reinforces the unexceptional nature of the patient's distended stomach: *that (.) is very often (.) normal.* His first explicit reference to a potential high-risk condition is again put negatively: *I don't see any sign at all of any serious illness.* He mentions *cancer* explicitly only at the end of this long series of reassurances, and then only in the linguistic context of an emphatic denial of its probability: ***very***

unlikely that this pain is due to anything serious like cancer. And after this reference he twice mentions that he finds the situation *reassuring.*

Yet cancer was apparently implicated very early in the extract when the patient insisted *I'm not having any operation*, and one *which I think it needs if I'm being perfectly fair.* Her reference to preferring poisoning herself to being operated on graphically represents the health "stakes" as she construes them. The patient is therefore oriented to her mortality from almost the beginning of this sequence, and offers her death as an alternative to the operation, which she feels is unwarranted by her age. The doctor is not drawn into the mortality discourse until he has established the grounds for opposing the patient's implication that she may have cancer. And in the process he explicitly resists the patient's formulation of her cost-benefit analysis in age-salient terms. In the profusion of thanking that follows the doctor's diagnosis (e. g. *oh it's wonderful (.) isn't it lovely? oh it's lovely (.) really*), the patient is acknowledging more than the doctor's competence, attention and interactional manner. It is difficult to resist the reading that she is acknowledging the gifting of her life. The doctor's caveats that he cannot guarantee that his diagnosis is correct (perhaps through the implication that she is as safe from threat as he) seem irrelevant to the patient's assessment of the "debt" she owes him.

But there are occasional circumstances when a patient does not unequivocally deem life to be worth gifting. These are the encounters when a doctor's reassurances about a patient's continued living are not taken to be reassuring. Extract 11 is from the end of a lengthy consultation during which the patient has complained of severe back pain, which the doctor explains is caused by arthritis of the spine.

Extract 11:

Doctor F, consultant, male, in his forties
Patient 24, female, aged 81

Doctor: and you come and see me in two weeks time
Patient: thank you very much
Doctor: (standing over patient, smiling and touching her arm) you're going to be alright you're going to live (laughs)
Patient: (laughs) I don't *want* to live
[
Doctor: (laughs)
[
Friend: no she doesn't want to (.) this is the trouble
[
Patient: this is the trouble I don't want to live

Doctor: well I think your being lonely has a lot to do with it
[
Patient: yes but what can I do about being *lone*ly?
[
Doctor: well I'll (.) let's get firstly let's get one or two things sorted out with the backache

As the patient and her companion prepare to leave the consulting room the doctor produces a formulaic utterance contextualising (Coupland–Coupland–Giles 1991: 100) the patient's troubles. The formula *you'll live* conventionally implies that the addressee's condition may be serious but is sustainable. Her problems are, as the doctor jokes to the patient, not life-threatening. But the patient's reply deconventionalises the expression, reformulating it in more literal terms. The patient's claim not to want to live is reiterated (and so warranted) by her companion, and repeated by the patient. The force of the position is such as to undermine not only the *you'll live* formula but the whole range of institutional assumptions on which geriatrics is practised. The stance of not wanting to live is an absolute, whereas we have seen that doctors often work to produce mitigated or palliated references to mortality. In this case, the doctor sustains the consulting mode by trying to reestablish some modest and tentative footholds on the route to the patient's "recovery": *let's get firstly let's get one or two things sorted out with the backache.* His utterance purports that his own model has at least a temporary relevance; *firstly* falsely implies that the issue of wanting to die can be postponed until moves towards some superficial aspects of healing (*get one or two things sorted out*) have been made. He retreats into talk on the health agenda, an area of the patient's selfhood which offers less threat to him and which lets him voice a legitimate institutional position by seeming to make a positive intervention. The question of loneliness falls squarely within the holistic ideological remit of this practice and of modern geriatrics generally, but is left unaddressed in this instance.

7. Questioning life: living and living

As shown in the last extract above, social circumstances such as bereavement, disengagement and loneliness, may make elderly patients question the value of their lives – to themselves, their relatives or their doctors.

This is to invoke a minimalist version of C. S. Lewis's sixth sense of the word "life", designating "enjoying those experiences or performing those actions which are most worth while" (Lewis 1967: 285). Geriatric patients, and no doubt others, can therefore forge a distinction between biological living and experiential living and imply that in the second of these dimensions their lives have effectively ended already. For example, in extract 12 the patient's daughter rationalises her mother's alcoholism, heavy smoking and lack of interest in eating as a desire to escape from the realities of her current life.

Extract 12:

Doctor F, consultant, male, in his forties
Patient 08 female, aged 75

Daughter: she just won't *help* herself you see (.) when my father died now for seven years and she vowed she don't want to *live* no more (.) and the *drink* is her *ans*wer (1.0) so ((2 sylls)) as I say the *drink* (.) is the answer she if she carries on drinking you know her health is um

Doctor: hm

A life which, on another occasion, has not reportedly lost its value may still be portrayed as subject to shifted or lowered evaluations in old age. In extract 13, the same patient as in the previous extract implies that her health is not worth protecting in the way it may have been previously.

Extract 13:

(details as for Extract 12)

Patient: (seriously) I don't think guinness would hurt you after I've drunk it all through the years

[

Daughter: this is it you see she has a guinness and then it goes to lager then and then it goes to whisky and that

[

Doctor: yeah (.) *noth*ing like that

[

Patient: drunk it all through the *years* I mean to say I may as well drink the little bit I'm left my life left mightn't I? (4.0)

(P08 and her daughter are moving towards the door)

Daughter: come on then mum (.) bye bye

The patient's *may as well* reasoning draws support from two directions – retrospectively and prospectively. She implies that there is little point in changing long-established habits (*drunk it all through the **years***), perhaps implying that she has not suffered unduly from past drinking, or merely that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks". But she also suggests that there is little justification for further impairing the quality of a short remaining life (*the little bit I'm left my life*).

The corollary is that death itself has become an event of negotiable value. If life is redefined as "what adds value to experience" then, when that value is perceived to be lacking, death is correspondingly devalued. Death loses its taboo in such discourses and is transformed into a rather routine "take it or leave it" option. Death is constructed as a viable alternative to living in the sense of mere existence, which has already replaced "real living".

When geriatricians involve themselves with patients whose morale is apparently so low as to deny the value of life, they take up the challenge of redefining living for their patients. Through their professional discourse they must find arguments to discredit their patients' versions of their own lives and construct new standards of evaluation. In extract 14, the patient has been discussing her long standing feelings of depression and how prescribed drugs have failed to alleviate it.

Extract 14:

Doctor A, registrar, male, in his thirties
Patient 59, female, aged 80

Patient:	it's er the *troub*le I've had (.) *that's* the trouble *that's* the cause of my depression (.) nothing else
Doctor:	what you find though is sometimes if somebody *has* had a lot of hardship which is *mak*ing them unhappy... it affects (.) other things (.) it particularly affects how you sleep and how you feel about about things in general
Patient:	how I feel about *liv*ing
Doctor:	that's *right* (.) now we find sometimes that that it does help...
Doctor:	how do *you* think things are going?
Patient:	...it's all trouble here and everywhere is *mis*ery and trouble (.) you think what the *hell's* the good of living in a world like this?...

Doctor: how old are you Mrs P?
Patient: pardon?
Doctor: how *old* are you?
Patient: oh I'm um I'll be eighty-*one* in November
Doctor: and how many other eighty-one year olds are there in the in the party which you go to on Mondays?
Patient: there's not a lot
Doctor: not a lot no
Patient: me and my friend (2.0) she's um (2.0) well ((we're getting the oldest cos)) (.) a lot of youngsters isn't it more
Doctor: do you think that's perhaps something you you could take take a pride in?
(2.0)
Patient: (dully) what?
Doctor: that that you're one of the few eighty-one year olds in the meetings that you go to (.) I mean you've obviously got a very active *life* still (.) you're very *in*terested in things in what's happening
Patient: I *read* a lot
Daughter: your *read*ing's better now isn't it?...
Doctor: well it *is* it is it is something which is slow but things are are im*prov*ing um (.) er (2.0) yes the fact that you are anxious about things which are happening a*round* you (.) um (.) obviously I'd be con*cerned* if I thought that those sorts of things were um getting on top of you (2.0) but I think it I think equally it shows that you are that you (.) you're pretty (1.0)
Patient: I'm *still* in the world
[
Daughter: you're still alive (laughs)

The doctor activates various strategies here. One is depersonalising or appealing to a more general experience. He recasts the patient's depression as part of a general pattern: *if somebody* ***has*** *had a lot of hardship*. He implies that external factors have an agency in causing unhappiness: *which is* ***mak****ing them unhappy*. He implies that there may be local reasons for depression: *it affects (.) other things (.) it particularly affects how you sleep and how you feel about about things in general*; and that depression itself is an occasioned *feeling*.

But these mitigatory strategies make little apparent impact, and the patient goes on to voice her most extreme version of her valueless life: *it's all trouble here and everywhere is misery and trouble.* At this point the doctor moves from attempts at mitigation to an attempt at perspective shift. He asks the patient how old she is. His argument is that, far from seeing old age as a time of impoverished circumstances, the patient should reevaluate her circumstances in relation to her age. He suggests that the patient's being *one of the few eighty-one year olds in the meetings* should be a source of personal pride: *do you think that's perhaps something you you could take take a pride in?* He invites the patient to see herself as a functioning citizen of the world "even at her age", although he does not complete one of the most relevant utterances: *you're pretty (1.0).* The patient's next move, *I'm **still** in the world,* can be heard as a completion, and so assenting, albeit with a less upbeat formulation that those that the doctor offered earlier. The daughter's overlapping utterance, *you're still alive (laughs),* on the other hand, voices the minimalist version of "merely" living.

In such sequences, death versus life has been established as topic, but still without being explicitly referenced. Death is thematically available, but still in itself apparently unsayable. Interestingly enough, even in the patient's talk it is *living* that she explicitly references, however negatively – *what the hell's the good of living in a world like this?* In contrast, the patient in the final extract we shall consider invokes a common euphemising metaphor of death as departure, using words that in themselves are no more threatening than those which might indicate going home from the morning's clinic: *time I went now then.*

Extract 15:

Doctor H, registrar, male, in his thirties
Patient 40, female, aged 82

Doctor:	so the main problem in your mind is the breathing? (.) right (.) OK let's have a look you
Daughter:	and de*press*ion doctor
Doctor:	yes I can understand you being down in the dumps you've had a long time in hospital and you've been so breathless
Patient:	time I went now then
	(5.0)
Doctor:	I think I think you're looking *bett*er than before
Patient:	yes
Doctor:	and although I can understand you feeling *down* (.) I don't think it's time yet (quiet laughter) (initiating the physical examination) let's have a look at you

The lengthy silence which follows the death reference may indicate the doctor's uncertainty about how to respond. His eventual response strategy does not engage with the death theme, and in fact proposes a model of the patient's health which conflicts with her version of her own state. He suggests she is *looking better*, just as he earlier reformulated what the patient's daughter called her ***depression*** as her being *down in the dumps*. As his turn continues he postpones the suggestion of death and distances himself from the suggestion as a feasible one through his laughter.

8. Epilogue

Returning to Becker's theorising of the repression of death, we can at least now suggest that his thesis is overgeneralised. Repression does indeed seem an appropriate notion to characterise the range of silencing and part-silencing strategies that doctors, and to a lesser extent elderly patients, use in negotiating health concerns, depression and misgivings about living. On the other hand, death *is* sustained as a theme in these discourses and underlies several different aspects of older patients' self-reports and professionals' responses to them. Becker's account of the process of repression, as in the following quotation, does not allow for this negotiative perspective.

> In order to function normally, man [sic] has to achieve from the beginning a serious constriction of the world and of himself. We can say that the essence of "normality" is the *refusal of reality*. What we call neurosis enters precisely at this point: Some people have more trouble with their lies than others. The world is too much with them, and the techniques that they have developed for holding it at bay and cutting it down to size finally begin to choke the person himself (Becker 1973: 178).

In geriatric medical discourse, our data suggest, the reality of death is not so much "refused" as palliated, or glossed. Orientations to the quality of life and to death are in fact core aspects of the negotiation of health within geriatrics, even though these orientations are systematically oblique, tentative and often mitigated. Doctors do not tell "lies" about death, but they do sometimes appear to propagandise for life and rhetorically undermine arguments about the naturalness, desirability or imminence of death. The data also show that the position contrary to Becker's – the view that older people sustain open and unproblematic discourses about death – is also oversimplified.

When Becker writes about neurosis as the result of having trouble with our lies about death, he seems to be considering the deviant case. Yet his

descriptions of neurotic states are evocative of the self-presentations of many of the elderly patients in our study, and we suggested earlier these are not at all unusual accounts of health-in-ageing. Late elderly people as a group are not clinically neurotic, so again we have to conclude that Becker's thesis is too pathologised. As we age, we do indeed have trouble with our conventionally repressed concerns; we need to take stock and reappraise the most fundamental of our values. This is what Bengston–Kuypers (1971) have referred to as the changing developmental "stake" – the changing pattern of human investment across the generations.

When doctors engage with the various sorts of death-implicative talk that we have seen patients producing, they clearly have the option of playing an active and constitutive role, adding value to older people's lives. It is tempting to see certain resources of this kind as what Becker (1973: 255) calls "immortality formulas". Avenues to claiming heroic or exceptional stances are, for Becker, attempts at achieving immortality (denying death), as are initiatives towards creativity generally.

> Heroism transmutes the fear of death into the security of self-perpetuation, so much so that people can cheerfully face up to death and even court it under some ideologies (Becker 1973: 217).

Doctors do indeed strategically promote positive, and occasionally heroic, identities for their older patients. But more regularly they are concerned with tempering and de-heroicising patients' self-accounts. We might say that they are adroit manipulators of the mundane-to-heroic dimension, with a range of identity sets to offer their patients as local considerations seem to require.

And this is the point at which the sociolinguistic data diverge most significantly from the repression hypothesis. Ultimately it seems incorrect to view doctors as gatekeepers to truths about health-in-ageing. Becker wrote that "if repression makes an untenable life liveable, self-knowledge can entirely destroy it" (Becker 1973: 269). But it is difficult to see truths and expert knowledge about selves as the main rationale for *any* doctor's projection. What we see (as non-professionals) is a proliferation of *versions* of elderly health and developmental stakes, contingently invoked in response to local discursive needs. This broad function of geriaticians' talk is certainly professionally skilled and, we must assume, a rich therapeutic resource. The discourse record itself suggests that some elderly patients can derive actual social support from their doctors offering them new or modified versions of themselves, their lives and their deaths. But in this

setting, we have seen how doctors and patients *collaboratively* construct such versions, and generally versions targeted at more manageable identities for older patients in the particular circumstances of their lives.

Notes

1. We are grateful to Adam Jaworski for detailed and very valuable comments on an earlier version of this text.
2. This section of the paper is an extended version of one part of a paper presented at the workshop on *Discourse, Institutions and the Elderly* at the Uppsala International Conference on *Discourse and the Professions* (26–29 August, 1992), published as Coupland and Coupland (1993).
3. The data for this study were collected at a Geriatric Outpatients Clinic at a major hospital in South Wales over 6 weeks of participant observation, interviewing and audio- and video-recording. The study was designed on ethnographic lines, to involve multiple intersecting levels of analysis, centring on tape-recording of interactions between staff and patients during clinic hours, but supplemented with open-ended interviewing of all participants.

   The data we report in this paper derive from audio-recordings of the doctor-patient consultations themselves and associated observers' notes. There are 102 interactions involving 98 patients and eight doctors (6 males and 2 female) ranging in status from junior housemen through registrars and consultants to very senior staff. Patients were aged between 62 and 97. Their presence in the clinic to some extent simply reflects their age: the existence of the Geriatrics Unit means that older patients in the Health Authority region are referred here for care and treatment. Hence, the Clinic staff deal with a wide variety of more and less routine ailments, though there is a predictable predominance of age-related medical conditions represented, from minor to acute.

   Each doctor who participated in the study agreed to have a micro-recorder running on his/her desk and a researcher present during the entire consultation. The observer sat in full view of doctor and patient but towards the back of the consulting room. S/he made written notes of contextual information and nonverbal behaviours particular to each consultation as it progressed and took no direct part in the interaction other than minimal responses if spoken to by another participant. Doctors asked patients' permission to record the consultations for research purposes soon after they entered the consultation room. (In addition, patients had in all cases been alerted when they entered the clinic to the fact that recordings were being made at the clinic on that particular day.) In all but one case this permission was readily granted. Micro-recorders were placed in open view on the desk between the doctor and patient. To ensure protection of confidentiality and patients' privacy under any special circumstances that arose, doctors were given discretionary rights to stop the recording if they felt that the procedure at any point constituted too

great an intrusion. This option was taken up on two occasions, when one patient became ill and the other extremely upset during the consultation. These interactions were of course excluded from the data set. All details of these procedures were fully endorsed by the relevant Medical Ethics Committees of the Local Health Authority in advance of the recording sessions.

Large sections of the recorded data have been transcribed using a modified version of the conventions we describe in Coupland–Coupland–Giles 1991 (see Appendix). Our policy is to transcribe with varying degrees of delicacy depending on the analytic questions being addressed. But in all cases, interpretive commentaries derive from repeated listenings to the recordings themselves, supported by the observational notes and post-interaction interviews. That is, we use transcriptions as one of several analytic resources rather than as objects of analysis in their own right.

4. We should make it clear that we do not see the role of the discourse analyst as being to legislate on the viability or desirability of ideological positions. Billig's (1987) comments on the pervasiveness of ideological dilemmas in mundane talk are relevant here; cf. his views on the need for a critical discourse analysis to expose such dilemmas, and specifically not to contribute to them.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions

Sequences of talk have been transcribed according to the following conventions:

1. Conventional orthography has been used wherever possible, though without capital letters (except in proper names and "I") and generally without punctuation. However, question marks and exclamation marks are retained as a rough indication of the illocutionary force of utterances.
2. Identifying names and other information is replaced with fictional names or initials and/or an explanatory gloss.
3. Syllables in italics receive heavy stress.
4. Overlapping speech is marked by vertical alignment of text linked by square brackets.
5. Brief (unmeasurable) pauses are shown as (.). Longer, measured pauses are timed in seconds, for example (2.0).
6. Adjacent utterances that are "latched" (end-to-end without an intervening pause) are linked with =.
7. Indecipherable or inaudible sequences are marked with (( )); where the number of syllables is identifiable, or where possible but uncertain interpretations are made, these are indicated within the double brackets, for example ((2 syllables)); ((surely)).
8. Commentaries on non-verbal, prosodic or paralinguistic features are given within brackets.

Part Four: Narrative analysis

Silence and revelation in the English traditional ballad

Jeffrey L. Kallen

1. Introduction

1.1. The English and Scottish popular ballad

The term "English and Scottish popular ballads" denotes a genre of oral and popular literature which is instantly recognisable within academic folklore study, particularly in the Anglophone and Scandinavian traditions. Outside this area, however, the term "ballad" may mean substantially different things to different people. As a preliminary to a discussion of the uses of silence in ballads, the first section of this chapter reviews the major characteristics of the genre.

Francis James Child's landmark work, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Child 1882–1898), is more than just a collection of ballad texts and critical commentaries. Shields (1991: 40) comments that "the body of song which Child called the 'true popular ballads' ... and never really defined except by editing is not easy to define by other means". Elaborating on this theme, Andersen (1991) discusses the diversity of approaches to the ballad which has developed using the Child collection as a point of departure, and concludes (p. 39) that "perhaps it is our good fortune that Child ... did not have a clear-cut definition of the English and Scottish popular ballads". Twentieth century scholarship shows divergence even in determining what is to be studied in looking at ballads. The initial scholarly emphasis was on texts and text collections, while later scholarship, given particular impetus from the development of oral formulaic theory (e. g. Lord 1960) has paid more attention to the role of the singer and the process of performance.

Despite the diversity of possible approaches to the ballad, the designation of ballads as popular verbal art invokes a generally recognised set of concepts pertaining to the composition, transmission, and dissemination of narrative song material. In an idealised sense, oral literature involves oral composition, performance in face-to-face settings, and large-scale dissemination by the continued process of performance in such settings. The material which becomes available to the analyst does so only following faithful transcription by a skilled collector.

These idealised situations, however, rarely hold. Oral composition may imply mutual exclusivity with literary composition, yet as Jonsson (1991) demonstrates, interactions in both directions between courtly literature and oral tradition can be seen in the development of the Scandinavian ballad well before the development of printing and literacy on a popular scale. Since the rise of the popular press, it has been possible for anonymous authors to rework or even innovate ballad texts via cheap broadsides and broadsheets. The movement back and forth between oral interpretation and written codification is thus also a part of the study of balladry. In contemporary society, electronic media further complicate the pure oral model. One version of a text or tune may assume canonical status for a generation of singers and musicians due to its popularity as a commercial recording and to the status accorded to the performer. The effect of this process may be both to sanction the innovations of this performer as part of the ongoing process of tradition, and to freeze a particular interpretation in a way not envisaged by the classic model of oral composition and transmission. The scope given to individual innovations in the recording industry also provides greater freedoms for non-traditional influences, exemplified by such hybrids as "Rockabilly", "Celtic rock", and the fusion of traditional Jewish and Eastern European music with jazz and other influences in the American "*Klezmer* revival" (see Slobin 1984). In this chapter, while the data sample excludes texts which show obvious signs of being purely literary compositions, the requirement that a ballad must be strictly oral in its composition and transmission is modified on the understanding that there is some critical oral element in the life history of the ballad.

Similar considerations apply with regard to the transmission, as opposed to composition, of ballad material. The idealised model suggests that ballads should be performed in face to face settings within a small, close-knit community. This method of transmission becomes important not only as a defining characteristic of the genre, but as an indication of the social role of the ballad. Ballads and other genres of traditional song have functioned not only for entertainment, but as mechanisms of social control, commentaries on social and political behaviour, and in other socially significant ways (see Renwick 1980 for discussion). The ballad texts which are available for historical analysis are not necessarily taken down from performance in such contexts. Many are only known through broadsides and other printed sources, and it is left to conjecture how accurately they represent texts as they may have been performed. These texts in themselves may show little or nothing of their social significance,

and it remains for further analysis to try to discover just what role they may have had in the society from which they come. Though social historical reconstruction lies outside the scope of this chapter, it is suggested in Section 3 of the present chapter that the texts alone, when viewed as a group, do suggest some strong values with regard to the role of silence in discourse.

The dissemination of ballads across social, geographical, and linguistic boundaries is a further aspect which arises from their method of composition and performance. Here too we see a continuum of possibilities. The "English and Scottish" ballads of the Child collection are found in English-language versions in Ireland, North America, and elsewhere. They are also international, frequently existing across wide areas of Europe in many languages and thematic variations. This distribution could occur in many ways: through face-to-face encounters in monolingual or plurilingual settings, by population movements (including both immigration and the activities of transient individuals such as sailors, migrant labourers, etc.), and by the use of printed, or later, electronic media. Here again it is not possible to set up an absolute criterion that a ballad cannot have been transmitted at some time via mass media; what distinguishes the traditional ballad's mode of dissemination, though, from that of popular culture in the wider sense is an essential level of transmission by the unofficial means of small group interaction.

Consider now the characteristic features of ballad texts. Ballads as understood here are typically narrative, rather than lyrical or descriptive. The narrative point of view is generally detached, rarely going into first person, and rarely expressing the emotions of the narrator. Characters are most frequently generic rather than rooted in some specific "real" time or place. The typical ballad text may involve a brief introduction and coda, but frequently makes extensive use of directly reported speech. Some texts, in fact, consist almost entirely of reported speech, with no material from the "narrator's" voice. Stock formulas or epithets are usually used to denote characters, settings, and ordinary objects such as wedding rings, horses, and parts of the body, heightening the impersonal perspective of the text. Most texts will be organised in simple quatrains, frequently using a nonsense or formulaic refrain as well, though some more elaborated poetic structures are possible. Themes of love and romance abound in the Child collection, though supernatural, amusing, adventure, historical, and religious narratives are also to be found.

The following chapter is based on an examination of the Child collection, for the simple reason that it is a well-known and accessible work

which provides a ready frame of reference for the genre as a whole. The geographical scope of the texts considered here is therefore limited. Similar texts are found in other collections and in other languages, yet the common definition of ballad used in these collections suggests that the materials will be roughly comparable in their dynamics. Though every collected text is in principle unique, it is obviously more efficient to group texts together according to shared textual and dramatic features. The usual practice, then, is to identify a ballad *type* following the numbering system of a standard collection, and to refer to individual texts as *variants* within this type. This practice will be followed here.

1.2. The pragmatic structure of ballad texts

The use of dialogue in ballads as discussed above provides our link to the study of silence in the ballad. Despite the large amount of conversation depicted in ballad texts, few studies have analysed ballad texts as conversations. Renwick (1980) and Kodish (1983) have, however, taken what might be seen as a discoursal approach to ballad texts in demonstrating that these texts may set up conversationally relevant implicatures concerning the characters depicted in narratives. For Renwick, whose study encompasses closely related song types as well as ballads in the classic sense, the situations and outcomes depicted in songs which deal with "sexual liaisons" of various kinds construct a set of implicatures by which texts are able to communicate more to the listener than they actually say. Many different song types may be taken as a whole to construct what Renwick (1980) terms a "precept" concerning relationships. These precepts organise the song world into meaningful units and interact in significant ways with the social and material reality of the societies from which they come. Note, for example, Renwick's Precept 3 "If your husband is engaging in liaisons with other women and/or neglecting his sexual responsibilities to you, and your response is of a *conventional* feminine kind, then you will have a tragic experience" (p. 75) or Precept 7, "If you engage in a sexual liaison with an *acontextual* man, then you will have a tragic experience" (p. 78). These precepts arise for the analyst from a distillation of many texts, and may be seen as part of the world view encoded in songs shared by members of the culture. Similarly, Kodish (1983) argues against the view of ballad epithets or commonplaces as simple textual fillers, demonstrating ways in which they establish implicatures concerning characters in ballad texts.

Though both Renwick and Kodish invoke the notion of implicature, the implicatures in question are not established in ordinary conversation, but rather by the way in which the text may be read as having deeper meanings. This kind of implicature works from the text (mediated by the performer) outwards to the audience; it must be distinguished from internal implicature which works within the text and which therefore holds between the characters depicted by it. In an earlier paper, Kallen (1993), I have suggested that the structure of the conversation "overheard" by the audience generates implicatures in the sense of Grice (1975, 1978) which show the importance of upholding conversational maxims when speech acts such as marriage or the initiation of seduction are performed. I propose here that silence in the ballad text includes both silences which are focused towards the audience's perception of events and silences whose focal point lies in the conversations of the characters in the story which the ballad tells. Though both levels of silence are important, it will be suggested that the internal silences are particularly important for a genre whose textual form is largely that of reported conversation.

The study of silence in the ballad appears at first to be almost self-contradictory. Since ballads are sung texts, the immediate possibility that this study would involve silent songs or simple interruptions in singing would be unfruitful. One possibility, not considered here, would be to investigate a silence which has been observed between the singer's understanding of a song and the text itself. As Porter (1976) demonstrates, singers frequently have their own interpretations of song texts which go well beyond the text itself and which also display strong elements of traditionality. In a sense, these interpretations constitute the silent partner to the ballad text, and only rarely do they surface in performance. The silences considered here, however, are not those in the ballad performance, but rather those which arise in the consideration of the ballad text. The essential question to be asked will be what uses silence can be put to in ballad texts, and what maxims or precepts concerning the role of silence can be deduced from their use in these texts. In other words, we shall be asking what the ballad tells us about the uses and consequences of silence.

1.3. Frames and times in the ballad text

The key mediating principle between performer and text, text and audience, or characters within the text may best be understood in terms of the interaction of frames through which events are viewed by various participants. Frame theory in psychology, sociology, anthropology,

discourse analysis, and other fields has a complex history which has been surveyed by Tannen (1993: 14–22) and will not be reviewed here. The notion is intuitively simple: a frame can be seen as a cognitive system which accounts for, say, the way in which the same remark may be understood in one way as part of an interview, in a different way as part of an argument, and in a third way as part of a courtship ritual. Bateson (1955 [1972]: 179), in commenting on the way in which monkeys engage in playful fighting, commented that "play could only occur if the participant organisms were capable of some degree of metacommunication, i. e., of exchanging signals which would carry the message 'this is play'." Similarly, Rommetveit (1992: 25–33), inspired by an example from Herbert Menzl, has shown that even a simple scenario such as a man mowing the grass in front of his house could be understood by various conversationalists to give rise to many equally legitimate statements of the state of affairs. Thus "Mr. Smith is WORKING" opposes the possibility that he may still be in bed, yet "Mr. Smith is NOT WORKING" makes equal sense in the context of whether or not he is free to go fishing, and "Mr. Smith AVOID[S] THE COMPANY OF HIS WIFE" may depict the same event from the perspective of an outsider who is "prying into the miserable marital relations of the Smiths" (p. 26). In each case, what Rommetveit terms the " 'attunement to the attunement of the other' " is what makes the difference in how these statements derive their validity.

The ballad text typically embodies several frames at once. For the singer and audience, the outward form of the ballad in the context of its performance marks the act of speaking as one of balladry, which may be opposed to other oral genres such as conversation, sermon, riddle, gossip, instruction, and the like. In a performance-centred model, this is the "real" or primary frame. The singer is really performing a ballad, and the audience is listening within the conventions established by this frame. Thus it is not open to the audience to challenge the performer to depart from the set text and provide real world explanations of the terms used in the text (as might be appropriate in a college lecture), the question of factuality or the singer's personal involvement does not arise in a literal sense even though the singer may use a first person introductory commonplace like "As I roved out in a May morning", and the audience's response is limited by the demands of tradition, which may include joining the singer in certain lines or offering verbal encouragement at key points. Of course in real situations, individuals may also reject the ballad frame: Munnelly (1990: 121) cites an Irish example of an anti-ballad outburst occasioned by a listener's association of the themes of nobility and

courtly love with historical British domination. Though such incidents do not affect the abstract system of performance, they do remind us that what we may call the "performer's frame" is worked out anew each time a ballad is sung.

Yet the performance is not the only frame through which to view the text. The written texts which form the object of many studies are not actual performances. They represent what Goffman (1974) refers to as the "keying" of a primary frame. By "key", Goffman (pp. 43–44) refers to "the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else." The manuscripts and printed versions collected by Child are in some cases keyings of actual performances or a secondary antiquarian's keying of a generalised sense of what the text is or should be. In other cases, the oral performance influenced by a printed broadside might be seen as the keying of a written text into a performance mode.

More important for the current analysis, however, is the way in which texts provide keyings of conversations. The dialogue which is depicted in ballad texts is not real conversation. Yet the text is still "real" as a presentation of conversation which follows generic patterns. If we accept these presented dialogues as keyings of conversations between fictive characters (fiction also representing a keying of experience), it becomes obvious that the characters themselves operate within a frame of discourse. This frame is distinct from that shared between performer and audience. It is in this frame, which I would designate as the "inner frame," that characters perform their significant deeds, and it is within this frame that we see most of the evolutions of silence in the ballad.

In a more pure analysis based on fieldwork and live performances, the performer's frame and the inner frame might provide us with sufficient material for a close analysis of silence and the traditional ballad. In this chapter, however, dependent as it is on written texts (i. e. keyings relative to performance), a third frame, the "narrative frame" will necessarily receive attention. This frame may be defined as the one established in the process of textual composition, that which in standard literary analysis would be seen as the authorial voice. Given the anonymous and popular derivation of the ballad, we have no access to the actual authors of ballad material, but we may nevertheless view our texts as having been assembled by some authorial process which gives rise to the texts as collected.

A final preliminary point here concerns the temporal perspective to be used in ballad analysis. As a narrative genre, the ballad requires a

presupposition of temporal ordering both in the "real time" of the events portrayed in the ballad and in the "narrated time" sequence which forms the text. Narrated time sequences do not necessarily correspond to real time orderings: flashbacks, anticipatory sequences, and other ruptures to real time are possible in narration. The relatively brief span of the ballad means that only a segment of a presupposed chain of events can be put into the narrative frame: some events are actually depicted, while some may only be referred to, and still others can only be taken as implied. The "window of events" available to the listener may thus be seen to include the depicted events (placed fully within the narrative frame), anterior events (which are presupposed and which may come into play during the depicted events), and posterior events (which are implied by the information schema derived from the depicted events).

Thus it is that when a ballad text opens in the middle of some chain of events which the listener can only guess at, the narrative frame has included the audience in the silence (here taken as the lack of explanation of some crucial element in the total chain of events). It becomes significant for the listener to see how silence will be dealt with. Will the silence be broken, either to the audience alone, i. e. within the narrative/performance frame only, or for the characters in the drama as well, i. e. within the inner frame overheard by the audience? Or will the silence remain completely unbroken? Alternatively, the narrative frame may make the audience aware of the creation of silence within the inner frame: someone has done something which involves silence that is known to the audience, but which remains unknown to a significant protagonist in the inner frame. Here our question is different. As members of the audience, we do not proceed in silence, for the silence is created in a different frame. We become involved in wondering whether or not this inner silence will be broken? If it is not broken, what are the consequences?

2. The uses of silence in the Child ballads

Within the narrative structure suggested above, silence in ballads is usually either *antecedent* or *created.* By these designations, I suggest that silences have their origins either in the overall structuring of events in the narrative frame, in which case silence usually pertains to events which occur prior to the opening of the events depicted in the story, or in the inner frame established by the characters portrayed in the text. The interplay between temporal factors (asking the question, *when does the*

silence arise?) and the framing structure of the text (asking the questions, *who determines the silence*? and *who proceeds in silence*?) allows for many different patterns in the use of silence to emerge.

Ultimately, the overall use of the opposition between silence and telling within the ballad tradition further defines silence as a signifier in semiotic terms. The choice to create or break silence becomes a meaningful act which can be commented on within the ballad canon. Here we may invoke the notion of "knowledge schema", defined by Tannen and Wallat (1993: 60) as a set of "participants' expectations about the people, objects, events and settings in the world." For the ballad audience, the establishment of a ballad frame brings into operation the knowledge schemas appropriate for perceiving the meaning of the ballad. Knowledge of the type represented by Renwick's precepts forms part of this knowledge schema, and certain assumptions concerning the benefits or drawbacks associated with silence, to be discussed below, form another part. With these distinctions in mind, let us consider a full range of uses of silence in ballad texts.

2.1. Antecedent silences

The *display of silence* involves a first interlocutor who draws attention to knowledge which is hidden from the second. I view this kind of silence as antecedent because the hidden knowledge in such cases exists prior to the opening of the depicted events of the text. Such silences include both audience and characters, since the audience is not made privy to the hidden knowledge any more than are the characters of the inner frame. The riddle is a clear example of displayed silence, since it does not use speech to give information, but to point out that which has *not* been said. In so doing, the riddle relies on a presupposition (which holds true both within the inner frame and in the real world act of riddling that the text represents a keying of) to the effect that a riddle answer is known to the riddler, although this answer is not known to the riddle recipient and will not be given to the recipient unless this recipient breaks the silence by exposing the answer or submitting to the dominant position of the riddler and admitting defeat. The implication of the riddle and related forms of displayed silence within both the narrative and inner frames is that the riddle recipient will try to break the silence which has been established.

"King John and the Bishop" (Child 45) exemplifies the display of silence within a full narrative. As Child (1965: I, 404) points out, Biblical analogues exist to this story in which a forfeit is attached to a riddle, and

this story type is widely found in ballad traditions and prose narratives (see Thompson, Motif H561.2 "King and abbot", and Aarne-Thompson Tale Type 922). In Child 45, the Bishop of Canterbury is summoned by King John to answer three questions upon pain of death. These questions are of an obscure nature generally known as "neck riddles," i. e. those whose resolution is required to save the neck of a prisoner. In this ballad the questions are typically: the value "to one penny" of the king's worth, how long the king shall "be riding the world about", and what the king is thinking. The Bishop, unable to answer these questions, is rescued by his shepherd, who successfully exploits the potential ambiguities in the riddles to provide acceptable answers. Disguised as the Bishop, the shepherd returns to the King and replies that the King would not be worth more than the thirty pence paid for Jesus, that he will go around the world from sun to sun in 24 hours, and that the King thinks that his interlocutor is the Bishop of Canterbury. Having successfully defeated the King's display of silence, the shepherd and his master are rewarded.

Conflict between speakers over the breaking of displayed silence is found in the seven ballads which I have identified in this category. In "Riddles Wisely Expounded" (Child 1), a knight poses difficult riddles to a woman as a precondition to marrying her (e. g., "what is longer than the way, or what is deeper than the sea"). In Child's A variant, the woman answers successfully and wins the knight as a husband; in the C variant, her answers further reveal that the knight is in fact a devil, and the devil flees when she names him. "The Elfin Knight" (Child 2) presents a comparable problem, in which a woman is set an impossible task, to which the reply is an even more ingenious and impossible counter-proposal. Situations of this kind feature prominently in narrative folklore: Thompson (1955–1958: III, 423–449) lists an extensive catalogue of riddle motifs involving natural and supernatural interlocutors, and tales built around such encounters include Aarne-Thompson's Tale Type 1172* "Devil to count stars, grass, sands of sea, etc." (see Aarne-Thompson 1961: 369).

In the ballads at hand, the answer to silence is silence. The first interlocutor draws attention to hidden knowledge by posing impossible questions; the second, unable to break this silence, successfully retaliates by creating one of her own. Most of the Child ballads end this chain of events in a state of equilibrium: the woman neither submits to the knight, nor does she win him as a husband. In some of the prose analogues, however, the woman is portrayed as victor in a contest of wits, winning the man as a husband (cf. Child, pp. 8–9). Similarly, in "The Marriage

of Sir Gawain" (Child 31), "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child 46), and "Proud Lady Margaret" (Child 47), riddling or the posing of mysterious questions is fundamental to the narrative: in Child 31 and Child 46, successful revelation ends in marriage, while in Child 47, Margaret uses riddles to establish the identity of a visiting man who turns out to be her long lost dead brother. In all these cases, silence, once displayed, cannot go on: it must either be broken in the inner frame by successful answers (leading to positive results) or nullified by the imposition of further silence (leading to equilibrium).

Another type of antecedent silence, *anterior silence*, builds in a problem for the characters of the narrative, who must act in the story without knowledge of crucial information that exists prior to the opening of the events related directly in the ballad. Unlike displayed silences, however, there is no character who draws attention to this pre-existing silence. What is crucial in examples of anterior silence is that the story is seen by the audience to *proceed in silence*. This is the kind of "silence as a container" which has been discussed by Jaworski (1993: 82–83ff). "Tam Lin" (Child 39), for example, begins with a declaration to the women of an estate not to visit Tam Lin, a man who lives somewhere in the vicinity. The women are warned that no woman goes near Tam Lin without leaving him "either their rings, or green mantles,/ Or else their maidenhead". One woman violates this prohibition, however, and having become pregnant by Tam Lin, returns to him at a later stage. Only then does she discover that he has been under an enchantment, and she proceeds to break the spell, winning him for a husband and causing anguish to the Fairy Queen who cast the spell in the first place. The crucial dynamics are these: the sequence of events from the prohibition of the woman's encounter with Tam Lin, her return home, and her return to Tam Lin all take place in the silence of her not knowing the essential fact in the case, that Tam Lin is actually a civilised man under a spell rather than the strange and malevolent creature he is supposed to be. The object of the woman's quest is not the exposure of silence per se; yet it is only as a consequence of the breaking of silence that the ultimately successful end of the story is achieved.

Within the 22 texts which I would assign to this category, there are many variations on a common pattern. In "The Bonny Hind" (Child 50), the drama of a man and a woman running off together goes on smoothly, until it is discovered that they are brother and sister. Tragic consequences result: she kills herself and he becomes despondent. (Cf. also Child 52, "The King's Daughter Lady Jean".) Here the entire chain of events would

not have occurred had the silence been broken prior to the beginning of the story. Previously unknown events are revealed by chance in "The Boy and the Mantle" (Child 29), in which a stranger comes with a mantle that magically tests the virtue of the Court's wives. All the women fail the test, until Craddocke's lady is tested, who confesses to a premarital kiss with Craddocke and emerges unscathed. An antecedent mystery with consequences during the period of depicted events is revealed in "Brown Robyn's Confession" (Child 57), in which a ship is in trouble at sea, lots are cast to see who must leave the ship, and Robyn leaves as it is revealed that he has previously committed incest. This breaking of silence ultimately has happy consequences, as the Virgin Mary appears and takes Robyn with her on account of his having confessed his sins.

The stranger in disguise or with a secret past also brings the possibility of an antecedent silence, though a disguised individual may alternately, as shown below, create a silence by his or her own actions. The "Baron o Leys" (Child 241) runs off with a young woman, whom he impregnates and who subsequently demands to know his name. Up to this point we may speak of the story as proceeding in silence. After refusing to reveal his identity, the Baron finally reveals his name and the fact that he is already married. Once this silence is broken, the young woman demands either money, marriage, or the Baron's death as a forfeit. Sending word to his wife, the Baron is rescued by her, as she is willing to pay a ransom to have him return home. The resolution may be termed a happy one since the wronged maiden does receive the forfeit which she has demanded and the Baron is returned to his home, but this resolution again requires the breaking of silence.

"Our Goodman" (Child 274) represents a final subtype of anterior silence. The crux of this widespread text is that a drunken husband comes home to find obvious evidence that another man has been in bed with his wife. The wife, however, explains away each bit of evidence as an innocent occurrence. Here the silence arises from her hidden affair, and while the husband attempts to break the silence, his stupidity, drunkenness, or other disability (depending on the version) render him unable to do so. Though Child (V: 90) cites European parallels with an "approach to a serious termination" in the form of curses from the husband, most traditions, include the Anglophone, German, and Francophone, leave the matter in a state of equilibrium which may border on the comic. The truth has long been clear to the audience by implicature within the narrative frame, the husband is unable to break the silence in the inner frame, the wife is successful in outwitting the husband, and the story proceeds no further.

Static silence, like the silences discussed thus far, denotes a situation in which silence is of crucial importance within the period before the opening of the ballad's window on events. Static texts, however, do not narrate a true sequence of events, but rather focus on the attempt within a single conversational interchange to break or maintain the pre-existing silence which lies within the inner frame. In one of the best-known ballads, "Lord Randal" (Child 12), the scene usually opens with the central character dying. On interrogation by his mother, he readily reveals that he has been poisoned, and generally leaves a testament which includes blessings on some members of the family and a curse on someone else (either a family member or a false lover). The central figure of "Edward" (Child 13) undergoes a similar interrogation concerning the blood on his coat or personal effects, reveals that he has killed some family member, and leaves a testament comparable to that of "Lord Randal". In both these instances, there is no conflict or display of wits comparable to the texts which feature a display of silence. The purely confessional nature of Child 156, "Queen Eleanor's Confession" underscores the static nature of this kind of evocation of silence. Faced with death, the Queen asks for two friars of France to hear her confession. The King and the Earl Marshal go to her in disguise, pledging not to record whatever is said. Here her long-held silence is broken: she confesses to infidelity and other crimes, but her husband, on revealing his true identity, is bound by his vow not to inflict the savage punishment that he would have done otherwise.

These three examples (plus a fourth, Child 27, "The Whummil Bore") show a different perspective on silence. While displayed silence sees silence as a source of conflict, and antecedent silence plays a role in the development or evaluation of a chain of events, static silence simply shows that the breaking of silence need not have effects in the "real world". Silence in these texts is broken, in keeping with a conversational expectation of the genre, but life or death in these cases goes on unaffected by the breaking of silence. It may be significant, however, that this use of silence is rather marginal in the Child ballads: the usual implication is that breaking silence *does* have an extralinguistic significance.

Death may be the *ultimate silence*, but many forms of folklore, including ballads, deal with the attempt (from either side) to break this most unbreakable silence. Five Child ballads deal directly with this theme. Here again, the silence itself is antecedent to the opening of the narration, but the characters of the inner frame employ supernatural means to communicate with each other. In "The Unquiet Grave" (Child 78), the surviving partner (either a man or a woman) is left to mourn the departed for a year.

After this time, the ghost of the departed returns to see who continues to weep so much, and warns the surviving lover not to desire a kiss from the departed one, lest they die as well. This narrative typically ends in equilibrium, with the ghost withdrawing and the ghost's advice apparently followed. "The Wife of Usher's Well" (Child 79), "The Knight's Ghost" (Child 265), and "The Suffolk Miracle" (Child 272) share a roughly similar dynamic in which no further consequences result from contact across the grave. It may be argued that making any supernatural contact within the inner discourse frame counts as a case of breaking silence. Though "Sweet William's Ghost" (Child 77) follows a different pattern, with different versions portraying either a successful reconciliation between William and his surviving lover or the tragic consequences of failure in this regard, the significance of silence is roughly similar in all these cases: given the right conditions, even the silence of death can be broken long enough to allow for the resolution of the survivor's grief.

2.2. Created silences

Turning to the question of silences which are created or maintained by the depicted characters themselves, *created silences* operate within the inner frame. Unlike many (though not all) antecedent silences, the audience is exposed within the narrative frame to the events which give rise to the silence which is a problem for the characters of the narrative. By definition, created silences do not shield facts from the listener, but from the characters of the text. The narrative frame generates an implicature that the characters who operate in silence will ultimately share the knowledge that has already been revealed to the listener. Yet this implicature is not inherent in the literary use of silence: it is certainly possible for a created silence in a novel or play to remain unbroken, either to the characters within the text or even to the audience itself. Since ballad texts do not exploit such logical possibilities, our understanding of created silences in ballad texts helps to understand the particular viewpoint of the ballad regarding silence.

In some 34 texts which use created silence, the pattern of breaking silence in the inner frame is overwhelmingly confirmed. The main distinction between text types lies in the timing and subsequent results of exposure. If silence is broken before tragic consequences result from actions already set in motion, then the breaking of silence features as a part of the derivation of a happy resolution. In other cases, though, silence is only broken after the development of a tragic end.

One of the best-known of the "happy" uses of created silence depicts the testing of fidelity by a period of silence, often combined with further testing through the use of disguise. This pattern is seen in simple form in "Hind Horn" (Child 17): Hind Horn goes away for a period of years, bearing a ring from his lover that will turn pale if she should cease to love him. When the ring fades, Hind Horn returns in beggar's disguise, to find that she is about to marry another man. After Hind Horn reveals his true identity to break the silence which his disguise has created, the two original lovers are re-united, although the woman may already have married the interloper. An inversion of this theme is found in "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington" (Child 105), in which the bailiff's daughter rejects her suitor's advances, causing him to go away in despair. She follows him in disguise, and on meeting him gives the information that the bailiff's daughter has died. Thus she creates a silence, by concealing the true facts of her change of heart under cover of her own death. On seeing her suitor mourn her death, the woman reveals the truth and the lovers are united happily.

Other variations on the themes of pretended death or obscuring of identity, leading to the breaking of silence and the success of love, are found in various texts, running from "The Kitchie Boy" (Child 252), which also employs feigned death and recognition by token, to "The Jolly Beggar" (Child 279) and "The Beggar Laddie" (Child 280), in which the roving beggar turns out to be a rich man in disguise, to the more intricate "John of Hazelgreen" (Child 293). In this ballad, a man tells a woman who is pining for John of Hazelgreen that Hazelgreen is married; he offers the woman his own son instead. Rejecting this son, the woman nevertheless accompanies the man to his own estate, whereupon it is revealed that this Hazelgreen is in fact the older man's son, and the two are happily united. In all such cases, we see the deception caused by the conscious hiding of crucial facts which causes the characters to proceed "in silence" within the inner frame until the silence is broken.

Created silences can also be used to hide or cause terrible crimes. Even when the silence is finally broken, revelation may be too late to have any real effect. In "The Twa Sisters" (Child 10), for example, the sisters are in competition for the attention of a young knight. The elder sister is spurned and drowns the younger out of jealousy. Silence is created in the inner frame, though not in the narrative frame, since the act takes place in secret and is never divulged by the perpetrator. This silence is broken by supernatural means. The victim's body may be made into a musical instrument by a third party who has found the body floating in the water:

this instrument then tells the public at large about the manner of her death. Similarly, the corpse of the woman killed in "Young Benjie" (Child 86) is able to tell her vengeful brothers not only who has killed her, but what his punishment should be. Sometimes a third party reveals the crime: in "Young Hunting" (Child 68), a woman kills a man and puts the body in a river. No-one can find the body, but despite the woman's attempt at bribery (the buying of silence), a bird reveals the body's location and the woman is killed in punishment. In "The Cruel Mother" (Child 20), there is no revelation to the outside world that the mother has killed her children. Instead, an initial silence is created by the children's reappearance as beautiful children whom the mother is drawn lovingly towards; they break this silence by revealing their true identities as her departed children and with the reproach that she had no such feelings towards them while they were alive.

Created silences may also cause or facilitate death. There are not many ballads of this type, but there are enough to define a type. "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard" (Child 81) is concerned with the creation of silence at several points. The two illicit lovers of the title seek at first to buy silence by bribing Lady Barnard's page boy. He refuses this offer, and though the lovers proceed with their affair, they do not do so in silence: the page boy, rather, informs Lord Barnard. Later, however, as the lovers lie in bed, Musgrave thinks he hears a bugle call which warns him that the jealous husband is coming to seek revenge. Lady Barnard assures him that the call is only her father's shepherd bringing in the sheep. Here the silence stems from an act of framing: for Musgrave, the bugle call is a meaningful message within a frame of "Danger" (a frame which can be said to envelope his actions within this affair, accounting for his attempts at bribery), while for Lady Barnard, the bugle call takes its meaning within a frame of "Everyday life" which is not a cause for concern. The narrative frame makes clear, however, that Musgrave's frame is the correct one, and Lord Barnard surprises the pair, ultimately killing both of them before killing himself. Here the importance of not proceeding in silence is vital: had the illicit pair broken the silence by receiving the message intended for them, they might have escaped.

A problem related to the preceding created silences is found in ballads which display a *surrogate silence*. In these texts, one figure engages in a speech act which prevents the other from speaking at a crucial moment. Such ballads as "The Lass of Loch Royal" (Child 76), in which a silence is imposed on an unwilling protagonist, illustrate the potential tragedy

of enforced silence. The heroine of this text goes to her lover's castle in the night and begs to be let in. She is interrogated to prove her identity and told to go away. It emerges, however, that her interrogator is not her lover at all, but a vengeful mother who has let her son sleep through the entire incident and thereby caused his lover to leave. On waking and finding what has happened, the son pursues his love unsuccessfully, and both die in the end. In the different pattern of "Child Owlet" (Child 291), the rejected Lady Erskine stabs herself and says that she has been wounded by Child Owlet. Unable to speak in his own defence, this man is punished by being ripped to death by horses.

The second silence referred to in discussing "Little Musgrave" above is actually indicative of a wider trend of *silent encodings* in ballad texts. By this term, I suggest that a narrative may turn on a character's attempt to encode a message that is not received correctly by the intended recipient. The warning bugle of Child 81 is one such example, as are the tokens used by the woman in pursuit of her lover in "The Broomfield Hill" (Child 43). In this text, the woman finds her man asleep in the woods, but leaves significant tokens next to him, rather than wake him up. On waking, the man is dismayed to find her gone, berates the animals for not waking him, and pursues her, to an inconclusive result. In "Child Maurice" (Child 83), the lack of communication occurs despite the use of a verbal message. Child Maurice sends a message to a Lady to meet him, accompanied by many gifts. She may be described, as in Child's D variant, as "my first fair love". The Lord of the house overhears this message, and kills Child Maurice, suspecting an adulterous plot. It is revealed, however, that Child Maurice is the Lady's son, and the killer is filled with remorse for having acted without knowing the facts.

Episodes of this kind are important for discourse analysis. In terms of Grice's conversational maxims (Grice 1975: 45–46), these encodings violate the maxims of quantity ("make your contribution as informative as is required") and manner ("avoid obscurity of expression" and "avoid ambiguity"), while the failure of communication arises from the intended recipient's inability to understand the encoding in terms of the Grice's maxim "be relevant". In fact, the failure of the relevance maxim may arise from a problem of framing: the expression "my first fair love" is legitimate within the frame of "Mother-child relationships" as it was intended by the sender, yet is the cause of jealousy and anger when put within an "Adult sexual relationships" frame by the lord of the house. From such examples we come to realise that the maxim of relevance can only be understood within a shared discourse frame.

Though the overwhelming trend in the uses of silence in ballad texts suggests that silences are meant to be broken, four texts explore silence in other ways. *Self-destructive silence* is maintained by "Hobie Noble" (Child 189), who is enticed into leading a raid which leads to his capture and punishment. Hobie Noble refuses to inform on his colleagues, however, stating that "I wad betray nae lad alive, For a' the goud in Christentie". He is killed in consequence. Silence kept as a point of honour is more comically seen in "Get up and Bar the Door" (Child 275), in which a husband and wife make a wager to the effect that the first person to speak must get up and bar the door. This theme ("The silence wager", Aarne-Thompson's Tale Type 1351 and Thompson's motif J2511) features widely in prose narratives throughout Europe, India, and elsewhere. Whether portrayed tragically or comically, the essence of the use of silence in both tale types is the same: silence carried to extreme, even for noble motives, can be dangerous or deadly.

Two final texts to consider in this chapter demonstrate both the logical possibility that silence can be seen as benign and the rarity of this position within the ballad corpus. In "Auld Matrons" (Child 249), the male hero loves a gentlewoman seamstress, but is afraid to court her as he fears the "auld matron". The seamstress reassures him that the matron has not walked in years and poses no threat; silence, in other words, will provide protection. Silence is broken, though, by the unexpected intervention of the matron, who informs the sheriff that his daughter is in bed with a man. The sheriff comes with his men, but they are met by the woman's brother, and the sheriff ultimately loses his eyes and curses the matron for involving him in this matter. "Lady Elspat" (Child 247) agrees to meet her suitor in secret, but this secret is divulged by a page. Despite his attempts to prevent the liaison, the affair once made public is sanctioned by the judge, who gives the couple his blessing. In both these texts, silence in the inner frame is viewed as appropriate within the narrative frame, and the attempt to break the silence and thus interrupt the desired progression of events is either dangerous for the breaker of silence or ineffectual. Here at last, but only in these two examples, do we see a suggestion that sometimes it is better to leave silence alone.

2.3. Not all texts use silence

It might be thought from the preceding discussion that all ballad texts which use deception, disguise, questioning, or similar motifs use silence. While it is true that silence can be use to deceive, I would not argue that

all deceptions are based on silence. In fact, we can understand much about the way in which silences are used in ballads by comparing "silent" texts with texts that are thematically similar but which do not use silence as a major narrative device. Since the discussion of "non-silent" texts could be at least as lengthy as the preceding discussion, this section analyses only a sample of such illustrative ballads.

Consider first the deception of "Willie's Lyke-wake" (Child 25). The main protagonist pretends to be dead in order to ensnare the woman he loves. She comes to his wake, at which point he revives and spirits her away to be his bride. In these and other European versions, some of which involve the woman perpetrating the deception (see Child: I, 247–250), there is no series of events which takes place within silence in the inner frame. Willie lets it be said that he is dead, and the ensuing events come as an immediate consequence of this statement.

It might be argued that a ballad such as "Lizie Wan" (Child 51), in which a father quizzes her daughter as to the reason for her crying and moaning is a type of displayed silence. After all, Lizie is patently in distress, yet she does not reveal the reasons for her tears. Yet on being asked, she tells her father directly that it is her pregnancy from her brother which makes her cry. Unlike the anterior silence of "The Bonny Hind" mentioned earlier, in which brother-sister incest takes place against the background of silence arising from ignorance, "Lizie Wan" involves neither events which go ahead in silence nor a primary attempt to create a silence that would hide the event.

Consider, too, "Will Stewart and John" (Child 107). John is the younger brother of Will, who lies in bed, sick for the love of the daughter of the Earl of Mar. In order to communicate his elder brother's feelings, John disguises himself as a beggar and gains access to the daughter, whose father has forbidden the match. It could be argued that this disguise, like that of the returned lover in "Hind Horn", is a kind of silence. Yet the narrative frame uses the disguised beggar motif in "Hind Horn" in an opposite way from that of "Will Stewart". In the former case, the disguise is used in order to *prevent* a message from being communicated, i. e., the disguise initiates a silence and the event of interrogation proceeds within this silence until it is ultimately broken. In the latter, however, the disguise is used to *facilitate* communication: only by disguising himself can John gain access to a situation in which he is able to speak openly and directly. At no time has he the intention of doing otherwise.

As a final example of ballads which are related to but distinct from those which use silence, we may cite "Jamie Douglas" (Child 204). Unlike

most ballads, this one is generally narrated in first person. The woman at the centre of the story is married to Jamie Douglas, but subsequently goes to bed with another man. Exposed by one Blackwood, the woman is forced to go, leaving her children behind. The narrative frame in this text is entirely retrospective. The episode of Blackwood's betrayal is thus generally presented simultaneously with the affair itself, as in the G variant:

> When I lay sick, and was very sick,
> A friend of mine came me to see;
> When our Blacklywood told it in my lord's ears
> That he staid too long in chamber with me.

This compressed mode of presentation means that none of the events are seen to proceed in silence, nor is there any attempt to create a protective silence after the event. Though the "real world" state of affairs summarised above could have been cast in a ballad which employed silence as a narrative device, the significance of Child 204 for our analysis is precisely that it does not see events through the contrast between silence and the breaking of silence.

3. Conclusion

Having seen the different ways in which the anonymous authors of the "English and Scottish popular ballads" have used silence in narration, it becomes possible to extract a particular view of silence in the ballad which is remarkable for its clarity and simplicity. Essentially, the ballad canon examined here views silence as a problem to be overcome. Where silence is displayed, it should be broken; where anterior silences are not broken in a timely manner, tragic consequences usually result; created silences require exposure to achieve a happy end, otherwise, they may only hide or perpetrate terrible crimes; and even the ultimate silence of death can be transcended in the ballad world. The "honourable" silence is ultimately self-destructive. In short, it is almost impossible to find a ballad text which argues in favour of silence.

Further consequences of this perspective arise in considering both textual and cultural aspects of the ballad. At the textual level, we can see that silence itself becomes one of the signifiers within the narrative frame. The soldier, tramp, or other "acontextual man" referred to by Renwick (1980) and the formulaic characters described by Kodish (1983) set up particular expectations within the song tradition which may be taken as

part of the audience's knowledge schema within the understanding of balladry as discourse. It requires more subtle analysis to understand silence in the same manner, since silence is not often portrayed explicitly. Though phrases such as "a profound silence fell upon the group" or "there was a nervous silence in the air" can go some distance towards a conventional description of silence, these phrases are rarely found in the texts considered here. Yet once we understand silence as being established either by the presentation of information within the narrative frame or by the actions of characters in the inner frame, we can see that silences set up the same kind of conventional implicatures within the logic of the ballad as the signifiers which are more usually identified. A silence can be understood as an indication to the audience that something is wrong: that something must either be rectified in good time, or that some tragic consequence is to be implied by the silence.

The significance of silence in ballads does not stop within the domain of verbal art. Since ballads are to a large extent presented as reports of conversations, that is, as keyings of conversation, it makes sense to understand them in conversational terms. The use of silence in the ballad can be seen as part of an "adjacency pair", as this term is understood in conversational analysis, i. e. a single conversational unit which is distributed across two speakers. The second part of an adjacency pair is a response to the expectations established by the first. Greetings, leavetakings, and invitations are all well defined adjacency pairs which involve a "first pair part" that initiates the process of response and a "second pair part" which may either be of the preferred form (greetings and leavetakings are generally reciprocal, while an invitation prefers acceptance) or a dispreferred response (as in a declination to accept an invitation). Taking silence as the first part of an adjacency pair, the preferred response, from the narrator's point of view if not from that of the characters themselves, is to break the silence. The dispreferred response is to maintain it. Many of the texts discussed above show serious, sometimes fatal, consequences attached to the use of a dispreferred response to silence. In this sense, it is not the silence per se which has significance, but the sequence of silence and revelation, presupposed as the preferred expectation, which is at work as a signifier in the ballad.

To understand the importance of the use of silence in the ballad, we must remember that the ballad of tradition was no marginal art form as it would be considered today. The oral and printed streams of song tradition have existed side by side in the English speaking world since the early 16th century (Shepard 1962: 49). Printed songsheets during the four

centuries from this time onwards cover a wide range of themes, including politics, religion, news, romance, and all the familiar stuff of today's popular culture. As far back as 1520, for example, John Dorne of Oxford was registered as selling 190 different ballads from his shop (Shepard 1962: 51). While it is true that many of the songs referred to by Shepard and other commentators on English folksong do not fall within the strict definition of "traditional ballad," the point is that we must understand the ballad as an integral part of the popular culture of certain times and places. The view of silence expressed by the ballad genre, then, must be taken both as a reflection of and an influence on society's attitudes towards silence.

Even during the time of the ballad's greatest vitality, the perspective of the ballad is of course not the only one available in traditional lore. Proverbs such as "silence is golden" and "discretion is the better part of valour" may emphasise the values of silence. The perspective of other traditional genres, such as prose narrative, or the formal culture of religion, education, and law may also be different from that of the ballad. What is needed for a further examination of "silence and the ballad" would be a detailed analysis of the operation of silence as a day to day reality within the cultural milieu that gave rise to traditional ballads. Renwick (1980) demonstrates that it is possible to reconstruct the link between the views expressed in traditional songs pertaining to "sexual liaison" and the ethnographic reality of sexual relations in 19th century English village life. Not only is such historical reconstruction possible, but it is necessary in order to understand the relation between song and society. Renwick's (1980) investigation of contemporary song in the culture associated with coal mining in Yorkshire also shows the continuities between older traditions and the processes of modern cultural expression. Likewise, an approach towards silence in traditional song could be developed further to encompass contemporary popular song. Bradby (1985: 3), for example, argues that "the rock performance ... makes the woman into a silent object of exchange between men" and contrasts rock 'n' roll "girl group" songs with male-oriented songs, concluding (p. 20) that "if male performances exchange a silenced woman between men, the object of the female performances seems generally to be not to exchange the man". Any such uses of silence in contemporary song may take their development from older traditions developed within changing cultural patterns. Thus it would remain for our understanding of silence not only to examine its use in specific art forms, but to map the ethnographic reality of silence in relation to its many conflicting portrayals in traditional, popular, and elite culture.

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Silent and silenced voices: Interactional construction of audience in social work talk[1]

Christopher Hall, Srikant Sarangi and Stefaan Slembrouck

1. The social work space: what is said and who is heard

Pithouse (1987) describes social work as an "invisible" trade because social workers "often enjoy high levels of autonomy and privacy in their dealings with clients" (Pithouse–Atkinson 1988: 183). Taking this observation further, it is possible to characterise social work as a sequence of discourse events organised around different sites: interviews with clients, planning meetings with fellow professionals, case conferences, court hearings etc. In all of these encounters social work talk is organised around the telling and retelling of stories made up of events and with characters in them. So a great deal in social work depends on the production of professionally competent stories which must convince a wide array of audiences.

The use of a narrative mode is a significant dimension of the social work trade. As Pithouse–Atkinson (1988: 195–196) put it:

> The narrative art of the competent social worker depends upon the ability to extemporise accounts which incorporate the "right" sorts of background information in the "right" quantities, from which the "right" inferences may be drawn ...

It is through the production of institutionally ratified narratives that social work becomes "real" and "visible", and that it can be "heard".

These observations suggest that doing competent social work is a matter of deploying a range of discursive strategies with audiences in mind. It is also by taking a position as an audience that different points of view can be interactively heard or silenced. In this article, we examine narratives as performance, rather than just text, because it is by looking at talk as performance that we can account for the occasions and positions of telling and listening. Our framework thus corresponds with Fairclough's (1992) plea for a three-level approach to discourse analysis focusing on (i) discourse as text, (ii) discourse as a user-oriented process (production, consumption, circulation) and (iii) discourse as socio-cultural practice, including a focus on ideology and power relations.

1.1. The neglect of silence in linguistic analysis

Traditional forms of linguistic analysis do not usually deal with silent discourse, or tend to deal with it in minimalist terms, as a stage which precedes speech. Yet, from our everyday experiences as language users, we know we can hear something that is not said. As Birch (1992) points out, even analytic strands which see language use as discourse or as social action, have paid insufficient attention to the occurrence of silent or silenced voices in a text, this way running the risk of silencing "silence" itself. According to him, linguistic analysis effectively contributes to cultural silencing if it ignores texts and discourse situations which, from a dominant cultural perspective, are uncomfortable:

> But surely as linguists we should be as interested in those strategies which silence voices just as much as we are in the strategies that allow voices to be heard [...] But we are not, as a rule, because the models and theories of communication that underpin mainstream linguistics are rampantly anti-strategic. Linguistics, even despite the moves that have been made in language as social semiotic by systemic functional linguistics, has not handled the idea of language as consequential interaction very well at all. (Birch 1992: 24)

Silencing may be an effect of research practice not only in the sense that only texts are analyzed which conform to the dominant culture, but also in the sense that certain voices are repressed or remain unheard in these texts. Our view is that a "narrative analysis" which invites a critical readership can succeed in uncovering the "silenced" perspectives and the consequences of their suppression. A critical analysis of social work performance, for instance, should help us uncover how social workers as story tellers manage to suppress and exclude certain "undesirable" voices (e. g. by keeping certain voices outside the plot, by objectifying certain voices as they are talked about rather than being allowed to talk, by constructing or presupposing voices in antagonistic terms while not letting them speak, etc.).

In this paper our aim is to link a narrative analysis of social work talk (section 2) with the notion of voice (section 3). Our investigation will concentrate on the analysis of an extract from a research interview between a social worker and a researcher. The interview is part of a research exercise concerning children's services in a public welfare organisation. Mishler (1986: 69) notes that research interviews are often achieved through story telling:

> Telling stories is far from unusual in everyday conversation and it is apparently no more unusual for interviewees to respond to questions (in research interviews) with narratives if they are given some room to speak.

Our extract for analysis (transcribed in Appendix 1) presents the opening exchanges of the interview in which the researcher is asking why a family of three children were admitted into public care (see Hall 1993 for more details). Whilst our data might be read as interactants attending to the occasion of a research interview, our main interest is in the extent to which the talkers are also collaborating in the production and reception of the story of a life-world case, including a series of professionally competent interventions, and ultimately, the efficacy of social work itself. Although there was no explicit evaluation of social work practice in this particular research exercise, the presence of an external researcher asking questions about specific cases is likely to have produced an encounter in which professional practice is examined as competent and justifiable.

2. Social work accounts as narratives

To approach social work accounts as narratives means to consider the ways in which a social worker draws together and configures "facts", impressions and opinions into a justifiable occupational account, in short a narrative performance. As Pithouse and Atkinson (1988: 194) point out:

> The story is constructed by the worker as an act of *bricolage*. That is, bits and pieces of family life are picked out and reassembled into the narrative format of case-talk.

Like the social worker, the analyst is confronted with the art of picking out "bits and pieces": firstly, what narrative theories to appropriate, and secondly, what aspects of the account to analyze as narrative. For some theorists like Roland Barthes, narrative is everywhere:

> Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable [...] comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society: [...] it is simply there like life itself (Barthes 1982: 251).

Given this all-encompassing power of narratives in human activities, it is not surprising that there has been a proliferation of theoretical approaches to the study of narrative – in literary theory, social theory, linguistics, to name just a few. One dominant analytical orientation here is the distinction made between meta-narratives and local narratives (*grand récit* versus *petit récit,* Lyotard 1984). The meta-narrative is concerned with the totalising discourse of how it is possible to talk about a phenomenon. For example, Foucault (1972: 32) sees madness as the product of a discourse of psychopathology, which developed in the nineteenth century:

> Mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it.

At the other extreme is the local construction, which is located in the everyday discursive practices of speakers and listeners. Unlike the grand narratives where actors are constrained by what it is that is possible for them to say, local narratives are actively created in "language games". As Bruner (1991: 4) points out:

> We organise our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing or not doing, and so on.

In analytic terms, perhaps we need to bring together these two approaches to the study of narratives. For instance, we can incorporate the theme of the grand discourses of welfare in the analysis of everyday encounters between social workers and their clients. Such a position will take account of Fairclough's (1992: 57) critique of Foucault:

> The questionable assumption is that one can extrapolate from structure to practice, that one can arrive at conclusions about practice without directly analyzing real instances of it, including texts.

In very broad terms, a distinction can be made between formalist and interactional approaches to narratives (Nystrand–Wiemelt 1991). In a formalist approach, texts are narratives if they display a story structure with specific features. A structuralist would go for a more abstract level in which story structures are seen as surface manifestations of underlying deep structures of cultural distinctions (Propp 1968; Chatman 1978). In an interactional approach, on the other hand, a narrative is seen as a product of the occasion of telling. A story is made available in its performance and reception – it is not in the head of story-teller, but resides in the interaction with the listening audience. Drawing on these approaches to narratives, we want to investigate how this particular social work account can be approached as a narrative, by first considering aspects of story structure in section 2.1., followed by the interactionist concern for audience construction in section 2.2.

2.1. (Formalist) Narrative analysis: distinguishing story structure

For researchers with a more formalist (though not necessarily a structuralist) approach to narrative (e. g. Labov), stories are characterised by necessary conditions which distinguish them from other forms of text. Such approaches are concerned with delineating the structure of the

story, by recognising distinguishing features. The most basic formulation of story structure is *critical situation – complication – resolution*, and a text with such a pattern is thus identifiable as a completed narrative. For Labov (1972), the clauses must also have a temporal relationship. Applying such a framework to our social work account, a story structure can be established around the categories of "opening", "orientation", "complication", "resolution" and "evaluation" as elements of an episodic narrative structure.[2]

Whilst we have reservations about what can be gained by investigating story structure for definitional purposes, the use of such headings can introduce us to features of the social work account which demonstrate its "story-able" features. An interactionist approach to story structure considers similar features, but sees them more as recognisable in the narrator's interaction with the listener(s). Sacks (1992) is concerned with a "potential story", which becomes a story only when interactants respond to it in an appropriate manner. The narrator is given the floor through a story preface, s/he is granted an uninterrupted turn, the completion of the telling is signalled by the recognition of the "dénouement" and a return to turn-taking conversation. In what follows, we will examine the social work account as a narrative in terms of Labov–Waletsky's (1967) headings, but assume that such a story structure is interactionally accomplished.

2.1.1. Opening

Before the tape recorder is switched on, the interviewer outlines the purpose of the interview. The opening utterances display the participants in some difficulty agreeing on the appropriate format. The social worker locates the starting point of these events as the date of the children's admission to care; it is the outcome which is to be explained. The truncated and contested nature of "floor seeking" (Sacks 1992: 681) in the initial utterances (lines 1–35) can be interpreted as creating an unsettling set of exchanges – the interviewer is attempting to ask questions and receive answers, but the social worker is trying to introduce characters and events. The interviewer can be heard to undermine the potential story telling by cutting across the social worker's utterances to ask informational questions about race, gender, age, thereby interrupting any bid for an extended turn. For example, a strong bid for telling a story can be observed at line 14 ("now the children ..."). It is interrupted by the interviewer in line 15 ("sorry sorry race"). The social worker, on the other hand, can be heard to stop trying to tell a story and to revert to a question and answer approach in line 20 ("go on").[3]

There is rather a contested set of exchanges with convergent expectations about the nature of the encounter. The interviewer can be heard to acquiesce at line 21 and the social worker accepts this as a story invitation. A chronological starting point for the story and the case is offered: the initial intervention by the department to make the children wards of court (line 24). A further bid for an extended utterance can be heard in the instruction to provide "a bit of background" (line 34), which the interviewer acknowledges. Not only can this be interpreted as a story preface (Sacks 1992: 227), but it also asserts that understanding the outcome requires a "background", a story. Despite the initially uncertain nature of this exchange, a bid for an extended utterance, hearable as a story, has now been interactionally accomplished.

2.1.2. Orientation

The "background" offers a description of particular features of family behaviour which may be heard as the problem, i. e. why the social services have been involved. It makes available a moral categorisation of the case, and describes a particular state of affairs. The mother is young with four children. She has entered a pattern of moving home, because of the violence of the father of the children (line 41–42). The family is specifically constructed as a mother with her children (line 36); the constant reference to "the father of the children" (line 37) underscores the lack of any basis for a relationship between herself and the man in the story. He is not, in the social worker's construction, part of the family. The family set-up and the dispreferred state of affairs provide the background against which the social work intervention is to be justified. And it is now the social worker's job to establish a preferred family set-up.

The preferred family set-up would establish a second state of affairs and offer a chronological and categorical starting point to social work intervention – "with social services having worked quite hard at having contracts with both her [= the mother] and the father" (line 45–6). The second state of affairs and preferred family is depicted through a list of objectives and interventions (lines 48 to 72). The aim is to "get her [= the mother] settled down" (line 72) and sort out the children's behaviour (line 73–74). This second preferred state of affairs is distinguished by the exclusion of "the father of the children" and its benefits are demonstrated by a series of upgraded descriptions of the social work interventions: not just a new house for the family but "a 5 bedroom house" in a sought after area (line 62); not just pre-school day care but "a community package" (line 68); get the two eldest children into special school in order to

handle their disturbed behaviour (line 70) and the safety of "an injunction against him [= the father] to stay away" (line 63–64). A potentially satisfactory state of affairs can be heard (lines 60 ff.).

This second preferred state of affairs and family set-up has established a family without the father, and the social work intervention to support this arrangement is characterised by the provision of a range of "goodies". A new house, a community package, the safety of an injunction, and a special school, connote images of safety, warmth and calm.

2.1.3. Complication

The complication in the story, however, signals a return to the former dispreferred state of affairs. This change is marked by an event with an approximate date (line 76) and the injury to the eldest child is taken to signal a breakdown in the former preferred state of affairs, with doubts over the cooperation of the mother. It means the "father's on the scene" (line 78). The "da da da da da" (line 79) is an important comment as it heralds a domino effect of all the consequences that follow from the father's presence in the family. It also acts as a pivot between the two states of affairs, signalling the obvious implications, which need not be spelt out. Furthermore, the mother does not really seem to take things all that seriously and she has been deceitful (line 82). The very foundation of the previous state of affairs has been blown up.

2.1.4. Resolution (with a twist)

The breakdown of the preferred state of affairs can be heard to justify the strongest action available to the social worker: to remove the children against the mother's will (line 86). But, the judge did not go along with the social worker's "side of the story", and the children returned home (line 91–92). That the mother's formulation is described as "her side of the story", a version, rather unsettles the social worker's display (line 90–91) and the researcher asks for confirmation that the social worker's version of events did fail (line 93–94).

2.1.5. Evaluation

The interviewer is now able to intervene, not because the story has ended, but in response to his surprise at the judge's unwillingness to accept the social services' case ("oh", line 93). The interviewer's intervention seeks an explanation for the apparent failure of the social worker's version of

events, and a justification of the social services' position is now made available: things happening so fast and needing time to plan the future. The story is completed by the closing comment, "that's it in a nutshell really" (line 106).

2.2. (Interactive) Narrative Analysis: constructing the audience

The above analysis has been concerned with recognising features of story structure. It has been suggested that hearing this account as a story has been made possible through the interchange between two states of affairs. A series of events and behaviours has been linked together and, towards the end, the speaker describes it as a "story" in the sense of a version of events (see Ricoeur's (1984) notion of "emplotment" to account for the diverse mediations performed by the plot in a story).

Such a formalist approach to social work talk which concentrates on story structure, however, does not serve our purpose well because it gives the impression of a "closed" account.[4] It leaves story recognition in the hands of the analyst, as it assumes that a story structure is somewhere outside the interaction – outside the discursive space of those who are involved in the telling and the hearing.

In developing an interactionist approach, we now wish to consider how story construction and reception are achieved through the ways in which the narrator appeals to the listener and, in doing so, constructs a preferred audience or "implied reader" (Iser 1974).[5] Our interest here is in how stories are constructed with an eye on how they will be received and responded to. Herrnstein Smith (1980: 216), among others, notes the strategic importance of the storytelling occasion:

> No narrative version can be independent of a particular teller and occasion of telling and, therefore, we may assume that every narrative version has been constructed in accord with some set of purposes or interests.

It seems then that the elements of story construction can be located in the requirements of an adequate reading performance, including the work necessary to convince listeners, to set up alliances and to gather support for establishing categorisations. What methods does the narrator use to convince the listener that his/her story is believable and morally accountable? In what follows we suggest that the construction of an audience is accomplished in two ways: the binding instructions to the audience, and the construction of deviance through contrast. In section 3, we will go on to argue that it is through the construction of the audience that "silent" and "silenced" voices are detectable.[6]

2.2.1. Setting up alliances and binding the listener

If one wants to grasp the complex relationships between story-telling and audience expectations, one needs to take into account first the immediate audience – in this case the interviewer – who takes on a listener's role and allows for a full story to be unfolded. As already indicated above, the interviewer is here constructed by the story-teller as an "addressed audience": narrators tell audiences what they want to hear, but it is just as important to bear in mind how this is bound to the social worker's position. What is in part at stake then is the maintenance of a discursively common *what we believe, understand and accept as reasonable*. However, the interviewer's role is far from that of a passively positioned audience. It is important to see the interview situation, indeed all storytelling, as a two-way process. Our analysis of the story structure has shown how the researcher initially resisted the social worker's role of storyteller and a question-answer approach appeared briefly. On becoming a storyteller, the social worker received a "sympathetic hearing", with appropriate back-channelling and solidarity from the interviewer (line 94).

It will be clear from the analysis so far that the telling of a story is not accomplished merely through the presentation of facts for listeners to make their own interpretations. The organisation of story structure discussed in 2.1. is a cohesive framework around which events and characters are linked into a plot, each feature leading the listener inevitably on to the next, and eventually to the "dénouement". In this process, the "right" sort of hearer is appealed to by setting up a range of alliances and binding instructions. There are a number of occasions on which the story-teller can be seen to both instruct the listener how to interpret events and characters, and to join in an alliance with the narrator. There is, firstly, the use of specific devices which bind together narrator and listener. Take for instance the use of "y'know" which, according to Schiffrin (1987: 284), is an important device in story evaluation:

> "Y'know" enlists the hearer's participation as an audience to the storytelling by drawing the hearer's attention to material which is important for his/her understanding of why the story is being told [...] it marks meta-knowledge about shared (either speaker/hearer or general) knowledge. That is, once speakers produce in their hearers' recognition that a story is about something with which they themselves are familiar – something which is shared knowledge – then much of the informational and interactional dilemma facing the story-teller is resolved.

Coming to our data, there is a particularly interesting use of "y'know" at lines 47 to 49:

> social services decided that they had to put some sort of stop to this some sort of legal framework around it for the children y'know in the best interests of the children

In this utterance, the justification for seeking a legal framework is upgraded from "for the children" to "in the best interests of the children" with "y'know" in between. By using the second phrase, the story-teller appeals to wider concepts of child protection enshrined in legislation and social work principles (Jacobs 1982, Parton 1991: 194).[7] The dispreferred state of family relations in this case is located in the realm of professional justification and the legal responsibilities of social work intervention. A competent social work listener would recognise such an appeal and be constrained by it. Later, at line 78, "y'know" is again linked to an important strategic move: "this meant alarm bells y'know father's on the scene da da da da da so because of that ..."

Bakhtin (1981: 342) notes the use of authoritative discourse, filled with sacred words or phrases, distanced from the present utterance of the speaker. Unlike the appeal to "sacred" phrases above, here the "da da da da da" can be heard as having so successfully recruited the listener that the implications need not be spelt out. The presence of the father in the family has been carefully developed throughout the story to indicate a dispreferred family arrangement. His apparent reappearance indicates to the listener, not merely his presence, but the breakdown of a set of relations, with serious consequences. This is an example of what Atkinson (1990: 53) calls "synecdoche":

> A restricted set of features are selected in order to exemplify salient aspects which the reader may treat as symptomatic of a recognisable or plausible state of affairs.

Both "alarms bells" and "da da da da da" are powerful figurative phrases, devices which attach the listener's attention to the drama of the occasion ("alarm bells" can be heard as the metaphor for the action of the fire brigade, whilst "da da da da da" signals the domino effect referred to above, as one event signifying more serious connotations).

Both uses of "y'know" then display important interactional work in the performance of the story. The appeal to shared "sacred" formulations and to locally constructed agreement is reinforced by the meta-communicative "y'know". The listener is bound to the story and to the narrator's version of the events. These utterances are also important in the structure

of the story, as Schiffrin (1987: 283) points out: "y'know" is linked to "pivotal points". The first occurrence we drew attention to summarises and completes the first state of affairs and why the social services department should intervene; the second pinpoints the return to the dispreferred set-up. The interviewer agrees with the social worker and her projection of a (dis)preferred family set-up. In the text we can notice the presence of a listener, as presupposed by "we" and "you know", "da da da da da". It is only when this coalition breaks down that the silenced voices begin to come in. The preferred audience starts to distrust the story teller. But, first, we shall focus on how silencing is accomplished through discourses of "deviation" and the role which the (dis)preferred set-up plays in this.

2.2.2. The interactive construction of deviance through contrast

Let us return to the preferred family set-up once again. As we have pointed out, audience alignment is presupposed in the way this set-up is outlined through devices such as "you know", "in the best interest of the child" and through claims which are brought into play such as that in normal families "children shouldn't move thirty times". By contrast, the dispreferred family set-up referred to earlier is said to increase the deviance of the children: there is the father as the deviant antagonist; there is the mother's behaviour which displays deviant "ethics" (dishonesty), etc.

The mother's position is put forward as one of control (line 74–75: "J was supposedly keeping to the contract", "you can't keep moving around these children" (51–52) "J knew quite clearly he [= the father] had to stay away" (65–66). In line 70 ("into special schools because they were no longer going to be able") and lines 53–54 ("showing signs of disturbance"), the children are depicted as developing into positions of growing social deviance. The implied hearer is expected to accept this unfolding scenario.[8]

This expectation of agreement can be compared with the form of audience alignment reported upon in Smith's (1993) analysis of "K is mentally ill", where a contrast is established with others in the same event. K is described as behaving deviantly and this is accomplished through contrastive devices ("K is unlike ..."). In this process, K is not allowed to account for her behaviour. For instance, Smith draws attention to the role of the detail that K insisted she swam 30 lengths. The strangeness of this activity lies in the precise description of the behaviour. Similarly, in the story analyzed here, the mother, unlike other mothers, has moved house 30 times (lines 39–40).[9]

To conclude, the mother in our story is interactively constructed as non-cooperative and deviant. Through contrast, the audience is to be convinced of her deviation. The strategy is by manipulating the preferred and dispreferred states of affairs. Additionally, such deviance is used to justify institutional action as a last resort (Hall–Sarangi–Slembrouck, forthcoming).

3. The mediation of voices

In section 2 we have shown how a story is told by constructing a preferred audience, with very little or no support from the clients involved (we return to the notion of preferred audience in section 4). In what follows we pay closer attention to some of the narrative devices deployed to keep the clients' voices at a distance. In order to develop this aspect of the analysis, we must first turn to a more detailed discussion of the concept of "voice".

There are a number of different ways that the concept of "voice" can be developed. Various writers, notably Bakhtin (1981, 1986), have developed theoretical notions of style, intonation and genre in order to account for the multifaceted functions of voice in text and talk. In the Bakhtinian sense, voice refers to the many different types of ways of talking derived from historical or genetic sources. By extension, one word can include many voices. For Bakhtin (1986) it is these many voices that make up the self, the personality. This leads to another use of voice where the character in the text is given an overall voice. According to Bakhtin (1981: 320):

> (Each character's) sphere of influence extends – and often quite far – beyond the boundaries of the direct discourse allotted to him. The area occupied by an important character's voice must in any event be broader than his direct and actual words.

With regard to the textual analysis of voice, Silverman–Torode (1980: 34) analyze an interview from Labov (1972) through a "voice structure" of six voices in a short passage. Each "voice" whilst uttered by two persons, displays different positions towards their relationship and towards the topic talked about. In this formulation "voice" is used to refer to an "organising principle" at a local level in a text. For instance, a selective use of pronouns like "we" or "you" to signify exclusivity or inclusivity can lead to a unified system of relations which constitute a consistent voice. In contrast, Atkinson (1990) considers voices to be "large" textual

positions in the text – rhetorical devices for persuading the reader. In his analysis of ethnographic writing, he identifies the contrasting voices of the "sociologist" as an observer and as an analyst. By moving between a confused observer and a confident analyst, s/he can persuade the reader that ethnographic observations can be explained by theory.

While each of these analytic traditions has some interest, we would like to develop our analysis of voices in the social work text in two ways. First, we would use voice to refer to some of the strategies available to narrators, viz. the utterances of a person or a character in the text (an aspect which is tied up with the right to speak and to be heard). Secondly, for us, voice represents a position, a point of view, an ideology which the text implies, suggests, expounds – in short, the discourses that concrete utterances draw upon, as well as the potential readings which are available to the critical audiences (what Bakhtin (1986:119) would refer to as "social voices"). The occurrence of voices thus, firstly, warrants an analysis of the use of discourse representation devices in the story-telling. In a second analysis, we will link up this analysis further with an extended use of the term "voice" in the sense of "position" or "point of view". In other words, we focus on how people's words and ways of speaking are used to construct characters in the text as particular types of people with particular points of view. Thus our analysis relates back to the discussion of narrative, while anticipating the theme of partiality and exclusion of voice in character depiction (section 4).

It will be clear from our narrative analysis that in this story the social worker is both character and author. He talks about his own work, ideas and feelings although often these are fused with the construction of a social work point of view, the social work voice. As Bakhtin (1981) points out:

> (A given character's values and language are) diffused throughout authorial speech that surrounds the characters, creating highly particularised and sensitised character zones. These zones are formed from fragments of character speech, from various forms for hidden transmission of someone else's word, from scattered words, sayings and verbal ties belonging to someone else's speech, from those invasions into authorial speech of others' expressive indicators (ellipsis, questions, exclamations). Such a character zone is the field of action for a character's voice, encroaching in one way or another upon the author's voice (cited in Morson–Emerson 1990: 329).

In our analysis we focus on how the social worker as author creates a text (the author's voice) as well as how he produces himself as a character (a voice in the text alongside and in opposition to the character of the client).

3.1. Mediation of silent voices through the representation of speech

In section 2.1.2. we have shown how "deviation" is sometimes established through interactive devices between narrator and audience. In what follows we focus on the use of discourse representation devices which play a role. For us, stories can be seen as a mosaic of voices, a point which applies in the more narrow sense of the representation of speech activity, but also in the wider sense of the intertextual relations which underlie the bringing together of various ways of speaking within the space of a single text or discourse event.

Narrators have various discourse representation devices available to them. The client's speech may be quoted directly or paraphrased (as in the report of what the eldest boy said in hospital). Alternatively, the story may restrict itself to reporting a particular speech act, or restrict itself to the representation that a certain type of speech activity took place. What is striking about the use of speech representation in the story is that only the social worker's speech is at any given point seen to be quoted directly, viz. in line 51–54: "... which meant then ehm you know it gave us some legal framework to work with J to say (= reporting verb) look you can't keep moving around these children are you know their behaviour is showing us this that and the other showing signs of disturbance" (= quote itself). The quote displays some interesting features. It purports to relay what the social worker told the mother, but, at the same time, with the use of "this that and ..." the social worker presupposes that there are parts of the quote that the interviewer can fill in for himself (a device which is similar to the use of "da da da da da" in line 79). In doing so, the social worker presupposes a common ground with an audience who can work out for itself the kind of wording that would have been used or would have been appropriate in such circumstances.

Note also that the direct quote is not followed by any report or representation of the mother's reply. Instead, it is followed by a question of the interviewer asking about the actions taken by the mother in response to the speech act ("where did she go when she leaves", line 55). Consider what would have been the outcome if the interviewer had actually asked: "What did she reply?"

In the present story-telling situation it is not possible to hear the mother physically speaking. In any event, whatever can be said to belong to her speaking voice is mediated as report in the story teller's narrative. Voice then becomes a question really of the extent to which the story-teller – here the social worker – allows the client's voice to make use of

"words". In other words, whether or not and to what extent the social worker allows himself to become a mouthpiece for the mother's point of view by letting the latter's voice take over for a longer or shorter period of time in the telling.

We notice that the mother's point of view is not sought at various points in the story because it is not deemed necessary and the implicit assumption is that she is in agreement with the worker; only when she has separated herself from the social worker's construction of the preferred scenario, she must account for that. At line 79, she is finally heard. Significantly, this comes immediately after the "da da da da da" – the point at which, as already indicated, the audience is assumed to have been won over. It is now safe for the mother's words to be heard, and for her position to be attacked:

> and because we talked to J and she seemed to think well it's ok for dad to see the children I'm not really bothered ehm (line 80–81)

The thrust of this complex attributed quotation is to construct the mother's view as unacceptable and her position as directly opposed to the preferred family set-up which has been established carefully by the storyteller, and endorsed by the preferred audience (see section 4). The first part of the utterance, "she seemed to think well it's ok for dad to see the children", directly challenges the social worker's view that the father should not see the children. This is further compounded by "I'm not really bothered", indicating an uncooperative and possibly an uncaring stance. A complete rejection of the social services' position is therefore able to signify not only that her position is unacceptable but also that it should be contested. The social services position is now re-established as "the children's sort of long term future was at risk" (line 82–83), and the decision to go to court is heard as the only possible course of action (a last resort).

Note that "and she seemed to think well it's ok for dad to see the children" is not a straightforward direct quotation. It probably indicates something which the social worker assumes was clear from her reaction. It is also unclear what the precise status of "I'm not really bothered" is. Is this more of a thing the mother actually said, or is it again an attitude attributed to the mother, without the wording necessarily reflecting her actual words? Analytically speaking, it is perhaps not so important to try to resolve this ambiguity (quotations are always double-voiced; cf. Voloshinov 1973). Yet, the possibility that the utterances are interpreted by the audience as (partly) reflecting words the mother actually used

works clearly to the advantage of the speaker and can be effective in discrediting the mother's position.

The attributed quotation is also ambiguous in terms of import. Do we take the mother simply to state that the father's visits are no problem to her? Or, is she mainly being dismissive of the social work enterprise? To the extent that the latter alternative prevails interpretatively, the use of the attributed quotation is clearly instrumental in constructing a position for the client vis-à-vis institutional action.

The story-teller offers no report of whether the mother agreed to the action plan or whether she had suggested alternatives. In fact, when the mother's speech is finally heard in line 80, she is reported as uncooperative, and even dishonest ("the fact that she hadn't been honest with us", line 82). The sequence is important in this: first the dispreferred set-up and then the preferred set-up (father excluded, moving house, and children into day nursery) and then the worker recounts the return to the dispreferred set-up. The reader is now invited to doubt the mother's commitment to the preferred set-up. Had her voice been incorporated into the story earlier on and had she been cast as seeing the two alternative set-ups in the same way as the social worker saw them, it would have been easier to point out the mother's uncooperative behaviour later on without sowing doubt in the reader's mind. Nor is the father allowed discourse space to comment on the preferred set-up, or the children, except for the eldest who is heard commenting on the return to the dispreferred set-up:

> the eldest child who was there at weekends broke his nose he went to (hospital) and he told the hospital that his father had done it this meant alarm bells you know father's on the scene da da da da da (lines 76–79).

At this point, the child's voice comes in to consolidate the institutional label of the father as a threat. In a way, the child's speech is used to lend support to the institutional analysis, rather than as part of the family (cf. the partial outsiderness presupposed in "who was there at weekends", lines 76–77).

It emerges from the story-telling that attributions of "deviation" go together with various types of "silencing". There are points of view which are not heard at all (e. g. the father); there are words which are heard in the report of speech but which are framed interpretatively in support of the institution (e. g. the eldest boy); there is reported speech which initiates a discourse stretch but the response is not heard (e. g. the social worker quoted as addressing the mum); there are points of view which

will only be heard when speakers have to account for their own actions (e. g. the mother who has to account for stepping out of the preferred script), etc.

Concluding this section, a neat, credible social work story is made possible by the structured and episodic juxtaposition of narrative points of view. This juxtaposition is achieved through language – for instance, how parents receive constructed identities and how their behaviour is discursively reacted to. There are two sides to social work accounts. The narrative is carefully structured, either leaving out client voices altogether (as in "K is mentally ill?", Smith 1993) or in presenting these voices as subjective, biased and untrustworthy (cf. how easing of the client's voice is accomplished through reported speech). By contrast, institutional perspectives are voiced as "facts", and as such voiced loudly and clearly.

3.2. Silenced voices and the point of view of "the other".

So far we have looked at the mediation of voices which results in a truncated portrayal of the clients' words and actions. A critical reader can ask: where are the positions of the mother and father? Not only are the parents absent from the text in terms of their "words", but also nowhere is their position represented – they are "silent" and their version of events is "silenced", too. We need to construct a critical audience who can liberate these silenced voices: an audience – both in terms of reported speech and point of view – who can take different subject positions and endorse different voices. The critical audience could be the interviewer, the judge and/or the analyst.

As we have shown, reported speech acts performed by the social worker manifest two aspects: the silencing of voices (the use of contrastive devices to establish deviance) and reports of silence being constructed as noncooperative behaviour. The unheard voice of the client – "the other" of the text – is initially silenced, and then undermined with the help of an audience who recognises "parental incorrigibility" (Dingwall et al 1983). Clearly, "the other" is always there in the discourse, potentially undermining any story teller's version, hence the reader's response may initially be to be convinced of the social worker's position (bound to the speaker by "we", "y'know", "in the child's best interests") but becomes ultimately distrustful (e. g., the use of "you" in lines 93, 95–96).

How can the silent voices of the parents become "hearable"? This is possible, for instance, by questioning the preferred family set up, by locating the points at which critical questions may be asked or by noting the

possibility of an alternative story, etc. Every "speaking voice" includes a potential number of "voices" (see Bakhtin's (1981) notion of heteroglossia). For instance, the social worker is able to draw on discourses of welfare (social services' work, line 45), normal families (children don't move 30 times, line 40), deviant behaviour (children should be protected from violent fathers, line 42) and legal frameworks (line 51) to frame an account. The preferred reader, who is likely to hear the authoritative voice of the social worker, is perhaps also likely to be impressed by such positioning to voices in the justification of social work action ("in the best interest of the child") and persuaded by the cues that bind him/her to the story.

When the case gets to the court however, the force of the social worker's story becomes relativised: "our" side of story is contrasted with "her" side of the story (line 90–91). The two versions are available to be presented side by side in the court, which suggests to the audience that an alternative version of events is now available. Secondly, the mother's voice is not only heard but the judge goes along with it. From the audience's point of view, the judge's endorsement of the alternative version undermines the alliances so far developed in the narrative. For instance, we see the interviewer as an immediate audience showing surprise that not only is there an alternative version but also that this alternative version drowns the social worker's carefully constructed story line. This turn of events invites us to explore what the mother's version may have consisted of.

Let us, for this purpose, turn to the case notes which refer to this incident and examine to what extent the mother's perspective is taken into account there (see Appendix 2).[10] The mother's participation is detailed in the case notes in the form of three entries. Whereas the third entry is very much taken up in the spoken narrative, the first entry reports that the mother's viewpoint is to be sought about a whole range of issues – the accident, the father's involvement with the children, her cooperation with the department – and that it is to be made potentially available for later reporting and discussion. Yet, it is missing from the narrative we are looking at. In the second entry we see mother's voice being reported (in the sense in which we have used this notion in the previous section) as dismissive of the entire social services enterprise and blaming their intervention for the present state of the family. Interestingly, this is again not available in the spoken narrative. We would argue that in these particular case notes ample space is created for the mother's voice, so that these can be used in preparing a condemnation of the mother's action in the future court hearing (this is also done in much stronger terms than in the interview story – "not honest", did not accept "preferred family set up", "not working with us").

One additional explanation for why the details of the case notes are not accounted for in the spoken narrative could be that case notes are written with different audiences in mind. The social worker needs to display to colleagues and managers that the mother has been consulted at each stage of the intervention process. Another explanation could be that the mother's voice can potentially undermine the worker's story and therefore should be left out, and with this her position is also silenced.

To summarise, the social worker can be heard gathering and interpreting events and characters. Despite the recruitment of other points of view, facts are turned into interpretations, translatable into actions. In view of this, "the eldest boy" is not constructed as a voice since he does not represent a position or point of view. The "mother" and "father" are constructed as potential voices since enough is said about them to depict them as particular types of characters *who would behave in a certain way, say certain things and take up certain predictable positions*. We are thus presented with a "mother" as someone who cares for her children, who cooperates (initially) with the social services department, but who ultimately fails to live up to her responsibilities of, and expectations as, a "mother" because she returns to the "father". The "father" is depicted as a dangerous character – violent and unpredictable. They are "constructed characters" without voices, deprived of an opportunity to justify their position.[11]

4. Linking our analysis with the sociology of exclusion, suppression and disambiguation.

Central to the notion of silent and silenced voices is the notion of the "other". The discursive construction of "the other" is a mix of situational performance and socio-culturally accessible story lines, categorisations, plots, etc. In this respect, silencing and the use of contrast mutually reinforce one another. An appearance of abnormality given to depicted actions can only work if a normal pendant is presupposed in one form or other, interactionally or through other linguistic means. Similarly, one can scan what others say about "silent" characters in terms of attributed *do's* or *don'ts*. This implies an implicit measurement against scripts for socially (un)acceptable behaviour.

For Foucault (1961, 1972), "normality" has no objective existence, but it always exists in its discursively realised contrasts with "abnormality". For instance, there can be no talk of "reason", unless it is contrasted

with "insanity" through complex forms of discourse which constitute the interrogative practices of, among others, psychiatry, medicine, etc. Pêcheux (cited in Haroche et al. 1971: 98) calls these "ideological pairs". For Foucault (ibid), the voice of "insanity" is what is being suppressed, because it is not allowed to speak at all or because its speech is only heard through the interrogative practices of "reason". Foucault argues that throughout Western history there has been a dialogue between madness and reason, and, at times, madness was seen as a specially gifted type of reason. The dialogue between the two, however, collapses in the 18th century with the birth of psychiatry: the interrogative incorporation of madness within the practices of reason goes together with the complete silencing of madness' own, distinct voice.

> When, at the end of the 18th century, madness becomes mental illness, it is confirmed that the dialogue has been broken up; the separation is postulated as an accomplished fact and all failing words with their unstable syntax are forgotten, that stammering contact between madness and reason. The language of psychiatry, a monologue of reason about madness, could only have been based on silence. (1972: 58–59).

And Foucault continues:

> It was not my intention to write the history of a language, but much more the archaeology of this silence.

It follows then that silencing and exclusion are based on socio-culturally held assumptions that clients', patients', etc. voices are not worth hearing, as they do not understand themselves or their own "problems" – one aspect of the profoundly rationalist ideology that the professional knows best.

But there is another angle to the silencing of categorised "others" within the body of social work discourse. The naked truth in modern society (the unheard voice in some cases) can become irretrievable – but was it ever there? According to Bauman (1993), social spacing in modernity is awash with residue effects it cannot control, because it is not possible to beat ambivalence. Ambivalence, in Bauman's view, is something which modernity is very ill-equipped to handle, because the rational discourses of modernity are oriented towards the truth about "problems" and their "solutions". Applying this to the domain of social work, one can note that family intervention is one domain which is heavily loaded with ambivalence. (The question – is this parent an abuser? – is loaded with a great deal of uncertainty). Not surprisingly, story-telling, which must show to the institution that things are under control and are being

dealt with efficiently, is invested with attempts at reducing and fighting ambivalence. Once it has become stable, a story counts as a successful act of classification, in other words, an act of accomplished disambiguation (which, when institutionally endorsed, literally rules out ambiguity – at least, in the face of the institutions). But having reached such a point, the storỹtelling is really over; the story no longer needs to be told. Before such a decision is reached – or even afterwards – whenever the story is told (again), ambivalence crops up anew, with alternative accounts lurking underneath (cf. Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogism).

Therefore, beyond an analysis of narrative ingredients and lexicalised oppositions, one should, as we have argued, concentrate on the production of narratives as situated discourse. Stories are not told for their own sake, but for the sake of establishing or contesting realities – and, very importantly, they are addressed at audiences with powers of ratification.[12] Thus, silencing happens not necessarily because social workers cannot conceive of allowing silenced voices to be heard, but because of the moulding effects of the inevitable attunement to institutional considerations and audiences, beyond the relationship with individual clients.

This discussion of audience construction and silenced voices links up with two further aspects in the work of Bakhtin. Firstly, Bakhtin sees all communication as directed towards an other, and as anticipating a response:

> Every word is directed towards an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates. (Bakhtin 1981: 128)

Of particular interest in this analysis has been the way in which various audiences are constructed and addressed, not only the immediate listener. Bakhtin (1986: 126) distinguishes between the immediate listener and the "superaddressee":

> Any utterance always has an addressee (of various sorts, with varying degrees of proximity, concreteness, awareness, and so forth), whose responsive understanding the author of the speech work seeks and surpasses. This is the second party (again not in the arithmetical sense). But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher *super-addressee* (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee).

Applied to the story analyzed here, the "super-addressee" could refer to the judge who will ultimately evaluate the credibility of the story. As discussed in section 2.2., some devices used to construct the preferred audience appeal to principles of a higher order – for example, "the best

interests of the children" or "children shouldn't move 30 times". This suggests that both narrator and listener can be seen to stand before some higher authority in reverence and accountability, perhaps to the judge, or to the inquiry. In this way, the appeal to principled conventions and higher authorities is more than a persuasive rhetorical device in talk. It is fundamentally linked to how social work as a profession is able to convince others through its stories and thereby gain power and influence in important societal areas. The failure to persuade the judge in this story is therefore not only a failure of persuasion but also of the professional authority to talk and thereby control family life with the authority of the law. At yet another level, therefore, the "super-addressee" could refer to the social work profession itself, in the sense that all accounting is self-addressed and self-defensive, as social workers use description to silence the critique or the unheard voice.

Secondly, following Bakhtin (1981), the dialogic character of the text raises the issue of "the other" in communication. "The other" is a complex notion developed in existentialism and phenomenology, and applied in anthropology, psychoanalysis and literary theory. As Theunissen (1984: 1) considers, few issues have exercised as powerful a hold over the thought of this century as that of "the Other". Put simply, suppressing "the Other" is concerned with the way in which the speaker is in danger of being undermined by the available but unspoken alternative versions. For Bakhtin, alternative versions oppose authoritative versions and thus inhibit finalised claims or definitive representations. In our analysis, this suggests "silenced voices".

Two approaches to otherness may offer fruitful directions. Firstly, there has been an interest in how anthropologists construct the "native" as an object of study. Fabian (1983: 143) criticises the ways in which anthropologists have described "primitive" cultures in terms of temporal distance, a world outside the reporting world and yet one which the anthropologist is privileged to enter and comment on.

> Anthropology emerged and established itself as an allochronic discourse: a science of other men in another Time. It is a discourse whose referent has been removed from the present of the speaking/writing subject. This "petrified relation" is a scandal.

We have seen in our analysis how social workers also attempt to put boundaries around clients and their worlds, and thereby make them objects of comment. In doing this, the voice of "the other", like that of "the native", is suppressed. In this reading, "the other" is always an absent third person in the discourse, about whom a number of things are said

and presupposed. One could say that it is "s/he" or "they" who forms the object of interactive assessment between the "I" (speaker) and "you" (audience), who – in their turn – may (but need not) conflate into all kinds of "we" – configurations with shared meanings. In short, the successful institutional story is the one which succeeds in constructing a common, blackboxed (Latour 1987) "other".

A second, different approach to "the other" follows the existential self-other relation in a reversal of the identification of the subject of the text, since "the self" is the hero or character constructed in the text, whilst the other is the author. In other words, the self is the client in the text and the other, the social work writer. The self is only able to come into the world through the work of the other. Jefferson (1989: 159) compares the approaches of Bakhtin and Sartre (citing the latter's *Being and Nothingness*):

> Whereas in Bakhtin the author/Other's incarnation of the hero/subject is a loving and aesthetically motivated gift, in Sartre this incarnation is a negation (p. 228), a theft (p. 225), an alienation (p. 263), an enslavement (p. 267) [...] The Other lets loose a catalogue of irremediable catastrophes for the subject; and even love itself in Sartre proves to be just one of the necessarily antagonistic modes in which self relates to Other.

Returning to the case we have been looking at, our analysis suggests that institutionally ratified categorisations and depictions inform social workers' "incarnation" of their clients. But "the other of the author" necessarily enslaves in the very act of the "telling the social work story". In the end the court resists social work control. This is only one case, but perhaps the fixed depictions of social workers are always available to be undermined by other, stronger audiences.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that it is in the production of narratives that voices of clients are silent and silenced. While social work narratives allow the case worker to produce a competent performance by institutional standards, it inevitably means that alternative versions of events and characters are excluded and suppressed in order to produce finalised texts. By seeking out the unheard versions which surround social work narratives, one can question the credibility of the social work story and create an audience for the client's voice. Silent and silenced voices then begin to show up. For instance, in the case examined here the judge takes on the role of a critical audience as he creates the social space for the mother's voice to be heard.

It seems to us that the social worker strategically excludes the mother's voice or reduces her right to speak early on so as to construct a competent story, but ironically, in casting the mother as uncooperative in strategic but minimalist ways and only allowing her restricted access to the story-line, the story is only heard as a story, and as such later dismissed by the judge.

As analysts of social work talk we, like the judge, have positioned ourselves as part of a (critical) audience with the aim of uncovering the strategic accomplishment of silent and silenced voices in the fabric of the story. This is, however, far from claiming that the alternative mother's account is more valid than the social worker's. What our analysis has, hopefully, upfronted is the importance to resuscitate the suppressed and silenced voices so as to show the powerful mechanisms of institutional "cases". This ultimately raises the question whether one still wants (in principle) to subscribe to some version of the grand discourses of social problems/solutions.

Notes

1. We are grateful to Jacob Mey for his critical, but constructive, comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Our thanks also go to Adam Jaworski for his editorial patience, without which we would not have been "heard".
2. This is similar to our analysis of social work narrative in terms of a "three-stage device" (cf. Hall–Sarangi–Slembrouck forthcoming). Also, it is worth drawing attention to the view that causal accounts are in part occupational "survival kits" (Bull–Shaw 1992).
3. In Labov and Waletzky's (1967) definition of a story, the opening of an interview is not structured by narrative clauses. Nor is there a recognisable story preface (Sacks 1992).
4. Gee (1991), for instance, analyses an account of a woman suffering from schizophrenia as a piece of narrative. Gee offers an analysis of the piece in terms of its linguistic features but he does not raise the question about the things which eventually could or should have entered the narrative but did not.
5. Conceptions of audience are built in the production of a text and a particular text configures an ideal reader. This is very similar to the idea of the audience being "seen but unnoticed" (Garfinkel 1967).
6. We will approach audiences in different ways. In section 2.2.1 the narrator's construction of audience is seen as appealing to the interviewer, given their presumed agreement on social work concerns. Here the audience is treated as a benign and supportive listener. In the later sections, however, other more critical audiences will be constructed.

7. Note our earlier point about the grand discourses of family welfare in which small narratives are embedded.
8. The "implied hearer" refers to a range of addressees on various occasions. We can assume that this is one performance of a story which will have been told with slight variation in other situations in the social work "order of discourse".
9. Wooffitt (1992: 32–37) criticises Smith's analysis as using the concept of contrast structure rather loosely. According to Smith, other items which are not constructed as contrast structures can be shown to be contrastive with reference to larger segments of the account. In this sense, the device is expanded to include any statement or individual description which can be found to be contrastive to any other part of the account. What it amounts to is that characters are portrayed "unlike others". Yet, what Smith says about contrast structures, with the risk of becoming a blunt device, is nevertheless useful, as the point in the story about the 30 moving operations indeed proves (lines 39–40).
10. Case notes play an important part in social work as it is through case notes that clients become cases. Case notes are important devices through which, on the one hand, black-boxing (Latour 1987) is accomplished and on the other, institutional decision-making is made relatively transparent. In reports such as case notes, audiences and voices are more directly attended to. Garfinkel (1967) sees case notes as displaying a justifiable therapeutic contract for later readers.
11. Thus, there is also the factor whether a voice is heard to speak coherently, or whether it is given a fragmented appearance. In *The Cheese and the Worms*, Ginzburg (1980) brings together fragments from court reports to show that Menocchio, a sixteenth-century miller who was tried for sorcery and witchcraft, actually possessed an embryonic modern world view, which happened to be at odds with the then dominant world view represented by the Inquisition. However, in the report, Menocchio's voice appears very incoherently because of its fragmented appearance and because it was translated into the socially dominant diction of the Inquisition.
12. It is important to recognise the relative stability of narrative structures and ingredients, while not ignoring the aspects of story-telling as situated performance (i. e., the telling is a relatively unique and unpredictable event). Following Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Mumby (1993: 5–6) sees narratives as discursive acts which temporarily and partially fix the meanings which construct social relations, and thus make up society. One major problem with this position is that it lacks a sense in which stories have to be convincing enough in a situation to hold up to challenges (cf. the role of competent stories in social work). Precisely because narratives also very much count as situated performances which are subject to repeatable forms of social and institutional ratification carried out by mandated audiences, one must be careful not to overstate the potential randomness of professional stories.

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Appendix 1: Research interview

Introduction by the interviewer (IN) and explanation of interest in the circumstances of admission to care of children under five as a part of an institutional review. Then follows the first turn of the social worker (SW).

SW: on the nineteenth of november M, J and A came into care and it was in a private home called M____ right and they stayed there until the twenty seventh of november and the one that is under five is M and ehm how old is he (−) have you got his date of birth
IN: no but roughly how
SW: he's two and a half, oh there's another one J and J is four ok that is roughly ehm (−)
IN: and sorry and how many came into care at that time
SW: three
IN: three so how old was the other one
SW: seven
IN: right ok right
SW: now the children ..
IN: sorry sorry race
SW: race (−) wh.. (−) black (−) mixed race
IN: right (−) and gender
SW: boys
IN: all boys three boys right sorry
SW: go on
IN: no I'd rather you talk .. it's just
SW: ok ehm (−) th these children wards of court in february ehm (−) in february 19__ and ehm and with interim care and control to (local authority) (−) and ehm the decision at that time was to leave the children with the mother though we had interim care and control ehm they were to be placed at home with mother ehm (−)
IN: can I just interrupt how long had you been involved with the case before
SW: I got involved in february
IN: in february right
SW: cos it was it was known to this area (another social worker) was involved with the family before right ehm (−) I suppose I'll have to give you a bit of background actually to explain this
IN: yes
SW: the family ehm J (mother) is a young mum who has lived with the father of these children for about eight years there is an older child but he's actually at (children's home) so these three are with mum and for instance A who's seven has moved in his lifetime

about 30 times (−) the reason that that's happened is that mum ehm has kept returning to to the father of these children who who at times can be very violent towards her and when that happens and he suddenly turns she's off with the children and she's always protected them she takes them away (−) now (−) in february she did this again having with social services having worked quite hard at having contracts with both her and the father of these children the thing blew up again social services decided that they had to put some sort of stop to this some sort of legal framework around it for the children you know in the best interests of the children so that's why they went back they went to court which meant then ehm you know it gave us some legal framework to work with J to say look you can't keep moving around these children are you know their behaviour is showing us this that and the other showing signs of disturbance

IN: where did she go when she leaves

SW: well what she did was to go to bed and breakfast in ehm (area) and then another bed and breakfast in (area)

IN: she just booked herself in

SW: well no (local authority) put her in homeless families she went down to homeless families violence put her into b and b and then ehm finally we got hold of a property in (area) so she's in a 5-bedroom house in (area) the whole family moved over to there without the father the courts put an injunction against him to stay away from the family and under no conditions could he see either J or the children (−) and then what happened was J knew quite clearly he had to stay away and that she had to stop moving around and to work work with us and we were trying to work sort of promote some sort of community package with the idea of a family centre which is fixed up with (address of centre) day nurseries getting the two eldest children into special schools because they were no longer going to be able to from the assessments be able to sort of stay in mainstream school try and get her settled because I mean moving about was one of the biggest things and the children were all over the place quite insecure (−) then so J was supposedly keeping to that contract and having no contact with the father and then in ehm november the beginning of november the eldest child who was there at weekends broke his nose he went to (hospital) and he told the hospital that his father had done it this meant alarm bells you know father's on the scene da da da da da so because of that ehm and because we talked to J and she seemed to think well it's ok for for dad to see the children I'm not really bothered ehm and because of that attitude the fact that she hadn't been honest with us we felt that the children's sort of long term future was at risk and ehm that and that they were at risk because he was around and he could turn up at

every moment so we went to court and got an injunction to actually go and collect those children from the home because we expected mum to not let us have them ehm and that's why that's why they came into care ehm and then we went back to court for a fuller hearing because you would have got it in half an hour this injunction to go and collect the children and so J was able to put her side of the story and we put our side of the story and the judge decided that the children should go back home

IN: oh (−) cause you'd not wanted that

SW: no

IN: what would have been your sort of preference that court that you'd been asking for

SW: well we were we were sort of seriously saying that ehm we hadn't I mean basically we were saying look we haven't had a chance to really think about ehm the future for these children it's all happened so quickly but what we do recognise at the moment the children are not safe at home because of the father being on the scene and because of what has happened to the eldest child and that we needed time to think about it and in the meanwhile we wanted the children to stay in care and then come back to court the court wouldn't grant us that so the children went home (−) ehm (−) and that's it in a nutshell really

IN: ok

Appendix 2: Additional data from case notes

18/09 Met with (principal Social Worker, Team leader and self); 1) Decided to find out (mother's) view about the accident, 2) Her view of (father) and him seeing the children, 3) Why she's not been honest with us and could she be honest with us about (father) in the future in order to have a workable relationship. (filled in by SW)

18/09 (mother not accept points above) ... she said she could not talk to (social worker) and didn't want any more mealy mouthed social workers interfering, just bribing her with carpets, washing machines etc ... In my view (mother) is not prepared to accept any role in protecting the children from (father) and indeed felt SSD (social services department) were to blame for the fact that (father) was locked up. At this point I suggested she see her solicitor ... (filled in by TL)

19/09 Discussed with Area Manager, Team leader and myself. Decision to take the children in care today. Reasons: 1) (Mother's) clear statement that she will not work with Social services in any way, 2) Her view that (father) has a right to see the children and apparent need to have him around, 3) Dishonesty and the need for (mother) to be honest if there is any chance of working together. (filled in by the SW)

Part Five: Ethnography of communication

Giving street directions: The silent role of women[1]

Bessie Dendrinos and Emília Ribeiro Pedro

1. Introduction

The field of linguistics is increasingly concerned with silence, recognised as a possible means of communication. There are a number of recent studies whose aim is to investigate how silence is structured and how, through silence, a variety of meanings are expressed and a range of communicative functions are performed (e. g., Ciani 1987; Houston–Kramarae 1991b; Jaworski 1993; Tannen–Saville-Troike 1985). Ultimately, the claim is that "in the study of communication, speech and silence should be treated as equally valid and complementary categories" (Jaworski 1993: 66). Such a recognition leads to a need for the systematic research of silence which is a "complex and diverse phenomenon" (Sifianou this volume), with ambiguous value (Tannen 1985: 94), composed of complex dimensions and structures (Saville-Troike 1985: 4). Indeed, there is a broad range of types and functions of silence which is perhaps more difficult to interpret than talk (see, e. g., Jensen 1973; Bruneau 1973). Comprehending a spoken text can be a very demanding task; however, trying to capture what is meant by an unspoken text involves the recipient not merely in an effort to infer what is being communicated through the absence of words, but also in perceiving the social meaning of the use of silence in the specific communicative instance. Understanding in this case is related to one's knowledge of sociocultural rules regarding silence and, ultimately, to an individual's communicative competence. On the other hand, sociolinguistic investigation of communicative encounters involving silence may be conducted in terms of the power relations that exist in a specific society. The investigator would seek to find out when and why participants decide not to talk, when they are explicitly or implicitly prevented from talking, and how the interaction is structured as a result of the silence. In fact, these questions are vital concerns of the present chapter, reflecting its theoretical basis in critical discourse analysis (a central aim of which is to examine in detail the relationship between discourse and the reproduction of dominance and inequality in society). Consistent with this aim is the effort to explain how dominant discourses influence socially constructed knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, namely through their role in the manufacture of concrete models (cf.

van Dijk 1993: 258). As such, critical discourse analysts want to know what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or of communicative events play a role in the production, reproduction or in the challenge of unequal power relations (cf. van Dijk 1993: 250).

2. Silence as ideological practice

The term "silence" is used here to refer to the avoidance of turn taking in conversation. Specifically, it refers to the failure of one addressee to produce a response to a request for street directions and her/his willingness to lend the floor to the other addressee(s) present. Silence in this case serves the structuring of discourse. Moreover, it reflects the social relationships between participants in the particular communicative situation and, therefore, the social distribution of power, culturally and institutionally defined. Thus our interest in this function of silence relates to the wider question of how silence as a discursive resource is implicated, along with talk, in the production, maintenance and resistance of dominant ideologies – what might be termed "ideological propagation." Text is not only the visible or audible materialization of verbal choices the speaker makes; it is also the realization of selected or imposed silences. Additionally, there are instances in a communicative encounter when the social production of meaning is a result not of what we say and how, nor simply of what we do not say, but of failing to talk at all, thus giving voice to someone else. The production of silence, like the production of speech, can realise an ideological struggle. It follows that to arrive at an understanding of how ideology expresses itself will involve us in systematic research of who remains silent, about what and in what situations. This goal falls under the rubric of critical discourse analysis, which affords us a perspective through which we may focus not only on speakers and their words but also on the meaningful absence of words, and on those instances where access to any participation in verbal interaction is prevented, directly or indirectly, in formal or informal situations.

3. Silence, speech and gender

Communicative interaction involves the management of power between interlocutors. In order to make sense of ourselves and of our experiences and relations with others we frequently adopt the dominant patterns of the social distribution of power. In other words, our tendency is to

maintain the status quo. Dominant social groups exercise power when communicating, in a manner regarded as legitimate and natural, while subordinate groups exercise their powerlessness. Interaction between men and women is a case in point. The relevant literature indicates that the social power asymmetry between the sexes is generally reproduced in communicative encounters. Men dominate and women submit (see Davis 1988; Henley–Kramarae 1991; Martin–Craig 1983; West–Garcia 1988; West–Zimmerman 1983). The unequal rights of men and women in society are not only reflected in their interaction where men basically employ mechanisms of control backed up by physical power. They are actually produced and reproduced conversationally. To present the picture drawn by Troemel-Ploetz (1991: 491):

> Men, the speakers of the dominant style, have more rights and privileges. They exhibit their privileges and produce them in every conversational situation. Men are used to dominating women; they do it especially in conversations: they set the tone as soon as they enter a conversation, they declare themselves expert for almost any topic, they expect to get attention and support from their female conversational partners, they expect and get space to present their topics and, above all, themselves ... Women are trained to please; they have to please also in conversation, i. e. they will let men dominate and they will do everything not to threaten men: not set the tone, not insist on their own topics or opinions, package opposing views pleasantly, not refuse support, not take more space than men, i. e. let men win conversationally and renounce their own conversational success and satisfaction in the process.

Though the statement above accurately summarises the social reality reflected in the conversational world in which women and men participate, it possibly implies that male discourse is intrinsically more authoritative than female discourse. In fact, this is an assumption which has been supported by a number of scholars, for example by Lakoff (1975). We are at variance with such a view and believe, as does Cameron (1992: 71), that men "use their *socially* dominant position to claim *linguistic* privileges" (Cameron's emphasis). They employ various methods to gain these privileges and use language to exercise their institutionally bestowed power over women.

Power is routinely exercised through speech. For instance, it can be exercised by someone who interrupts her/his interlocutor in such a way as to make the interruptee feel that she/he has no right to the floor, and that what she/he is saying is less valuable that what someone else has to say (see, e. g., Lakoff 1992). In this light, it is interesting to consider the pioneering study by Zimmerman and West (1975) who found that whereas same-sex dyads tend to share the floor equally and interrupt

each other rarely, in mixed-sex dyads men tend to interrupt women. In later studies, West (1984) and Woods (1989) were able to show that this marked asymmetry occurs even when the female is of higher status than her male interlocutor. Further gender research, which has focused on interruption as a central dominance behaviour, demonstrates that females are frequently interrupted by males in mixed-sex conversations, but not vice versa (e. g., Dindia 1987; Kennedy–Camden 1983; Roger 1989; West–Zimmerman 1983).

In the classroom setting, boys also tend to interrupt more than girls (cf. Clarricoates 1983; Delamont 1980; Swann 1992: 48–70). Generally, as Swann (1988: 129) points out, studies of classroom interaction produce results that are similar in many respects to the general studies of talk between women and men. She supports her claim by referring to findings which show that boys, in various ways, dominate classroom talk, frequently claiming more "speaking time" for themselves. These findings coincide with the results of research which sets out to examine the effect of status and gender on the organization of interaction. It seems that "men and generally persons of higher status command a dominating role within conversation and therefore gain for themselves a disproportionate amount of floor space" (Woods 1988: 141).

Kramarae and Treichler (1990), referring to university students in classroom settings, also found that males tend to control talk in mixed group conversation and they explain that female students talk less not only because they experience a "chilly climate" in the classroom, but also because they feel less self-esteem and power than their male colleagues. These conclusions are consistent with those of an earlier study by Bisseret (1979) who looked at male and female students in French universities and discovered that males are more likely to talk as individual beings while women talk with an awareness of their gender and the subordinate social standing of women.

Power is not exercised through speech only. It may also be exercised through silence (cf. Makri-Tsilipakou, 1991: 82). In fact, as supported by Watts (1988 and this volume), silence has been used by men as a tool of domination in communication. Results of a study by DeFrancisco (1991) provide further evidence for this argument. The author presents data which show how men exercised power in their daily communicative encounters with their female partners by being silent. The relatively silent behaviour of husbands tended to silence their wives, who thus worked harder to maintain the interaction but whose efforts were confounded by their partners' frequent "no-response" turn-taking violations. On the other hand, however, silence in the form of nonverbal communication

may be an expression of powerlessness. In an early study, Henley (1977) was concerned with the ways in which nonverbal behaviours of women and men express subordination and dominance between them. Our own position regarding this matter is that verbal and non-verbal behaviour, speech and silence can be used as tools of domination only by those who are empowered to use them. Used by the powerless, the same resources can become tools of subordination. Indeed, this is what frequently happens in mixed-sex conversations in which, as Jaworski (1993: 120) notes, it is men that are usually in control of the communication process.

Men's usurpation of power has led to the silencing of women for centuries. At various stages in history women have been denied access to education, literary expression, and public speaking. The silencing of women meant to them the denial of equal social and political rights, and of access to most positions of public influence, either legally or by tradition (see, e. g., Donovan 1980; Spender 1982; Lakoff 1992)[2].

Women's silence is often self-selected, partly because speechlessness has traditionally been seen as a defining quality of womanhood whereas having a voice is seen as a threat to female identity (cf. Lakoff 1992: 345). It is also imposed directly or indirectly but in either case silencing has definitely helped reinforce and recreate a gender ideology which constructs both men and women as social subjects with normatively defined roles. In discussing some of the methods which have been used to silence women, Houston and Kramarae (1991a) explain how women's discourse is trivialised by men and how women are not allowed to speak in public arenas. They refer to men's control over language change, and to their domination of the media. In an earlier publication, Kramarae (1981), based on Ardener's (1978) dominant and muted group theory, talked about women as the "muted group" since "some of their perceptions cannot be stated, or at least not easily expressed, in the idiom of the dominant culture" (Kramarae 1981: 2)[3]. This may explain, she speculates, why women rely on nonverbal expression to a greater extent than males do, or in a different way (Kramarae 1981: 17). And because nonverbal expression can be used to establish and maintain power differentials, Kramarae believes that we need to look at the ways women and men use verbal and nonverbal methods of communication.

4. The aim of this study

Our concern in the present study is not to investigate how women and men express themselves nonverbally in the communicative encounter of

giving street directions, though this may be an interesting point for further research. We are interested in seeing how social meanings are conveyed by looking into a particular relational context to ascertain who gives the directions when the addressees are of single or mixed sex, how the interaction is organised and what strategies are used in the process of communication. Having assumed, prior to the study, that the role of information provider would more frequently be played by men, we set out to observe, analyze and interpret how females and males manage their right to talk or their duty to remain silent when asked for street directions. Basically, we were investigating how the social roles are actually performed, how each gender deals with speech and silence in the specific communicative encounter. Ultimately, we wanted to know whether the interactional patterns in this type of social encounter reflect the prevailing social distribution of power, contributing to the reproduction of gender ideology. In undertaking this task, we are in accord with other scholars who are dissatisfied with those studies which tend to accept gender differences as given and fail to consider social or relational contexts (see critiques by Rakow 1986; and Spitzack–Carter 1989). In agreement with De Francisco (1991: 413), we find most insightful the research which attempts to link larger social hierarchies to the less assuming, day-to-day interactions between females and males.

5. Street-direction giving as a communicative encounter

The choice of the act of giving street directions as a communicative event to be studied in a gender perspective was driven by two motives: linguistic and cultural.

From a linguistic point of view, giving street directions is connected with the use of commands, which in turn are more frequently associated with the speech of men than women. The former are believed to realise the commands consistently in the imperative mood (Poynton 1989), whereas the latter tend to use directive statements with signals of tentativeness (Preisler 1986).

We were also aware that the frequency and realization of giving street directions, like that of other speech events, is culture specific (Dendrinos 1986). Based on our direct experience of the Greek, Portuguese and British societies we would assert that asking for and giving street directions is a more common practice in Greece and Portugal, which we would call "verbal cultures", than in Britain, which by contrast is a more "literary"

society. It seems to us that whereas, for example, in London it would be unusual for a pedestrian and even more so for a driver to stop in the middle of the street and ask for directions, in Athens and Lisbon this is not uncommon – despite consequences, such as traffic confusion. In Greece and Portugal the use of printed or hand-drawn maps is likely to be mistrusted or, in any case, not as common as in the UK. Whereas learning to design and read maps may be a communication skill learned at quite an early age in the UK, there are many cases of map illiterate children and adults in our societies, probably because there is no strong communicative need for the development of such a skill.

Our personal experiences with British friends in the UK confirm these intuitions. When we were spending some time in England, there were occasions when we wanted to stop and ask strangers for street directions. However, friends accompanying us had implied that this would be culturally inappropriate and that we should rather consult a map. The discussion that followed led us to believe that interacting with strangers in the street is more likely to be a form of desirable social contact in Greece and Portugal, whereas such behaviour in the context of British society may be a source of embarrassment for the person asking due to cultural values of self-reliance.

Given the considerations above we felt that examining the gender patterns in giving street direction in Greece and Portugal was both linguistically and culturally valid.

6. Data Collection

6.1. Information seekers, place of data collection, information stimulus

Our data was collected in the streets of some cities and a few smaller towns in Greece and Portugal when both of us, together, separately, or with other companions were actually in need of information which we sought to acquire by asking. Therefore, our questions were naturally motivated. In all cases, the information seekers were exclusively women, not by premeditated plan. Either the information seekers were the two of us researchers, together or alone, or one of us in the company of a female friend. Where this was the case it was not unusual for our female companion to do the asking, but it should be noted that we did not impose the role of information seeker on our companions. Whenever the role was undertaken, it occurred through a self selection process.

6.2. Informants, nature and location of encounter

We analyzed thirty-four, random, naturally occurring instances of asking for and giving street directions. Our addressees were: thirteen mixed-sex couples, five mixed-sex groups, ten males (who were alone or with others), and six females (alone or with another woman). We did not select these instances out of a larger body of data. From the moment the decision to carry out this investigation was made, we considered every naturally motivated occurrence over a period of three months. It may be important to note here that part of this time was spent on holiday, outside our normal home environment, which explains the greater need for relevant information. This information was sought from pedestrians or drivers while the information seekers were on foot or in the car[4]. Our sample shows variability, not only in terms of sex, but also in terms of social background. There is also variability according to age, though the large number of our addressees were between the ages of 25 and 50.

6.3. Recording of data

Informants were addressed in their mother tongue, and they provided the answer in their mother tongue: in either Greek or Portuguese. In ninety (90) percent of instances there was a pair of information seekers, but the addressees often exclusively addressed the one who had asked the question – particularly if they sensed that the other did not understand their language. Though it may have been desirable to do so, the responses were not tape- or video-recorded. This was consistent with our spontaneous and motivated data collection procedure. The exchange was recorded in hand-written form, within the space of one hour after the interaction had been completed, on an observation sheet constructed for this purpose. On this data-recording sheet, we noted the following:

- the language used during the interaction;
- the time of the occurrence and the exact location;
- who asked for information and who provided it – along with a brief description of the informants;
- other sociolinguistic parameters that seemed important for the interpretation of the event;
- a detailed description of the interaction;
- other linguistic or discoursal features which seemed relevant to the interpretation or that were simply considered important.

At the end of the observation sheet, space was provided for "remarks." In this space we noted critical comments, once the previous points had been recorded and after we had reflected on or discussed the issues that had arisen.

7. Results

In what follows we shall make no distinction between Greek and Portuguese data because we did not observe any significant differences in terms of gender or any other parameter relevant to our present study. In both cultures, when individual females and males were asked for street directions, they were happy to volunteer information, providing that they knew where the place was and how one could get there. Moreover, we did not note any important differences in the way the information seekers from the two cultures were making their requests for directions. Rather, we noticed some differences in the naturally occurring process of addressee selection, but these were not culture bound. They were selections the addressors were making on the basis of their subjective preferences. In assessing these selections made by us, as information seekers, or by other women, we ascertained a tendency to choose male addressees more frequently. This choice was realised either when the request was actually made to an individual male or a single-sex male group, or when gaze was directed to a male in a mixed-sex group.

In considering the addressees' responses to requests for directions, we observed some differences in how individuals expressed themselves, i. e., the clarity and completeness of the information given. However, these differences seemed to be related to socio-educational background and age rather than to cultural background and sex. Very young and elderly people did not seem to be as articulate. This was also the case with individual informants whom we identified as less well educated, working class people. However, in those encounters where informants were unable to provide the information requested, differences in response correlated strongly with gender. In four encounters, the women were apologetic. They made no attempt to provide the information and they indicated that they were sorry for being unable to oblige. They expressed their apology either verbally, with an apology formula, or nonverbally, via facial expression or intonation. On the other hand, three similar encounters involving men who were unable to supply directions, were characterised by their non-apologetic attempts to answer. One man simply

stated, as a matter of fact that he did not know, another man told us where to ask, and a third one, who did not stop to consider our request, responded by shrugging his shoulders as he was walking away.

Generally speaking, men and women responding to our need for directions, when alone or as members of a pair or a group, used patterns of verbal and nonverbal talk that corresponded to gender difference. That is, women tended to make more frequent use of modalised directive statements, adjectives of approximation and diminutives, which in fact are very common in both Greek (Sifianou 1992a) and Portuguese (Ribeiro-Pedro 1993; Skorge 1958). They made more frequent pauses, which we felt served the purpose of allowing us to take in the information. They also made more frequent use of facial expressions, which we interpreted as a strategy designed to elicit feedback and other conversational signals that would indicate that we were understanding the information. By contrast, one of the more notable features of men's talk was that their directives were expressed with non-mitigated imperatives. On a number of occasions Greek males made statements using the equivalents of the English future *will* to indicate obligation for the addressee, and both Greek and Portuguese males used the equivalents of the English auxiliaries *must*, *should* and *have to*, in order to indicate necessity and obligation, which emphasises the role of the information giver as an authority (cf. Schiffrin, 1994). The user does not merely view her or himself as a facilitator by providing directions, but as an instructor who has the right to determine the addressee's action. It is worth emphasizing that in our data it was almost exclusively males who used modals in this way, e. g.,

Portuguese male: Tem que virar à direita e vai vê-la mesmo em frente.
You must turn right and you will see it, facing you.

Greek male: Prepi na akolouθisis to leoforio, alios θa xaθis. Ine berδemeno apo δo.
You must follow the bus; otherwise you'll get lost. It's confusing from here.

It is also interesting that, unlike the males, when our female informants used the equivalents of *will* in their direction giving utterances, they served the purpose of expressing reassurance, e. g.: "It's further down. You'll see it on your right", "Just take the road indicated. You'll have no problem".

Apart from the modal verbs expressing obligation and necessity, our male informants tended to use repetition, which also carried the connotations of insistence and dominance, e. g.,:

Portuguese male: Vire à direita imediatamente e vá em frente até ao semáforo. À esquerda do semáforo. Aí, vai ver uma ponte. Vá por baixo dela. Não vá por cima. Tome atenção! Por baixo da ponte, porque assim que passar a ponte tem que virar outra vez à esquerda.
Turn right immediately and go straight up to the traffic light. Left up to the traffic light. Then you will see a bridge, You will go under it. Don't go on it. Watch out! Under the bridge, because as soon as you pass the bridge you will take a left again.

Also, on several occasions they signalled, with a nod, an eye-gaze or a hand-movement, that they expected us to repeat bits of information. Finally, it may be worth noting that male informants generally did not show uncertainty, linguistically or paralinguistically realised, even when in one case the information proved to be totally misleading. In fact, on three occasions assertive statements such as the one below proved to be wrong:

Portuguese male: Vá pelo passeio da direita de modo a voltar à direita no próximo semáforo.
Take the right lane so you can turn right at the next traffic light.

In the above instance, the place we were looking for lay in the opposite direction.

There were no striking cross-gender differences in the actual content of responses provided by same sex pairs or groups of informants, but a number of minor ones are perhaps worth mentioning. Firstly, in two of the three encounters, when the addressees were a pair of women, the role of informant seemed to be negotiated. The negotiation in both cases was expressed nonverbally, through eye-contact. For a moment, the two women looked at each other, and then one of them proceeded to give the information. In one of the two instances the other woman remained silent, but in the end she smiled at us and nodded as if to show agreement with her partner. In the second instance, the other woman facilitated her companion's task by twice supplying names of streets and by confirming a bit of information that the speaker had verbally indicated that she was unsure about. In the third encounter, at a holiday resort, there was no delay in one of the two women assuming the informant's role, and she was articulate and precise in her directions. She was in her late twenties and seemed well-educated. The person she was with was much older and her appearance was that of a traditional local woman.

In cases where the addressees were a male pair or a group of males, there were four instances when more than one person started to speak simultaneously, thus producing overlapping talk. Finally the floor was allotted to one speaker, but it was unclear to us how this was achieved. In five such all-male encounters one addressee would finally assume the role of the informant, but the other men present had a more active role than the women in equivalent cases. Male addressees seemed to function as co-informants, and would interrupt each other, or interject utterances or word-fillers, back-channel forms and assent terms. Only two encounters proved to be exceptions to this pattern. In one instance with a pair of male addressees, the one spoke only when his companion had completed his turn. He suggested that they get into our car so that they themselves could direct us to our destination. The other such instance where a group of male addressees did not participate actively as informants, occurred at a petrol station. Five males were addressed but only one of them, apparently a customer being attended to, came over to our car to help out with the directions we needed.

During the encounters with mixed-sex pairs or groups, we recorded fairly significant gender differences in turn-taking behaviour. In no less than fifteen out of seventeen such encounters it was the males that ultimately assumed the role of informant. These cases can be classified as follows:

1. Four encounters were very clearly male dominated. The women present made no attempt to contribute, even when in one case the male hesitated for a couple of seconds before he began to talk. In fact, in two of the four instances the women not only remained silent; they gave no signals of participation whatsoever. In the other two cases the women provided several nods to indicate agreement and made eye-contact with addressors and addressees. One woman also used a number of assent terms.
2. There were two other encounters which were clearly male dominated, as the women who began to talk were silenced. In both cases, the women's response was not immediate. Realizing that the men present were unwilling or unable to take the floor, they began providing the directions. The men then interrupted and provided the information themselves. In one of the two cases, the man continued from where the woman had left off. In the other case, the man paraphrased what had already been said and then continued. In neither case was there evidence of any protest on the part of the woman interrupted.

3. The outcome was somewhat similar in three other mixed-sex encounters during which the participants began providing information simultaneously. But then, in all three of them it was the females who gave up their role as informants. In only one encounter, when the man had completed his turn, the woman confirmed what her companion had said, and repeated his last utterance verbatim.
4. In two of the mixed-sex encounters, the directions being provided by the male could have been questioned by his female companion, and the male informant's contribution could have been contested. However, in both of them, the role undertaken was not challenged. In each of the cases the man began to talk immediately and the woman remained silent. The women did not interrupt or intervene in any way either, though the males were providing incomplete, unclear or confusing directions. In fact, in one of the two instances the woman did not intervene even when we, who had asked for directions, expressed confusion and made attempts to clarify the information being delivered. The male took two more turns but this only resulted in making things as complicated as before. In both cases the women spoke after the men had clearly finished talking. As they took the floor, neither of them assessed negatively what had been said before, by uttering, for example, something that would translate as *You're wrong* or *That's not right* or *But all you have to say*.... They presented their contribution as additional bits of information. In fact, one woman's contribution impressed us in particular. After her partner's three attempts, which had been totally unsuccessful because of long, complicated directions that were really leading nowhere, she spoke briefly providing very concise information:

Greek female: Vlepete tin plateia sto telos tis leoforou? Θa δite mia pinakiδa eki. Akolouθiste tin. Δe θaxete provlima.
See that square at the end of this avenue? You'll see it signposted there. Just take the road indicated. You'll have no problem.

It is also interesting how this last utterance functions as a reassurance. There are, in fact, three other instances in our data when women, but not men, reassured us verbally with utterances like the one above. Moreover, it is worth noting that both Greek and Portuguese women, more frequently than men, used the formal plural verb form to any one of the two information seekers. Additionally, women direction givers more frequently made a point of directing their remarks to both their addressees, even when they were aware that one of the two did not speak their language.

5. Two other encounters we recorded lend weight to the idea that both men and women see the giving of street directions as an essentially male responsibility. In these cases the addressee in a mixed-sex group was unable to provide the directions requested and said so. Each time it was a male from the remainder of the group who assumed the role of respondent and supplied the information.
6. An encounter which involved three young adolescents (two girls and one boy), patterned in a similar way. The boy immediately selected himself as respondent, and the girls accepted it. But since he gave the wrong information about where the Demotic Theatre, our destination, actually was – he was pointing us in the opposite direction – one of the two girls shyly took a turn. However, she did not contradict the boy's information with a negative statement. Addressing him, not us, she asked: *To Δemotiko Θeatro?* "The Demotic Theatre?", as if to make him think twice and try again. It seemed that her intervention served the purpose of helping him to perform an expected social and interactional role. As if to confirm this, the boy acknowledged his error with an *A... ne!* "Oh... yes!" and promptly began a second attempt. This time, the boy's directions were not totally wrong but unclear. He obviously did not remember exactly where the Demotic Theatre was and how to get there. As he realised he was confusing us, he ended his turn by telling us to go to the nearby square and ask again. Neither of the two girls attempted to provide the information themselves.
7. Another instance which was of particular interest, involved a larger group of people in a neighbourhood setting. We addressed an enquiry to a small group of working class men in their thirties and forties who were standing around and talking together. One of the men responded immediately and proceeded, without any interruption from the others, to give long and complicated directions. A woman in her twenties, coming out of a nearby bakery, heard the confusing explanation and intervened to help clarify the man's account. But as soon as she began to talk, she was interrupted by the same man who had spoken and who now began to repeat what he had said before. The woman intervened again and was allowed to complete her turn of short and precise directions. At that moment, another man, who had witnessed the whole incident took the floor and spoke in a loud and authoritative tone, as if to correct the female speaker. However, he simply paraphrased the information which had been provided by the woman.

Finally, we shall refer to the two out of the seventeen encounters, in which, as mentioned above the role of informant was assumed by the females though men were present. The first case involved a young couple. The woman was quicker in uttering her short response: *Ine liγo pio kato. Θa to δite δeksia sas* "It's a bit further down. You'll see it on your right." Her male companion looked at us and confirmed: *Sosta* "That's right."

The second case involved a request for information made by a female friend of ours, who along with one of us, approached and asked directions of two couples that we encountered in a residential area of a holiday resort. She asked them if we were likely to find a good restaurant if we continued to walk along the main road. The oldest man of the group began to answer but was unintentionally ignored by our female friend who addressed the two women again, this time with a more precise question. One of the women then tried to talk but was interrupted by the previous male speaker. The addressor again ignored him (obviously not so as to control the data, since she had not been informed about the nature of this study). She persistently addressed the females in the group, and finally received from the two of them a complete response regarding a restaurant which might prove satisfactory. At the close of the two female addressees' collaborative talk, and after a final turn by the addressor to thank her interlocutors, the man who had been denied his role as informant yet managed to have the last word. He reprimanded us for wanting to walk along the main road at all where, he argued, we could be hit by a car.

8. Discussion and implications of this study

In considering the communicative encounters presented above, we are well aware of the fact that for women and men ways of participating in social interactions are context specific. Despite the fact that in our data we consistently see males selecting themselves as informants and females accepting the silence imposed upon them (or perhaps selecting for themselves the role of the silent participant), we could not possibly make general statements about the verbal space men and women demand in mixed-sex interaction; neither were we able to make a generalization about the role of females in street-direction encounters. Research outcomes could have been different had the interactional and contextual factors been different. If, for instance, the information had been sought by male addressors or by a mixed-sex pair, or by women of different status, age,

etc., then the communicative behaviour of information givers might have varied in each case. Had the information seekers made a different selection of addressees, or had they controlled their verbal behaviour when asking for directions, for whatever socially or psychologically motivated reason, the encounters would have been modified accordingly. It is also possible that, in the same social setting, if the addressees had been male, there would have been a different frequency of street-direction encounters, in the same time span in which the investigation was carried out. As things were, the results of this research were significantly influenced by the particular configurations of participants, involved as direction seekers or givers, by the settings, and by a range of other contextual factors present in the communicative events. Thus, we feel that it is only through context-specific studies of this nature that we are able to arrive at a fuller understanding of women's and men's roles in interactional situations. We understand that before attempts are made to arrive at reliable conclusions about women's and men's communicative behaviour in street-direction encounters, further research will have to be carried out, with experimental and control groups, and with mixed-sex or all male addressors. The value of the present study, with its various limitations, lies in the way that it provides evidence to support the claim that during street-direction encounters, in their specific social settings, gender ideology is reproduced. The unequal division of labour between women and men is maintained, reconstructing female and male as social subjects. As such, it becomes evident that their communicative behaviour is not a result of "personality" and childhood socialization, but a consequence of social forces constantly at work to position and reposition gendered subjects.

The reproduction of gender ideology is evinced in our data via the linguistic and paralinguistic features of the speech of males and females participating in street-direction encounters, but it is particularly salient when we consider how female participants perceived and realised their right or duty to remain silent or to speak. First of all, there is evidence that women frequently ask for street directions, which means that they do not choose to remain silent when they are in a non-authoritative role, i. e., the subordinate role of information seeker. Whether males place themselves in this role as frequently needs to be investigated, as an answer to this question was not the aim of this study. Secondly, there are some indications that women addressors tend to give voice to male addressees more frequently than to females. Such findings are consistent with results from classroom talk research. Swann (1988) from an analysis of male

dominance of conversation in school classrooms, found evidence for the claim that boys' talk control may be due to teachers paying greater attention to them than to girls. Thus, she suggests (Swann 1988: 139) that everyone is an "accomplice" in the tendency of boys to contribute more to classroom talk, including teachers and female students who possibly use the resources available in the interaction to contribute less. This is a claim she makes in a later publication (Swann 1992: 69) and it accords with the position we have set out in this chapter (notwithstanding the point we made above that systematic research might shed more light on the role that female and male information seekers play in the organization of interaction and in the structuring of discourse in street direction encounters). In the light of this, perhaps it would be useful in future to carry out investigations with addressors who are not simultaneously the investigators, as was the case in this study.

With regard to the addressees, given the particular circumstances, it is clear that the role of informant in the encounters in question is commonly undertaken by the male. It seems to be a role legitimised by gender ideology. Therefore, females and males tend to see the communicative act of giving street directions as a male responsibility and a right. When this legitimate right is questioned and the role threatened, it is likely that there will be a reaction. Yet, it is interesting that, in some encounters involving individual male addressees who could not fulfil this role, we observed no apologetic behaviour, whereas we did observe such behaviour in equivalent encounters with women. This phenomenon could be interpreted as gendered behaviour since female talk is generally assessed as both more polite (Brown 1980: 112; Holmes 1992: 321; Lakoff 1975: 74; Poynton 1989: 73; Sifianou 1992b: 39), and also more supportive, collaborative and cooperative (Cameron 1992; Leet-Pellegrini 1980; Fishman 1990; Goodwin 1980). This general tendency is borne out by our data, though the more polite and collaborative features of women's speech are being seen here in the light of the argument put forth by Graddol and Swann (1989) that the use of politeness routines may reflect and reproduce unequal power relations between speakers.

Our investigation allows us to conclude that street-direction giving is a male dominated social practice. This seems logical if we consider gender ideology in terms of the role of women in affairs of the public sphere. Females have traditionally been denied a voice in the public sector (Lakoff, 1992: 344); they have defined and symbolised the private domain as opposed to the public. When they appear in the latter, their status is considered marginal (Cameron, 1992: 89; Dendrinos–Haviara-Kehaidou, 1992:

33; Parsons, 1951). Male dominance is indicated very clearly in our data. There is ample evidence of selected silences by females, when in the presence of males. On the other hand, we have evidence that males among females select themselves as speakers. When males are among other males they frequently take overlapping turns, initiating talk cooperatively as informants, rather than negotiating the role as some women tended to do. We also have evidence that males in single-sex groups take a more active role in the interaction than women in similar cases. In fact, the non-participatory role of women in the interactions considered became evident not only when they did not attempt to give the required information themselves, but also when they seemed to accept the silence imposed upon them if they made such attempts. Moreover, it was evinced when, unlike some males in equivalent cases, they avoided confirming the information provided by their male companions; and when they made no corrective moves, interruptions or interventions, even if the directions their male companions were giving were wrong; and when they hesitated to take the floor even if they knew the required information and their male companions did not. It may be interesting to note that in our data there are no cases of women giving unclear or wrong directions. This may be due to the fact that females are less willing than males to take the floor unless they are sure about what they are going to say. Also, it may be worth mentioning that female avoidance of self selection as speaker was not in any way related to the type of information sought. In fact, the analysis of our data did not show that women were more willing to respond to requests regarding places which could be associated, for example, with their traditionally assigned responsibility regarding domestic duties, or with their assumed preoccupation with appearance. In other words, we did not ascertain that women volunteered more frequently to be informants when the requests were about a bakery or grocery store, a beauty salon or a jewellery shop. However, we should mention that we did not set out to investigate encounters on the basis of classified questions – whether, for instance, women, as opposed to men, are more willing to answer questions about certain places but not about others, or more readily answer questions that seek the location of a place rather than how to get to it, etc. Yet, systematic research conducted on the basis of the type of questions posed might provide interesting results.

Considering all of the above we conclude that women's reluctance to take as active a role as men in the specific encounters reviewed here derives, ultimately, from the unequal social distribution of power obtaining within the societies in question. This linguistic behaviour will, in turn,

contribute to the reproduction of the social hierarchy between females and males. The social meaning of females' silence in street direction encounters is thus the propagation of dominant gender ideology. And it seems that the linguistic or paralinguistic behaviour and the silence of the two sexes, as well as their resistance to talk or to silence is ideological practice. We must say however that we see the evidence that we have as indicative, rather than definitive affirmation of our initial assumptions and our consequent conclusions. We suggest that additional research on issues raised here may provide greater insight. In fact, this study is significant insofar as it provides these indications. Its significance also lies in that it demonstrates the importance of investigating not only the speech but also the silence of females and males. Such investigation leads to an awareness of how the two sexes come to qualify to act as social subjects. Finally, it is significant to the extent that it links the larger gender hierarchy to a specific communicative encounter involving women and men in day-to-day interaction.

Notes

1. This paper was originally presented at the 10th Sociolinguistics Symposium "Discourse Practices and Identities" organised by the Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language of Lancaster University. We would like to express our thanks to one of the participants and editor of this book, Adam Jaworski, for asking us to contribute our paper to this volume and for his suggestions and comments, which we took into account when giving our paper its present form. For her editorial comments and support we also thank Mary Sifianou and other colleagues at the University of Athens with whom we discussed our ideas. However, the usual disclaimer holds.
2. Lakoff discusses women's silence in relation to their exclusion from positions of power in a historical perspective and with reference to the present day. Although we accept her position that there continues to be an imbalance of power favouring males, we do not agree that "for psychological reasons, women are too often complicit in their silencing" (Lakoff 1992: 10). Neither do we agree with her suggestion that if women become conscious of their silence and oppose their voicelessness, deep changes in the unequal power structure will occur. We maintain that the reasons for the continuing silencing of women are largely socio-political.
3. It is important to point out, as does Cameron (1992: 141) that muting is not to be confused with acoustic silence. She quotes Ardener (1978): "They [the muted group] may speak a great deal. The important issue is whether they are able to say all they would wish to say, where and when they wish to say it."

4. In nineteen of these instances the information seekers were in the car: eight times we sought information from pedestrians; five times from another driver who was at a stop light; three times we drove into a petrol station and asked people working there or customers; three times we signalled to a car or a motorbike driver to slow down or pull over so that we could ask for information. On other occasions, twelve in number, we were on foot seeking information: five times from pedestrians or some people sitting, for example, at a park bench; six times from store, shop, kiosk owners or people sitting/standing outside these places; one time from a driver about to drive off. On two occasions we were in the car; but, as we needed information, we pulled over and got out to ask for directions in an office. The three remaining times we asked for information before we set off for some place, from a hotel reception desk – where it so happened that on two occasions there were a female and a male receptionist on duty.

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Silence in ritual communication[1]

Bohdan Szuchewycz

1. Introduction: Silence in religious practice

In many Western traditions silence is used in religious contexts to express reverence, awe, or respect. Bruneau (1973: 41) for example notes that "religious rituals in many Christian orders, regardless of their conception of highest authority, are replete with movement towards silence." Saville-Troike (1985: 9) also suggests that "especially in ritual contexts ... silence may be conventionally mandated as the only form which could achieve the event's communicative goals." This has been particularly well documented in Bauman's (1974; 1983) detailed and sensitive analyses of the sociolinguistic features of Quakerism. Bauman notes that in Quaker worship silence is not merely a passive act marked by the absence of other verbal activity, but rather is a highly symbolic communicative act performed in a manner comparable to other speech acts. In the Quaker conception of religious practice, silence "was not an end in itself, but a means to the attainment of the defining spiritual experience of early Quakerism, the direct personal experience of the spirit of God within oneself" (Bauman 1983: 23).

However, the equation of religion with silent reverence and the association of silence solely with reverence are not universal characteristics of Christianity nor are they shared among all varieties of Protestantism. Maltz (1985: 113), for example, contrasts the differing sociolinguistic norms of Quaker and Pentecostal worship with respect to "noise and silence", and points out that within Pentecostal churches "noisiness rather than silence is the most common as well as the preferred form of religious worship." For the Pentecostal, "noisiness" serves as an expression of commitment, an expression of joy in worship, and as evidence of the free working of the Spirit in the group. As Maltz (1985: 128) summarizes, "In general, the Pentecostal conception of the noisiness of ideal worship is that of the individual Christian filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit so that words bubble over in the form of rejoicing, prayer, preaching, testimonies, or verbal gifts."

Based on this contrast between Quaker silence and Pentecostal noisiness, Maltz draws several conclusions about silence which I feel cannot be maintained under closer ethnographic scrutiny.[2] The first is that "there is only one kind of silence but many kinds and degrees of noise" (Maltz 1985: 131). The second is that a fundamental property of silence and noise is that they "are opposed to one another" (Maltz 1985: 130). Upon this basis he argues that silence, glossolalia, and noise can not be considered as functional equivalents. Finally, he argues that "the potential meanings of noise and silence are not arbitrary ... [but] are constrained by both logical and experiential aspects of the phenomena themselves" (Maltz 1985: 133).

In what follows I hope to demonstrate: 1) that like noise, there are many kinds, degrees and meanings of silence, 2) that silence and noise do not necessarily contrast with one another, and thus can serve as functional equivalents, and 3) that dramatic shifts in the symbolic interpretation of silence and noise suggest that their meanings are essentially arbitrary. Ethnographic evidence[3] from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Ireland will be provided to support these assertions, and in so doing I will be able to demonstrate the value of a relativist and nonessentialist approach to the study of silence as advocated by Jaworski (1993).

2. The charismatic model of communication

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal (henceforth CCR) is part of the broad Neo-Pentecostal movement which first influenced mainline Protestant churches in the late 1950s. In the late 1960s it spread to the Roman Catholic Church where it was renamed the Charismatic Renewal.[4] Although the initial growth of the movement occurred in the United States, it soon spread to the Catholic populations of other countries. In Ireland, the site of the present research, the movement took root in 1972 in the form of a small prayer group in Dublin (Flynn 1974), and by 1978 there were an estimated 300 prayer groups in the country with a membership of approximately 35,000 (*Irish Times* June 16, 1978: 7). By the mid 1980s, however, membership had declined and stabilized to 10,000 (Inglis 1987: 50). Reflecting its Pentecostal origins, the CCR focuses on the spiritual experience of "Baptism in the Holy Spirit", and the vital role of the concomitant "gifts of the Spirit" (or charisms) in communal worship. These gifts include glossolalia, or speaking in

tongues, prophecy, healing and others. This "baptism" marks the establishment of a new and direct personal relationship with God/Jesus – a relationship which is evidenced by the presence of the spiritual gifts and is manifested in a highly distinctive form of religious practice which emphasizes egalitarian spontaneity, and demonstrative, enthusiastic and emotional engagement in worship.

Underlying each of these innovations lies a fundamental alteration in members' conceptions of the nature of human-divine interaction to what may be termed a charismatic model of communication. Modification in the religious use of language is rooted in a change in the beliefs and expectations surrounding acts of communication between God and "His people" and the roles of speaker and hearer in such communication.

In traditional Irish Catholicism communication between God and humans is conceived of as largely unidirectional, asymmetrical and fixed. The role of speaker is restricted to the human participant while that of hearer is restricted to the divine. People thus pray to an ever attentive God without the expectation of "hearing" an answer. Prayers, of course, are often seen as having been answered, but the "answer" is not a direct response in the form of a verbal message or vision from God. Within the CCR the roles of speaker and hearer in religious communication have become less restricted and more symmetrical; each party in the interaction, both human and divine, has the potential to send and receive messages. Members of the prayer group gather not only to speak to God but to "listen" in silence to what He has to say. Because of the new, more personal relationship with God established by the "release of the Spirit", individuals believe that God cares deeply for them, is intimately involved with their lives, and therefore wishes to communicate with each person and to the group. In the charismatic prayer meeting this communication from God becomes publically realized through several of the charisms or "gifts of the Spirit": prophecy, prophetic tongues, and interpretation. "Shared" personal spiritual insights derived from personal Bible reading, prayer and reflection (practices which are strongly encouraged by the CCR), as well as from life experiences, are also considered as possible channels of divine communication, and as such are accorded great prominence and significance in the context of charismatic religious practice.

As shall be discussed below, silence has come to play a crucial role in the realization of the charismatic model of communication, for it is in silence that members experience "the presence of God" and are able to "listen" to what it is that God wishes to communicate to them.

3. The differing kinds and meanings of silence

Based upon his comparison between Quaker and Pentecostal patterns of religious practice, Maltz suggests that "silence is absolute while noisiness is relative," and it therefore follows that "there's only one kind of silence but many kinds and degrees of noise" (Maltz 1985: 131). Even within Quakerism, upon which Maltz bases this conclusion, it is evident that different kinds and degrees of silence are recognized. Bauman refers to "enhancing the condition of silence" (1983: 125) within a Quaker meeting, while Davies writes that "speaking arises out of silence and is a means to the end of even deeper silence" (Davies 1989: 118). Both of these statements imply that qualitatively different silences are distinguished by group members.

The CCR in Ireland provides rich evidence as to the range of possible meanings and spiritual activities which are encompassed by the notion of silent worship. Different kinds and degrees of silence are recognized and these are identified as paralleling charismatic conceptions of spirituality. Spiritual improvement is conventionally discussed in terms of two metaphors, one of "growth" or "progress" and another of "depth". As these metaphors dominate all discussions of spirituality, they are also intimately associated with how the meaning and functions of silence are conceptualized, for charismatics believe that spiritual progress is most likely to occur during times of silence – a time when God is able to communicate with the individual. As one member expressed it:

> Most people think prayer is talking to God but the really beautiful prayer is the silent prayer. ... The silence is that moment when we stop rushing about ... to be open, channel open. ... The Lord is trying to get through to us but we're babbling to Him. ... It's in the silence – but people don't really realized the full depth of the silence. The growth is in the silence. ... It does have an effect. The silence is meaningful, you know. There's tremendous depth in the silence. But the prayer of silence is really – you have to silence not just your mouth but your thoughts.

The type of silence which is seen as necessary to spiritual growth is not merely the absence of verbal activity or other external noise but also involves a silencing of thoughts or a "stilling of internal noise." Deep silence is achieved when individuals are able to quiet their own thoughts and thereby become receptive or "open" to communication from God:

> If there's real growth in the spiritual life it's got to lead into some degree of personal depth – silence, which is pure – to some degree advancing towards pure relationship with God. ... He personally wishes to communicate with

> every human mind and heart and the only way this can be done is through a certain sense of silence – recollection and try and get the old motor shut down completely. Turn off all the noise of the cogs and the wheels and everything else and just be there for that one little word or thought or sense of joy and elation which you might otherwise very easily miss.

Communication with God is perceived as being hindered or even prevented by normal mental activity. Any thinking about mundane concerns impedes the achievement of deep silence and contemplative prayer and, therefore, is a barrier to spiritual growth and the establishment of a "pure" relationship with God.

The "openness" which comes in deep silence may also lead the individual beyond a state of receiving communication from God to a deeper level where it is possible "to rest in the presence of God" and thereby develop a more personal relationship with Him. "Resting in the presence of God" refers to an "awareness" or an experience of a presence of God in which a person need do nothing but "relax" and enjoy the feeling of a real and personal contact with God. For the charismatic, such an experience can only come to an individual in moments of "deep" silence. The aim of silence in religious practice, according to one charismatic, "is to blank – to be nothing – empty. And to let God do the work. Just to be in the presence of God." To achieve this goal, she stressed that during silence there must be "an emptying of yourself – a complete outflow of all the thoughts, problems, worries, desires, of everything – an emptying of yourself and an inpouring of God." Similarly, another stated, "I like the silence. It brings me very close to God. Silence brings me very close to Him. ... I'd be thinking on the Lord. I wouldn't be praying. I'd be just in His presence."

Concomitant with the idea of spiritual growth and progress there exists the belief that there are different levels of spirituality and different stages in the spiritual life. A metaphor of "depth" serves to characterize these levels or stages, with spiritual growth described in terms of an increased depth in personal spirituality. Contemplative prayer is seen as both a means of achieving spiritual growth and as a sign of its achievement. It is in contemplative or "deep" prayer that the individual is able to experience "real" communication with God, to be "touched" by God and to "just *be* in His presence", all of which contribute to spiritual progress. Because inner mental silence is necessary for contemplative prayer it is an important medium of communication in the private "prayer life" of individuals as well as in the context of the public prayer meeting.

Because of its association with contemplative prayer, silence is also encompassed by the metaphor of "depth" so that different silences connote different levels of spiritual activity and meaning. Silences may be described as ranging from "dead" or "not real" to "beautiful" and "deep". Another member expressed this view:

> Have you ever noticed ... there are silences and there are silences? Silences that you know immediately are not real, that they're just people afraid – don't know what to say, don't know what to do, looking-kinda- with their eyes closed to see if there is somebody going to speak. You feel those kind of silences, but there are very beautiful silences when you can feel almost the tenderness of God just putting you to sleep.

In the prayer meeting context, negatively evaluated silence would result from unease, lack of familiarity, shyness or fear of participation. Silence of this type is seen as a product of human as opposed to spiritual motivation and for this reason is labelled "dead", "empty" or "unreal" (i. e. in a spiritual sense). A highly positive evaluation would be reserved for those silences which are "spirit-led" and signify "the presence of God." These silences are times of meditation, contemplation, "deep prayer" and spiritual growth.

Falling within this range of interpretations of silence are a variety of spiritual activities which individuals may be engaged in during periods of silence. The specific activity would vary with the individual's mood and personal stage of spiritual growth, and the mood of the meeting. As one charismatic put it, "I like the quietness because I go in to, you know, contemplation or meditation, imaging or talk to God or whatever or just *being*, you know. Or just relaxing in the presence you know."

During silent periods individuals may pray silently, they may reflect on what has been read or said before, or, they may receive a message from God, meant either for themselves or to be shared with the group. Each of these possible activities is seen as valuable in promoting spiritual growth and, precisely because different levels of spirituality are recognized, it is stressed that each individual must feel free to participate in the silence in whatever manner is personally most appropriate.

In its simplest form silence provides an opportunity for silent personal prayer during the prayer meeting. Such communication may take the form of the mental recitation of formal prayers or the more extemporaneous and conversational forms of prayer encouraged by the CCR ("simply speaking directly to Him"). Personal prayer is, of course, a valued activity and to increase the frequency of one's communication with God is

seen as a positive act having positive spiritual consequences. As one informant simply put it, "If you pray within yourself during the silence a lot can come of it, you know." Such a view of silent prayer is a direct reflection of traditional Irish Catholic religious practice with which the members of the prayer group were raised.

Silence also provides a time when individuals are able to consider at greater length the personal implications of what has been said or read previously in the meeting. In this way the significance of what has gone before is intensified through reflection upon its meaning and personal relevance. In commenting on the importance of silence in the prayer meeting, one person stated that, "It is good to meditate on what has been said, on the reading perhaps, and just think about it and see how it affects you." Another individual echoed a similar sentiment, "I love silence for a while, especially if someone has said something that's worth listening to. It's lovely to have a few minutes of silence to hold on to it, to think about it or relate it to yourself or to whatever, you know."

Reflection on what is said during a prayer meeting is seen as one way of achieving spiritual insights and therefore personal spiritual growth, but it is also of benefit to the entire community. According to one prayer group leader, reflective silence can have "a great communion in it, a great awareness or consciousness of each other in the consciousness of God and I think there can be a great coming together in the silence." Silence thus contributes to the conception of the prayer group as a community and strengthens and maintains the interpersonal bonds created through the group's shared spiritual experiences.

It is also in periods of silence that "the Lord speaks to the people" through the reception of either inspired sharing or words of prophecy. Although many informants stated that God is capable of communicating with an individual at any time, all stressed that it was in times of silence during the prayer meeting that divine communication was most likely to occur. Therefore, in these instances silence becomes a time of listening, where one has to have "a listening ear" or "a listening heart": "When [the leader] says 'have a listening ear' you listen to see what thoughts come into your mind, see what God is saying to you ... see what God is putting into your mind." Charismatics believe that it is in silence that individuals are able to "relax in the Spirit", to quiet their personal thoughts and become "open" to what God wants to say to them to them.

One member recalled how in a period of silence she received a message from God which she then shared with the group. The theme of the message concerned the need for silence:

> Each person prays their own prayer to the Lord during those silences. And I think it's at those times that the Lord can speak to the people. And I remember one time sharing at one of those that the Lord said to me – this was in the beginning when I was all full of enthusiasm and I couldn't get there quick enough – "Will you simmer down and slow down and pipe down and give me a chance to say something?"

In order to encourage the reception of divine communication prayer group leaders may explicitly request that there be a time of silence at a particular point of the meeting instead of waiting for those which occur naturally between hymns or sharings.

Silence often provides the motivation which leads individuals to vocalize their thoughts and thus actively contribute to the meeting. This contribution would usually take the form of sharing from personal experience but could also include other "word gifts" (e. g. speaking a word of prophecy). Silent reflection on the emerging theme(s) of the meeting frequently leads to the public sharing of personal experiences. Thus while silence may be a time of personal prayer or a waiting for "a word from the Lord", it may also involve a decision on the part of an individual whether to speak or not: "If I feel the silence is going on too long then I ask the Lord if He wants me to say something, you know. And often He does." When a silence appears to be becoming too long or seems "dead", some members of the prayer group report that they seek to determine, through prayer, whether it is the wish of the Spirit that they speak. In such instances, silence plays a dual role in creating both a mood of expectancy and of motivation. Members believe that the speech which follows a period of silence may be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the expectancy generated in the silence intensifies the significance of the speech which does eventually follow. In addition, members also believe that anyone of them may be the recipient of divine communication and, as the previous informant indicated, in silence they may judge that they have received words for the group or for someone present. As another informant bluntly put it, "The silence often brought myself up to say something."

The fact that there are different types of silences during a prayer meeting often requires that they be interpreted by some member of the group, usually someone in a leadership position. Silences which are "dead" must be recognized as such, and in such cases it is frequently a member of the leadership who guides the meeting by ending the silence. It is the role of the leadership to discern the direction of the meeting and through its guidance to ensure its success. Individuals who are particularly "sensitive to silence" are recognized and relied upon to interpret particular instances of silence and their contribution to the overall mood of the meeting:

> The meeting I led the other night, I asked one of the people, ... I asked her to sit beside me because I believe she is very sensitive to silence. I'm not sure at times during the meeting what should come next. I'm not good at interpreting silence. And we were sitting quietly for a while when she turned to me and said, 'People are waiting for you to talk.' So I got up and talked. And I like to have somebody like that who is sensitive to it. Then I'd say after I spoke there should have been more silence. So, you know, rather than someone coming in immediately that cut across the silence.

Again, the importance of silence in intensifying the meaning and significance of what has preceded it is recognized by the speaker.

Because of its inherent ambiguity an analysis of the meaning of silence requires a great sensitivity and awareness of the shared background knowledge, beliefs and expectations which permit consistent interpretations within specific cultural contexts. As Jaworski notes, "the qualitative, and to some degree the quantitative, changes of silence depend on the subjective perception of the individual. Thus what may seem as an absolute and undifferentiated span of silence to one person (the observer) may consist of various, however subtle and inexpressible, silences charged with different overtones and meanings for another [the participant]" (1993: 43). The complexity of silence and its meanings within the CCR is revealed through the comments of members regarding their own subjective experiences. These meanings, however, are not purely subjective for they are linked to the specific ritual practices of the CCR and its ideological conception of divine-human interaction.

4. Silence and noise as functional equivalents

Although Maltz (1985) argues that silence and noise/speech are logical opposites and discrete categories, others have argued that in particular circumstances silence and certain forms of speech are functional equivalents. Bruneau noted that political protest is frequently accompanied by "serious silence or repetitious chanting" (1973: 20). Similarly, Tyler (1978: 84) suggests that the same emotional or cognitive state may be produced through meditative silence or uncontrolled speech. Davies adopts a similar stance when he argues that "Pentecostals and Quakers have different methods for reaching the same solution, that of waiting on the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals through inspired noisiness, Quakers through silent waiting" (1988: 118). Baer (1976: 152) writes of the "fundamental functional similarity between speaking in tongues and ... Quaker silent

worship and the liturgical worship of Catholic and Episcopal churches." Stressing their cognitive effects, Baer proposes that "each of these practices permits the analytical mind – the focused, objectifying dimensions of man's intellect – to rest, thus freeing other dimensions of the person, what we might loosely refer to as man's spirit, for a deeper openness to divine reality" (Baer 1976: 152).

Baer's characterization parallels remarkably charismatic descriptions of "deep silence", its cognitive characteristics, and its religious consequences. The CCR also confirms his assertion of the essential functional equivalence of silence, glossolalia, and certain features of liturgical worship, for all of these practices are perceived as means whereby individuals may achieve the inner, mental silence so necessary for "real" contact with God and personal spiritual growth.

Glossolalia, or the "gift of tongues", is one of the most distinctive characteristics of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal religious practice (Gerlach–Hine 1968; Samarin 1972). Indeed, Maltz cites glossolalia as best exemplifying "the most important meaning of noisiness in Pentecostal worship" (1985: 128), that is, of "giving free reign to the Holy Spirit." An examination of glossolalia within the context of the CCR reveals that silence and noise/speech have become functional equivalents, and thus viewing them, as Maltz suggests, as logical opposites and discrete categories results in an unnecessary distortion of the ethnographic reality.

Within the Irish CCR the conception of the "gift of speaking in tongues" has expanded from its original Pentecostal significance as an external sign of the "Baptism in the Spirit" to being a method of prayer which facilitates the achievement of a state of silence and contemplation. This view of the gift of tongues is encouraged by the publications of the Irish CCR and is reflected in the statements of prayer group leaders and members.

The primary journal of the CCR in Ireland, *New Creation*, reported that "many found that Baptism in the Spirit and the gift of tongues has led them for the first time to real contemplative prayer, or to a new and deeper contemplation" (Faricy–Rooney 1983: 23). Because one cannot understand what it is that one is saying when speaking in tongues, the gift of tongues allows a person to "enter the Lord's presence and remain there silently in contemplative prayer" (ibid.). Familiarity with the use of tongues for prayer, it is argued, makes silent contemplation much easier and attractive, and for that reason the gift of tongues is appropriate not only for public use at prayer meetings but is also an effective technique for private prayer.

Furthermore, the authors of the article suggest a new relationship between the gift of tongues and the Baptism in the Spirit. The prevailing view of tongues within the CCR is that it is one of the "gifts of the Spirit" which an individual might receive following "the release of the Spirit". Although the gift of tongues is not seen as a necessary outward sign of the Baptism of the Spirit, as it is in many Protestant Pentecostal groups, many individuals reported considerable disappointment when they did not receive tongues either immediately or at some later time following being prayed over. Thus, there is a strong association of the gift of tongues with the Baptism of the Spirit. In terms of its value for contemplative prayer, the article, however, stresses the independence of tongues from the Baptism of the Spirit by stating that it is a gift not only for those individuals who have received the Baptism of the Spirit but anyone interested in improving their prayer. The private use of tongues to facilitate contemplative prayer thus contrasts with its typical Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal uses as either a form of communal prayer and praise or a channel of prophetic communication from the God to the group.

The link between tongues, silence and contemplative prayer was made even more explicit by a clergyman with a long association with the CCR. The following description of his personal use of glossolalia emphasizes the attainment of a state of "mental silence":

> I just, you know, ask the Lord to take my voice, mould it and shape it in whatever way He wants to do, into a song of praise to Him. And I find a great relaxation because I don't have to search for words. I find it's a way into a listening prayer, a receptive mind, because then you can banish all this logic and word prayer and analysis and self-analysis and so on that tends to cloud in upon you when you sit down on your own like that. And there's a great emptying of the mind. I suppose it's somewhat like saying the rosary in that it becomes a kind of an anchor for the mind, that stills your mind and introduces you to a receptive prayer, where you can just sit and be there – be present to the Lord and receive strength and healing from that presence without necessarily having to talk or in any way perform, or in any way give an output in prayer of words or be doing anything really, being receptive and being open. I find it's a great stilling introduction into that kind of receptive prayer. I hesitate to use the word contemplation but I suppose that's what it is.

Glossolalia, like silence, contrasts with "word prayer" and is associated with a "stilling" and "emptying of the mind", a state where an individual may become "open" to "listening prayer" and "receptive prayer". The speaker also likens glossolalia to the more traditional Catholic practice of reciting the rosary. Silence, glossolalia, and the chant-like recitation of

the rosary all function as ritual practices which lead the individual to a contemplative state in which the direct experience of the divine becomes possible.

As previously discussed, it is also in the state of silence that the individual is better able to listen to what the Lord may be trying to communicate. For this reason, in the context of a prayer meeting, the gift of tongues serves not only as a distinctive form of prayer and praise but, by leading the group into a period of silence, it facilitates the reception of inspired speech and words of prophecy. As articulated in the literature of the CCR, in order to receive divine communication, the individual must "listen", and this requires a silencing of the mind: "Since a prophecy is God's message the person giving it has to be listening to the Lord, hearing the Lord's voice. Praying in tongues is a help to this listening as the person's own ideas and preconceived notions are put away and he is more receptive to the Lord's mind" (*New Creation* 1977a: 4).

Similar views of contemplative prayer and its relationship to the "gift of tongues" were echoed by several charismatics. One prayer group leader, for example, commented that praying or singing in tongues creates a "prayerful atmosphere ... [which] opens people up to listening and to prophecy."

In public prayer the use of tongues leads to silence and an atmosphere of listening to the Lord from which may emerge other "spirit-led" vocal activity. In private prayer, glossolalia becomes a technique which facilitates contemplative prayer. Accounts of the use of tongues in public and personal prayer stress that the most significant spiritual benefit of using tongues is that by creating an atmosphere of silence and stillness it encourages an "openness to the Spirit" and contemplative or "receptive" prayer.

This emphasis upon "mental" or "internal" silence as opposed to verbal silence gives rise to an interesting paradox, if one accepts Maltz's notion that silence and noise are logically opposed to each other. A charismatic may appear to an observer to be silent while in a state of internal noise. Likewise he or she may be approaching or even be in a state of silent "listening prayer" while speaking in tongues, or as suggested above, while chanting the rosary. The differences of meaning on the subjective and experiential level are of primary ethnographic significance, and these are lost when an oppositional view of silence and noise is adopted. Not only may these three forms – silence, glossolalia, and chant – serve as functional equivalents, as suggested by Baer (1976), but in some contexts they also merge so closely together that precise boundaries between them

become not only extremely difficult to identify but, even if identifiable, contribute little to our ethnographic understanding of the communicative event. For charismatics, the complete absence of speech alone is neither necessary nor sufficient to constitute a religiously meaningful silence. Cases such as this provide compelling evidence for "the nondiscrete nature of speech and silence and their significant functional overlap" (Jaworski 1993: 62).

5. From silence to noise to silence: arbitrary meanings

As we have seen, silence has come to carry great symbolic significance and a wide range of positive meanings for Irish charismatics. This was not always the case, however, and the meanings and interpretation of silence in worship have undergone two dramatic transformations for members of the CCR within a relatively short span of time. In response to their initial socialization into traditional forms of Catholic religiosity, charismatics originally embraced the exuberance and noisiness characteristic of neo-Pentecostalism as an external sign of their new personal relationship with God. The silence associated with Catholic worship was interpreted as a sign of passivity in worship, a lack of religious commitment, and most importantly, the absence of a personal relationship with God. Within ten years, however, silence emerged as a central form of charismatic religious practice and spirituality with a concomitant expansion and elaboration of its meanings and functions. Such dramatic shifts in the socio-religious meanings accorded to silence, occurring as they did within such a brief time period, suggest that the meanings accorded to "noise" and "silence" are essentially arbitrary and result from social processes and conventions rather than, as Maltz argues, being motivated by any intrinsic or logical properties of the phenomenon themselves.

In the early stages of the CCR in Ireland, the emotional and spontaneous forms of Pentecostal prayer, or "noisiness", symbolized to participants a greater personal religious commitment as compared to their previous traditional forms of religious practice. Early members of the CCR interpreted the high Irish rates of participation in these traditional forms (i. e. Mass and the sacraments) as a product of social norms and habit and that, because of this, for the vast majority of Irish Catholics, religion was merely superficial. Even those Catholics who expressed a more personal attachment to Catholic religious practice were seen as being motivated through feelings of guilt or a fear instilled through traditional

religious instruction.[5] Traditional Irish Catholic religious practice thus contrasted with the charismatic goal of achieving a deeper relationship with a loving God who also desires such a relationship with individuals:

> A lot of people are just functional religious goers – fulfil the duty on Sundays. It's a social occasion and it has to be done. ... They're missing the point that there's a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. And also the one thing the Charismatic Renewal has told people about the love of God – that we're loved. People don't believe they're loved by God because we're always told in Catholicism that we're bad, and you're no good, and you go to hell unless –. And we've been motivated by guilt as Catholics that unless you do this something is going to happen to you. And people cannot come to terms with the fact that God loves them.

This view of traditional practice is also clearly reflected in the following recollection of a current member of the CCR:

> I had attended Mass. I had been a book-abiding Catholic, you know. I obeyed the rules, and carried it out – through fear or whatever. I suppose it wasn't wrong but it was a very surface faith. Now when I look at it that all changed to be a heart faith – a soul faith. My relationship was with something deeper.

The achievement of this new and "deeper" relationship with God was expressed through the new style of religious practice associated with the charismatic movement. In terms of religious behaviour, the demonstrative enthusiasm and emotional expression of charismatic "noisiness" came to symbolize, for the early members, a genuine and experientially based commitment to Christianity and an integration of both emotion and intellect in worship, while the silence and passivity of traditional practice represented a shallow faith and a lack of religious commitment. Over the years, however, the symbolic meanings associated with silence and "noisiness" within the CCR have been reversed, resulting in a dramatic change in the style of prayer. As one informant recalled:

> In those days it was much more exuberant. It has really quietened down. In fact it's gone better probably because it's gone into a much more spiritual level now. But in those days it was very exuberant all together.

At present, what members would describe as overly emotional and verbally active meetings are characterized as superficial and as representing a shallow faith, too dependent upon "the external signs" and the presence of the "spiritual gifts" associated with neo-Pentecostalism. Charismatic meetings whose emphasis is more upon silence and contemplative prayer are seen as deeper, more mature and as exhibiting greater spiritual growth.

This view of silence is not restricted to those in leadership roles but is representative of most participants at prayer meetings. Silence is equated with spiritual "depth" and "growth". As one informant commented on the change in emphasis, "I think silences are very good. There usen't to be silence – that much silence in the old days either. And that's another sign of the growth in the meeting." The early, distinctively Pentecostal features of the CCR have, in retrospect, been reinterpreted as somewhat hysterical and emotional whereas in contemporary prayer meetings these features have diminished and a deeper spirituality has been achieved:

> I find that I can see the difference of what it was at that time and now and that it has come into a deeper kind of a meeting and a deeper renewal. And it was a bit – you know, all the actions and all that and that people were a bit hysterical in the beginning and, you know, then that kind of faded away. And while you still have the prayer of praise people are kind of calmer and there isn't this, you know, any sense of hysteria.

When discussing the higher degree of emotionalism which was typical of the initial period of the CCR in Ireland, many referred to it as a product of a "honeymoon period" during which participants were on "a spiritual high". Both these terms are particularly apt as they capture the initial attraction, joy and emotional uplift experienced in the early days of the Renewal, as well as the inevitability of the waning of the initial intense enthusiasm:

> The whole emphasis on "hallelujah" and praise seems to have changed very much over the years. It's not the same terrific honeymoon thing that it was. It seems to settle down very much now into a deeper type of prayer or a more sense of commitment, I think.

Members attribute the end of this "honeymoon" state as the result of a "Spirit-led" process and an outcome of the spiritual growth which it initiated in individuals. The striking change is interpreted as a spiritual evolution and as a part of some larger divine "plan" for the spiritual growth of the prayer group. Emotional and outwardly expressive prayer, for example, is seen as an important element which God used in the development of the Renewal and was appropriate during its initial period of growth. As one informant stressed, it was through human emotion that God was able to lead people to Him. However, once this had taken place and an individual becomes "more grounded in the Lord" then a deeper form of prayer becomes more desirable if spiritual growth is to occur: "We can't just pray when we're emotionally high."

The idea that silence constitutes a most important feature of religious practice within the context of the charismatic prayer meeting is reflected

in statements published in *New Creation*, the journal of the Irish CCR, and in the comments of prayer group leaders and participants. In an article summarizing media reports of the Fourth National Charismatic Conference, held in Dublin in 1977, *New Creation* quoted from the *Catholic Standard*, the paper which it described as giving "the most favourable and constructive assessment" of the conference. An excerpt from this quote is revealing of Irish attitudes towards prayer while its selection for publication in the principal journal of the CCR in Ireland indicates that these attitudes are shared by members of the CCR: "But with all that noise and movement is there any real prayer? Yes clearly there was, a lot. There were several periods of total silence but even during the most boisterous sessions you would see people praying away silently" (1977a: 12). As can be seen, "real prayer" is associated not with the externally demonstrative and spontaneous verbal prayer of charismatic religious practice but rather with silent prayer.

The traditional Irish Catholic conception of prayer (and one frequently repeated as a criticism of the charismatic style of worship by non-members) emphasized its private and personal aspects. Individuals who were too public with their prayers or religious devotions were seen to be either doing so for incorrect motivations (e. g. pride or vanity) or to have already received the benefit of their prayers through the esteem which such activities might create in the eyes of others. The text of Matthew 6:5-7 is seen as providing the scriptural basis for this attitude and it too was often cited as demonstrating the impropriety of charismatic practices. However, although traditional Catholic practice stressed private, silent prayer, such prayer was essentially unidirectional communication from the individual to God. Within the charismatic model of communication silent prayer involved more – a listening for words from God. This view of silent prayer was clearly expressed and encouraged in Irish charismatic publications such as *New Creation*:

> The heart of the renewal and of every meeting is prayer in which there is real communication between God and myself. This most effectively happens in moments of deep silence ... which is not just a rest after singing, nor an empty pause before another reading or sharing but which is at the very heart of the prayer meeting – the rich fruitful moment when I listen and can be touched by God (Kelly 1979: 19).

As early as 1976 a commentator on the Renewal in Ireland noted the increasing importance of contemplation in the religious lives of many charismatics and stressed that contemplation was not solely the preserve of the contemplative orders or of mystic theologians but has been an

experience open to the laity (O'Connor 1976). Using the language of the CCR, he described contemplation as a charism or a "gift of the Spirit" which, like the other gifts, is meant to be for the benefit of the individual and the community. Another article in *New Creation* drew specific attention to the changing character of Irish prayer meetings with respect to the increasing ratio of silence to vocal activity. The author, drawing a parallel with the Charismatic Renewal, argued that there was "another mighty move of the Spirit" within the Catholic Church at the present time. This new movement was characterized by "a growing interest and involvement in more contemplative less talkative forms of prayer. More and more people are feeling the urge to make the journey inwards towards a stillness that is characterized by *watching*, *waiting*, *listening*, *awareness*." (Moore 1978: 17). Throughout the article this shift in emphasis from talk to silence was referred to as "centered prayer", "the gift of listening", "deep prayer", "contemplation", "expectant listening and waiting", and "a listening heart". The author asserted that those individuals at prayer meetings who are less demonstrative in their emotions are no less deep than those who express their feelings freely. He objected particularly "when a leader of a group is loud in his efforts to induce this emotion, to force people to cry and shout when they would be still [because] the Holy Spirit, not the "leader" is the leader at a prayer meeting" (Moore 1978: 19). A dramatic reevaluation of the spiritual importance of "talk" is implicit in the following statement: "We must admit that in some prayer meetings there are too many things happening, too much sharing of spectacular happenings attributed to the Holy Spirit ... too many "teachings", in a word too much talk and too little silence. Silence shared is as precious as prayer shared; it is prayer shared" (Moore 1978: 19–20). It is thus the achievement of moments of "deep silence" which is identified as the primary goal of the prayer meeting.

This view of the importance of silence is also shared by prayer group leaders. In the following description of a prayer meeting, silence clearly plays a crucial role, whether it is a time of silence requested by the meeting leader or silence which is Spirit-led, "the quietness of the Spirit". It is a time for reflection, a time when God can communicate to individuals and a time to experience the "presence":

> When we start the meeting it's very good to have praise, songs of praise and prayers of praise and praise of the Lord, because that's what He wants us to do. And then that quietens all the troubles of the day and it brings you into a place where you can really begin to relax and enjoy God. And

> then probably there might be a reading or something that gives you something to think about, you know. And then when the silence is called for it's because whoever is leading the meeting might like people to really think about the readings that went before. So it helps this contemplating of the scripture or whatever it was. And then the Lord can speak to us, but He can't speak to us until we're silent, you know. So there needs to be silence in the meeting for that reason. ... Now sometimes silence occurs automatically without having anybody suggesting it – that's the quietness of the Spirit – and that's when you really know the Spirit is working because when people become aware of the presence and if you notice the presence when in the silence – if it comes without somebody suggesting it, it's marvellous. And you say, "Sure enough, there should be silence at this moment," and you agree – you might have nothing to do with it and you begin to agree with the silence, you know. You're with it. ... And of course when you agree with it you don't want anyone to break it and you really get disturbed when somebody does break it.

The importance of silence in charismatic religious practice is frequently underscored during the prayer meeting itself in either the leader's introduction and opening teaching or sharing, in the sharing of others during the meeting or in the leader's specific instructions ("guidance") during the meeting. In all such instances silence is seen not as time for the private recitation of formal prayers or the expression of petitionary requests to God but rather as time for the reception of divine communication. Silence is the medium through which the most important charismatic ideological innovation becomes realized in religious practice; and that innovation is the charismatic model of communication. For the charismatic, silence is most significantly a time of listening and waiting for the word of God.

6. Conclusion

Maltz claims that a fundamental logical property of silence and noise is that they are opposed to each other and interprets Quaker silence and Pentecostal noisiness as motivated responses to differing perceptions of the world; Quakers respond with silence to a world perceived as noisy, while Pentecostals respond with noise and speech to a world perceived as silent. Furthermore, this contrast between speech – one of the main expressions of noisiness (1985: 131) – and silence has important implications for communication, social interaction, and social engagement. With respect to communication, silence "deemphasizes the message and the needs of the audience"; it "deemphasizes social relationships", and it

symbolizes disengagement. Speech, on the other hand, emphasizes the message and the importance of social relationships, and symbolizes "engagement in social relations with divinity" (Maltz 1985: 132).

Within the CCR at least, silence and speech are both complementary and essential aspects of the charismatic model of communication. Interpersonal communication requires both speech and silence to send and receive messages. Silence emphasizes the importance of the message (and the metamessage that divine human communication is occurring), the new personal relationship established between God and both the individual charismatic and the prayer group, and it symbolizes and concretizes the very act of spiritual engagement which is the innovative core of charismatic conceptions of divine-human communication.

In spite of the dramatic shift in emphasis from a predominantly "noisy" style to one more focused on silence, the underlying religious goal in charismatic groups has remained constant – i. e. the development of a personal relationship with God. Initially this personal relationship was symbolized through a deemphasis of formal, liturgical forms of prayer and the adoption of informal, spontaneous forms. As noted by Maltz (1985: 133), "The Pentecostal's very human model of the Christian's "personal relationship with Christ" is expressed through a very human type of speech interaction. The Pentecostal speaks personally to Christ and seeks a verbal message from Him in return." The value placed upon spontaneous prayer has not declined, nor has it been replaced by the greater symbolic meaning attached to silence. In contrast to what Maltz suggests, silence in charismatic worship does not signify a disengagement in social relations, but rather a profound engagement in a newly conceptualized relationship with God, and with other members of the prayer group. Indeed, silence is interpreted as essential in creating and maintaining such a relationship. Paralleling the pattern of human conversational interaction, speakers must also be listeners; and effective listening requires silence.

Jaworski (1993) has convincingly argued for the adoption of a nonessentialist and relativist approach to the study of silence, and suggests that "silence and speech do not stand in total opposition to each other, but form a continuum of forms ranging from the most prototypical instances of silence to the most prototypical instances of speech" (1993: 34). The value of such an approach has hopefully been revealed through its application to a specific ethnographic/historical example. I have discussed the semantic and functional complexity of silence, the evolution of its significance within a specific ethnographic context, and its relationship to the

religious ideology of the Irish CCR. An essentialist definition of silence as an absolute and discrete category, whose meanings are motivated by the logical properties of the form itself, not only distorts the complexity and subtlety of ethnographic reality, but also unnecessarily constrains our understanding of the role of silence in religious practice, and indeed, in all communicative events.

Notes

1. Portions of this paper were previously published in Szuchewycz (1989).
2. See Jaworski (1993: 36–63) for a detailed critique of Maltz's position.
3. The following discussion is based upon research conducted over an eleven month period from September 1983 to July 1984 with members of the CCR in Galway, Ireland. This was made possible through a doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The primary methods consisted of regular participant observation at four weekly charismatic prayer meetings (three public meetings and one which was held in a private home) and in-depth interviews with leaders and members of these groups.
4. For accounts by members see Ranagan–Ranagan (1969) and O'Connor (1971). McGuire (1982) and Bord–Faulkner (1983) have published on the American Charismatic Renewal from a sociological perspective.
5. This perception of Irish religiosity was also shared by many Irish clergy, and was supported by a number of sociological surveys of Irish patterns of religious practice and beliefs (e. g. Fogarty–Ryan–Lee 1984; Breslin–Weafer 1985).

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Part Six: Cross-cultural communication

The silent Finn revisited

Kari Sajavaara and Jaakko Lehtonen

1. Introduction

On a popular postcard, each member nation of the European Union is represented by a caricature of a characteristic stereotype such as German humour, British cooking, and the sober Irishman. The perfect European is said to be "as talkative as a Finn", and this Finn is illustrated by a couple of people, their mouths closed with adhesive tape. The obvious implication is that Finns are considered to be the least talkative among the Europeans. Similar disparaging descriptions can also be found in some recent books about Europeans. Hill (1992: 182–183), for instance, gives Finns a special place among the silent "Nordics": "Finns are the odd ones out ... They tend to seem taciturn, partly a reflection of their difficulties in communicating. Not only their language isolates the Finns from everyone else ... they even have problems in communicating among themselves." In the same way, Lewis (1992) refers to the shyness of the Finns and their unwillingness to open themselves up, which accentuates the opacity of the culture, people's voluntary withdrawal from company, and their geographical distance.

Finns also have similar characterizations of themselves. The difference between the characterizations by Finns and those by non-Finns is in that while foreigners flavour their descriptions with some wit and humour, Finns themselves regard such descriptions of themselves as deadly serious. In their own eyes, they *are* taciturn, stubborn, and slow backwoodsmen, who live in the periphery of Europe, who do not speak, communicate, or show their feelings, and whenever they open their mouths, they speak one of the most difficult languages of the world.

In an earlier paper (Lehtonen–Sajavaara 1985), an attempt was made to deal with the problem of Finns being negatively stereotyped because of their frequent use of silence. Various types of material were brought forward as evidence for the silence-bound behaviour of Finns and the silence-related features of conversation among them. In the present paper, the problem of the silent Finn is revisited on the basis of some more

recent research. An attempt will be made to answer the following questions: where does the stereotype of the silent Finn originate?; what are the reasons for such a stereotype?; and what are its consequences in interaction and intercultural communication?

2. National perception of self

Popular conceptions relating to national character are persistent. People have deeply embedded ideas about themselves as members of their reference groups, and the characteristics that they cite as typical of themselves and their fellow-members resist change. In Finland, people often talk about themselves as a nation whose members are practically incapable of communicating with each other and outsiders (see e. g. Greig 1991: 342). The origin of this tendency is often ascribed to the isolated environment where Finns used to grow up and the peripheral location of the country on the northern outskirts of Europe. This self-effacing characteristic of Finns has been recorded by Bertolt Brecht in one of his plays, where he refers to Finns as a people who are silent in two languages (Finnish and Swedish, which are both national languages in Finland). Finns generally seem to find this characterization of themselves rather attractive.

It is by no means unexpected that the view of this national communicative handicap of Finns is extended to foreign language use in particular: Finns generally believe that their aptitude for learning foreign languages is not as good as that of other people. They easily picture themselves as people who have stiff tongues in hard heads.

Stereotypes are an important, and necessary, ingredient in cultural adaptability: they contribute towards the cognitive system's capacity to adjust to unexpected and unknown phenomena. It is also true that the proportion of cultural behaviour that is shared between people always exceeds the differences that distinguish them. What may turn out to be fatal in cross-cultural communication, however, is that "negative stereotypes combined with negative collective self-esteem may lead to a vicious circle in which negative expectations result in negative perceptions and negative behaviours, or in the use of self-handicapping strategies which are handicapping for intercultural interaction as well" (Lehtonen 1994b).

It is possible that the national image that Finns have of themselves may have been strengthened by the nationalistic movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when Finland was engaged in a

fight for her independence: in that particular situation it was very important for Finns to emphasise the unique features of their nationality. The origins of such characterization can be traced significantly further back than this however. Daniel Juslenius, a bishop who is considered the originator of the Finnish nationalistic movement, wrote as early as 1700: "[Finns] are very intelligent, to the extent that no other nationality could be any better than they are, unless they were diverted in their efforts of specialization by their being interested in far too many things. By now they have learnt to avoid this problem. It is to be hoped that they also learn to give up their reprehensible adoration of foreigners, their excessive consideration of their personal interests, and the underestimation of them themselves" (Juslenius 1987 [1700]).

Stereotypical conceptualizations based on myths and misconceptions devoid of any true empirical foundation can also be found with established scholars. For his description of the history of Finnish, Lauri Hakulinen (1979: 33–34), a well-known Finnish-language scholar, adopted certain characterizations from Hugo Bergroth, a Swedish-speaking teacher at the University of Helsinki. Bergroth (1916) had made an attempt to explain why the way in which Finland Swedes spoke was more colourless, dry, and monotonous than that of Swedes living in Sweden. Sweden-Swedish speakers employ, according to Bergroth, the cords in the larynx with greater vigour and energy; a Finn is also slower and sulkier, while a Swede is more open and self-confident and has more temperament. In Hakulinen's opinion, Bergroth's characterization applies to the Finnish language and speakers of Finnish even better: they speak with a rather quiet voice, at a low pitch level, with little affect, with their mouths rather closed, because they do not move their lips a great deal, and with a mumbling overall style of expression arising from a lax execution of individual sounds.

Implying that characterizations of the above kind apply only to Finns would be highly misleading. Similar characterizations are often given of many other nationalities. In addition, the unforced flexibility that is typical of normal everyday uses of the mother tongue makes the efforts expended on the learning and use of foreign languages look particularly problematic, which again may result in misguided conclusions about the levels of energy required. Speaking one's mother tongue is normally easy, and there are mostly no problems in the execution of communicative objectives, while speaking a foreign language often exposes the speaker to hardships that tend to arise unannounced.

More recently it has not been customary to refer to national characteristics as an explanation for aspects of communicative behaviour. In the second edition of his book Hakulinen too adopts a slightly different angle: he predicts a change in the ways in which Finns speak as a result of "alterations in the aesthetic and phonetic character of Finnish from a rustic dialectal level in a more positive direction"; due to the spread of a conscious speech culture among educated people. Hakulinen's main argument is that education makes people "better" speakers of a language. The same attitude is reflected, more popularly and from a different viewpoint, in regular complaints that people who appear in public, such as radio or TV announcers, cannot pronounce words or letters (sic!) correctly. Labelling of pronunciation and communicative style in this way may be a convenient way to label educated and non-educated (better and not-so-good) people (see also Milroy–Milroy 1985: 29 ff.). It may have a destructive impact on the transference of communicative intentions if the label of lower education is also taken to be a signal of a lower level of intelligence.

A common concern in Finland is the question of what other people think about the inhabitants of the country. Here an entire nation behaves like an individual who has a low level of self-esteem. Persons who feel insecure and are not sure what sort of self-image they have are also more sensitive to picking up negative evaluations in their environment, and they tend to react to them with an irrational strength (see Lehtonen 1993). Finnish media keep a keen eye on what is written about Finland and Finns abroad: journalists know that their readers are interested in the news about Finns who have been recognised abroad or in the news which throw a shadow of disrepute on Finland and her inhabitants. A reflection of this "collective lack of self-confidence" is the constant demand for acknowledgement from the outside and for instances of international acclaim for the country's unique character. The whole world is seen from a perspective with Finland at its centre point: whatever is said about Finland and Finns is thought to attract everybody's attention throughout the world.

An element which is one of the major causes of misunderstanding in intercultural communication is a phenomenon called projected autostereotype. It is derived from a more general hypothesis of projected similarity: both parties assume that the other is thinking the same way and making the same assumptions about the situation (Lehtonen 1991; see also Adler 1986). In terms of a projected autostereotype, persons whose perception of their own culture is negative assume that the

members of the neighbouring country see them in the same way, and the autostereotype is the stronger the closer the cultures are to each other and the more alike their external appearance. Swedes and Finns are next door neighbours, and they "wrongly" interpret each other's behaviour in just the same way as do the Germans and the Dutch, or the British and the Americans. The assumption based on the idea of projected autostereotype also explains why Finns accept the characteristic stereotype of Finland. The national image of Finland for Finns is largely built upon their assumptions about the way in which outsiders see Finland and Finns.

In 1987 a survey was carried out in Sweden which attempted to discover the way in which Swedes saw Finland (Laine-Sveiby 1991). The informants were asked to pick out from a word-list those that they thought described Finns the best. The ten most common characteristics typical for Finns were vitality (36%), taciturnity (30%), power (28%), discretion (24%), violence (24%), hospitality (23%), cooperativeness (23%), reliability (22%), and purposefulness (22%). The responses are characteristic of Swedish culture: each informant connects Finnish characteristics with features that are familiar, and the result is a number of discrepant characterizations constituting no uniform profile of Finns. Finns are like any other people with their virtues and vices.

Conceptions similar to those described above in terms of national characteristics also arise from observations of language behaviour. People's intuitions are often far removed from the actual state of affairs, since they are easily coloured by tradition, expectations, inferences, and pure belief. Observations on speech rate serve as an illuminating example (see Lehtonen–Sajavaara 1985). The impression of slow speech rate, for instance, may be derived, not from actual speech rate, but from morphological or morphophonemic differences between the listener's and the speaker's variety of the language. The impression of slowness may also be due to pauses that are longer than they should be according to the (subconscious) experience of the listener. Since slow speech rate is also easily confused with slow rate of thinking, serious constraints on efficient interaction may be the result. Speakers, again, who are recognised as fast by listeners are not necessarily any faster than others: the impression may be derived from the same factors as above but in reverse order. Crown and Feldstein (1985) also argue for the relative nature of silence and speaking by providing statistical evidence of the fact that the amount of talk by a speaker is determined more by the silences of the listener than by the speaker.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of variability in each individual's speech behaviour. Nobody is a member of just one speech community (see Milroy 1987; Fasold 1990: 235–238), and there is a great deal of variation in the ways in which one person uses the languages or language variants at his disposal in different contexts. The vernacular and the ways to communicate typical of it such as they have been acquired in childhood may have been pushed to the background in the process of the speaker's adoption through education of a more standard variety of communicative behaviour. Yet the vernacular may easily surface in situations where the speaker interacts with speakers of that variety, or when the monitoring of the speech chain misfires for one reason or another. In addition, peculiar forms of communicative behaviour may develop in interaction with specific groups of people. The shift from one form of expression to another mostly takes place automatically without any awareness of the change. The way in which the other party is approached is very important: a common language variety creates a bridge for further communication, while its absence may prove to be a serious handicap but is not necessarily fatal (for examples see e. g. Jordan–Fuller 1975). Tannen (1986, 1989) cites numerous instances of failure that can be assigned to a missing common "language". The destructive impact of failure may even be greater when people speaking the same language do not realise that their respective codes are shared only partially.

3. National character as metaphor

Labelling people's communicative behaviour, one way or another, in general terms may be highly misleading. Scollon (1985:27–28) points out that "differences in pausology lead to one set of attributions in one society and perhaps to a very different or conflicting set in another". He argues that the problem lies with the process attribution, which he regards as "essentially a culture-specific phenomenon" instead of a universal one. His conclusion is that "if we are going to get any further in our understanding of the meaning of silence in conversation, we must first examine the metaphors generating our research and our conversational stance".

National images are conglomerations of all the ideas, conceptions, illusions, and evaluations linked up with countries or nationalities, which are used when information and observations about these countries or

nationalities are assessed and interpreted. Similar to other images, national images are ingredients in the knowledge structures of thinking and memory, necessary for the categorization of the surrounding reality in order to constitute it in terms of views of the reality that are easier to control. Like other images, a national image is a generalization embedded in memory that often exists trimmed of all the concrete information and experience that originally has given rise to this generalization. Such a generalization is constituted by knowledge and evaluations relating to a country's culture and experience, and to the information, from the media and elsewhere, about the country in question. All images share one and the same characteristic: they complement, or are substituted for, observations made of the reality around us. What we observe around us is, in many ways, a state of mind (cf. Bauman 1992: vii). If the national image is negative, this negative imprint is easily transferred in people's minds to specific features, phenomena, and things relating to the country concerned. In the same way as sunglasses tint our view, the national image colours everything: negative expectations make the observer see negative features while positive ones remain in the background. The negative image supplies a meaning for whatever is done by the country and her inhabitants, and for the news that is received about it.

The major problem lies in the fact that for an average observer the cultural stereotype usually represents "objective reality": it is how things stand. In cross-cultural communication, the potential breakdown of the communicative situation results from these conceptions being subconscious for the most part. People have the tendency not to be aware of the characteristics of their own culture that serve as the yardstick of their attributions, and they are also bound to think that people living in other cultures perceive the world in the same way as they do (Lehtonen 1994a).

It is important to remember that stereotypes cannot be said to be based on illusory perceptions of reality. The behaviour that gives rise to them is true and real: it is the interpretation of the behaviour derived from misguided expectations resulting from a different cultural framework that leads the observer astray. Yet it may be necessary to reconsider the perceptual basis of attributions relating to national images to see to what extent they are "social acts performed in discourse and not merely cognitions about social acts" (Edwards and Potter 1995:88).

Conceptualization of an ideal self may be seen as a facet of ego protection (see Lehtonen 1994a). It may make sense to see others in a deprecatory light in order to boost one's own ego, and the discrepancy between

what one considers oneself to be and what one wanted to be ideally may result – despite a certain degree of threat involved – in a positive conclusion: things can only turn out to be better in the future, because they cannot be worse than they are now.

4. Finland: a silent culture

The statement by Bertolt Brecht that Finns are silent in two languages can be considered just a cliché today. In their attitudes towards speech and silence, Finns share the overall tendencies with their Nordic neighbours: just like their fellow Scandinavians they are of the opinion that you speak only when you have something to say. If you do not have anything to say, you keep silent. Talkativeness is an indication of slickness, which serves as a signal of unreliability.

Since the main body of research in speech communication deals with Americans, it has become rather customary to compare the non-talkative Nordic communicator style with the kind of talkativeness that is characteristic of the majority of Anglo speakers in the United States. Talk and non-talk serve totally different objectives in these two cultures: while Americans make use of talk to gather information about the other party and to reduce uncertainty, Finns try to reach the same goal by making silent observations of the interlocutor. Representatives of southern and central European cultures become irritated, because they tend to assess their interlocutors by their skill in verbal argumentation and reasoning, and this is something that may be totally absent in situations with Finns. Germans may regard Finnish quietness and silence as reticence, reserve, and even aimlessness (Tiittula 1993). Americans are often disoriented by this but realise later on that the silence of Finns is not a signal to inform the interlocutor of willingness to retire. For an Arab this characteristic behaviour of a Finn may also be confusing: Arabs are liable to think that something is definitely wrong (Lewis 1992: 139).

Descriptions that Finns immediately find familiar relate to North-American Indians (Scollon–Scollon 1981). Representatives of Indian cultures would not find any problems in adjusting to behaviour typical of Finns, and Finns would regard their communicator styles as normal.

When Sallinen-Kuparinen (1987) asked Finns to describe themselves as communicators, many of them pointed out that it is talkativeness that is one of their weaknesses. This conclusion looks quite unexpected, but

it can be interpreted against the way that Finns match themselves with an ideal communicator image: a good speaker for a Finn is one who can give expression to what he or she wants to say briefly and efficiently without talking too much and too profusely. Sallinen says that Finnish communicator style is clearly receiver-oriented. A Finn tries to avoid being the first speaker, and he prefers being a quiet listener who shows his respect towards the person having the floor through his non-interruptive behaviour. This manner of conduct in interactive situations may reflect a high level of appreciation for speech. The reasons that Finns give for their silences in this sense are labelled as "negative politeness" by Greig (1991: 233 ff.).

Nordic silence means retirement to solitude and non-communication, which makes it different from the kind of silence that is typical of Japan, Korea, and China. In these Asian high-context cultures non-talkativeness can mostly be described as active silence, which is expected to create the right kind of atmosphere and make the evaluation of the other party possible (see Gudykunst 1989: 329). Even Finnish silence and Swedish silence are not exactly the same, which may result in a Swede interpreting a Finn's behaviour as an attempt to keep a certain distance from the interlocutor (Laine-Sveiby 1991: 57).

If, as Gudykunst (1989: 336) points out, efficiency in intercultural contacts is a product of people's ability to forge new contacts with representatives of other cultures, Finns may be seriously handicapped by their silence-bound behaviour, which makes it rather difficult for them to open up and start communicating in such situations.

For people living outside the Nordic Countries, these countries look very much alike. It is not rare that even people living in the Nordic Countries themselves assume that these countries are culturally uniform. When looking at your neighbour from your own country, the picture may seem familiar, but it may also easily become threatening when the neighbouring country and her inhabitants are characterised by reference to features that you have regarded as typical for your own.

On Hofstede's (1991) cultural maps representing more than fifty national cultures, which are based on a statistical analysis of an extensive body of questionnaire data, Finland is grouped with the German-speaking countries. Hofstede summarises his results in terms of a number of indices. The Power Distance Index, which relates to the expectations and conceptions in terms of power among people working in organizations, is 33 for Finland, while it is 35 for western Germany (on a scale from 11 for Austria to 104 for Malaysia). Along the Individuality-Collectivity

Scale, Germany is given 67 points as against 63 for Finland (the top being 91 for the United States and the bottom 6 for Guatemala), and along the Uncertainty Avoidance Scale, Germany receives 65 points, Finland 59 (the extremes are 112 for Greece and 8 for Singapore). The only characteristic that links Finland up with Scandinavian culture is what Hofstede labels as masculinity. Scandinavian culture is characterised as the most feminine among the countries evaluated: Sweden receives 5 points, Norway 8, Denmark 16, and Finland 26, as against western Germany with 66 points, Switzerland with 70, and Austria 79 (Sweden is the bottom and Japan the top with 95 points). This implies that Finland is considered softer and more sensitive than the German-speaking countries but also more masculine than its Nordic neighbours. Swedes tend to regards Finns as too hard, while Germans regard them as too soft.

According to the conclusions made by Vaahterikko (1993) on the basis of interview data, Finnish company managers are closer to Germans and Spaniards than their British, French, or Dutch counterparts. They appreciate the same kind of values. This may be due to the fact that both in Finland and in Spain people perceive themselves to be geographically distant from the major currents of European activities, and people are highly concerned about the loss of face (see e. g.. Vaahterikko 1993). The need of being accepted and a weak self-concept may be characteristic of cultural peripheries: similar tendencies are found in Canada as against the United States or in Iceland as against the rest of Scandinavia. According to Vaahterikko, Spain resembles Finland also in the sense that, similarly to Sweden for Finns, France is the coveted neighbouring country whose inhabitants are considered proud and arrogant, while Portugal is the country where people from Spain go to show off and give testimony to their high standard of living. Italy is the Finns' Norway for the Spaniards, a sympathetic country where everything is alright: it is not far, but far enough.

Several cultural phenomena have been described as typical for both Finns and Swedes. Swedes are bound towards melancholy and a taciturn disposition, and they are regarded as tedious partners in conversation (Hill 1992). The phenomenon of painful silence is also found in Sweden, but there silence is mostly taken to be a positive phenomenon (Lundberg 1991). Interaction in the country is characterised by a degree of reserve: people do not want to make public appearances, and they expect that other people will be polite to them and leave them in peace. They try to

avoid loud conversation, accept extended pauses and long silences, do not interrupt other speakers, avoid criticizing other people, and do not like manifesting strong affections (Stedje 1990). The Swedes are more silent and less talkative than other nations: they stick to the principle that you should not talk unless you have something to say (Daun 1989). There are few nationalities that feel equal comfort when keeping silence. Finns cannot be considered talkative, but they too may feel that Swedes are rather uncommunicative.

The descriptions above are exactly the same as those that Finns are used to hearing and reading about themselves. These two neighbouring countries are competing with each other in many areas, notably in various sports, and in the area of speech communication and external communicator image the competition is as hard as anywhere else: the performances are equal but the styles are different.

In the 1980s many companies in Sweden had Finnish managers, which often resulted in cultural clashes. The way in which the Finns managed the companies looked austere to Swedes: the Finns made their decisions behind closed doors and dictated their decisions instead of applying the rules adopted for public relations in Sweden. At the same time, the Finns thought that their way of doing things was less bureaucratic and therefore more efficient. Swedes do not like the straightforward and direct way of decision-making that is typical of Finns. They expect there to be negotiation in order to take everybody's opinion into account. They cannot understand the different approach of their Finnish neighbours.

The interesting feature in the interpretation of the relative character of cultural behaviour is the fact that what is authoritarian to Swedes is experienced quite differently by Germans: Finnish managers are criticised by them for their exaggeratedly democratic attitudes and for their slow rate of decision-making. Along this dimension, Finnish culture seems to be somewhere between German and Scandinavian cultures.

It is possible to summarise a number of speech-related characteristics that are typical of Finnish or, more generally, Nordic culture. Many of the features reinforce the image of a silent culture held by west European or Anglo-Americans. The characteristics cannot be considered to be positive or negative as such: observers from some cultures regard them as strengths, while others take them to be weaknesses. The summary looks as follows (similar characterizations can also be found in Carbaugh 1995):

1. It is typical of interaction in the Nordic countries that you speak only if you have got something to say. Competence is assessed in Finland on the basis of deeds, not of speech or speech behaviour.
2. All Nordic peoples share the characteristic of social reticence, i. e.. unwillingness to appear in public and passive participation in situations where a large number of people are present. A Finn does not normally want to take the floor.
3. The approach adopted by Finns in new and unknown situations is that of passive information gathering: they observe the situation without saying anything, instead of using the active strategy of asking questions or the interactive strategy typical of Americans where the principle is that of speaking a great deal, which makes the other party talk about himself.
4. Finns respect the other party's privacy. They are not willing to open a discussion with a stranger, not to disturb him. Finnish politeness is passive: it is considerate to let other people be in peace.
5. It is typical of Finns to respect the other person's opinion. An opinion constitutes part of a person's private self. If you question his opinion, you also question him as a human being. Argumentation in Finland is difficult because the questioning of other people's opinions is easily considered to be mud-slinging.
6. The right to listen is one of the basic features of Finnish communication. The listener has the right to listen, while the speaker has the obligation to talk. At school, the listener is the pupil, the speaker the teacher. In intercultural contacts the stranger is easily confused with the teacher.
7. Finnish listenership means quiet listening. Verbal or vocal backchanneling is not very common.
8. Silence is harmonious. Being together without speaking is accepted: it means relaxation.
9. Long pauses in discourse are common and acceptable: a speaker can pause without being threatened with the loss of floor; long switching pauses between interlocutors are usual. Speakers are given the right to speak, and there is not much simultaneous talk.
10. The impact of Finnish cultural traditions is also seen in the way in which Finns speak. Finnish culture is closed, and it is characterised by a high degree of uniformity. Its members are highly suspicious of anything that is foreign and different. The threshold to open up discussion with a stranger is very high.

11. Collective self-awareness is very strong, which results in an emphasis on aspects of the nation's cultural identity. Finns tend to take a reserved stand in situations of intercultural encounter and may be highly concerned about the saving of "national face". A way to avoid the loss of face arising from communicative failure is to be silent.
12. Disfluency may result from traditional methods of foreign language teaching. Finns who had their foreign language education in the old school system differ from their Nordic neighbours, at least when speaking Germanic languages. They tend to be highly dysfluent. Conscious control of language production consumes a great deal of cognitive capacity, which is liable to cause "social non-fluency": this results in reduced social sensitivity, frozen non-verbal behaviour, and clumsy social participation. Many of the characteristics are quite different from what Finns do when speaking their mother tongue.

5. Observations of Finns as communicators

The main concern above has been the self-image of Finns, the way in which they see themselves as communicators and interactants in social situations. There is also a body of research now that deals with the way in which communication partners in other nationalities see Finns as foreign language users and communicators. Certain aspects of the results are relevant for the present discussion.

Questionnaires and interviews have been used by a number of Finnish researchers to deduce characteristics of foreign language use and communicative style among Finns, mainly in situations where they are interacting with their trade partners. Yli-Renko (1993) has gathered information about perceptions of Finns by a number of English-speaking and German-speaking interlocutors. Most informants accepted statements to the effect that Finns hesitate to use English or German, they approve of periods of silence in interaction, and appear to be reticent and tend to keep a certain distance from their interlocutors. About one half of the informants, however, did not accept arguments concerning Finns' inability to keep up interaction, high levels of hesitancy and apprehension, non-observance of partners, and high degree of monotony in foreign-language communicative situations.

The informants interviewed by Törnroos et al. (1991) listed the same depreciatory characteristics of Finns, but at the same time they also

found a large number of commendatory ones that are not without an impact on communicative success: Finns are straightforward, easy to work with, open-minded, hospitable, sympathetic, and polite. Similar findings are also reported by Lehtonen (1993) on the basis of a study carried out among Estonians. A slightly different picture in terms of communicator style arises from reports of the way Chinese interactants experience Finns as communicators (Salo-Lee 1994): the strengths of Finns are no different but the tendency to silence is no longer a problem. Silence is necessary for the evaluation of the partner and for the establishment of agreement, but even Chinese interlocutors experience Finns as reticent and distant: they appear stubborn and lack small words and expressions that are considered signals of friendliness and attention. Salo-Lee labels this kind of behaviour by Finns as social silence. Reticence was also reported as a characteristic of Finns by American exchange students who had spent a year in Finland (Mäkisalo 1987).

Another characteristic of communicator style that is attached to Finns is directness, even bluntness (Salo-Lee 1994, Tiittula 1994). This comes up in interviews with Asians and Germans. Bluntness may result from straightforward impoliteness, but it can also be a product of an inability to use various linguistic expressions such as downtoners, apologies, or polite requests. Since most of the information about Finns in this respect comes from situations where they are expected to use a foreign language, it is quite possible that what is experienced as bluntness actually is an effect of limitations in communicative competence in a foreign language. In their native communicative behaviour, many Finns, particularly if they have been enculturated in the eastern parts of the country, are famous for their indirect, ambiguous, and even incomprehensible practices.

A certain element of passivity and non-participation characterises Finns in the studies surveyed for the present paper. These features come out strong in Rusanen's (1993) study that is concerned with Finns in multinational workplaces: the Finn is normally a good listener but a poor speaker; he rarely opens up conversations, makes few initiatives, and seldom interferes in discussions. Finns could be characterised as friendly, quiet, hesitant, reticent, patient, and reliable. It is quite unexpected that in spite of the above characteristics, many of which are indicative of some reticence, Finns are regarded as sociable. This may be derived from a certain strength in the area of negotiating – instead of argumentation. Very interesting is Rusanen's finding that Finns are experienced as having no expression on their face. Here again we are

dealing with situations where Finns are using foreign languages, which may explain the discrepancy with reports by Swedes (Laine-Sveiby 1987) that Finns' non-verbal behaviour tends to be too open an indication of their feelings and attitudes.

To a Frenchman a Finn looks rather uncommunicative and withdrawn, while Japanese (and even Swedish) interlocutors may think that Finns tend to have too many gestures and they are too spontaneous. A German may think that as a negotiator a Finn is too conciliatory, taking too much time to reach an excessively democratic conclusion, whereas a Swede maintains that the way in which Finns present their case is too straightforward and blunt, and that as decision-makers Finns are authoritarian and too fast. The Finn's conduct may remain the same but the interpretation depends on the relative viewpoint of the observer.

6. Conclusion. Finnish silence: myth or reality?

A large number of characteristics have been listed as being indicative of Finns as a silent nation. Some of them originate through observations of Finns in interactional situations by foreigners, others are derived from experiences of Finns themselves. It would be certainly wrong to try and maintain that both groups of observers, both Finns and foreigners, have ended up having misguided conceptions about Finns as communicators. The conclusion is in any case that Finns have certain features in their communicative behaviour that strike the foreign observer as different. But at the same time, it must also be pointed out that the problem arises, in part at least, from the difficulties inherent in cultural perceptions: people make use of their own conceptual categories to organise their observations of the behaviour of others. The problem of having applicable concepts and categories arises when we are supposed to study conventions, norms, and behaviours cross-culturally.

The above comparability problem is aggravated in Finland through the tendency of labelling this or that communicative behaviour as better or communicatively more suitable than some other. Finns easily interpret their "national" characteristics, true or assumed, that are considered to be different from those of members of certain (perhaps more prominent) nationalities as handicaps that they had better try and overcome. It is considered important to be alike with representatives of what is regarded as mainline international culture. Anything that is labelled as typical of

this international culture is immediately adopted as a measuring stick for the future development of the nation, and what is considered characteristically Finnish is given a negative colouring. What is here labelled as Finnish silence represents a typical example of this tendency.

The respective proportions and particular forms of speech and silence are significant only as variables within a certain culture. They form part of the target-oriented behaviour of members of that culture and make sense only when interpreted within that specified context. If the features concerned are moved outside their domestic sphere and are given interpretations from the outside, it is understandable that the result is misguided. Yet one of the dilemmas in all this is that at the same time the insider is also incapable of seeing his or her true nature as a communicator. He too selects some features which he considers significant, and gives evaluations to his own behaviour in just these terms.

What is needed is a set of common denominators which could be used to assess the amount of talk and non-talk in the cultures to be compared. Such a set does not exist for the time being. Alternatively, the way in which a Finn talks could be compared with that of a member of another culture. So it could be maintained for instance that Finns speak less than Americans. Such a comparison is not however unproblematic: Finns may be less liable to intervene in public meetings and in classrooms but participate with vigour in discussions in pubs, at marketplaces, or in the sauna. It is not obvious where the measurement of the amount of talk should take place: in situations where the Finn is silent, or in those where he talks? Another notorious example is the observation that Finnish communicative behaviour lacks small talk, and what is found instead is silence. Yet here again the norm is brought in from the outside: the forms and topics of small talk in Finland are different, but it is not possible to say that there is less of it. When we observe a Finn's communicative behaviour in these terms, we are mostly concerned with a Finn as a user of a foreign language, which adds one more discrepancy: the comparison is always to native speakers of the target language using their mother tongue, and not to them as users of a foreign language.

The result of a comparison of the above kind also depends on who the other party is. As has been pointed out above, a Finn may be considered uncommunicative and quiet by representatives of certain cultures, while others may think that he/she is bound to excessive gestures and spontaneity.

All this means that an approach like Hofstede's through a grid based on attitudes towards other nationalities may have a relative value only.

As such, Hofstede's indices tell us very little about the basic theme of the present paper: they can be taken to be indications of an overall positioning toward culture.

A great deal of research work remains to be done in the area of silence. A useful starting point was made by Saville-Troike's (1985) proposition for an etic grid for the study of silence in an "integrated theory of communication".

The terminology used may also be highly misleading depending on the type of culture that it is applied to. The American research tradition, for instance, includes the term "tolerance of silence". It is appropriate for the description of the affective impact of silence in a culture whose members are used to filling social silence with talk. A group of people can stand a certain period of silence, after which the silence is broken by means of behaviour that is acceptable in that particular culture. If, however, people are used to enjoy silence and relax by not having to talk even when they are in other people's company, tolerance of silence cannot easily be used to give an interpretation to the functions of social silence, and the absence of talk is given a wrong significance in terms of the culture concerned. The concept is no longer valid.

The application of concepts valid in one culture, where they may be highly pertinent and appropriate, to another cultural environment is often done under the assumption that the concepts used are universal. It is even possible to talk about conceptual imperialism (Lehtonen 1994c). In the description of American speech behaviour a great deal of attention is paid to how active American speakers are. Activity is regarded as commendable, and it is considered one of the prerequisites of social success. Attitudes to taciturnity are characterised by, for instance, terms like "communication apprehension", which means rather natural anxiety felt when public speech is expected. If, however, social success results from ways of conduct other than verbal activity, as is the case in many Asian countries or sometimes in Scandinavia, the correct measuring stick could be "tolerance of talk". In such cultures the right and obligation of speaking depends on the relative position of power that the person concerned has and on the interpretation of the requirements of the situation. The person concerned may feel as anxious as his or her American counterpart for exactly the same reasons – having to appear in public – but, in addition, he or she may be worried about taking the floor in a situation where it is not appropriate to say anything in his or her own culture.

Speaking is controlled in Finland, like elsewhere, by various situational norms such as silence in church, talking in the classroom when the teacher allows it, and constraints on "chatter" at the dinner table. Finnish cultural behaviour also comprises a number of values and fundamental conceptions of appropriate behaviour which give an outsider an impression of a silent culture.

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Cross-cultural back channels in English refusals: A source of trouble[1]

Noel Houck and Susan M. Gass

1. Introduction

In this paper we approach the issue of silence by considering communication in a cross-cultural setting. This is a particularly important locus of investigation for the study of silence in that it is an area in which misinterpretation of an intended message is likely. We assume that "meaning" is conveyed through silence; we also assume that different cultures use silence for different purposes (e. g., time for thought, lack of understanding). In some cultures silence is a normal and expected part of an interaction; in others it is an awkward and uncomfortable part of an interaction (cf. Tannen–Saville-Troike 1985).

Our emphasis is on the act of listening – an act which is often associated with passivity or silence. By focusing on the efforts of nonnative speakers (NNS) of English to function as effective conversational partners, and thus as effective listeners, with native speakers (NS), we investigate the use of non-verbal (or minimally verbal) messages by listeners and their role in creating meaning out of silence.

We take as our object of inquiry the speech act of refusals, focusing on the non-verbal aspects of intercultural refusals. We agree with Edmondson (1981: 78) when he claims "that nonverbal clues are of great significance in accomplishing and modifying the effect of verbal communication." The need for interactants to modify the effect of verbal communication is particularly important when face-threatening speech acts are involved, since it is in those instances that miscommunication may have more serious consequences. Our particular emphasis will be on back channels and head nods by Japanese learners of English when engaged in conversations with native speakers of English. We point out that these features appear to be integral parts of conversation in all cultures despite the fact that they are not used in precisely the same way in all cultures.

Neu (1990) notes that verbal messages can be reinforced or undermined by the non-verbal message. She gives as an example someone slouching in a chair reading a newspaper, saying "I'm listening." When looking at cross-cultural communication the question becomes: to what extent are gestures or other aspects of non-verbal communication universal, and for those that are universal, do they carry the same or similar meanings across cultures? From previous research in cross-cultural communication we know that there is much culture-dependence in non-verbal aspects of communication. For example, Argyle (1975, quoted in Neu 1990) found that it was not always possible to assess facial expressions of other cultures, and sometimes, even of one's own. Importantly for our purposes, we know that learners have little idea of the non-universal nature of gestures and back-channel cues. In fact, Saville-Troike (1989: 57) finds that even those individuals who can easily make a verbal switch from one language to another "still use the gestures and proxemics of their native language as well as its interactional strategies."

Hayashi–Hayashi (1991) refer to two conversational channels:

1. the *main* channel, which is that channel used by the speaker, or the person holding the floor, and
2. the *back* channel, which is the channel through which the listener provides information to the speaker, such as attentiveness, agreement, disagreement, etc.

It is this last area of an interaction with which we are concerned.

It is generally agreed that the cues used in the back channel are important for the establishment and maintenance of a harmonious interaction, for these cues can signal aspects of a conversation which lead to harmony: agreement, understanding and attention. Rosenfeld (1987) notes, however, that each of these listener behaviours carries with it distinctive configurations of non-verbal listener responses, such as joint responses (nods and vocalizations), or multiple versus single head nods.

2. Back channels

The term back channel is used in a slightly different way by different researchers. We briefly outline some of the more recent uses. Maynard (1989) includes both vertical and horizontal head movement, laughter as well as the more commonly analysed listener responses. She categorises various functions of back channels into 6 main categories.

1. Continuer – indicates simply that the listener is bypassing the chance to initiate a repair. Back channels are frequent in awkward moments when a turn can easily be relinquished and when it is not clear who shall take the floor. In other words, they are used as fillers.
2. Display of Content Understanding – used when there may be doubt as to the listener's understanding.
3. Support Towards the Speaker's Judgment – occurs as a response to a speaker's evaluative statement.
4. Agreement – serves as a response to a question or question-like statement. A back channel agreement is not an opportunity to take the floor, only to express agreement.
5. Strong Emotional Response – consists of a laugh or exclamation (e. g., *oh, no*) indicating more than simple understanding or support.
6. Minor Addition, Correction or Request for Information – includes listener comments that change "the quality of the currently activated information" (Maynard 1989: 172), as in listener cocreation of an utterance.

Maynard also notes that back channels generally occur in the vicinity of a speaker's pause. Interesting is the fact that they are often near the final syllable of a speaker's utterance when the speaker marks this with a head nod (see below). Thus, both participants are acknowledging one another with non-verbal rather than verbal indications.

Edmondson (1981:150) defines back channels in terms of acts within a move. Some functions he gives are:

1. Go-Ons – signify that the hearer is attending and is in favour of the speaker continuing (similar to Maynard's Continuers).
2. Accepts – communicate that an act is heard and understood and is not unacceptable, e. g., *yes*, *mm* (similar to Maynard's Display of Content Understanding).
3. Exclaims – communicate an emotional reaction to something in the previous discourse or immediate situation, e. g., doubt, surprise, interest, sympathy (similar to Maynard's Support and Sympathy and to her Strong Emotional Response).
4. Okays – indicate that the speaker is satisfied with a current outcome of an ongoing encounter.

Hayashi–Hayashi (1991) define back channels as turns, with an illocutionary and perlocutionary force, which serve to support the floor. Their categories include not only acknowledgments of attention and expressions of sympathy, but repair initiations such as requests for clarification and

denials. This inclusion of repairs results in a broader definition of back channels, similar to that of Duncan–Niederehe (1974), and Yngve (1970).

In this paper we limit the notion of verbal back channels to minimal verbalizations such as *mm*, *uh huh*, and *yeah*[2].

3. Head nods

Maynard (1989) deals with head nods separately from verbal back channels. She defines head movements, which include nods and head shakes, in terms of the environments in which they occur and the functions they perform. She notes that listener nods and head shakes are rule governed in their placement; they may occur while the other interactant is speaking, during a pause in the other interactant's speech, immediately after the other interactant finishes speaking, or after a pause following speech by the other interactant. In Maynard's scheme, listener nods can have several interactional functions, primarily back channel, affirmation/agreement, and turn-transition period filler;[3] head shakes (HS) convey negation. Listener back channel nods may be accompanied by back channel verbalizations; affirmation nods often co-occur with expressions such as *yes* or *yeah*.

The present study will be concerned only with listener nods (and head shakes) in NS-NNS interactions. They occur

1. with no vocalization,
2. with minimal vocalization, such as *mm, uh huh*,
3. with *yes*, *yeah*, *ok*,
4. with brief (backchannel-like) statements such as *it's a problem.*

We associate listener nods with illocutionary and interactional functions corresponding to a number of Maynard's back channels and Edmondson's discourse-internal acts. Note that nods associated with agreement and acceptance (Examples 1 and 2 below) often accompany a verbal affirmative such as *yes* or *ok*.

1. Agreement – includes brief *confirmations* (a positive response to a request for confirmation by the speaker) and *positive responses* to Yes-No information questions (similar to Maynard's back channel Agreements). Examples from our data are given below (see Section 5); NOD signifies a single nod and NODS signifies multiple nods (see transcription conventions in Appendix A).

a. Confirmation
NNS: oh no ((LAUGHING)) wait outside of the house
NS: eh? wait outside?
→ NNS: yeh
→ NOD

b. Positive Response to a Yes-No Question
NS: =do you ever wake up in the morning looking a little pale?
→ NNS: (uhn) yeah yeah
→ NODS– – –
NS: ok
NODS

2. Acceptance – a positive response to a speech act requiring an acceptance or a refusal response, such as an invitation or request. Note that Acceptances are not considered back channels by Maynard or Edmondson. They constitute a substantive contribution and in many (but not all) situations are associated with the listener taking on the role of speaker. However, they can be accomplished non-verbally with just a nod or a nod with minimal vocalization and no further speech.

NS: I tell you what, we'll just go for a few minutes how's that, do you want to go for just a few minutes? ok?
→ NNS: yes. but you don't
→ NOD
take you won't take that drug?
NS: ((SIGHS)) ok I won't
NODS– – –

3. Other Back Channel Functions – consist of a minimal response (nod or nod with verbalization such as *mm*, *yeah, uh huh*) performed as a *continuer* (or transition filler); a minimal signal of *understanding*; or an indication of *support*.

a. Continuer (see Maynard's Continuer)
NNS: um I will call up and tell him about you
HS
NS: uh huh
NOD
→ NNS: NODS
NS: ok ok um well in the meantime can I wait for him? Do you mind if I come in and wait for him and you can call him?

b. Understanding (see Maynard's Display of Content Understanding)

In this example, the nods co-occur with minimal back channels at constituent boundaries; they indicate attention and, to the extent that no repair is attempted, of understanding.

NS: ah well do you mind if – I'm I'm his cousin
NODS
→ NNS: NOD
NS: and I'm just passing through Lansing tonight
→ NNS: mm
→ NODS
NS: and I'm I'm on my way to Detroit I'm on a on a business trip
→ NNS: mm
→ NODS
NS: and and uh I'd like to see him I've got about half an hour or so would you mind if I come in and wait for a minute or so an a till he comes back.
NNS: ah no wait wait I'm a guest to uh this home I can't uh I don't uh uh um I can't I don't know what uh I do this situation then eh

c. Support (see Maynard's Support Toward the Speaker's Judgment)

In this example the NNS is persuading the NS to accompany her to the neighbour's house where the homeowner is, rather than allowing the NS to enter the house.

NNS: so please go to him with me
NS: ok all right so come on
[
→ NNS: NODS– – – – – – – – – – uh hhuh ((LAUGHING))
NS: all right ok ok all right
[
→ NNS: ((NODS– – – – – –)) thank you

In this example the NNS's nods and laughter conspire to create a supportive, nonthreatening atmosphere. Note that we have extended the notion of support to include support not only for the speaker's judgment, but for her feelings as well.

4. Japanese and English non-verbal indicators

Given the focus of our database, we now turn to studies involving Japanese as well as English speakers. We first note that the word for backchannelling in Japanese is *aizuchi*, which is a non-technical term meaning "mutual hammering." White (1989: 75) notes that "it suggests effort to create something valuable." White finds from her data that Japanese use more backchannel cues than do American English speakers. In the cross-cultural conversations which she examined she found that the Japanese did not accommodate to the English pattern (i. e. they maintained the frequency of back channel cues as in their native speech), whereas native Americans did accommodate in cross-cultural conversations to the Japanese norm. This is explained by reference to the Japanese concept of "omoiyari", which in her explanation is the "creation and maintenance of smooth and pleasant human interactions" (White 1989: 67). In order to create this harmonious interaction, one must be sensitive to the views and feelings of one's interlocutor. One way to accomplish this harmonious feeling is through frequent use of vocalizations which indicate attentiveness, understanding and agreement, but which are without meaning in the more traditional sense.

A second study dealing with Japanese-American conversations is one by Hayashi (1990). Here, too, differences were found between the two groups in the domain of types of back channel cues. Japanese tended to display many hand and head movements as well as body movements, such as leaning. Americans, on the other hand, used other kinds of feedback devices, such as questioning and commenting, which appeared to serve a similar function to back channels. In terms of specific cues, Japanese used primarily vocalizations, such as *uhh*, *soo soo*, *ahh*, while American English speakers were more likely to make specific verbal comments, such as *That's tough*, *exactly*, *yeah*, or *I've read that*. While these latter may not fit the formal definition of back channels as being one aspect of non-verbal communication, they are functionally equivalent in that their primary goal is to show agreement and to keep the conversation going.[4]

5. Database

Our data come from refusals, which are a highly complex speech act primarily because they often involve lengthy negotiations as well as face-saving maneuvers. Because refusals normally function as second pair

parts, they preclude extensive planning on the part of the refuser. And because they are so clearly tied up with the need for face-saving, they are likely to involve many linguistic and non-linguistic devices needed to minimise the face-threatening activity.

Following the work of Beebe–Takahashi–Uliss-Weltz (1990), we investigate refusals to four types of situations:

1. suggestions
2. offers
3. invitations
4. requests.

Our data are video-taped interactions of native speakers of Japanese interacting in English with a native speaker of American English. We use full role-play situations, which allows participants to carry out the refusal to its logical conclusion. Thus, the responses which are given are not confined by either the printed page (e. g., the amount of space provided on the page, the number of turns which the respondent is expected to take) or by the closing response of the initiator of the interaction, which in many discourse completion tests directs the refusal by "sandwiching" it between a given opening remark and the subsequent closing comment.

Two situations requiring refusals were created for each of the four refusal types so that in all, 8 situations existed. These are given in Appendix B.[5]

The subjects were an NS who was the person making the request, invitation, suggestion or offer, and Japanese students at two levels of proficiency studying English. The subjects of the study were given the contextual information surrounding each situation. Following this introduction, each subject "role-played" the part with a native speaker who had been instructed not to give up too easily in cases in which the NNS initially refused. We made certain that each subject understood the situation before the session began. All sessions were video-taped and then transcribed. For each of the 8 situations, data from at least 2 NNS-NS pairs were gathered.

6. Findings

NNS back channel verbalizations and nods in response to NS speech occurred in all of our transcripts. Given the culture-specific nature of many aspects of non-verbal communication, we asked the questions:

1. How effectively do these advanced Japanese NNSs of English coordinate their back channel verbalizations and nods with NS speech?
2. How are back channels distributed across their refusal negotiations? and
3. What kinds of problems, if any, do these NNSs experience in producing appropriate back channels in English?

6.1. Competence

Advanced Japanese NNSs of English showed considerable competence as English listeners, coordinating back channels with the ongoing flow of NS speech. Coordination of back channels in a second language is not as easy as it may sound. Hinds (quoted in LoCastro 1987) has observed that NNSs of Japanese may overuse back channels or use them in the wrong place when speaking Japanese, causing the NS of Japanese to stop talking.

In our transcripts, we noted that a lower proficiency Japanese speaker of English may encounter problems coordinating head movement and gesture with verbal message, as the following example indicates (taken from a transcript with a low proficiency Japanese NNS).[6]

1		NS:	you will go skydiving NODS
2	→	NNS:	NOD HS ah no
			−HS−−
3		NS:	no?
4		NNS:	NODS
5		NS:	no no what ((LAUGHS)) no you don't like to skydive?
6	→	NNS:	NODS skydiving HS no
			−HS−−
7		NS:	skydiving no ((LAUGHS))
8		NNS:	[
			NODS
9		NS:	oh are y- do you not like to skydive? you do not like to
			HS−−−−−−−− HS−−−−−−−−
			skydive?
			−−−−
10	→	NNS:	no
	→		NODS

In line 2, in response to the NS's indication that the NNS will go skydiving, the NNS first nods, then shakes his head. In line 6, he nods, repeats the NS's last word, *skydiving* and then shakes his head. Clearly, he wishes to indicate a disinclination to skydive; however, his use of a nod before a

head shake results in a pair of confusing, if not contradictory messages. In line 10, the NNS coordinates his negative response with a nod.[7] *It is likely* that the nod accompanied by a negative is a result of transfer from Japanese, where a *yes* or *no* response to a question indicates agreement or disagreement with the proposition rather than correspondence with the valence of the proposition, as in English. Thus, a Japanese (as will speakers of many other languages) will usually respond to a question such as *Are you not going?* with *Yes, I'm not going*; a native speaker of English will employ a *no*. In this example, it appears that the NNS got the *no* right, but was unable to coordinate the appropriate head movement.

The more advanced NNSs were consistently quite proficient in their coordination of nods and head shakes with meaning. For example, they used nods for acknowledgments or apologies and head shakes for disagreements or refusals, timing them properly, even when the two appeared together, as in the *yes-but* disagreements preferred by many NSs of English (Gumperz–Jupp–Roberts 1979), as illustrated in the example below:

NS: and I was win in Chi- Chicago the night before I'm beat let me in let me sit down and wait for Quentin this is ridiculous

NNS: [ahh so
SMALL NOD

feel very sorry yeah but I so I cannot decide this door open
NOD HS

Although the NNS's speech in this example is not a back channel, it illustrates the proficiency with which a more advanced NNS coordinates his nods and head shakes with his communicative intent. He provides an empathetic nod with an apology (*sorry*) followed by a head shake with *but* which introduces an excuse expressing a refusal.

Also, these advanced NNSs placed their back channels at speaker clause boundaries or other transition-relevant points (often in the absence of speaker pauses to mark those boundaries). (See the example in 3b [Other Back Channel Functions – understanding] above).[8]

6.2. Distribution: high frequency contexts

Back channels occurred both during the more cordial segments of conversation, and during many of the less harmonious periods as well – often with even greater frequency, as in the example below:[9]

(Cousin)
The NS is attempting to persuade the NNS to let her into the house.

1		NS:	=let me sit down and take it easy and
2		NNS:	ahm
			[
3		NS:	rest for a while I'm thirsty
4	→	NNS:	yeah
5		NS:	yeah
6		*NNS:	it's a problem
			NODS
7		NS:	yeah it's a problem
			NODS– – – –
8		*NNS:	uh it's a problem
			NODS– – – – –
9		NS:	I'm tired I'm beat
10	→	NNS:	uhm yeah
	→		NOD

In this example the NNS intersperses primary vocalization verbalizations and nods (lines 4 and 10) with explicit expressions of empathy (lines 6 and 8), accompanied by nods. However, the NNS's intent is clearly one of refusal. (Expressions of empathy are indicated by asterisks.)

This use of back channels seems to illustrate the claims by researchers such as Hayashi, LoCastro and White that Japanese use back channels primarily as an empathic or supportive response. This contrasts with Americans, who use back channels primarily as a continuer (Schegloff 1981).[10]

6.3. Distribution: a low frequency context

Despite the occurrence of back channels across both cordial and less harmonious stretches of discourse, the number of back channels (and back channel nods) produced in the role plays dropped dramatically in some initial refusal episodes.[11] The example below occurs during the NNS's first refusal. It is accompanied by an increase in the NNS's speaking volume.

1	NNS:	((LOUDER)) uh-uh if uh you want to meet uh
2	NS:	uh
3	NNS:	him
		[
4	NS:	I can't believe this

5 NNS: uh
6 NS: I can't believe this this is my cousin this is my cousin
[
7 NNS: but
I don't know you
[
8 NS: we grew up together we went fishing together=
9 NNS: uh HS
10 NS: =you mean to tell me I can't even come in his house
[
11 NNS: hunn
HS (but) I don't know you are cousin I don't know
12 NS: well who uh a- a- a- a- a- uh-uh- that's not my problem=
13 NNS: oh yeah
14 NS: =that's not my problem you don't know? what do you=
[
15 NNS: nn
16 NS: =what are you talking about this is Quentin's my cousin what are you doing
17 NNS: oohnn
HS (slight)
18 NS: you're not going to let me in his house I can't=
[[
19 NNS: uhhh I=/
20 NS: =believe this
[
21 NNS: =/said it's my business I now I homestay
NODS
yeh I cannot door open
[
22 NS: what do you mean it's your business who are you how do I know you're not a burglar
23 NNS: no ( )
HS
(END of the NNS'S RAISED VOLUME)

This segment is filled with NNS vocalizations and head shakes, e. g., lines 5 (*uh*), 8 (*uh* HS), 17 (*oohn* HS), and the appropriate *no* with HS in line 23. However, there are virtually no back channel nods nor typical

continuers or displays of content understanding or support (*mms*, *uh huhs*, nods). There is one back channel-style utterance (*oh yeah* in line 13), which is associated with agreement. However, in this instance the use of *oh yeah* (with falling intonation) as a back channel is inappropriate. In fact, with rising intonation, it could be taken as a challenge.

On the other hand, once the refusal was established (as indicated by the fact that the NS finds it necessary to recycle the request; see line 2 in the example below), the NNS resumed back channels, even if called upon to repeat the refusal. The following example picks up at the end of the previous example, as the NNS lowers his voice.

1 NNS: no (?)
HS
(END of the NNS'S RAISED VOLUME)
2 NS: I'm a oh boy boy Quentin's not going to hear the last of this come on let me in
3 NNS: ann
4 NS: come on I've been traveling all the way from Muskegon
5 → NNS: oh yeah
→ NODS
6 NS: and I was win in Chi- Chicago the night before I'm beat let me in let me sit down and wait for Quentin this is ridiculous
[
7 NNS: ahh so
SMALL NOD
feel very sorry yeah but I so I cannot decide
NOD HS
this door open
8 NS: oh come on
NODS
9 → NNS: yeah NODS
10 NS: just let me in
NODS– – –
11 → NNS: yeah uh NODS
→ NOD
12 NS: just yeah let me in
NODS– – – – –
13 NNS: yeah oh so I think you had better to go
NOD
neighbour's house to uh to meet him

We suggest two possible explanations for the decrease in back channels and nods during initial refusals, both of which may lead to different types of misunderstanding. One possibility is that back channels and nods indicating support or empathy may weaken the refusal. In the Cousin situation, the NS was particularly aggressive, so the NNS may have felt the need to establish a strong refusal without any socially ameliorating signals that could indicate ambivalence.

A second possible explanation for the decrease in back channels and nods during a refusal is the danger of the refusal not being understood as a refusal and thus being taken as something other than a refusal. As discussed below, back channels such as *yeah* can be ambiguous. In our situations, the combination of the stress of refusing, the speed of the NS's English – which was rife with direct and indirect offers and requests, and the desire to be clear made it particularly risky to show support and empathy during the initial refusal. In negotiating a negative, face-threatening speech act, the Japanese NNSs in our study may have opted initially for clarity, followed by a resumption of back channels after they felt they had made their point and the threat of misinterpretation had passed.

Thus, these more advanced Japanese used back channels conveying understanding during NS explanations and empathy during NS stress. Back channels were generally withheld during speech acts in which an indication of a positive response could be taken as an acceptance, with all the commitments entailed thereby. In addition to negotiating their way through a relatively tricky speech act with a sometimes aggressive NS, these NNSs often situated back channels at points at which they might be expected to show support and empathy for the NS and to modify the negative effect of the NS's loss of face.

6.4. Problems

On the other hand, nods and back channels were not always used so effectively by this group. Problems in the use and interpretation of back channels by proficient NNSs of English have been reported by Gumperz (1990), Hatch (1992), and Luthey (1983). The occasions of misuse reveal areas in which even more advanced NNSs of English may encounter problems. These include the use of *yeah* as a back channel and the use of nods and back channels during speech acts such as invitations.

6.4.1. Yeah *as a back channel*

As should be evident from a consideration of Maynard's and Edmondson's lists of back channel functions, a back channel token may sometimes serve more than one function within a speech community, and the same token may have different ranges of interpretation from community to community.

Yeah, *yes*, and even *uh huh* are some of the back channels used regularly by NSs of English. Unlike *mm*, *hmm*, *umm*, etc., *yeah*, *yes*, and *uh* huh are often used by NSs of British and American English to signal agreement. This is not necessarily the case for speakers of other varieties of English or for NNSs of English speaking English. For instance, Gumperz (1990) has shown that for speakers of Indian English, back channel *yes* and *no* are used mostly as a way of showing attention to the speaker's previous positive or negative statement. This difference in use can result in serious miscommunication.[12]

LoCastro (1987) cites a similar situation involving Japanese, in which such a misunderstanding occurred. As reported in *The Japan Times*, a Mr. Ishida was accused of agreeing with FBI undercover agents when they told him that there was no choice but to steal the information he was seeking. The defense counsel claimed that Ishida used *yeah* and *uh huh* not to show agreement, but rather to show that he was attending to what was being said.

Perhaps many Japanese NNSs of English are aware of the dangers of using *yeah*, *yes*, or *uh huh* as a back channel.[13] White mentions that the Japanese NNSs of English in her study produced the same back channel tokens as NSs except for *yeah*, which did not occur. Likewise, in most of her transcripts, back channels are expressed exclusively by *mm*s, *mm hm*s, *uh huh*s, etc. However, in one of our transcripts, the NNS made relatively effective use of *yeah* to fulfil primary vocalization functions conveying understanding and empathy. (See sections 6.2 and 6.3 for examples.)

On the other hand, the difficulty in controlling the possible messages sent by back channel *yeah* are highlighted when the same NNS responds to a NS's sarcastic thanks with *yeah* and a nod, as in the example below.

(Cousin)
The NNS has suggested that the NS go to the neighbours' house where Mr. Quentin is visiting at the moment. However, when the NS asked for directions, the NNS admitted that he doesn't know where the house is.

1	NS:	so what am I supposed to do drive around? I don't know his neighbours either
2	NNS:	uh y- you can uh go by walk
3	NS:	thank you thank you very much very kind of you
4	NNS:	[yeah NODS [yeah NODS [yeah NODS

The three *yeah*s (line 4) after the NS's sarcastic thanks (line 3) stand out as unusual. And they call attention to two problems. First, the NNS does not seem to perceive the NS's intended sarcasm. If he does, he is unable to provide an appropriate response (in this situation, perhaps an apology or an apologetic vocalization). In either case, the NNS reveals an inability to deal appropriately with sarcastic interactions in English. Second, the NNS uses the English back channel *yeah* inappropriately in a situation in which it could be misconstrued.[14] This *yeah* with its nod could be interpreted by a NS as a sarcastic and inflammatory response.

Notice that if the NNS had stuck with neutral *mm*s, without nods, this response might have been less noticeable, and the NNS's problems with the NS's sarcasm might have been missed. General Japanese reliance on simple vocalizations and nods when speaking English may allow many problems in inferencing to pass undetected.

6.4.2. Primary vocalizations

However, problems can arise even with simple primary vocalizations (especially those accompanied by nods) if they occur during the performance of a speech act (e. g., an invitation or request) which sets up the expectation of an acceptance or refusal, with reference to which hearer responses will be interpreted.

That even primary vocalizations can send the wrong message in such situations – especially when accompanied by nods – is shown in the following example.

> The NNS has already refused the NS's invitation to a party with drugs that evening, claiming that her friend is having a birthday party, to which both the NNS and NS are invited and which she wishes to attend.

1	NS:	no no ok all right ((BREATH)) weell, uhh I'd better go to his party cause I promised my friends, I promised my friends, if you like I can drop you off at your friend at the at your friend's house=

2	→	NNS:	mmhm
	→		NODS–
3		NS:	=would you mind that? do you wanta do that?
4	→	NNS:	mm
	→		NOD
5		NS:	and then I can pick you up later?
			NODS
6	→	NNS:	mm hm
	→		NODS–
7		NS:	do you wanta do that? ok we'll do that ok so I'll drop you off at your friend's house
8	→	NNS:	NODS
9		NS:	ok so let's go
10		NNS:	uh no
			HS
11		NS:	I- I'm gonna drop you off at your friend's house
			[
12		NNS:	nn?
			HS– – –
			uh no no no no no
			HS– – – – – – – – – – –

The successive *mm*s, *mm hm*s, and nods (lines 2, 4, 6, 8) that occur during the NS's offer of a ride to the NNS's friend's house lead the NS to believe that her offer has been accepted. However, it is clear from the NNS's reaction in lines 10 and 12 that she did not intend to accept the NS's offer. Perhaps she misunderstood the NS's intentions. However, whether the NNS understood the NS completely or not, she obviously intended her nods and *mm hm*s as pleasant, perhaps supportive back channels similar to those of the defendant discussed by LoCastro; the result is an instance of miscommunication.

Thus, even primary vocalizations can send an unintended message when they are uttered at a point where they can be interpreted as a response to a speech act that "invites by convention a response or sequel" (Austin, 1975: 117).

7. Conclusion

In this paper we have considered some uses of back channel verbalizations and nods by Japanese in face threatening situations with NSs of English. In casual conversations, the proficient NNSs in this study use

back channel vocalizations and nods extensively and quite successfully to indicate attention, understanding, support and empathy. However, they run into occasional problems with choice of back channel token and with performance of back channels during speech acts such as offers which set up an expectation of a response intended as acceptance or refusal.

These problems serve to focus attention on several aspects of NNS non-verbal communication. With respect to Japanese NNSs in particular, it demonstrates both the effectiveness with which these proficient Japanese NNSs use back channels and nods in most English interactions and the extent to which a misunderstanding may pass unnoticed because of Japanese reliance on primary vocalizations. More generally, it illustrates the amount of work involved in performing the interactional and social aspects of a delicate speech act such as a refusal and the potential for miscommunication that exists outside the verbal message during negotiation of a speech act.

The extent to which non-verbal channels may carry critical components of an interactant's "message" (in situations such as those described above) indicates the importance of identifying non-verbal sources of difficulty for NNSs, as well as those areas or situations in which miscommunication is most likely to occur.

Notes

1. We would like to thank Adam Jaworski for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. While he helped us to clarify our ideas, he is in no way responsible for any errors that may remain.
2. Because of the central role often played by these minimal verbalizations, it is important to note that silence, or the (noticeable) absence of back channels, can convey significant meaning. In fact, LoCastro (1987: 101–102) notes the importance of giving back channels during (Japanese) telephone conversations. "Another observation is the problem of phone calls. It is almost a cliche that unless one carries on a phone conversation in Japanese with what seems to be frequent use of *hai* "yes" and *so desu ne* "is that so", that the other party will come to a halt and will check to see that the first party is still there by saying *moshi-moshi* "hello". This, of course, can happen even with English phone conversations; it is nevertheless particularly noticeable when one overhears only one side of a phone conversation in Japanese."
3. In this paper we are primarily concerned with transition fillers that do not result in a change of turn.

4. In fact, such comments are included as back channels in broader definitions such as those of Duncan–Niederehe (1974), Hayashi–Hayashi (1991), and Yngve (1970).
5. One could argue that it is highly unlikely that a non-native speaker would encounter situations such as the ones used in this study. However, that appears not to be the case. The data for this study were collected immediately following a home-stay weekend in which these students had visited an American family. Some of these situations had quite coincidentally been encountered, as had even more bizarre ones, such as a suggestion to go to the morgue to see a dead body.
6. Line numbers are given for easy identification of a particular point in the discourse, and are not intended to make any theoretical claim regarding the nature of the talk thereby identified.
7. The coordination of a nod with an agreeing negative is not an impossibility in NS English interaction. However, it requires a certain sophistication in terms of intonation, tone, volume, that we are at this stage reluctant to attribute to a low proficiency NNS.
8. The inclusion of verbalizations and nods at points where the speaker does not pause is a departure from Maynard (1989).
9. In this study we consider only the nature of the current interaction in our discussion of back channel frequency during refusal negotiations. However, frequency of occurrence is influenced not only by the course of the interaction, but also by the NNS's interactional style. For instance, Hayashi (1990) has pointed out that large individual differences in back channel frequencies exist among Japanese speakers (some NNS, may nod and vocalize less, smile and gesture more).
10. Note that differences in back channel use do not necessarily lead to problems or misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions. For instance, although Japanese use back channel verbalizations and nods to a greater extent and for different purposes than do most NSs of English, according to White (1989), they are perceived by NSs of English not as inappropriate, but rather as more patient, polite and attentive conversational partners than NSs. Americans also evaluated those Japanese listeners who produced more back channels as more encouraging, concerned, and interested than those who produced fewer. It appears that this use of back channels by English-speaking Japanese fosters positive feelings in Americans.
11. See Gass–Houck (1993) for a discussion of episodes in refusal interactions.
12. A similar phenomenon has been pointed out by Maltz–Borker (1982). They hypothesize that for women, minimal responses mean "simply something like *I'm listening to you please continue*; whereas for men the meaning is stronger, something like *I agree with you* or *I follow your argument so far*" (Maltz–Borker 1982: 202).

13. Many are certainly aware of the differences between *yeah* or *yes* and Japanese *hai*. An advanced Japanese NNS of English in Tokyo informed us that she often used Japanese *hai* as a back channel in situations where it would be appropriate in Japanese when speaking English to NSs because she is uncomfortable with the choices of English back channels.
14. Even when it cannot be construed as agreement to perform some act, as in LoCastro's case, the use of *yeah* to perform a primary vocalization when another response (in this case an apology) might be more appropriate can be confusing and potentially insulting.

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Appendix A: Transcription Conventions

Punctuation is used to indicate intonation changes.

?	a question mark indicates a rising contour
.	a full stop indicates a falling contour
,	a comma indicates a nonfinal contour
	no punctuation at the end of a clause indicates transcriber uncertainty
(?)	a question mark within parentheses indicates that the transcriber could not understand the word
(all right)	a word or phrase within parentheses indicates that the transcriber is not certain that s/he has heard the word or phrase correctly
[	a left bracket marks the point at which overlapping speech begins
=	an equal sign indicates "latching," that the next unit of talk continues without pause For example: J: I'm going to the= M: Where? [J: =movies tonight.
y-	a hyphen after an initial sound indicates an abrupt cutoff of the current sound For example: y- your mother is coming right?
(.)	a noticeable pause
( )	a brief pause
NOD	NOD refers to a nod; (NODS refers to more than one nod; NODS– – refers to nodding accompanying speech, with hyphens indicating how long the nodding continues)
HS	HS refers to a head shake (HSs refers to more than one head shake; HSs– – refers to head shakes accompanying speech, with hyphens indicating how long the head shaking continues) Note: If a nod or head shake does not accompany speech, it is positioned before or after the speech that it precedes or follows; if it accompanies speech, it is represented on a separate line beneath the speech it accompanies
((LAUGH))	double parentheses refer to nonlinguistic occurrences such as laughter, as well as loudness

Appendix B: Situations Used

1. You are ready to leave the house to go to a party with the children of your host family – Nathan, age 21, and Jennifer, age 23. They are telling you about their friends and the things they usually do at parties. The more they talk, the more you realize that everyone at the party will be using dangerous drugs. Nathan picks up his car keys and starts for the door.
2. You are at your host family's home. Your host family, the Quentins, has gone to a neighbour's house to discuss a business matter. They have left you at home with specific instructions not to let anyone in the house, no matter what they say. It could be dangerous. About 5 minutes after they leave, the doorbell rings. It's a woman who says that she is Mr. Quentin's cousin from Detroit. She is just passing through Lansing and says, *Can I come in and wait?*
3. It is Saturday morning at your host family's home. At breakfast the family tells you that they have made reservations at the airport for all of you to go skydiving this morning. The whole family – Mr. and Mrs. Cousins, Meg, and Tim – are all getting ready to go. They ask you if you have ever gone skydiving before. When you say no, they say, *Don't worry! It's easy!*
4. It is Sunday morning and you have agreed to attend church services with your host family, the Jarvises. As you are getting ready to leave the house for church, Mrs. Jarvis informs you that there are plans for you to give a short speech about university life in Japan after the services. She says, *I hope you won't mind.*
5. It is 11:00 am Saturday morning at the home of your host family, the Larsons. You arrived at the Larsons' home last night at about 8:00pm. You thought that you would be having dinner with them, but they thought you had eaten, so you had no dinner. This morning you had only a piece of toast and coffee. You are now very hungry. Mrs. Larson walks into the room and tells you that you will be going to an early barbecue for dinner. She suggests that because you will be eating at about 5:00pm, you skip lunch today. But you are really hungry.
6. You are at the home of your host family, the Sumners. Both the children, Charlie and Karen Sumner, have short, very ugly haircuts. At one point, they ask you how you like their hair. You answer politely that it looks very cool and comfortable. Mrs. Sumner announces proudly that she cuts their hair herself. And because you like the style, she will be glad to cut your hair to look like theirs. *Now where are my scissors...?*, she asks.
7. You are watching MTV with your host family on Saturday. You notice that both men and women rock stars have at least 4 earrings in their ears. You comment that this style is very interesting. Your host family's son Bob, age 22, says, *Oh, I'm glad you like it. My girlfriend pierced my ears. Why don't you get yours done, too? I'll call her right now, and she can be here in 20 minutes to pierce your ears.* Bob goes to the telephone to call.

8. You are at your host family's home. Your host mother, Mrs. Boulware, is admiring the expensive new pen that your family gave you before you left Japan. Mrs. Boulware sets the pen down on a low table, and you and she go into the backyard to look at her flowers. When you return to the room, the Boulware's pet dog, Ruffy, is happily chewing on your pen. When Mrs. Boulware gets the pen out of Ruffy's mouth, it is ruined. Mrs. Boulware says, *Oh, I am so sorry. I'll buy you a new one.*

Part Seven: Beyond language

Music and silence

Andrew Edgar

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to sketch four possible relationships between music and silence. The first section of the chapter will explore the function and meaning of silence (and silences) within music, including pauses within movements, and the silence of particular instruments within an ensemble. The second section will consider silence as the environment within which music is performed. This theme will be developed, on the one hand, through appeal to the anthropology of music, in order to highlight the tension between a moment of autonomy (that is predominant in Western art music) and a moment of social utility and function. On the other hand, silence will be considered, in an increasingly metaphorical manner, with respect to hermeneutics, such that the silences that anticipate, accompany and succeed the performance of music may be seen to constitute something of the hermeneutic horizon of that music.

The third section will explore the displacement of silence by music. Accounts of the possibility of music expressing that which cannot be articulated in ordinary language will be considered, culminating in the consideration of music as a form of expression of politically silenced groups. The fourth section will conclude the essay by considering the displacement of music by silence. A certain privileging of non-performance will be identified in the European tradition of art music, manifest in the centrality of scientific and speculative enquiry into the harmonic system and the objectification of music into a text.

While this does not pretend to be an exhaustive analysis, if successful, it will serve to indicate the necessary entwining of music and silence, and that the description of the precise nature of the relationship between silence and any given passage of music serves to describe that music in social, political and aesthetic terms.

2. Silence within music

Thomas Clifton begins an analysis of the function of musical silence with the analogy of a forest. The spaces between trees go un-noticed, "until

one realises that these spaces contribute to the perceived character of the forest itself, and enable us to speak coherently of "dense" growth or "sparse" vegetation" (Clifton 1976: 163). The function of silence within music is equally overlooked, and yet is a great deal more subtle in its function of articulating the relationships between pitched and un-pitched sounds. This entails that silence is not the mere absence of music. John Cage comments that what he terms "experimental music" consists only of those sounds "that are notated and those that are not. Those that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment" (Cage 1966: 7–8).[1] Superficially, Cage's argument suggests that silence primarily serves to open music to heterogeneous noise. More precisely, Cage may be taken as suggesting that this is a distinguishing property of experimental music, and thus that non-experimental music is characterised by its closure, even in its moments of silence, against the external world. A silence within (non-experimental) music may therefore be ascribed specifically musical meaning, such that on the one hand its identity as "silence" depends not upon the absence of (musical or environmental) sound, but upon its function within a larger whole. On the other hand, the meaning of the silence will be delimited by the context within which it occurs, and thus the relationship between the silence and other (sonorous) elements.[2]

Clifton suggests three broad categories under which musical silences may be understood. Firstly, "temporal silence" covers the more or less "hard-edged" caesuras that break the flow of musical time. Secondly, "spatial silence" refers to the significant non-use (and thus silence) of specific registers in terms of the larger structure of a piece. Finally, "gestural silences", or "silences in motion", refer to those silences that are not perceived and interpreted in terms of the cessation of the music's progress, but are rather part of a melodic line that continues through the ostensible pause.

The examples Clifton musters readily suggest the numerous functions that silence can perform. Principally, silence may surprise the listener, and thus disrupt their anticipation of subsequent events; or, once prepared, heighten or redirect the listener's anticipation. The citation of bars 29–42 of the third movement of Schubert's *Piano Sonata* in C minor provides a particularly precise illustration of the power of spatial silence to articulate a complex of musical elements. Two bar-length pauses serve to bracket a phrase, such that it is made to "sound like an insert or parenthesis" (Clifton 1976: 168). This suggests that silence

functions to articulate the narrative of the music's movement, precisely in so far as pauses shift the focus of the listener's attention, and thus the precise relationship of a given passage to the movement as a whole.[3] Spatial silence opens a perspective beyond the mere temporal pause. A musically significant silence occurs, not merely when all the available instruments in the ensemble, or all the voices of a polyphony or harmony, cease, but when not all of the instruments or voices are being used. Clifton's concern is with the manner in which the occasional intrusion, for example of a melodic or contrapuntal line, into an otherwise little used register will highlight, or effectively create, that register as having been silent. (Silence here may specifically be understood as being potentially open to sound.) The significance thus ascribed to the register can subsequently be used to structure large-scale passages. This is illustrated through the Introduction to Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Duly prepared and marked high notes, as "islands of sound" separated by between three and eighteen bars of silence, help "the listener in understanding the importance of these high silences" (Clifton: 1976: 173–174).

This line of enquiry may be taken further by construing the silence of an ensemble as being part of the context within which the performance of a solo instrument acquires meaning. The "Prologue" and "Epilogue" of Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* work in the context of the silence (and the respectively anticipated and remembered sound) of the tenor and strings.[4] A solo passage within an ensemble piece is thus distinct, in terms of the nature of the contextual silence, from a solo work. Yet in contrast to a solo piano or even cello work, a work say for flute (as opposed to a flute sonata with accompanying piano) generates its own contextual silence by violating the listener's presupposition that it is, in essence, an ensemble instrument.

In sum, in terms of the perspective of silence within music, Clifton's initial metaphor of the forest is (quite deliberately) misleading. Music is not constituted through the planting of a sequence of tree-sounds within a pre-existing (and silent) space. Rather, as Clifton's description of caesuras as "flat, undifferentiated, hard-edged" objects suggests, silence is an element (itself always already part of the expressive means of the composer) that acquires meaning and gives meaning through its reciprocal relationship to the ambient (musical) sounds.[5] Music's silence is akin to the spaces created within and by a sculpture (and music is thus perhaps carved out of the wood of a single tree, rather than being constructed from pre-existing tree-sounds and silences).

3. Music within silence

To extend this metaphor, music can be seen as the result of the paring away (or silencing) of all but a few possible sounds, so that the sounds that remain have their meaning due to the silences that have been created about them. A particular work merely pares away a few extra sounds, from the already heavily restricted selection permitted by a given musical culture. This suggests that any given music exists within silence, precisely in so far as it must presuppose a context of impermissible sounds or sound combinations. This point can be developed through further consideration of silences within ensembles.

While the ensemble used in a particular piece will set up expectations of sounding that can then be exploited through silences, there will also be broader presuppositions, as to the availability and appropriateness of sounds, that serve a definitional role in relation to a particular music. (In sum, it is the silencing of certain sounds and sound combinations that distinguishes Gregorian chant from pibroch, or Neo-classicism from the delta blues.) Clifton's analysis of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony focuses on the role of silence in articulating the internal structure of the movement. It may, however, be suggested that the construction of silent registers in the Symphony depends equally upon listeners' presuppositions about the normal use of registers. In effect, in this case, registers significantly above the treble clef are expected to be left silent (indeed to the point that certain extremes are not silent, but rather assumed to be non-existent). Similarly, there are expectations that extreme registers of certain instruments will not be used (or at least not habitually). Ferneyhough's *Terre* exploits this expectation by, for example, making excessive use of the lowest registers of the piccolo. It may further be suggested that a similar principle governs modulation, in so far as the introduction of certain chromatic notes directs the listener's attention to the significant silence of an alternative key. Indeed, tonal music routinely rests upon the unmarked silence of such chromatic notes, and even atonal piano music presupposes the silence of the pitches that lie between those of the tempered Western scale (so that, should any such pitch occur, it will most readily be perceived as due to the poor tuning, rather than to the composer's intention).

Such examples indicate, not merely that presuppositions about silences serve to delimit the listener's conception of the social and historical place of a given piece, but further that silence may serve to constitute a "second

nature", of given and unchallengeable assumptions about what is meaningful (and meaningless) sound. In effect, music is bounded by silences (of instruments, registers, intervals and, with due respect to Cage, the heterogeneous world), such that the violation of these expectations threatens to undermine the sound's status as "music". Cook suggests that the assertion that a given sound is not music is typically used by those who feel that their "basic musical values" have been challenged (Cook 1990: 13–14).[6] If so, such values may be articulated through presuppositions about silence, and music can be seen to be constructed in terms of a series of such prohibitions. Something of this is reflected in Steiner's rejection of much twentieth century art as meaningless, and his corresponding equation of meaninglessness with silence (Steiner 1976: 43).[7] Steiner's approach is problematic in so far as it may be taken to legitimate, not merely a purely negative view of the role of silence, but also a restrictive cultural conservatism. Art works are seemingly subordinated to the given presuppositions and prohibitions of the ambient linguistic culture, so that it is inconceivable that a particular work can be the source of challenge and innovation within that culture. (Thus does art fall prey to second nature.) While this position may be plausible with respect to the cultures of certain small-scale societies (or, in Levi-Strauss's terminology, "cold" societies), it is less plausible of the culture of contemporary capitalism's "hot" societies. More precisely, the relative autonomy of contemporary art from social utility and function may be presented as a potentially critical space in which it can challenge the prohibitions of contemporary culture. This thesis may be explored through consideration of the cultural mediation of the interpretation and use of music. This in turn will serve to highlight the culturally specific properties of the silences (or indeed noises) within which music occurs.

Clifton's analysis of the effect and meaning of silences within music is grounded in an asocial appeal to the human body. He remarks that a caesura may serve to throw the listener "out of the temporal life of the movement", causing "a momentary shift in awareness by briefly turning from the time of the movement to our bodily time" (Clifton 1976: 165). Similarly, in considering silent beats at the beginning of a work, it is suggested that analysis of a syncopated opening only makes sense if "one observes the motions of [one's] body, however sublimated they may be, as it yields its time to the time of the syncopated opening" (Clifton 1976: 170). Silences within music are thereby attributed meaning in part because they open the music to the already structured experience of the

human body. This account is problematic in so far as it fails to acknowledge the possibility of the social mediation of this bodily experience. As the ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl suggests, even if natural phenomena, such as pulse or breathing, lie at the basis of a music, these phenomena must be selected (for Nettl, in terms of the culture's adaptation to its natural environment) and thus allow of the possibility of a different selection (Nettl 1983: 237). Cage's experimental music indeed serves to remind the listener of those readily available natural sounds that have been excluded by much Western music. In consequence, the horizon of interpretation within which any given piece of music acquires meaning is itself constituted in terms of silences, in so far as certain natural sounds and other resources are silenced. (In effect, it is these sounds that the culture-conservative identifies as meaningless. Such sounds are without value, or are not used in articulating the value system of the ambient culture.[8])

A literal and complete silence, even if it cannot in practice be achieved, represents the most appropriate context for the performance of certain musics. Work songs, dance music and supermarket muzak do not require silence; concert performances of Debussy's *La Mer* and the singing of the *Magnificat*, *Nunc Dimittis* and anthem during Anglican choral evensong do. These examples suggests the relationship between silence and meditation (or contemplation) in Western culture (Jaworski 1993: 18–20). In the case of a classical concert, the object of contemplation is the music itself, and this in turn serves to structure and define the nature and scope of the music performed. The silence of the audience as the conductor's baton is raised illuminates not merely a moment of anticipation of performance, but also anticipation of (active) contemplation. The thoughts that fill the audience's ensuing silence should occur in response to the music. A presupposition that grounds Western art music, and thus a music that is largely autonomous of social utility, is that there is some determinate relationship between the audience's response and the structures of the music. (In effect, it is presupposed that the music does not provide the background to mere reverie.) This contemplative silence thereby frees music so that it may develop according to its inherent logicality, rather than the heterogeneous demands, say, of the work routine or the steps of a dance. The end of a piece will not be explained in terms of the ending of (or need for an end to) its attendant social activity, but through the inherent logic of the music itself. The music will have exhausted its argument. Thus the silence that follows the music will be comprehensible in purely musical terms. Conversely, this freedom places the burden of articulating time onto the music itself. (Music is not merely free to have

a developmental argument of its own, but is actually required to have such an argument.) It may then be suggested that the ideal of autonomous music is to generate a coherent musical time, and at an extreme that any given element or relationship within the work can be justified in terms of the rules (and thus logic) of the particular work itself.

The point may be clarified by returning to Clifton's discussion of Beethoven. It was suggested that the meaning of high registers depended upon both a recognition of the inherent structure of the work, and upon the listeners' culturally specific presuppositions about the frequency with which a given register is used. Thus, while the classical symphony is largely freed of the constraints of non-musical practices, a particular work still depends upon presuppositions about the nature of music that are strictly heterogeneous to the work itself. In effect, there remains an habitual, and thus given, foundation upon which the composition is built. The modernist movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is constituted by works that challenge an increasing number of these foundational presuppositions (and thus the silences that bound and define music). The focus of the meaning and coherence of the work increasingly shifts from the listener's general presuppositions to the inherent structure of the work. New music, and ultimately the total serial works of the nineteenfifties and 'sixties, may then be characterised in terms of a sustained reflection upon the presuppositions concerning structure and performance practice that have become reified as the second nature of the ambient culture. Voice is thus given to that which has previously been silenced.

This argument may be concluded by highlighting the tension that is exposed between the accounts of silence given by Cage (and indeed Steiner), and that derived from the dominant European tradition. The European tradition (crudely, from Bach to Boulez) recoils from the experimental silences of Cage's work, precisely in so far as the inherent logicality of its works strives to give a determinant musical meaning to silence. Cage's experimental music leaves itself open to an heterogeneous silence, the precise structure and significance of which is arbitrarily decided.[9] Cage's music is purely music within silence, and at an extreme the music collapses into the same arbitrariness as the silence. In contrast, the logically rigorous works of the European tradition must account for, and take responsibility for, the silences that surround them. While the silence of anticipation before the performance may illuminate the contemplative activity that frames Western art music, the silences within, and more significantly, at the end of the work, make sense through contemplation

of a purely musical logic. In opposition to Steiner, precisely because Western art music (and indeed much popular music) is a reflective activity, it can offer a determinate response to the values of its ambient culture, and express this response in the violation of specific prohibitions. In consequence, paradoxically, the silence within which such music occurs will be a silence that has meaning because it is silence always already within the ambit of music.

4. Music instead of silence

Charles Seeger prefaces his "Tractatus Esthetico-Semioticus" with a paraphrase of Wittgenstein: "What one cannot speak of may long have been drawn, carved, sung, or danced" (Seeger 1976: 1). Music can express that which is otherwise passed over in silence. In part, Seeger is providing little more than an elaborate gloss on the somewhat cliched idea that music is at once rich, in expressing our inmost thoughts, and yet poor, in saying nothing.[10] Yet in contrast to the individualistic and emotivist cast that this idea was typically given in nineteenth century aesthetics, Seeger's ethnomusicology works from the social and cultural aspects of music. Ethnomusicology and the sociology of music offer significant data on the function of music in saying that which is otherwise socially or politically unacceptable. A brief review may serve to highlight some possibilities.

The use of music to overcome silence may initially be related to its role in articulating the values of a social group and so stabilizing and integrating that group. Merriam has analysed the music of the contemporary Flathead Indians in terms of it functioning to maintain the stability and integrity of Flathead society, in the face of encroachment by Western culture (Merriam, 1967). Similar uses of music in industrial society, in relation to social movements, have been analysed by sociologists (Dasilva–Blasi–Dees 1984: 100–105). In this context soul music, emerging as a purely black music in opposition to a jazz that had been infiltrated by white musicians and audiences, is seen to function at once to provide work for black musicians, and to assert black identity and success (Szwed 1966). In pre-Revolutionary Iran, Persian classical music was associated with a good Iranian past, while a Westernized popular music symbolised the Westernization of Iranian society. Dasilva notes the consequent suppression of this music after the Iranian revolution (Dasilva et al. 1984: 81). Nettl suggests that the false ideas that Iranians have about their classical

music, as to its scope compared to Indian and Arabic music, its age and its unchanging perfection, entail that it symbolises an ideal of Iranian society. In sum, "one said about classical music those things that one wished to be able to say about the culture of Iran" (Nettl, 1983: 208).

The singing of otherwise offensive or dangerous sentiments may serve to diffuse or excuse the offence. Merriam argues that, because the interrelation of music and text leads to the language of the text taking on a distinct form, the text is able to take on special functions. "One of the most striking examples is shown by the fact that in song the individual or group can apparently express deep-seated feelings not permissibly verbalised in other contexts" (Merriam 1964: 190). Thus, a group of Bashi plantation workers are recorded as exploiting the performance of a series of songs to an ethnomusicologist, in order to express their discontent about payments to the plantation owner. By acting as translator, the plantation owner could not have missed the point of the songs. Singing may further licence the expression of obscenities and insults, albeit without necessarily protecting the singer against reprisal. The mutual insults and boasting of singing societies in St. Lucia can lead to violence and legal action (Merriam 1964: 194). Dissident political opinion similarly finds expression through song. Freeman notes that, "social protest verses emerge when the members of a society are deprived of other mechanisms of protest. Such songs will be found in any disenfranchised segment of society" (Freeman 1957: 219).

5. Silence instead of music

While it has been argued above, in section two, that the Western tradition of autonomous music generates a coherent musical time, and as such, exposes and undermines the second nature of cultural values, so giving voice to that which has otherwise been silenced, the extreme pursuit of logical consistency leads to the existence of music merely as text or score, and as such returns music to silence.

The European tradition may be understood in terms of its attempt to develop a consistent harmonic theory and notation. This construction is articulated in some detail in Max Weber's sketch of the rational and social foundations of music (Weber 1958). For Weber, music provides a paradigm illustration of the rationalization thesis that grounds his account of the development of Western society (and the entwined growth of the rational economic production system of capitalism). Music is subjected to the

same process of reflection that characterises all areas of post-traditional social practice (Weber 1930: 14–15). On the one hand, music theorists, from Pythagoras to Helmholtz and beyond, strive to give an exhaustive and consistent account of the harmonic system (albeit that this account is ultimately and inevitably left incomplete).[11] Purely traditional or customary practices in composition and performance are subjected to criticism and the demand for rational justification. On the other hand, a rational system of notation is devised that further facilitates reflection upon the underlying harmonic system and on particular compositional processes (manifest for example in the development of contrapuntal techniques, and the continual re-working of the tension between music as understood primarily in harmonic terms and that primarily understood in melodic terms). It may be suggested that this drive to rationalization continues in the twentieth century, after Weber had abandoned his own study (around 1912), in serialism and ultimately total serialism.

While the science of musical acoustics begins in the work of the Pythagoreans, the Pythagorean account of music, at least until the early seventeenth century, is complemented by the metaphysics of the music of the spheres. Crucial accounts of this doctrine appear in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Republic*, where the harmonic proportions are presented as the structure governing the creation of the world. While Plato discusses the spheres through myths, subsequently the doctrine is taken more literally, so that a real music is imagined, "audible to but unnoticed by mortals who hear it from birth" (Haar 1980: 835). This provides perhaps the most pointed metaphor of the silence which constitutes the possibility of certain Western musics. The music of the spheres becomes a noise that goes unnoticed, and as such is silent, as is any sound that falls outside our immediate concerns and attention. Yet it is not an insignificant sound, for it is the very structure that makes music (and indeed the whole of creation) possible. Study of this silent structure thereby acquires priority over empirical acoustic science, and indeed performance and composition. In *The Republic* this is anticipated by Socrates ridiculing empirical analysts of harmonies, who "torment their strings, torturing them, and stretching them on pegs". Such empiricism is subordinated to the exercise of reason (Plato 1992: 203). Similarly, Boethius identifies music itself with the rationally grounded judgement of modes and rhythms and of the classes of melodies and their mixtures, as opposed to the purely instrumental activity of performance and the instinctual activity of composition (Katz–Dahlhaus 1987: 73). As such, music already comes to be reduced to silence in the process of analysis and reflection.

Reflection, and thus the rationalization of music, is aided by the medieval re-invention of notation. Notated illustrations occur in the technical writings of Odo of Cluny and Guido of Arezzo (in the tenth and eleventh centuries). Yet notation also serves to objectify music into a text, and so further facilitate the subordination of performance to silent reflection, not merely on the musical system as a whole, but also on individual works. In the medieval tradition, while the doctrine of the music of the spheres continues to inform the place of music in the Quadrivium, increasing attention is given to individual works. These initially serve as illustrations of the musical system, or, as for Odo, facilitate elaboration on technical issues. In the work of Renaissance authors this culminates in something akin to a modern view of musical meaning. For Zarlino, the "subject" of a work, comparable to the "history or fable" of poetry, is purely musical, "a tenor or some other part of any composition you please, whether of plainsong or of figured music" (Strunk 1950: 231). Similarly, Glarean discusses certain works of Josquin by detailing the way in which phrases are structured or transformed (Strunk 1950: 222–223). As such, the conceptualization of meaning in terms of the internal structure of the work, and thus of the function of an element within a structured context, is anticipated.

In the nineteenth century, after this analytical strand of Renaissance thought had been submerged in aesthetics (although not in harmonic theory,) by concern with the emotional, affective or mimetic properties of music, formalism is articulated anew in the neo-Kantian aesthetics of Johann Friedrich Herbart. While Kant found little in instrumental music beyond an agreeable play, Herbart develops Kant's analysis of the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgement. He distinguishes between what he terms "apperceptions" and the true "perception" of the essence of an art work. An objective judgement of beauty rests upon the work being perceived independently of any extra-aesthetic purposes or associations it may have. While a work may give rise to an emotional response, or a concern with its subject matter, history or price, such a response cannot be to the work's essence. Specifically musical beauty is ultimately grounded in the mathematical relations that exist between sounds, and their exploitation in composition. The essence of music is thus to be found in such technical rules as "the universal laws of simple or double counterpoint" (Le Huray–Day 1981: 454. Katz–Dahlhaus 1987: 375). In further specifying the distinction between perceptions and apperceptions, he remarks that "notes need only be heard (or, indeed, merely read) for them to give pleasure" (Le Huray–Day 1981: 453). It is thereby

suggested that, while music may essentially consist in relationships between sounds, these relationships do not have to be heard in order to be appreciated. They acquire a beauty akin, perhaps, to that of a mathematical proof. A particular composition is merely the manifestation, exploration and illustration of pre-existing relations.

Herbart suggests that works of art typically appear "dispensable", which is to say that they could have been otherwise or need not have been created at all. A perfect work, however, is such that it overcomes this arbitrariness by justifying "its existence out of itself" (Katz–Dahlhaus 1987: 375). This suggests that a justification or explanation can be given for the existence and position of any given element within the work. If so, Herbart anticipates Joseph Kerman's characterization of the career of the analyst Rudolf Réti, as being dedicated to finding an objective explanation of "why every note in a Beethoven sonata should be *that* note rather than some other" (Kerman 1980: 318). Thus does nineteenth century aesthetics feed, not merely into twentieth century analysis, but also into the reflective rigour of modernist composition.

Analysis silences music. Edward T. Cone, starting from the question of why anyone should want to re-read a detective story, has suggested that music (and indeed good detective stories,) should be understood through a tripartite hermeneutic. The music will at first be encountered in performance. This "first reading" follows the piece through time, ignorant of coming events and desiring only to know what will happen next. This is followed by a "second", analytic reading, in which the reader does not simply follow the given order of events, but rather moves reflectively between them. The purpose is to provide a precise account of the patterned whole that will have been grasped only imperfectly and retrospectively in a first reading. Any individual event can then be placed and understood within this whole. A synoptic view is taken, striving to become the pure, timeless, contemplation of structure. It is thus at this moment that the justification of the work takes place, although Cone would fight shy of Réti's exhaustive account. A "third reading" returns to the work in performance, and uses the knowledge gained in analysis to replace the "naive pleasure" of the first reading by "intelligent and informed appreciation" (Cone 1989: 80). While Cone's account of the third reading is problematic, his purpose is clearly to defend music as sound. The extremes of total serial composition and its attendant analytic techniques, developed for example by Milton Babbitt, lead to analysis becoming an end in itself. The third reading, which returns to performance and therefore to sound, is lost. (Indeed, it may be suggested that

performance is irrelevant to the aesthetic worth of a number of Babbitt's compositions.) While music may, and indeed for a profound understanding should, pass through the silence of analysis and reflection, Cone dramatises the implications of its being reduced to that silence.[12]

In sum, autonomous music leads to a paradoxical position. On the one hand, the objectification of music into a text facilitates rational reflection that overcomes the silence of traditional prohibition. Potentially, it can express that which cannot otherwise be articulated. Yet, on the other hand, the cult of contemporary analysis gives rise to works that have their ontological grounding in the silent reading of the score, and not in performance, or any extra-musical social practices. Christopher Fox has argued that much contemporary music is produced wholly within academia, as graduate composers produce scores to be analysed by professional analysts. The work exists merely as an illustration of a pre-existing idea (Fox 1988). Contemporary analysis and composition, like Herbart's aesthetic judgement, is thereby grounded in a renewed Pythagoreanism. As for Boethius, the term "music" is reserved for something other than sound. The silence of the spheres yields to the silence of analysis.

6. Conclusion

All musics stand in specific relationships to silence. Silence is as much the material of composition and performance as is sound. Yet musics are further defined in terms of potential sounds and combinations of sounds that are prohibited and thus silenced. It has been suggested, largely through following Weber's rationalization thesis, that the tradition of autonomous Western music gives rise to a relationship to silence that is unique in its intensity and rigour. Music theory, in such forms as reflection upon musical acoustics, tonal systems, performance and compositional practice, as well as upon the technology of instrument construction and perfection, are by no means unique to Western European culture; nor is the performance of music within a contemplative silence. Weber's thesis, however, suggests that Western culture gives rise, out of its own resources, to a drive towards the logically consistent integration of the diverse strands of theoretical reflection. Further, it may be suggested that the rise of the public concert in the eighteenth century, and before that the patronage of the Renaissance courts, gave rise, not merely to the potential for accelerated musical innovation, but also to a demand for it.

Certain twentieth century musics, as Steiner has argued, at least outstrip the linguistic resources of their potential audiences. The music collapses into silence, both in so far as the music is itself incomprehensible to a lay audience, and in that its intended audience reduce it to a silent text. Steiner, and in a more subtle and rigorous form, Kerman, Cone and Fox, place the blame for this silence on the music itself. In effect, they challenge and invert the priority that the analyst gives to reflection. Contra analysis, it is held that, at the extreme, autonomous music ceases to be music. This may be countered, at least in part, by suggesting that the relationship between autonomous music and its public has always been fraught, characterised in effect by the silence of misunderstanding. As late as 1868, Gervinus described the development of purely instrumental music, and thus music that strives to be meaningful independently of the verbal language of a text, as "tragi-comic", dismissing the absolute music of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven as being of interest only to professional musicians (Bujic 1988: 91–92). It was suggested above that autonomy places on music the demand to articulate a coherent musical time. In effect, this is the demand to articulate a meaningful time, independently of any extra-musical resources, including those of verbal language. As is characteristic of modernist art, the composer (and theorist) thematise this demand, so challenging not merely musical presuppositions, but also, albeit inadvertently, the social values expressed by or encapsulated in such music. Music appeals to that which lies beyond the limitations of existing linguistic culture. In consequence, even if it is demanded that music is ultimately sound and should be performable, it must be recognised that the silence within which music is consumed is as much as a silence of incomprehension and prejudice, as one of contemplation and critical reflection.

Notes

1. Clifton (1976: 165) makes the parallel suggestion that caesuras serve to shift the listener's attention from time as articulated by the music, to the bodily time of pulse and breathing.
2. The concept of musical meaning used here may be best explicated through the German term *Zusammenhang*, suggesting at once an association of elements (and as specifically expressed in *Sinnzusammenhang*, an association into a meaningful whole), and the context or horizon within which an individual element is grasped. This may be seen as the rudiments of both Adorno's articulation of meaning in the *Aesthetic Theory* and *Philosophy of New Music*, and Meyer's "embodied meaning", amongst others. Within linguistics, it may be readily related to Sperber and Wilson's principle of relevance (see Jaworski 1993: 90–95).

3. On narrative approaches to musical analysis, see Anthony Newcomb (1987: 164–174), and T. W. Adorno (1992: 60–81).
4. This may be compared to, and developed in respect of, McGuire's analysis of the significance in theatre of there being silent characters on stage (see McGuire 1985).
5. On the metaphor of silence as an object, see Jaworski (1993: 81–84).
6. This point can readily be substantiated through reference to ethnomusicology. See for example Merriam (1964: 247–253), that reviews foundational work by McAllester, Lomax and others on the relationship between music, social structure and social integration. See also Blacking (1973) for a stimulating analysis of the relationship between music and its ambient culture.
7. "And it is, I think, exceedingly difficult to speak meaningfully of a Jackson Pollock painting, or a composition by Stockhausen." (It may be noted that the cultural conservativist view that I am developing is a restricted, and I suspect, ultimately inaccurate reading of Steiner.)
8. This argument may be taken further by recognizing the possibility that a dominant musical culture may absorb, and so suppress or distort the sound world of a subordinate culture (and in consequence its potential to articulate its own values system). Harker suggests that the English folksong revival of the early twentieth century distorted folk song by reconstructing collected songs within given and largely inflexible pre-conceptions. The alien sound of the folk song, as well as the social and performative practices within which it gains meaning and purpose, is obscured (Harker 1985: 346–359).
9. See for example Cage's account of seeing a deer in woodland as the second movement of a performance of his silence music. The first and third movements involved the contemplation of mushrooms (Cage 1966: 276). In contrast to Clifton, Cage fails to recognise that silence is already structured, albeit that, contra Clifton, it is here asserted that the structuring is cultural and not natural.
10. The nineteenth century neo-Hegelian Theodor Vischer uses this expression (see Dalhaus 1982: 50). In *The Beautiful in Music*, Hanslick writes of music being a language we can speak and understand, but are unable to translate. This is significant, not least in that light of Steiner's comments on contemporary culture, such that "[l]arge areas of meaning and praxis now belong to such non-verbal languages as mathematics, symbolic logic, and formulas of chemical or electronic relation" (Steiner 1976: 43).
11. See Weber (1948: 281) on the irreducible irrationality of the Pythagorean comma.
12. See Edward T. Cone, "Analysis Today" and "Beyond Analysis", both in his *Music, a View from Delft*. Cone is left with the problem of the ultimate grounding of the musical system, and like Clifton, tends to appeal to the natural propensities of the ear to hear sounds, melodies and cadences in a certain way, albeit that he vacillates between a pure concept of nature and a second nature of conditioned responses. Babbitt, in contrast, attempts to present a logical deduction of the tonal system from axioms (see Cone 1989: especially 72–73).

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Silence across modalities

Alina Kwiatkowska

1. Visual perception and language

There is an obvious connection between language and perception. As many researchers have argued recently, language is dependent on perception in most fundamental ways, and since human perception is visually oriented, there is an intimate connection between the visual and the verbal. A neuropsychologist (Sereno 1990: 3) suggests that "language comprehension in sighted people might best be thought of as a kind of code-directed scene comprehension that draws heavily upon specifically visual, and probably largely prelinguistic processing constraints." Sereno quotes evidence that the visual cortex in humans is involved in language comprehension. He argues that since language use is relatively recent and seems to have originated rather suddenly, the cortex could not have been completely reorganised in so short a time; rather, the existing unimodal areas (particularly the visual areas) of the primate cortex must have been reused for linguistic purposes. This view is consistent with the independent suggestions of such linguists as Jackendoff (1983); Talmy (1983); or Langacker (1987) that visual representations may be very important in the semantics of natural language. Many studies investigating the way in which the perceptual system handles discrepant information from different senses have shown that when senses are in conflict, the typical result is that vision emerges the victor (Marks 1978: 333). For example, as Adam Jaworski (personal communication) rightly points out, if someone says he is in pain but we see him smiling, we tend to believe our eyes rather than what he is telling us.

The differences between the modalities seem large at the superficial level, but smaller when we consider some schemes of translation from spatial aspects of visual form to temporal aspects of auditory form. Linguists of the cognitive orientation (see, especially Lakoff–Johnson 1980), have pointed out the universal tendency to conceptualise the abstract domain of time in terms of the more concrete and accessible domain of space. Time is thus conceptualised metaphorically as dimensional; events and states are seen as entities having extension, and the distance between

them can be measured. This conceptual spatialization of time is reflected in language: the English *within the space of two weeks* or the Polish *kawal czasu* 'a large piece of time' are representative of the countless spatial expressions that we use to speak about temporal phenomena.

2. Figure/ground distinction

Since visual perception is prior to, and a basis for, language, it follows that auditory/linguistic silence should be modelled on a similar phenomenon in visual perception, or at least that there may be significant analogies in this field between the two modalities. And indeed there are: we can observe interesting similarities between the forms and functions of silence in the aural/oral and the visual dimensions. These similarities have their source in the cross-modal characteristic of human perception: the spontaneous ability to separate objects from their general environment, or to distinguish between figure and ground. This ability, essential for survival, is inherent in the perceptual system.

As the psychologists of the Gestalt school pointed out, we see relations, rather than objects, in the world around us, and we make constant figure-ground distinctions as we focus our attention on one aspect or another of the visual field projected on the retina of the eye. A visual figure tends to be more complete and coherent, better-defined and remembered than the ground against which it is seen, which is perceived as less distinct, is less attended to and more easily forgotten. An auditory figure is the message – usually a succession of sounds which reveals some structure or pattern over time, like a word or tune. It stands out from its ground – which we usually call silence. Actually, we almost never encounter "absolute" silence, either verbal or visual. When we keep our eyes open, our field of vision is filled with objects and events at all times, although not all of them are consciously observed. Both nature and the man-made world are full of noises, most of which do not usually cross the threshold of our attention. Such imperfect silences, however, still fulfil their usual functions as the indefinite, blurred ground for sharper, better-defined verbal or visual events.

3. René Magritte's *Man with a Newspaper*

The perceptual organization of a scene largely determines the form of the verbal account a speaker is going to produce about that scene. What we choose as the basis of a linguistic utterance is obviously the figure. The

division into figure and ground, or foreground and background may be observed at all levels of linguistic organization (see, e. g., Talmy 1983; Langacker 1987). The interplay between those semantic roles also functions aesthetically within literature and the visual arts. Some artists will reverse the usual organization if they feel the need to create new foci of attention by foregrounding certain parts of the message that would not normally be viewed as a figure. One visual experiment of this kind is René Magritte's painting *Man with a Newspaper* (Plate 1).

It consists of four smaller pictures arranged so as to form a sequence (to be looked at clockwise, starting from the top left corner, in accordance with natural perceptual preferences). The first picture in the sequence shows a conventionally dressed man sitting at a table by a curtained window, reading a newspaper. The room is pleasant, with decorations on the yellow wall, some flowers in a vase on the window sill, and an old-fashioned heater near the table. In the three pictures that follow, we see the same room, unchanged, but the man with the newspaper is absent from the scene.

Magritte combines the potential of the individual picture to depict a simultaneous array of information with the potential of a series of pictures to communicate progression as the viewer moves along. One problem with such representation is that the flow of information has to be temporarily discontinued and then restarted, i. e. there are gaps between the frames. One such gap, between the first and the second picture, is an important one in that it provokes the basic question of this purportedly narrative sequence, namely "What has happened?". This question remains unanswered: the artist does not show us whether the man, when he finished reading, jumped out of the window, walked out of the room to answer the phone, was shot by some anarchist and taken to hospital, or just got hungry and decided to have a little something somewhere else. He stole out of our field of vision stealthily, or, as it is usually put in Polish, *po cichu* 'silently'. The artist gives us no clue, either, about the amount of time that separates the situations depicted in the pictures. This is the first of the silences that make Magritte's work so puzzling. The silence seems to be deliberate: the artist *could have* shown us the man jumping out of the window, answering the phone in another room, etc.; such scenes might have given us some indications about the time involved. And yet, he chose not to do this, leaving the viewer to guess.

Although the pictorial medium is usually rather badly equipped to deal with temporal aspects of situations, this case is rather different. The four pictures definitely cannot be taken in at a glance, they have to be

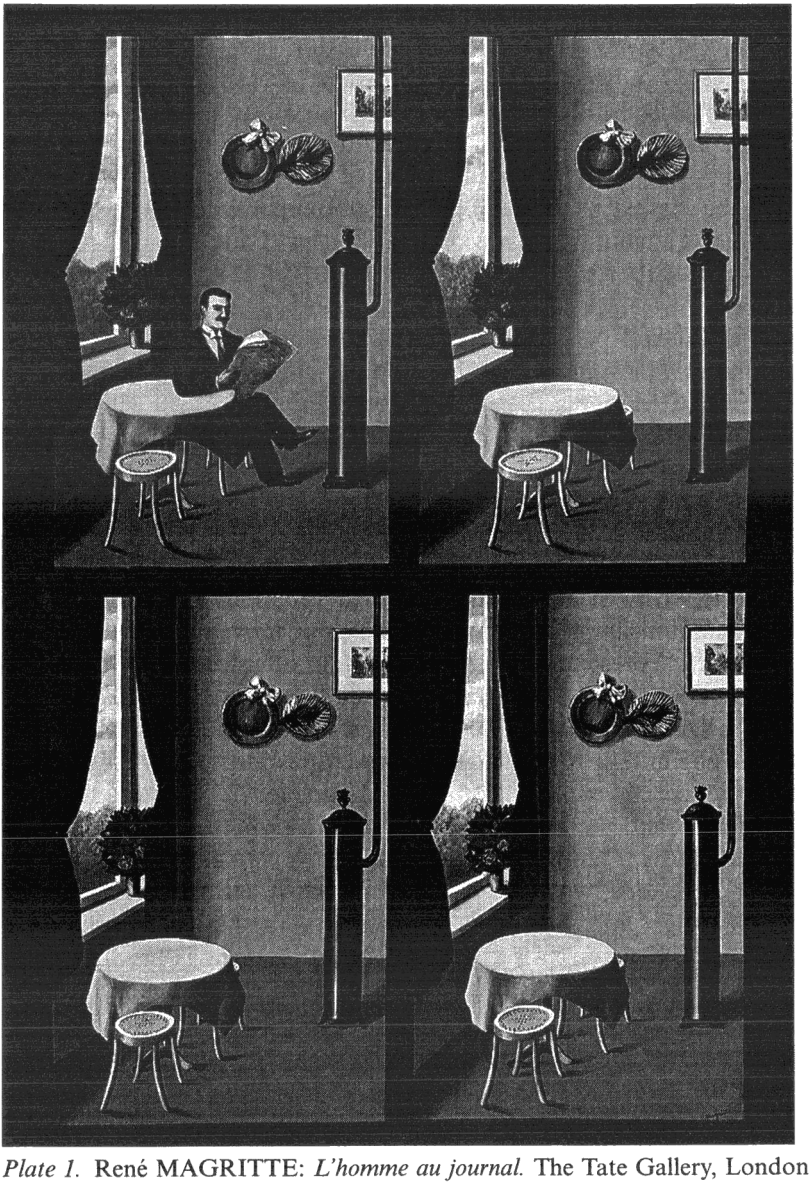

Plate 1. René MAGRITTE: *L'homme au journal.* The Tate Gallery, London.

processed sequentially, like sentences in a text. The artist thus projects a linear time dimension on the spatial arrangement. The fact that the set-

ting of the represented scene remains the same throughout produces the impression of continuity; at the same time, Magritte introduces change: the first picture obviously differs from the ones that follow. What continues is the ground and what is changed is the figure.

Looking at the first picture, we focus our attention on the man, in accordance with the laws of visual perception, which gives natural priority to moving or conceptually movable, animate entities. The man is the subject of the picture (and would be the subject of a sentence describing the scene); he is the figure against the less salient ground. That this was Magritte's intention is confirmed by the title of his work.

The figure having been so clearly established, we develop expectations about what we are going to see in the following pictures. A sequence of pictures is a narrative construction and we expect to be told a story, learn more about the man's activities. The first picture indeed seems to be setting the scene for future action – but the expected action never occurs. Inexplicably, when we turn to the second picture, we are met with silence. We do not see what we expected to see: the man is not there; the figure has vanished, leaving only the ground behind it. Interestingly, we do not perceive e. g. the table (closest to the viewer) as the new figure: we already saw it in the previous scene as part of the ground, and it remains in that role. What we now perceive as figure is rather the absence of the man. This is natural, as our perceptual apparatus is most sensitive to change. Gordon (1989: 97) points out that "sensory neurons seem to have evolved to deal with change. In numerous regions of the afferent nervous system it has been found that the onset or offset of stimulation produces a rapid and marked increase in neural firing." The attention mechanism thus favours what is novel and particularly what conflicts with expectations. This, of course, is true of any modality. A person's sudden silence when he is expected to be saying something (explaining, apologizing, giving more information, etc.) also draws attention to itself and becomes a figure in perception.

In Magritte's work, the silence is prolonged: the man continues to be absent throughout the third and the fourth picture. Since we conceptualise time in terms of space, as has been mentioned in section 1, it follows that more space (here, the same picture repeated three times) represents more time: the man is not there and is not there and is not there, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein. A prolonged absence is hardly the usual subject of paintings, which are often said to be unable to express temporal relations or deal with negation. Magritte seems to have found one way of circumventing both these problems; by leaving out the perceptual fig-

ure he has coded his picture in negative terms, and he has also managed to give it a temporal dimension. His visual silence resembles closely that of the auditory mode.

4. Visual silence in everyday-life situations

However seldom visual silence of this type occurs in paintings, which normally represent reality in positive rather than negative terms, in real-life situations it is very often the case that we do not see what we expect to see, and register this absence as a figure against the less important ground. Our past experience allows us to form expectations about what should and should not happen in any particular circumstance. It thus draws our attention if the person we are waiting for is still not there; if the bus that should have arrived ten minutes ago is not coming; if the book which we are looking for is not on the shelf, etc. The situation in which someone does not turn up where his presence is expected is analogous to the situation in which someone remains silent when he should be saying something. When a girl is asking herself "Does he love me?", his absence by her side when she needs him is as telling as would be his silence if she confronted him with the question directly. Both the absence and the silence are meaningful; both are often ambiguous, since they may be differently motivated. The man who is not offering assurances about his deep feelings for the girl may just be too shy, or he may genuinely lack those feelings; he is not there when she needs him because he was run over by a bus when he was hurrying to meet her, or because he is sitting in a café with another girl.

Another kind of silence in both modalities contrasts with the type described above in that it is much less figural. It does not conflict with expectations; on the contrary, it is an expected element of the situation and therefore does not draw much attention to itself. It occurs when things remain unsaid, or visually left out, out of consideration for other people's feelings. Newspapers do not print stories and television does not show scenes which may be potentially offensive for some groups of people. It is rude to tell someone that he/she looks old or ugly, and some painters think it would be rude (and/or would hurt them financially) to paint a realistic portrait of an ugly sitter – so they leave out the wrinkles and pimples. Most people would abstain from showing a male friend a photo of their wife kissing another man, and from telling the friend about the wife's affair. You usually do not make any verbal comment when the

dish your host has cooked is absolutely inedible, and try to keep your facial expression blank, which is more difficult, so that he cannot "read" your opinion from your face.

In all these cases, the silence is part of a behavioural schema: "a structured group of concepts which constitute the generic knowledge about events, scenarios, actions or objects that has been acquired from past experience" (Eysenck 1990: 322), and which we use to organise our comprehension of events and guide our actions. It is thus stereotypical, conventionalised, and as such – expected, ground-like. It is only our breaking it that would attain the status of a figure, sometimes quite explosively: breaking polite silence may come as something of a shock. (Showing is more brutal in this respect than telling, since, as was pointed out in section 1, people usually believe what they see more than what they hear. Thus, the deceived husband would probably be more devastated if he was shown a photo of his wife with her lover than if he just heard about the affair).

It is worth noting that in fact, the mechanism of figure forming here is similar to that observed previously: attentional primacy is given to what conflicts with expectations. Thus the figure may be an absence – verbal or visual silence – as well as a presence, depending on what particular script we are following. Silence thus finds its natural place among all the other elements of communication in both modalities.

5. Other modalities

To the extent that senses other than vision and hearing are involved in communication, we may, in fact, generalise this observation onto other modalities as well. Our tactile behaviour might be one case in point, since we may also form positive and negative expectations in this area and note their fulfilment or non-fulfilment. Both a child who suffers because she is never hugged by her parents, and the people whose tactile expressiveness is constrained by a set of various taboos on touching other people, perceive the tangible presence of tactile silence. This kind of silence is rarely mentioned, although it merits closer attention, as it is an important aspect of our lives.

We might perhaps also talk about olfactory and gustatory silence, conceived as the absence of the expected sensation (e. g. lack of any definite taste in a dish). Most of our everyday interactions take place in situations in which we obtain input from different sense modalities: we may simulta-

neously perceive an object visually, touch it and smell it, and listen or speak to someone, i. e. use several senses at once.

It is possible, of course, to be silent in more than one modality at the same time. As children know, the essence of keeping a secret is not to tell and not to show; two people who have fallen out do not speak and do not shake hands when they happen to meet; such situations are common enough in our everyday experience.

6. Conclusions

Silence is part of linguistic communication, but, as we have seen, it may also be part of the language of vision, and one may find its analogues in other modalities. It is connected with the similarly cross-modal ability to make figure/ground distinctions, which is one of the most essential characteristics of the human perceptual system.

The observation that silence has similar communicative functions in different modalities may help us realise that perhaps different modes of communication generally have more in common than is usually conceded. We are inspired to look for other possible parallels and correspondences that are found in sensory and perceptual processes. One may assume that more of them exist, since, as L. E. Marks (1978) claims in his comprehensive study, "All of the senses, it is commonly believed, trace their evolutionary history back to a single primitive sense, a simple undifferentiated responsiveness to external stimulation. ... It perhaps should not be too surprising to find that different sensory systems use similar mechanisms, for the senses are, after all, constructed of similar neural tissue." (Marks 1978: 182).

In time, the unitary sense gradually differentiated itself into the various modalities. However, its basic attributes still manifest themselves in the dimensions of experience that are not limited to a single modality. Some of them mentioned in the literature are intensity of sensation, and the perception of space, size and linear extent. The ability to use and interpret silence belongs together with those cross-modal processes and mechanisms. Since it is by now one of the better studied of those mechanisms (thanks, in part, to the editor of and contributors to the present volume), it may throw light on other, less well understood phenomena of the same kind.

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Silence in painting: Let me count the ways

Marcia Hafif

There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot.
John Cage (1961: 8)

1. Introduction

Silence in regard to art is often seen as silence in poetry (the blank spaces on a printed page) or in music (the intervals between sound). Less often does one think of silence in painting. Reflecting, I find that though paintings simply are silent, they at the same time provoke us into thinking about different uses of the word "silence" in their regard. My first response to this provocation is in terms of the physical aspects of making, and seeing, a painting. Following that, I will consider silence in the form of certain restraints I feel Modernism has imposed, as well as silence in the way certain artists are excluded from the discourse of painting on the basis of gender (and the artists' responses to this exclusion). Finally, I want to return to the experience of a direct involvement with a non-verbal work of art and to my recognition of a meaning which could be called spiritual.

2. Matter in painting

The automatic process of mixing paint and applying it—the immediacy, the absence of barriers that define a situation of being under way with a given project (paint in its application) – can be almost transparent. The process can function without mediation as with paper and pencil, paint is transferred onto its support (from the palette), as music by virtuoso fingers on a piano, direct in that even thought moves without mediation from the brain and the hand to execution of the final form.

Transparent, yes, but opaque, too, in that preparation is complex. One must procure time, place, paint, all material components, before or along with the development of an urge, a need, an idea, a reason, a method, a purpose, and the practice, the ease and fluidity with which one can function within the Act of Painting.

Transparent, but is it silent? I watch television (the Watergate crisis) and draw, later listen to music (Bach or Pergolesi ...) and paint. Silence is in the soul, in solitude, in free movement.

One might ask why I talk here about the process of *making*. If this is the silence in painting, how is it relevant to anyone but the painter, what does the viewer care about the process when only traces are apparent? What does the silence mean, and how can the viewer share in it? When the painting is one made in the concrete reality of paint, the viewer participates vicariously in this painterly process. The viewer in perceiving the painting stands in for the artist at this later time, enjoying a process of seeing similar to the one the artist went through during the process of making.

Painting is a literally silent form (as are most visual arts). Paintings have been built up, stripped down, appliqued with objects (chair caning, a nail, printed music – tires, parts of chairs...), but most often the painting does not speak or play music, sing or make loud noises. Neither does the viewer feel inclined to speak, sing or dance in front of the painting. This is its most obvious level of silence.

What about the silence of colour? I think, as is my habit, of monochromatic works, paintings in primarily one colour, generally thought of as quiet. (Because monochrome painting is my special interest, the examples I give will often come from thinking around it.) Is a red painting "louder" than a white one? Does a white painting, or a black one, speak of silence, and of death, endings, stillness, immovable being, entropy, the end of the world, the finality of the end of being? (Will that be silent?) Does a green painting signify nature (or institutional wall paint), blue, the sky? They do and they do not since colours will always have multiple meanings.

It is possible that a colour does not signify at all, but rather is experienced directly without translation. It has a physiological effect, so that my blood pressure rises with red and my mood with yellow. Or I am tranquil with green or blue, sad with black or white. But colour is one manifestation of the work – others are size, surface, material, brush work, shades and tones of colour, nature of the artist.

The optimum location for viewing a painting is usually indoors where the painting is surrounded by all the usual paraphernalia (together with the knowledge of the nature) of the gallery/museum/private home.

In the gallery, I would like to put myself in front of the painting alone and in silence. I do not want the judgement of any companion with whom I might have entered the exhibition space. I do not want words around me, words which will immediately begin to judge. I do not want to speak to anyone.

In the museum (usually quiet) I do not want even written words which tell me the name of the artist (if I do not know already), the provenance, the material, the owner. All that is for later. I do not want to see a painting as some butterfly: killed gently, pinned and identified. I do not enjoy the work better when I can name it. I prefer to simply put myself in front of the painting, to live in its aura experiencing it quietly.

A different environment for viewing the painting exists in the private home. The painting is hung, if it is, on a wall among furniture, other paintings, windows, on wall paper? Here the dilemma of the painting is not actual sound which may break its silence (I hardly dare to speak in the museum or gallery) with music, children, adult voices, but the clutter (visual noise) which may surround it. Here I know a more extended time in relation to the work. I may confront it intentionally, I may see it in passing, simply aware of its presence, or I may ignore it.

In each location I am free to move about in order to better read a work. From the time of the beginning of the Renaissance, the beholder has been engaged in finding that proper perspective from which to view the painting, and in reading or deciphering the painting through signs in the same silent way one reads a book: through iconography, allegory, and so on.

When I encounter a painting I find myself going close to it almost immediately in order to see intimately the nature of the surface and to peek around the side measuring the thickness of the support and the nature of the materials which may be exposed there. I am disappointed when a frame or tape does not allow me to see the side of the support with any paint which may be intentionally or accidentally applied or dripped over the edge. What I find there informs my estimation of the artist's intention toward the work. I want to know if it is planned to deceive me by creating an illusory space, or if it will expose itself as an object – literally and metaphorically – at its edges?

Now I move away from the canvas to see it from a distance, to look for the larger gesture. I move closer again to enjoy details (as in Agnes Martin's *Milk River*, made with horizontal rose-coloured pencil lines which melt into an over-all rosiness at a short distance) and to enjoy vicariously the making of the work.

My movement in space is even more important in the case of an installation which takes into consideration the entire space in which it is exhibited.

A group of paintings may be hung in careful relation one to the other. Or a single painting may be installed with thought given to the energy of the space and the movement of a potential viewer within it. I move in search of different views and in order to play with the angle of available light.

Through all this I am not speaking. I have "gone into a silence" (an evocative phrase which I heard used about a man I met in Iran) as I also do when I go abroad to live alone briefly and paint. I speak to no one and the painting does not speak to me. We confront one another non-verbally and without touching.

Another kind of silence in painting may derive from the simplicity of the work. Plainness can be equivalent to silence, simplicity may imply or promote silence in Piet Mondrian or Agnes Martin. However, we interpret possibly at the risk of falling into cliches.

Political art, social realism, regionalism are easier to read than abstract art because with a more complicated form they carry an overt singular message about the public world. Mondrian, functioning on a more non-verbal level, intended a search for a new world, a more aesthetic one, an inner one.

One can read and know his philosophy these many years later, one can see his work, and it continues to carry a complex meaning. It is not one meaning, not a message that can be spelled out easily, but at a minimum one could say that the human stance and earth's laterality are reflected in the painting's dynamic symmetry, primary colours, vertical and horizontal lines and shapes.

One sees the material, the marks of a brush, the very specific application of paint in carefully determined areas, an idiosyncratic attention even to framing that comes from a specific, attentive, aware mind that is present in each of his works. Martin's work presents one with a similar consideration, a desire for perfection (relatively, in the world). For the moment the multiplicity of the world, the sorrows, the violence, the prejudice are put aside.

There are other silences in experiencing painting, and here my attention follows two paths. One leads toward the mystic, the Judeo-Christian, "the Sublime", often discussed in relation to abstract expressionist work and thought, another toward Mallarmé with his use of blank spaces on the page and the Zen practicality of John Cage as he makes silence as important as sound.

Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, focusing on the difference between light and darkness, between coolness and heat, describes the minimal details which bring pleasure in seeing, from the shining red lips of the Noh actor to the view outdoors from the Japanese toilet. "Japanese music is above all

a music of reticence, of atmosphere. When recorded, or amplified by a loudspeaker, the greater part of its charm is lost. In conversation, too, we prefer the soft voice, the understatement. Most important of all are the pauses." (Tanizaki 1977:9) Cage's silence, not empty, but other.

I think too of Witold Gombrowicz who gives meaning to details through repetition, making something out of nothing, using time intervals to heighten attention. The ash tray referred to once is passed over, referred to again, is noticed, and yet again becomes significant, a clue.

In the introduction to *Pornography* he describes his interest in the incomplete, the imperfect, the young. And the erotic. The body in philosophy, not separated from it. Despite his distance from the cool, the classic, his vision seems not so different from that of Martin. Can we, do we, read eroticism into *Milk River*, a very bodily painting which from close is clearly composed of calculated spaces between carefully drawn horizontal lines, and yet from a short distance dissolves into the most bodily pink haze. The imperfect, perfect.

3. The effect of Modernism on subject matter

I have talked about some of the literal, practical aspects of silence in painting. A different silence of Modernist painting is visualised as an entire body of work adds up to one whole, present or not, a silent museum carried in the mind. Contemporary painters often work in series, and even when they do not, a knowledgeable viewer has in mind other work by a given artist. Presently invisible work expands the context within which to place the painting in question, one painting informing another painting, one series another series.

Another silent component of Modernism is in the intent of the artist. For most painters a painting stands or falls on the credibility of the intention behind it, the painting becoming a marker for a certain aesthetic and consistent with the maker's intention.

Here again the silence is divided. On the one hand most contemporary artists create a linguistic base for their work and are willing to expose it. They will talk, give interviews, write, append titles to paintings, make statements which give indications of the thinking behind the work.

But are they heard? Intention is a silent content of a painting, present (or not) in the mind of the viewer. I see a certain repression as intention is excluded from discourse around the work.

A kind of semi-silence more evident in writing and talking about painting than in the painting itself is found in the propensity to talk (write)

about painting in one-to-one conversation as much as in learned essays, without concern for content. Are you painting? Is painting dead? Painting is back! Painting should ... Painting should not ... Title/no title, oil/other media, small/large, figurative/abstract.

If painting is dead, what is it that is no longer relevant; if painting is "back", what is its new function? If figures are used, which figures are they or is it enough that they be figures at all? (Or abstract at all.) Little is said. We are left with the thought that there is, then, an inherent meaning in the bare presence of abstraction that over-rides any other possible content.

Modernism is thus a factor in the development of monochrome painting. The fact that endless discussion can go on, never (or rarely) touching on a purpose for painting, a definition of its function, a choice of subject, is, in my mind, one basis for the existence of monochrome painting. One could say the monochrome painting is generic, A Painting, which, Modernism having run its course, can fulfill all the need there is for an embodiment of Painting.

Monochrome painting is one response to a time in which painting is considered passé. American minimalism rejected painting most completely. In the late 1960's – early 1970's it was not thought to be a medium capable of relevance in a Post-Modern period. Painting made a come-back in the 1980's but in a thoroughly regressive manner.

Yet, Painting is not finished. Surely it is a set of Modernist conventions that has exhausted itself. It cannot be the end of painting as such, can it? If it seems impossible to find a "new" painting one could now ask if the new continues to be the sine qua non of art making that Modernism demanded.

Still, if monochrome art was a possible response to the situation, one could say that there is a nihilistic base in the use of one colour over the entire surface of a painting and in what seems avoidance, not only of colour relationships, shape, light and dark, but also of figures, history, narrative of any kind.

One implication of monochrome is that of a refusal, either in preferring the simplistic (solipsistic?) as easier to work out, or in the exclusion of any sort of literary significance as a repression of subject matter, a preference for the "no." It can also be seen as an engagement with silence, the void, the other side of full, the something which is nothing – a braver sort of endeavour leaping into space with not even a grid to hold on to, no safe structure, no security anywhere. On the other side of being, of sound, of shape and colour there can be an as yet little explored territory which might lead to another kind of fullness.

Thus, silence it may be a refusal, but with a painter's purpose: that of finding a new path for painting to follow, of collectively looking for the new paradigm which will replace the old, of searching out the painting which will follow that of our time.

4. Silence and gender

If Modernism functions to repress artists generally, there is a more covert repression I would like to discuss. This further silence I see in Painting is the silence of women, an imposed silence, a secret silence since no one says to her, no, you cannot be a (great) Painter. Even the materials are deceptive since differently from those used in sculpture, painting materials are easily within the physical grasp of women.

Thus many women admire painting, study painting, and aspire to Painting themselves. But they do not take in the de facto situation that (great) Painting is the province of men. No one tells them that to paint publicly is to lock horns with the rival.

The world looks for heroes, and heroines will not do, at least not too many of them, and not on the same scale. Women are free of course to paint, and they do paint. Some exhibit their work publicly. What they do not know is that the area of Painting is being jealously guarded by men as a masculine province.

Women were not let into the club: see Lee Krasner, Hedda Sterne, Pat Passlof. Gabriele Munter, Sonia Delaunay. Louise Bourgeois finally became an honourary member. Women painters are not usually included in surveys of abstract expressionism, though significant women were working in that style at that time. None of the many creative and ambitious women who pioneered abstraction in Russia have been regularly shown in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York where their male counterparts are always displayed.

Old Mistresses, the title of a book by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, is a wonderful term which quickly expresses a difference when juxtaposed with "Old Masters". According to Parker and Pollock:

> In art history the status of an art work is inextricably tied to the status of the maker. The most common form of art historical writing is the monograph on a named artist, often supported by a catalogue raisonné of all the paintings and drawings so that a group of works is given coherence because it is seen to issue from the hand of an individual (Parker–Pollock 1981: 68–69).

Surely Joseph Beuys had this status, Beuys who is currently exhibited and published everywhere. In some way I do not want to be drawn into Beuys and his work. I think I will not see it, I have already seen it, I am not interested in his collections of detritus, his markings with rust-red paint or pencil on any paper which seems available, small notebook sheets, larger ones, pages from a diary, part of a potato that once grew in the top of a box. I do not care to pay homage.

And yet entering a display of his work I am immediately relieved. It is hard to say how. Here I see a misogyny at times, but I see too a simplicity, a quiet, a silence, that takes me to the heart of meaning in my life. It does not seem to matter that he is the hero/martyr that at times I disdain, the teacher; he was more, a pied piper who lent significance to all he touched. One feels it even in the least object.

I was shocked at first when I saw his work in the Guggenheim Soho barely separated from, in fact intermingled with, the work of Louise Bourgeois. There was a piece or two I could not distinguish. Then I saw that what was hers and what was his at that point was not so different, and that their sensibilities rather melted together before moving silently off in either direction to the specifics of one or the other. It seems apparent that Bourgeois has acquired that mythic status, the position of the shaman, in our time.

But I have strayed from Painting. Let us think of John Cage and his campaign against the "individual ego ... celebrated in the socially constructed masculine figure of the abstract expressionist artist." Caroline A. Jones discusses what she calls a "negativity" produced in both "gay" and "straight" discourses through the silencing of a homosexual content. (Jones 1993: 628–665) Interesting to me is her notion of John Cage's silences as a negativity in relation to the dominant discourse of the time in which he entered the field of art, that of abstract expressionism.

She characterises the difference: "The body ... through its libidinal energies, was writ large in the abstract expressionist canvas; the individual ego was celebrated in the socially constructed masculine figure of the abstract expressionist artist." (Jones 1993: 653) While, she says, John Cage – as well as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns – took steps to remove the body from his work (the prepared piano, the record players, the instructions to others ...).

Even now the ethics and aesthetics of abstract expressionism survive. It may seem that pop art and minimalism (both largely masculine as well) pushed all that out of sight, but, with the return of (abstract) painting at the end of the 1980's and into the 1990's, one still finds a (mostly male)

attraction to the large canvas, the sign of the individual painter, the manipulation of paint. One can find (mostly) males bringing forward these signs of themselves, these renewed manifestations of the "individual ego," either because it is they who are making them or because it is they who are exhibited.

It was in the 1970's that women emerged as a truly significant public force in art. The 1970's, a hinge decade. These women and later women artists, however, often chose to work in sculpture, photography, performance, other media than painting. One can think of the exclusion of women from the upper levels of Painting as discrimination against an oppressed group, but there are other possibilities.

Along with Cage, they may refuse that masculine form of expression, simply not choosing to further a practice of aggrandizing the individual "masculine" (or feminine) ego. One remains silent when not allowed to speak, but one can also be silent in order to protect private emotion, as Johns said he did (Jones 1993: 652). Or, more broadly, it may be that women give up on Painting finding there is little left to do within the confines of Modernism.

There is another possibility here which is that of taking evidence from the paintings themselves. Yes, a case can be made for the masculine ego in abstract expressionism especially when one reads what writers (biographers) have made of it, when one knows the nature of the Club, how the men kept their women, well, women. As Parker and Pollock aver, there have always been women painters even as writers excluded them from history.

5. Meaning in silence

Rather than focusing on political factors I would like to extend my discussion of the experience of painting to include a thought about meaning in painting.

Singularity in monochrome, somber colours, an awesome installation may be patriarchal, but I would like to leave this gender reading open. A painting, I believe, is not necessarily masculine or feminine, be it a still life (flowers), a portrait, landscape or an abstract painting (even monochrome). There is nothing necessarily masculine in silence, reverence and awe, in spirituality. It is the rhetoric around abstract painting that makes it masculine.

In a "monochrome" painting, perhaps more directly than with a complex arrangement of colours, meaning is inherent in the physicality of the work. Meaning is present in the size, the colour, the material, any divisions on the surface, the placement (on a wall?), distance from other works present or not, the context (in a gallery?), the artist, the viewer, critics, collectors – all that in relation to a viewer's interpretation and understanding of those elements.

What that meaning is, becomes difficult to define, as words often distort individual interpretation and it is easy to fall into cliches. It may be that, though viewers do find meaning in the experience of a painting, it is not possible to translate it, as painting remains essentially a non-verbal experience.

In another essay I have discussed what seem to me four important levels of meaning to be read from a work. The first, the most concrete, the most transparent, is that of the material as I have discussed it here. The second is the place that work takes in a given culture and here its position is relative (Hafif 1978: 39).

A third is that of the historical and here we come again to the notion of the end of a period, the end of Modernism seemingly built into itself. Certainly, with Modernist reduction (to each discipline what is inherent in itself, and only what is inherent in itself, not allowing painting even the ability to create illusion – an ability that always has set it apart from other art forms), there would seem to be only so far that one can go toward painting a painting flat.

I am inclined to think that the end we have come to is the end of a self-conscious, historically determinative way of thinking about painting. Since criticism can no longer set a single criterion for Painting, multiple criteria will arise to describe painting production.

The fourth level that seemed apparent years ago was one not discussed so openly, that of the spiritual and/or the philosophical. While the material level is relatively easy to talk about, the spiritual while seemingly more accessible, is most often avoided.

And in this area, it seems apparent, lies the true silence of the work, for in the spiritual is found a quiet, a respect, a concentration which allows for centredness rather than dispersion. Painting can provide an opportunity to be alone, to shut out the chatter of the world, to go inside and rest – but with an open restfulness which allows the energy of the world to flow through peacefully and restoratively.

For the painter this has to do with the silent process with which I began this discussion, that process of the making of the painting, the

thought/action which is not analytical, but which flows and which restores the artist, and later the viewer, as it creates the painting.

Painting then is the product of that time in the studio and the concentration the artist finds there. Beyond all other considerations, all other interpretations, painting constitutes a form of nonverbal philosophical expression. The kind of silence that interests me in the end is not the literal or the social but the spiritual.

The experience of painting that I value is that which produces what Robert Ryman has called "enlightenment" (Ryman: 1988: 39). It is nearly impossible to define the object that can bring about this state. Surely it happens through a juxtaposition of viewer and object and time, in any case too many variables to pin down. But it is an experience that I know from being confronted with (putting myself in front of) certain works of art, and in that circumstance a change comes about.

I may be in a mood of petulance, weariness, exasperation, but when this particular contact occurs all that negativity is gone and feelings of well-being replace it, well-being and generosity, expansion and openness such as happens to me in front of certain very plain paintings like Barnett Newman's white painting, The Voice, or certain other one-colour paintings, and as happened with me in Krefeld on a Sunday at a Beuys exhibition I did not have any great desire to see or with Agnes Martin's *Milk River.*

I find that silence, shall I say, or completion, in the act of making my own work. I could only hope that others might find it there too.

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Silence and communication in art

Stacie Withers

1. Silent art: a definition

Certain works of art are silent because they appeal to the spirit rather than to the mind. They express a state of being or an experience, out of which the time element has been removed. This is exemplified in the *Sacre Conversazioni* of artists of the Italian Renaissance, such as Giovanni Bellini and Raphael. Non-silent art forms, on the other hand, express a sequence of thoughts, which evolve within time. Non-silent art forms appeal to our minds, to our thought-life and to our reasoning powers, for which time is a prerequisite, as one proposition necessarily follows another within time. These non-silent art forms, which include much Dutch art, Mannerist art and still life, are of a highly "talkative", didactic nature. Unspoken words form the medium for our thought-life, and non-silent or "talkative" art addresses its moral message to our minds, not to our spirits. The opposite of silence is noise, of which "talkativeness" or "wordiness" is one aspect. Silent art, however, by inviting one to worship or share our experience, cuts out wordiness altogether. The portrayal of particular characteristics of mystical experience also contributes to the silent or silencing element of certain paintings.

We may be accustomed to think of silence as a negation because it is the absence of noise. However, it is equally true to say that it is noise that is the negation because it expresses the absence of silence and that silence is a very positive force. There also seem to be extremes of silence beyond normal human perception. A human being may think that there is silence when a dog whistle is blowing or, as in Poe's famous story, when only the hypersensitive ears of Usher can hear a faint scratching miles away. Silence is not defined by us and human experience cannot measure it. It is larger than ourselves.

We sometimes speak of a depth of silence. As the sea, much used image of both silence and turbulence, there are many depths of silence to be plumbed. The deeper the silence, the more effective the communication – or communion – may be. Communion may be defined as a form of communication that dispenses with words, spoken or unspoken, altogether. It is a communication of the spirit rather than of the mind.

2. Silence and "Slow Time"

How can silence be measured? Sound is a measure of silence. The smaller the sound, the deeper is the silence that it emphasises. So, in Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*, the utter silence of the parting between Charles and Emma is measured only by the occasional drops of water from the thaw falling on Emma's silk parasol. The repetition of the action suggests the passage of time, which interrupts the silence. The depth of the silence is also conveyed by the smallness of the sound that disturbs it:

> On s'était dit adieu, on ne parlait plus ... L'ombrelle, de soie gorge-de-pigeon, que traversait le soleil, éclairait de reflets mobiles la peau blanche de sa figure ... et on entendait les gouttes d'eau, une à une, tomber sur la moire tendue. (Flaubert 1961: 17).
> Having said goodbye, they would speak no further ... [The parasol] was of shot silk, and the sun shining through it cast flickering lights over the white skin of her face ... and they heard the drops of water dripping on the taut silk one by one. (Flaubert 1950: 30).

Just as the drops of water repeatedly fall from Emma's parasol and by their repetition break the silence, so notes of music and words of poetry follow a sequence and break a silence.

T. S. Eliot's thesis in "Burnt Norton" (1935), as restated by Fibicher, is that "music and poetry evolve in time because they have a beginning and an end". Language, however, is "preponderously temporal" because "words are dynamic; they live and die; they can only be followed by silence" (Fibicher 1982: 13). According to this restatement of Eliot's thesis, however, the pictorial arts – represented by the Chinese jar in "Burnt Norton" – are not submitted to the category "time". They have a stillness about them because, unlike poetry and music, which evolve in time, the pictorial arts are without words or sounds, and are therefore outside time (Fibicher 1982: 13).

Eliot's reasoning, however, is surely not applicable to all the pictorial arts. In fact, an object such as a Chinese vase *is* submitted to the category of time. This is because vases and urns usually portray events from a narrative – Chinese lovers under a willow tree, a Grecian shepherd chasing a nymph, or perhaps a Roman or Etruscan funeral picture, showing events from the life of the deceased. The narrative has not been interrupted for a moment of choice, decision or reflection, but would continue if it could, to show the next stage in the story. Events from a narrative must necessarily imply the passage of time. Keats' Grecian urn is in fact described as the "foster-child of Silence and slow Time" (Keats ed. Bullet 1944: 191, l.2).

The Grecian urn is not the symbol of the silence of eternity, but it is an object that is frozen or trapped in time. That is why it was not satisfying to Keats as a symbol of permanence – the "bold lover" can never kiss "though winning near the goal" because the natural story and outcome cannot be finished. The goal can never be reached. Far more suitable as an image of permanence is Keats' figure of Autumn in his late "Ode to Autumn". Autumn, as a season, is cyclical, constantly reborn and in that sense has eternal life.

According to Fibicher, there is "a whole genre of painting traditionally connected with silence" – the inanimate still-life (Fibicher 1982: 13). However, although superficially most still-life paintings seem to embody silence, they do not in fact have the silence of eternity. Many of them are didactic and testify to the passage of time, the objects in them even portraying the seeds of their own destruction. It is not true that:

> To us, a still-life is an object of pure contemplation (sometimes enhanced by illusions and *vanitas*), an object that does not *mean* anything, but simply *is* visually. In the area of pure vision, speech becomes useless and impossible. Our dialogue with still objects must be silent (Fibicher 1982: 14).

A still-life is trapped in time because every object in it implies the passage of time: the apples, which have taken time to become shiny and ripe would, in time, become rotten; the *vanitas* (the fan, the lute) are specific reminders of the transience of life; the skull, or any other *memento mori*, tell us that life will end. Furthermore, it is not true that "it does not mean anything". Its meaning is often very specifically verbal. Our contemplation is not pure because we are overtly told what the message is: we are instructed not to hold a different opinion. The didactic nature of so much Dutch still-life makes the pictures "talkative". In fact, we are lectured morally. Furthermore, the message is to our minds and not to our spirits. All didacticism and moral reasoning is of the mind, and of time, as one word follows another and one proposition necessarily follows another within time.

3. "Talkative" art: Dutch and Mannerist painting

Much of Dutch art does not only carry a moral message, but words are also implicit. Its use of symbols is quite different from that of Italian Renaissance art, which takes us away from words; Dutch symbols are often words and proverbs in disguise. Let us take, for example, the symbol of the candle in Marinus' picture *The Two Tax-Gatherers* (between 1526 and 1567; see Plate 1).

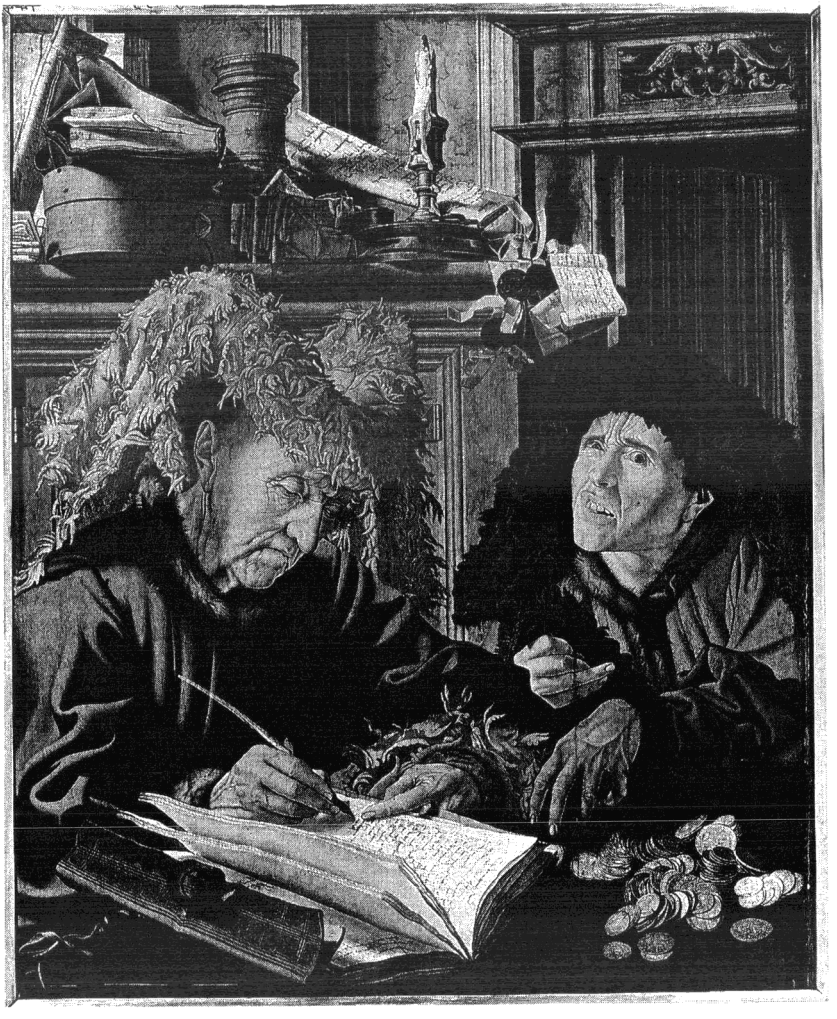

Plate 1. MARINUS: *The Two Tax-Gatherers* (1526–1567). The National Gallery, London.

In the background, a candle is burning unevenly, thus wasting the wax, which is dripping abundantly around the candle-holder. This very specifically refers to the old proverb "There is a thief in the wick" (National Gallery of London 1980: 3). We are to translate the visual image verbally. Dutch art is full of proverbs and puns, to the extent where a knowledge of the Dutch language is helpful to appreciate it, or one misses much of

the humour. Jan Steen's *The Morning Toilet* (1663) shows a candle and an open jewel-box, which refer directly to the popular saying, "Neither does one buy pearls in the dark, nor does one look for love at night". The young prostitute in the picture is very conspicuously putting on a stocking. This is also a pun, as the Dutch word for stocking *kous* has the slang meaning of 'vagina'. The still-life in the doorway shows a lute, and the Dutch word *luit* means either 'lute' or, again, 'vagina'. Thus "the erotic content in the picture is defined in reference to linguistic usage". Dutch still life can "mean" a great deal verbally; even the dead birds sometimes seen in a still life are a pun on *vogelen*, the vernacular term for copulation (Fuchs 1978: 44–45).

In *The Two Tax-Gatherers*, there is communication between the black-hatted tax-gatherer and the viewer, but it is as if he is defensive and has been caught in the act of cheating; he is the challenged, rather than the challenger, which is distinctly opposite from the Italian Mannerist figures, who look out at us boldly from the canvas. The distribution of power is different; in the Dutch painting, the viewers hold the power and are invited to criticise the tax-gatherers, possibly even with some self-righteousness; the Italian Mannerist figures, on the other hand, such as Parmigianino's John the Baptist in *The Madonna and Child with St. Jerome* (1527; see Plate 2), hold the power and challenge the viewer, inviting him to think again. Both paintings are communicating with the viewer, but neither is particularly silent; speech is implicit and we are invited to imagine what is said. The jagged lines, twisted features and gnarled hands in *The Two Tax-Gatherers* also take any sense of peace out of the painting and therefore make it seem "noisier". Similarly, other artists also try to jar the viewer in some way and upset the harmony of colour, line or proportion to make the viewer think. For example, by the use of the bitter clashing yellow of the bystander's garment in *The Raising of Lazarus* (1517–1519), Sebastiano del Piombo deliberately upsets the harmony of colour and communicates to the viewer by shocking him. This is communicative, but the lack of peace and the crowded canvas make the picture appear busy and talkative.

These examples of talkative or non-silent art therefore have the characteristic of either telling us what to think in a didactic way or of provoking us to think differently on a familiar theme by shocking us. In either case, non-silent art appeals to the mind, to our thought life and reason, for which we need language. It also presupposes the passage of time, as language and reasoning evolve in time and silent pauses measure "preponderously temporal" language or, alternatively, the sound breaks the silence. Obviously, any kind of narrative must involve a time element. So what, then, is silent art?

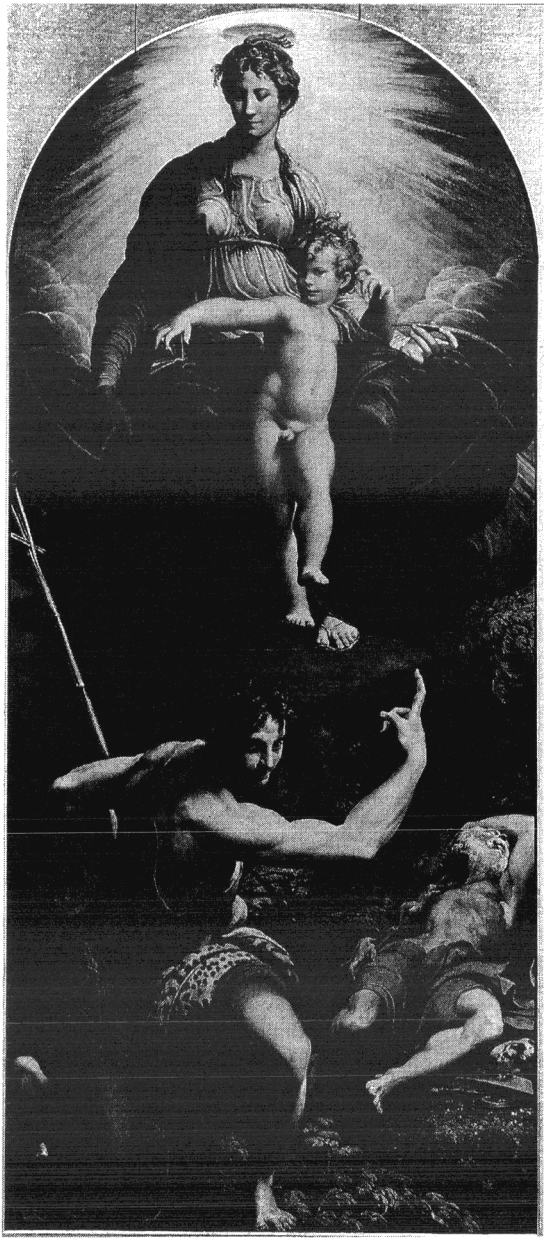

Plate 2. PARMIGIANINO: *The Madonna and Child with St. Jerome* (1527). The National Gallery, London.

4. Silent art: Leonardo

4.1. Natural framing

The natural framing of a painting, which may be open to include the viewer or closed to exclude him, plays a large part in creating a "silent" rather than a non-silent work of art. As Fibicher says: "The silence surrounding a painting is enhanced by one simple device: the picture frame, the purpose of which is not just decorative" (Fibicher 1982: 14)

As Leonardo finished so little, it is strange that we have two versions of *The Virgin of the Rocks* (between 1483 and 1508). One of the essential differences between these two pictures lies in the way he has framed the pictures. The Paris version is open to the sky; the version in London has the rocks completely enclosing the picture. The latter very much increases the concentration of the group in the centre of the picture so that the whole picture is "an inward world, enveloping the group in the timeless, eternal world of mystery" (Murray 1977: 11). The angel, whose sex is ambiguous, instead of pointing as in the Paris picture, has a hand on the Christ child, which also makes the group more tightly knit. The intense concentration in the picture suggests the same kind of deep communion of silent thought as in the *Sacre Conversazioni*, which will be discussed later.

4.2. Mystery, pause and ambiguity

Mystery and ambiguity, which cause us to pause and hesitate, are also a way of creating silence as people do not know how to react or what to say when they are uncertain. The ambiguity of the angel's sex in *The Virgin of the Rocks* emphasises that it is not of our everyday world. Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* (c.1502) is of course famous for her mysterious smile so that, although she is real and palpable, she still does not communicate to us her own inner world, but rather tantalises with her silence. This ambiguity has been quite consciously and deliberately created by Leonardo, who invented the technique of *sfumato*, which is a blurring of outline and mellowing of colours so that one form merges with another and leaves something to our imagination. In this painting, he has used this technique for the corners of her mouth and eyes, so that we are always unsure of her mood (Gombrich 1950: 219).

4.3. A state of being: removal of the time-element

Silent art appeals to a different faculty in us, not the mind, but the spirit, which experiences rather than reasons. Silent art does not tell a story, but expresses a state, and the time-element is taken out. There is harmony and

concentration of symbol. Silent art does not tell us to reason, but invites us to experience or to worship. It does not challenge the viewer or invite the viewer to give an opinion. It purely presents itself; it is a statement of itself in the eternal now. Before moving on to consider this quality of silence in High Renaissance Art, I should like first to consider an ambiguous painting, which contains both "silent" and "talkative" elements. This painting is Cranach the Elder's *Cupid Complaining to Venus* (c.1530).

5. Ambiguity: *Cupid Complaining to Venus*

The talkative, didactic message of this painting is obvious (see Plate 3). It is literally spelt out at the top right-hand corner in Latin verses derived from Theocritus that "life's brief pleasure is mixed with pain" and any viewer at the court of Wittenberg would have been familiar with this message. As such, it is a precursor of the *vanitas* of the still-life. Its message is clearly exemplified by Cupid, who is stung by bees from the stolen honeycomb. His mother, Venus, does not appear to be listening to her son, but rather is communicating with the viewer, and her hand gesture is more to indicate to the viewer the message Cupid embodies, rather than to reassure her son. Thus the communication is not so much between the characters in the painting as between Venus and the viewer. In this way, the painting is talkative in much the same way as Marinus's *The Two Tax-Gatherers*, the didactic Dutch paintings illustrating proverbs and the challenging Mannerist paintings discussed earlier.

However, the painting is more than this. The status of Venus is highly ambiguous. She is naked except for an elaborate necklace and the fashionable hat of a lady at the Wittenberg court; her hairstyle is similarly elaborate. Her pose, her nakedness and her challenging look, juxtaposed with her headgear, suggest that she is a temptress from the court, rather than the classical goddess. She is leading the viewer – now become voyeur – away from the sunlit, cultivated world of peace and harmony into the dark wilderness of the forest. The world left behind is so still that the house, bushes and church are reflected in the lake without even a ripple; that world entered into is dark, thorny and animal. The viewer is at the moment of choice between the two. The message is in itself ambiguous; the Venus/Court Lady figure at the same time both tempts into pleasure and warns of its painful consequences. There is also a pathway on the

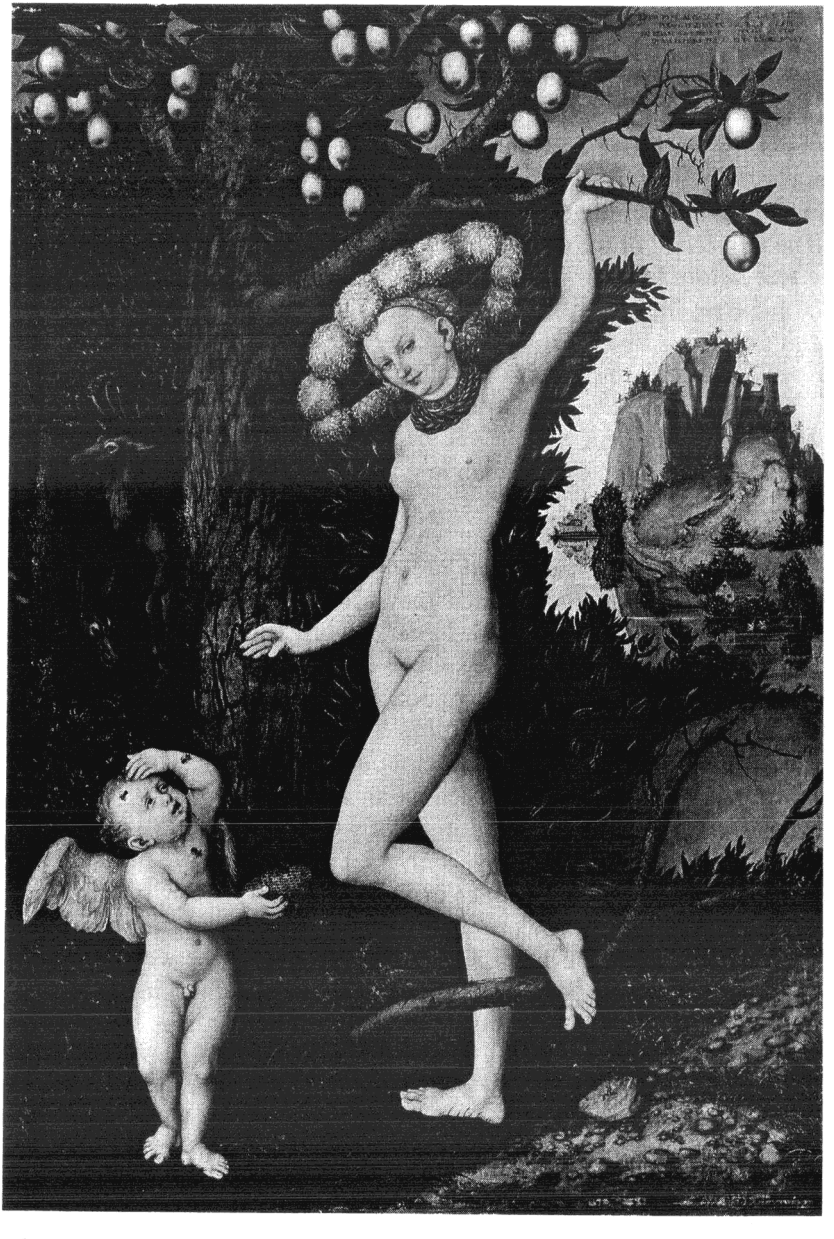

Plate 3. CRANACH THE ELDER: *Cupid Complaining to Venus* (c. 1530). The National Gallery, London.

right of the picture, probably leading to the sunlit world, and the implication is that the traveller/ viewer also has ambiguous status as he is neither in the dark world, nor in the sunlit world, but is hesitating between the two. The ambiguity – the hesitation at the moment of choice – interrupts the narrative and imposes a silence on what is at first sight a morally didactic, talkative painting. Our very response to the painting is split, just as the painting itself shows two worlds.

The ambiguity of the central figure is heightened by her third persona. The tree whose branch she is holding at the crucial moment of choice is an apple tree; she is also Eve. As Venus, the goddess, she is outside time; as the courtesan, the mortal, she is firmly inside time. However, as Eve she best expresses the ambivalent state between the two worlds of time and eternity, as before she chose to take the apple, she had eternal life and could not die, but after it she became mortal and subject to time. She is also three aspects of woman in one: goddess, temptress and mother of mankind.

Another aspect of this painting which concerns the question of silence in art is Cranach's concentrated use of symbol. Symbols become less "talkative" the more concentrated they are. A letter of the alphabet is the symbol of a sound, and so the written word is one step down on the silence/sound spectrum from the spoken one. The more concentrated the symbol – the more that is understood by it, saving as many words as possible of narrative and explanation – the more silent it is. Effective symbols cut down the time element embodied in lengthy, wordy explanations; the sight of one object, such as an apple or a naked Venus in a courtier's hat, can cut out a multitude of words of didactic explanation. Concentrated symbols also have universal application – they are not language specific, as are the ones in Dutch art. So here, Cranach's secondary symbols are more concentrated – and therefore more silent – than the "bees and honeycomb" direct illustration of the wordy proverb on pain and pleasure. The painting has the same effect as an optical illusion: viewed one way it is talkative; viewed another, it is silent.

Before leaving this picture, it is worth mentioning that its natural framing extends into the viewer's world. The Venus figure is quite neatly framed by the bush which runs (somewhat unnaturally) parallel to her left arm and the left side of her body and separates her off. She quite clearly belongs to the dark world of the forest, into which she is taking a step. The top half of the painting, however, is edged by blue sky; even above the forest, it is not blocked out. Sky is limitless and therefore presents no boundary between the viewer and the painting; similarly, half

of the bottom of the painting is "framed" by the path and a path also suggests a continuum. This is where the viewer must be standing and he is thus incorporated into the picture as the traveller on the path, as the path is not cut off from his world.

6. Four characteristics of mystical experience: the *Sacra Conversazione*

I would now like to examine some aspects of silent art which are connected to Christian mystical experience. James (1961) establishes four principal characteristics of mystical experience, all of which can be found in silent art. These four characteristics are ineffability, a noetic quality, transiency and passivity (James 1961, as quoted by Cox 1986: 24–26).

An ineffable experience is "one that is incapable of verbal descriptions: it is literally unutterable" (Cox 1986: 24). This is because the mystics "labour under one supreme and fundamental disadvantage: the ineffability of their experiences and the utter inadequacy of human language to communicate to others their direct apprehension of the divine" (Cox 1986: 25). Presumably this is why we are earnestly enjoined by St. Paul to seek "the gift of tongues" as a spiritual language; as our normal language is inadequate, he tells us that "the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Romans, 8:26).

The term "noetic" means "of the intellect", but "the use of the term 'intellectual' does not imply an act of logical rational analysis; rather it implies that knowledge can be grasped by intuition and insight, which reflects the meaning of the Latin word 'intellectus' – perception." (Cox 1986: 25). The "talkative" paintings which I have discussed above address our minds, our thinking and reasoning powers, and reason must have verbal language. Some "silent" paintings call forth in us the response to experience rather than to think because they address a different faculty: the spirit, not the reason. The Miltonian description of Mankind as "creatures rational" and of angels as "intellectual" helps to explain why an experience that is noetic is also ineffable; if such spiritual experiences belong to a different state of being, obviously there are no words to describe them as we can only describe what in some way is like ourselves.

The poet and painter William Blake invented a whole mythology to explain how we often confuse the responses of our different faculties. It has four mythological worlds – the worlds of reason, of imagination, of

bodily passions and of human emotions, each with a presiding god – Urizen, Los, Thaumas and Luvah. The problems arise when the god of one world – reason – tries to take over and deny the others. Thus reason is distinct from intellectual, or spiritual, perception.

The ineffable and the noetic qualities are often embodied in the type of painting known as *Sacra Conversazione,* 'Sacred Conversation', especially as perfected by Giovanni Bellini. Paradoxically, this kind of conversation does not imply words; perhaps, as has been noted earlier, the term "communion" would be more accurate, as a particular feature of such paintings is that the saints are *not* talking to each other or to the viewer, although they are communicating. They are palpably alive, but motionless and still, each locked in his or her own world:

> Such paintings are known as *Sacre Conversazioni*, because of their rapt stillness of mood, in which the Saints, scarcely looking at one another, seem to communicate at a spiritual rather than at a material level (Steer 1970: 62).

Because they are communing with the Divine, the "preponderously temporal" aspect of language is taken out, just as time is taken out of the communion elements in the doctrine of Transsubstantion, and this allows the saints "the silence of eternity". Harmony is a feature of such spiritual communication.

In these paintings each of the saints has a concentrated symbol which simply states who he or she is and gives the quintessence of the saintly act or reason for martyrdom. In Raphael's *The Ansidei Madonna* (1505; see Plate 4), the whole narrative story of St. Nicholas's gift of gold to the three poor girls is economically summed up in the three golden balls at his feet; the symbol dispenses with the need for narrative and again takes out the time element. In Gothic painting and in the early Renaissance, such a narrative, split into half a dozen sections, would have been the focus of the picture. The aim is now not to tell a story, but is totally different.

Although the saints are not talking together nor even looking at one another, this does not mean that there is no communication. In this painting, St. John is gazing heavenwards and St. Nicholas is very deeply absorbed in his Bible. The linking between the saints is essentially psychological; their thoughts and spirits are in such harmony that there is no need for words. The effect is emphasized formally, by the balanced position of the saints on either side of the Madonna and by the depth of the pyramid, rather than by a simply triangular composition.

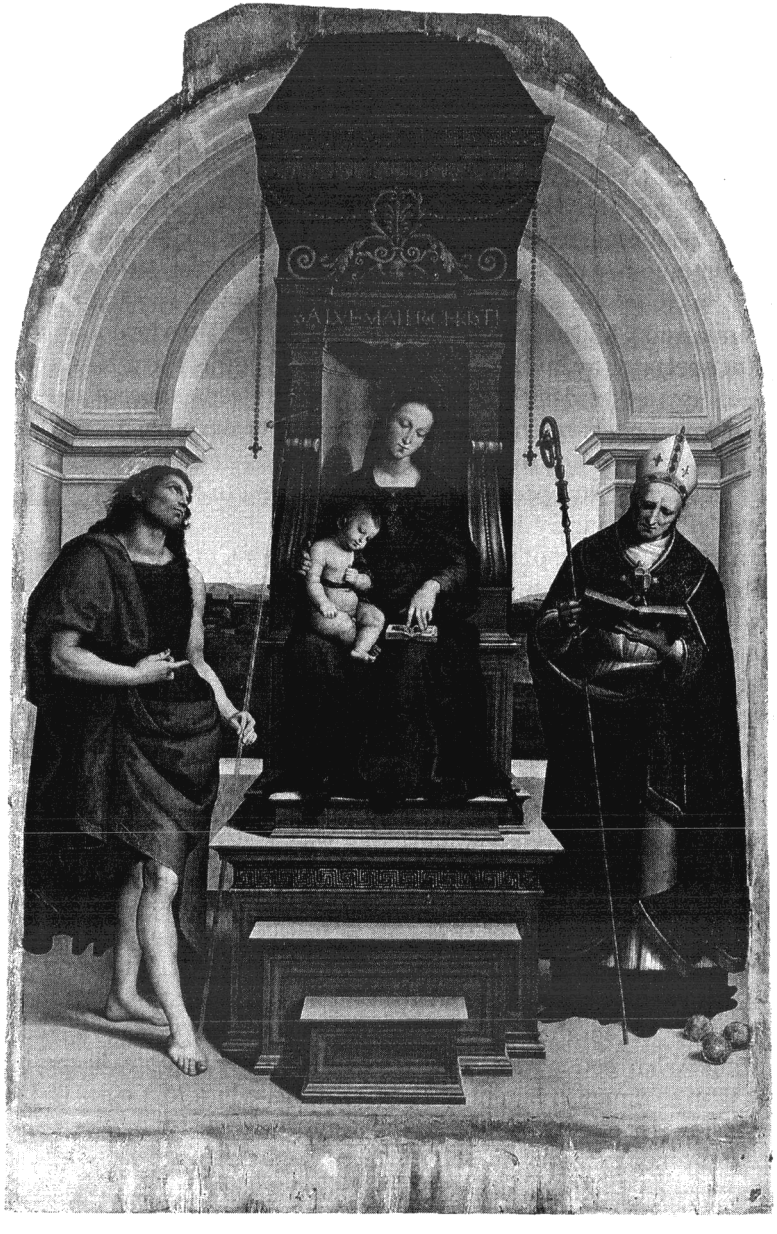

Plate 4. RAPHAEL: *The Ansidei Madonna* (1505). The National Gallery, London.

Giovanni Bellini, the great master and experimenter with the *Sacre Conversazioni*, especially concentrated on different ways of framing such pictures, very much so as to suggest the continuation of the spectator's space within the picture. In his *S. Giobbe Altarpiece* (c.1485), the chapel in the painting really seemed to open off the church in which it was originally placed (P.–L. Murray 1963: 262–263); another *Sacra Conversazione* by Bellini, the *Votive Picture of the Doge Agostine Barbarigo* (1488), has the Virgin seated in an open loggia, the top balustrade of which is continuous with the frame of the painting (Steer 1970: 61). In this way, he includes the spectator in the world of the painting and makes the Madonna and Child accessible, but still inviolable. Thus he communicates to the spectator by inviting him to participate in this silent harmony. Bellini also uses other devices such as the deliberate pausing of one of the depicted characters to emphasise the silence; for example, in the last of his *Sacre Conversazioni*, the *S. Zaccharia Altarpiece* (1505), his musical angel has clearly just stopped playing and is pausing to listen to the note dying away (P.–L. Murray 1963: 264).

We can now turn to the other two characteristics of Christian mysticism, those of transiency and passivity. If we look closely again at Parmigianino's picture with the prominent figure of John the Baptist, we shall find that it is in fact called *The Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome* and its traditional title was *The Vision of Saint Jerome*. But where is St. Jerome? We can be forgiven for overlooking him at first sight because he is in a very deep sleep on the ground, without even a lion. The focus is quite clearly on the dazzling Madonna and Child, who is communicating with the viewer, and on the Baptist, who is also communicating with the viewer. Nobody seems to be communicating with St Jerome. St. Jerome is clearly receiving this vision in a totally passive state and as he is asleep, presumably the vision is transient. Italian art is of course full of such dreamers and passive recipients of visions – Piero's *Dream of Constantine* (c.1460) and (the rather sexual) St. Helena by Veronese (c.1560) and St. Teresa by Bernini (between 1644 and 1647) in their ecstasies. In all of these works, however, except the Saint Jerome, the dreamer is the main focus of the painting. What better way to silence Saint Jerome and emphasise his passivity than to diminish him in size and to relegate him to a corner? The dazzling vision has almost wiped him out completely.

There are other examples in art in which the main figure has been almost totally "wiped out" or silenced, most notably Claude Lorraine's tiny figure of Psyche in *The Enchanted Castle*, (1664) which focuses almost entirely on the wild landscape. Such figures are silenced because they are ignored. An excellent example of this is Breughel's *The Fall of Icarus*

(c.1555–8). The viewer has to look very hard to find the tiny figure of Icarus tumbling into the sea in the background; the whole concentration is on the peasant in the foreground going about his daily task with tremendously calm indifference to the momentous event going on behind him. One cannot silence a person more completely than by wiping him or her out.

The intense concentration of the peasant also contributes to the silence of this painting, as he is completely absorbed in his daily task. It is this complete absorption, whether of ploughing a field, reading a book, pouring from a jug, making lace or tying a child's bonnet that gives so much genre painting of artists like Vermeer, De Hooch or Chardin a quality and a depth of silence similar to that of the *Sacre Conversazioni*. Although these actions imply movement and activity, the characters are so completely absorbed in what they are doing that they are fully living out that present moment; they are in a kind of "eternal now", which transforms their mundane task because they are so fully able to concentrate on the one thing.

7. Conclusion

The essence of silence in art is the intensity of its concentration, the removal of the time element, the appeal to a noetic faculty rather than to our rational faculty, an economy of symbol and a harmony of colour and of line. There is no narrative in silent painting, but a concentration on the now; there may be an ambiguity to keep the viewer guessing and at a loss for words, or alternatively, to break the narrative because ambiguity implies an uncertain state or hesitation at the moment of choice. There may be communication within the painting which is too deep to require words, or instead of communication, there may be the silence of indifference. There may also be communication with the viewer, especially if he is invited in to share by the open framing; or, if the framing is closed, he might instead be invited to contemplate or worship the figures in their concentrated, enclosed "other" world, but the boundary between these worlds is a hazy, ambiguous area.

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Part Eight: Teaching silence

Teaching "Discovering silence"

Karl Patten

A teacher is a man who must talk for an hour.
Ezra Pound

The natural enemy of any subject is the professor thereof.
William James

For many years I had been thinking and reading about silence, rather vaguely hoping that some time I would have an opportunity to teach a course in silence but knowing only too well that such a subject is far outside the categories of my discipline, English Literature. However, beginning in 1983, Bucknell University developed a new program for entering students, seminars limited to fifteen students which should be experimental and inter-disciplinary. I applied to teach one of these seminars, to be called "Discovering Silence." My project was accepted, and I taught the course for six years.

Here is the general course objective, which was sent to all entering students:

> At some point millions of years ago this cooling globe was silent, and it will presumably be so in some future time. Each of our lives is a microcosm of that vastness, but our existences interrupt the silence. Noise, sound, language, music are various interruptions. A blank page is silent; a poem is an interruption. A violin in its case is silent; a Bach partita is an interruption. And so forth. There must be a relationship between silence and whatever enters it and surely that silence contributes basically to the form of that interrupting work of art – on a small scale, rests in music, caesurae in poetry. We shall examine such things and their effects and meanings. But we shall also study how we perceive silence and what use we can make of it beyond the arts; for Christian mystics and Zen Buddhists it is crucial; Pascal was terrified by it.
>
> In addition to poetry and music, the mystics and the Zen men, we will deal with film (and silent film), other forms of public silence, and photography and painting, two mute arts. Samuel Beckett and John Cage will be invaluable, as will Susan Sontag, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Wendell Berry, Octavio Paz, and others, but there are not many books on silence, and much of the time we will have to be discoverers, informing ourselves.

> Classes will be conducted as discussions, although frequently we will be listening. The reading will range widely, as suggested above, and there will be writing assignments. There will be no examination.

I recall saying to a close colleague that I suspected that no one would sign up for such a "different" course. He replied: "The best fifteen people in the freshman class will take it." He was correct, or at least I must say that I could not have had a better group of students. Selection was voluntary, and as long as that continued my students were superior ones. The last time I taught the course the deans had begun assigning new students to their places, and I knew, very quickly, that there was the end of the silence course. It was designed for intrepid, curious, eager intelligences who made their own choices.

I knew, of course, from the beginning that it was a mad paradox to say that you would "teach" silence, and I paid considerable heed to the remarks of Pound and James quoted above. I realised that this course must be a "discovery", and a discovery of something that everyone thought he or she well knew and believed to be a most ordinary thing. Hence, the course had to engage the students in going places, doing things, it had to make them experience something they already knew in a new way. Since they were never going to find total silence, they were going to have to learn to perceive something approaching silence in relative ways.

That proved to be true. One of the chief things that I discovered in my experience of teaching the course was that students became students of themselves and of how they understood the world, and many of them mentioned exactly this in their evaluations of the course. I knew other things, too, such as that there would be no lectures here, that, if possible, I as a teacher must be like the students, a discoverer. There was no way I could avoid being a leader, in the sense that I had to give them weekly assignments, but I always would try to assign them projects which I myself would have to do, with as little sense of what they would lead to as they had. If the course was going to succeed, I had to walk in the same darkness as my eighteen-year-olds. This course had to be a course of questions, with virtually no answers, and if it was to be of value all of us would be somewhat different people in December from the ones we were in September. The prospect was exciting to me because I realised that by not using textbooks or guides I was going to make up the class every week. (I should say here that the class met one afternoon a week for three hours. This was my choice, for I knew that I needed long stretches

of time. If there was a single consistent criticism of the course, it was that three hours was a long time, but even this was not true for all students.)

I saw, too, from the beginning, that if this was to be a course of discovery and experience, that the students should be reporting constantly on what they were seeing, hearing, and doing. Hence, a paper each week, a minimum of two typed pages, was necessary. This worked extremely well. The steady attention to a variety of "silent" experiences made the students more and more alert as the semester wore on.

And what did they study – or do? As I said above there are no textbooks in this field (and if there had been, I would not have used them). The course was going to be improvised, week after week, frequently depending on whether or not I could find colleagues or visitors to the campus who could come to the class and bring a new element of silence to the students, for I used a fair number of guests. A good example of my opportunism came when two Quakers, a husband and wife, from Yorkshire, were on the campus for a few days. They were radical activists, and my question to them was: "How does the silence of a Quaker meeting lead you to political activism?"

My first assignment was calculated to have the students literally try to discover silence in their everyday world. Bucknell is located in rural Pennsylvania, and so I asked them to take a silent walk, alone, and try to find some silence. All reported, in their papers, that silence could not be found, no matter how far into the countryside they went, for even if they could get far enough away from the rumbling of tractor-trailer trucks on the nearby highway there were always the myriads of crickets at work or birds and squirrels chattering or the rush of a small stream. However, this was far from a failed assignment, for most of them were doing something new, concentrating in solitude, something that they would do much more of before the end of the semester. One student went to a cemetery at night in her quest, but instead of silence heard the flags blown across a stretch of blacktop. "It seemed to make so much noise."

As a teacher, I am most concerned with poetry, so that that would inevitably be an important part of the course. I started with the blank sheet of paper, which any poem would interrupt with its words and stanzas, but which would always be living in the silence of the unjustified right side of the page and the spaces between the stanzas. All of that before one began to be aware of the crucial fact of the caesurae and other pauses. Poetry had to be a listening experience, words in the air, never

words on a page. Hence, of course, I would send the students to all of the poetry readings of the semester, wanting them to hear a diversity of silences in different voices, telling them to forget about the poet's "meaning." A rather one-sided approach, indeed, but I believed that a kind of monomania was necessary for this course.

It is not hard to find poets and poems, from Keats on, who explicitly deal with and sometimes celebrate silence, and I presented many of these to the class for reading aloud and discussion. At this point, I should say that, lacking a text, all the printed material for the course was duplicated and handed out; by the end, each student owned a rich, loose anthology of poems. Throughout, I was very much guided by some of the poets' reflections concerning silence. For instance, here are two remarks by the American poet Howard Nemerov: "The activity of the great poets [is that] their language ... comes up out of silence and speaks the silence", and "The first move of the understanding ought to be the silent comtemplation of what is, and of how it got to be the way it is" (Nemerov 1979: 113–114). Or, from Octavio Paz (1973: 69): "Enamored of silence, the poet's only recourse is to speak."

"What can poetry be in the twentieth century? It seems to me that there is a search for the line beyond which only a zone of silence exists, and that on that borderline we encounter Polish poetry." This is Czesław Miłosz. I had been reading post-World War II Eastern European poetry for several years before I taught this course, the poetry that Michael Hamburger calls "anti-poetry", and I knew that it should be an important part of what we encountered. Różewicz, Karpowicz, and Staff among Polish poets, Hanzlík and Bartušek among the Czechs, and Vasko Popa as a Yugoslavian example, were all studied, read in the context of Adorno's remark that after Auschwitz, poetry could not be written. It was, of course, for something had to be said, but in the bareboned manner of these poets in which the silence of the unspeakable echoes. For young American readers a poem like Różewicz's "Pigtail" will generally stun them into silence. Such poetry does not need analysis or much discussion; it needs presentation.

Presentation, or simply looking at a thing in and for itself, became a major way of working in "Discovering Silence." I began one class by setting out a much weathered piece of wood, a stone so varied in colour and shape that it drew one into it, and a purple oak leaf I had picked up on the way to class. One can look at such things, in silence, responding to their silence, and before long one realises that the things are looking back at you, as G. M. Hopkins said they would. And such a simple act

of displaying inanimate things led the students to wonder if they were as truly inanimate as they first seemed, to begin to question silent phenomena, and soon thereafter to start collecting objects of their own that seemed to speak to them out of the silence. As the Cuban poet Jose Martí says: "The universe speaks better than men" (quoted in Paz 1974: 101).

As I improvised my way forward, making use of whatever the world of a small university offered, I was easily and naturally drawn to film, for I frequently teach that, as well as poetry. Most of the students had never witnessed a silent film, for even the few Chaplin shorts they may have seen on television had been rigged out with jolly, "witty" music, and, hence, watching Chaplin, Keaton, or Eisenstein (*Potemkin*) silently was always an ear-opener for them, as was the fact that "le cinéma sonore a surtout inventé le silence", as Robert Bresson puts it. To attend a showing of Lang's *M* or Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player* and to be alert to those moments when the director cuts all sound off will quickly make one aware of the truth of Bresson's words and will instill a listening habit for all future films one sees and hears.

The other visual arts, painting and photography, were bound to play a large role in the course, for, once again, we are faced with mute objects on a wall or in a folio volume that definitely ask us to respond to them. Such works have been so artfully constructed that their speaking to us out of their framed rectangularity demands that our eyes, often restlessly roving over the composition of the work, translate what they see into language, whether spoken or not. Silence again speaks. Thus whenever a new show of paintings would open in our university gallery I would send the students to it, instructing them to go alone with a notebook on, say, a Tuesday morning when the gallery was likely to be deserted or nearly so, look hard, and record their reactions to a painting, or several, if they preferred. To go alone was essential, for if one went with a friend the chatter of conversation would destroy the intimacy I wanted them to develop with the painting.

This was always a fruitful exercise, but the longer I taught the course I came to realise that something even more valuable came from studying photographs. What I was learning was that the painter chooses his edges (even the Impressionists), limits the world that he creates, partially in the interests of his composition, his balances, masses, volumes, depths, but that the photographer must be picturing something that is truly out there, and although of course he makes his choice, too, the "out there" outside the frame of the photograph will not go away and is virtually limitless. It was my own study, with the students, of the work of Henri Cartier-

Bresson that first led me to understand this. No matter how crafty the photographer, however skilled he is in finding beautiful compositions, he must find it in the "out there"; he cannot make it up. These encounters with the world waiting to be discovered and then transformed into black-and-white (for I also found that all of the great photographers work in black-and-white) in some ways paralleled what I wanted the students to be experiencing in a host of ways. The practical method of teaching photography was simply to rifle the university library of the large volumes of the work of the best artists, give them to the students to study for a week, and then have them report on what they had discovered. At times, these sessions were among the most exciting of the semester

Music, of course, had to be important, and among my colleagues were two composers, each of whom visited class at various times, presenting their own work and discussing how they, in one sense, "worked around" silence, first choosing to interrupt the dumb grounding, but then holding their notes in abeyance at calculated moments. That one of them had been a student of John Cage and the other deeply influenced by Japanese music fed directly into my intentions. I could have not imagined two more valuable musicians, and the experimental nature of their work had to broaden us all.

On other occasions I would bring records into class, and for a couple of hours we would listen, I monomaniacally emphasizing the crucial placing of rests. For this exercise, which was nearer pleasure than study, I found that chamber music most easily supplied the material that I needed. Brahms, in particular, provided me with some rather dramatic examples. As time went on, I was delighted that some students had their own good pieces of music in which we could hear silence at work. They would request permission to play them for the rest of us; naturally, I always agreed. It was this kind of initiative that made the course a group endeavour. The students felt that it was *their* course, an especially good thing for university beginners to feel. And music, of course, silenced me, kept me from being a man who must talk for an hour.

I sought my materials everywhere, not always knowing what we would be doing two weeks hence but invariably coming up with something, for the world is a very rich place, indeed. For instance, I have a friend who is an actor and a mime, and I invited him to join us each time I taught the course. He was an enormous success, entering the classroom at some odd moment and, then, without speaking, making his role, perhaps his "mission," clear to the students, his only prop a briefcase containing a bewilderingly mixed set of "things", including the papers, pencils, and

notebooks that teachers must rely on. As I suppose all mimes are, he was a superb comic actor, and his manifestation as a guest scholar very quickly turned into a parody of what most of us who stand behind a desk in the front of the room spend our days doing. Eventually, the dumbshow came to an end, and then he became a teacher himself, instructing the students how to use bodily and facial gestures in order to speak, precisely, to convey messages, without speaking. Such was his charm and warmth that even the shyest students responded and became mimes. Another technique of his followed that, again involving silence, which he called "trust walks". The students would pair up, and, since there were fifteen I would also make a member of the eighth pair, and alternatingly, one would close his or her eyes and the partner would take that person on a walk, that included stairs, the grounds around the building, or the various rooms and corridors, with never a word of warning. One had to trust one's partner in complete silence. Because students like to surprise others and are ingenious, at times these "trust walks" could be unnerving, but no disaster ever occurred. Trust in the other was established, certainly a healthy happening in any human life. Once again, the class was involved in an action, a "doing," an expression of what a kind of silent behaviour could mean. For all six years, every evaluation spoke glowingly of my friend's visit.

So our mime actively brought the body into play. "Unmoored from the body, speech deteriorates. It becomes false, inane, ignoble, weightless. Silence can inhibit or counteract this tendency, providing a kind of ballast, monitoring and even correcting language when it becomes inauthentic" (Sontag 1966: 20). Susan Sontag's brilliant essay "The Aesthetics of Silence" was the single theoretical work we studied. This essay is widely known and needs no *reprise* here, but for my young students it was the perfect example of someone thinking hard about what they were encountering. Since they were constantly dealing with the arts, it was helpful for them to read: "In one of its aspects, art is a technique for focusing attention, for teaching skills of attention" (Sontag 1966: 13). Her examples came from Wilde, who pointed out that people did not see fogs until painters like Whistler taught them how to, and from film. In connection with the latter, my own experience was from Bela Balázs, who, in an essay on the close-up, says that the film camera (and he is thinking of silent films, pre-1928) made the decisive "discovery of the human face. Facial expression is the most subjective manifestation of man, more subjective than speech ..." (Balázs 1952, quoted in Mast–Cohen–Braudy 1992: 262). He then goes on to discuss the "mute dialogue" of Dreyer's

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, where, in the examination scene "We move in the spiritual dimension of facial expression alone. ... The silent film has here brought an attempt to present a drama of the spirit closer to realization than any stage play has ever been able to do ..." (Balázs 1952, quoted in Mast–Cohen–Braudy 1992: 262). And to what Sontag said, I reminded them of the close attention that must be given to the "anti-poetry" of the East Europeans, and, by extension, to all poetry.

Sontag's essay is broad, ranges over much ground, most of it unfamiliar to my young students, but often an insight of hers hit their experience in this course. For instance, she says that a look is voluntary; a stare compels. "Traditional art invites a look. Art that is silent engenders a stare" (Sontag 1966: 16). This was exactly what we were learning about the difference between painting and photography. Hence, "The spectator would approach art as he does a landscape" (Sontag 1966: 16), which asks nothing of the spectator and yet may magnetically hypnotise him. Or another insight which the students were ready for, because we read Sontag well-along in the course: "the artist's activity is the creating or establishing of silence; the efficacious art-work leaves silence in its wake" (Sontag 1966: 23). By then, their own experience was validating such a remark, as I suggested above in describing their reactions to Ròżewicz's "Pigtail" and similar poems. Honesty, however, forces me to admit that Sontag's sophisticated, learned, allusive essay was not always liked by the students; they found it "over our heads." One student pleased me, though, by saying at the end of the course that he intended to keep reading "The Aesthetics of Silence", hoping to "understand" it some day.

As I hope I made clear, the course was thick with variety, roaming in, around, and beyond the arts, and always with the notion that lived experience had to be part of "discovering silence." One constant developed, though, too. Fairly early on in the course, I showed the students two short films on Zen Buddhism, one by Alan Watts, the other of a remarkable visit to a Zen monastery in northern Japan, where the discipline was severe and unchanging. I also gave them some Zen texts, poems and sayings. I then introduced them to Zazen, sitting in silent meditation, lotus position if possible, with hands properly placed, an awareness of the spine, and careful attention to breathing. I suspect that for some of them this was at first only a game; adjusting the breath so that the invisible feather under one's nostrils would not blow away might seem a little silly. But it took only a few weeks of Zazen to create, if not disciples, at least enthusiasts, for I found that if class wore on in a discussion of the day's topic pretty soon someone would ask me if we were not going to

"sit" today, eagerly anticipating something that had been only exotic a few weeks past. So sixteen of us would be sitting on the floor for perhaps up to half-an-hour (longer once or twice) silently contemplating the nap of the rug. As one would expect, I learned that the students found it easier to "sit" the more they did it. However, as was always the case, we could not find pure silence no matter how well we ourselves performed, for there is no way, even with closed doors, to exclude the sounds of heels in a corridor or the giggling and chatter of passing students. So now my students were back where they began on their initial "silent walk"; the world will always intrude no matter how well one tempers one's breathing above that invisible feather. Nevertheless, I know from their final comments that "doing" Zazen was one of the most meaningful "events" for most students. Perhaps the element of risk involved had something to do with this, for one is making a kind of communal commitment in undertaking Zazen, and possibly something like peer pressure makes an individual student want never to be one who breaks the overall silence. This last remark applies only to the first few weeks of sitting, for, as I have said, all becomes easier as one learns through relaxation to be an experienced practitioner in concentrating on emptying the mind. (Though I should add that over all the six years none of us ever achieved *satori*, nor did I expect anyone to. That was for the Japanese monks, over the years.)

I am approaching the end of what could only have been a relatively informal, anecdotal report on my years of teaching this course. It would not be complete without noting my largest failure: making Samuel Beckett an integral part of the course. In the first few years I gave them copies of *Act Without Words* I and II, hoping that their imaginations would catch what seems to me the luminosity of these silent pieces, but that never happened, and so I finally gave up on trying to introduce Beckett, who had been one of my own inspirations in creating this course. It is clear to me now that words on the page which cannot be spoken, as poetry can be, were dead words for the students. A performance of Beckett's work would have had a totally different effect, as the visits of my friend the mime suggests, but such was not to be had. Hence, I tucked Beckett away and went on to other things.

My students were university beginners, most of them eighteen-year-olds, and the course worked for them because even when they were reading poems or looking at pictures the experience was lived; I always encouraged encounters, to which they splendidly responded. Silence, or something close to it, will only exist in a lived world. If I took a gamble in offering such a course, as I initially thought I had, it paid off wonderfully well, for I learned a great deal.

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Part Nine: Epilogue

"White and white": Metacommunicative and metaphorical silences

Adam Jaworski

1. Introduction

Silence is a category which can be contrasted either with speech or, more generally, with sound (noise) (Verschueren 1985). Both forms of contrast have been explored in this book, although most of its chapters have been concerned with linguistic communication and hence, the former type of contrast. It is also the speech – silence divide which will largely, but not exclusively, concern me in these closing remarks.

As with all pairs of such oppositions, the boundaries between speech and silence are unclear, indistinct and fuzzy. Although folk beliefs about speech and silence keep both these terms clearly distinct, the linguistic treatment of these categories is far from being simple. The multifaceted character of silence as a communicative concept has been well documented in the preceding chapters with their wide-ranging methodologies. All these studies seem to confirm the correctness of an earlier suggestion (Jaworski 1993) that the concept of silence be treated in terms of a prototype (Rosch 1973, 1978; Rosch–Mervis 1975; Taylor 1995).

Basing oneself on one's intuition, one can venture some suggestions about what we perceive as "good" and "bad" members of the category *silence*, where by "category members" I will mean different forms and functions of silence. Some of these forms and functions come to mind very easily, for example:

- expression and/or display of various emotional and cognitive states such as love, hate, embarrassment, respect, joy, anger, indifference, or meditation;
- signalling of transitional states and processes (rites of passage): ceremonial, celebratory, sacrificial silence;
- building resistance, showing disrespect, defiance of power; for example, exercising the right to silence, refusal to testify in political trials, stylized sulking, self-censorship;
- display of silent and still behaviour for aesthetic/artistic purposes (e. g. in the performance art of Abramović/Ulay).

As for other, less typical instances of silence, one can consider conversational inferencing, which is one of the central concepts in communication. In most situations we infer meaning from what is said, but the inference itself depends on what is left *un*said (Tyler 1978), and thus can be identified as a form of silence.

Other, less prototypical members of the category *silence*, do not come to mind so readily. For example, listenership (Houck–Gass, this volume) would not often be cited as a form of silence, in accordance with lay perceptions of linguistic communication as speaker-centred. Other rather peripheral conceptualizations of silence can be invoked here, too, such as indiscriminate repetition, chanting (Bruneau 1973), perception of an absence (Kwiatkowska, this volume), or *representations* of silence in painting, in which acoustic silence is understood to be extended to the visual medium (Hafif, this volume; Withers, this volume).

However, the investigation of the prototype of silence is not going to concern me here. The question of how silence is organized and how its manifestations may vary across different speakers is an interesting, empirical question which remains to be addressed in future research. Suffice it to say that silence is a communicative resource whose manifestations go well beyond mere absence of speech; a view which has been argued for by many authors.

What I would like to offer in this final chapter is an examination of silence as a metacommunicative and metaphorical concept. First, I will present a linguistic explanation for the commonly held view that silence marks *lack* of communication. Secondly, I will argue that, as is often the case with folk linguistic beliefs about language, silence is a concept which plays a far more important role in how communication is construed and talked about by non-linguists than can be assumed from the overt references to silence as forms of non-communication. My discussion will be based largely on the analysis of the word "silence", its variants and derivatives; my examples will be drawn predominantly from the headlines and articles in the British press.

2. Frames for silence

On 18 February 1994, the cover of the tabloid section of *The Guardian* featured a photograph of two American ice-skaters taking part in the Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway. The caption under the picture read:

(1) Nancy Kerrigan and Tonya Harding pass without a glance during figure skating practice in Hamar (Cover photo caption, *The Guardian 2*. 18 February 1994, p. 1).

Kerrigan and Harding were not only sporting competitors. In January 1994 during the national championships in Detroit, Harding's bodyguard clubbed Kerrigan's knee with a metal bar in order to eliminate her as Harding's most serious rival. Kerrigan recovered from her injuries and appeared in Lillehammer for the Olympics. The presence of both skaters fuelled media interest in their sporting, legal and personal rivalry.

Clearly, the intended meaning of the item of "news" mentioned above is that as rivals and enemies Kerrigan and Harding refused to talk to or even acknowledge each other with the smallest of greetings: verbal or non-verbal. Silence is implied here to manifest non-communication, lack of contact, and disengagement.

Soon after seeing this photograph in the paper I watched a televised transmission of another ice-skating competition from Lillehammer, and when a group of ice-skaters were shown warming-up before their contest I realized that in this particular situation it was normal and expected for the ice-skaters *not* to acknowledge each other, not to exchange glances, smiles, greetings, and so on. Ice-skating practice is an activity structured through "silence", not through talk (Philips 1985), and silence appears to be the underlying and dominant linguistic form (Tannen 1993; Tannen–Wallat 1993) within this particular frame (see Jaworski, this volume).

However, rather than recognizing the fact that some situations (frames) are more likely to invoke silence rather talk, the above caption seems to suggest that silence is a mark of non-communication (here, due to hostility). And this is not the only, or isolated, instance where silence is regarded as falling outside the realm of communication. As I will demonstrate below, "silence" is frequently used at the metacommunicative level as a term which indicates that there is a lack of communication, or communication breaks down.

3. The *conduit* metaphor

My explanation of the common treatment of silence as a semantic vacuum will refer to the *conduit* metaphor (Reddy 1993; see also Schön 1993). According to Reddy, linguistic metaphors represent cognitive metaphors, or cognitive modes of representation (see also Lakoff–Johnson 1980;

Lakoff 1993). Therefore, the ways in which English speakers talk about communication suggest that they have a specific way of understanding communication, although this cognitive image may be at odds with other, more plausible models of communication.

Reddy's examples (reproduced below as 2–4) suggest that English speakers conceptualise (metaphorically) thoughts, feelings and ideas as travelling across space and time:

(2) Try to *get* your *thoughts across* better

(3) None of Mary's *feelings came through to* me with any clarity

(4) You still haven't *given me* any *idea* of what you mean.
(Reddy 1993: 166)

Naturally, transfer of thoughts, ideas, meanings or feelings from one person to another requires some kind of conveyer: words, phrases, sentences, poems and other linguistic signals. This is brought home by Reddy's examples of what is said to someone who is considered to be a poor communicator. Such a person is advised to strive for perfect communication through the physical transfer of thoughts and feelings encapsulated in various linguistic units:

(5) Whenever you have a good *idea* practice *capturing it in words*

(6) You have to *put* each *concept into words* very carefully

(7) Try to *pack* more *thoughts into fewer words*

(8) Insert those *ideas* elsewhere in the *paragraph*

(9) Don't *force* your *meanings into* the wrong *words*

(10) Never *load a sentence* with *more thoughts* than *it can hold.*
(Reddy 1993: 167)

On the basis of the above examples, Reddy argues that "in speaking or writing, humans place their internal thoughts and feelings within the external signals of language" (Reddy 1993: 168). This conceptualization of language is called by Reddy the *conduit* metaphor.

The conduit metaphor has important implications for the common understanding of how successful communication works. It is clear from many further English examples quoted by Reddy that words and other linguistic signals, are believed to communicate successfully or not depending on whether the speaker manages to "insert" the right meanings and ideas (i. e., "content") into them:

(11) The *thought is in* practically every other *word*

(12) The *sentence was filled with emotion*

(13) The *lines* may rhyme, but *they are empty* of both *meaning* and *feeling*

(14) Your *words are hollow* – you don't mean them.

(Reddy 1993: 168)

Thus, the conduit metaphor presents words and other signals to English speakers as containers with "insides" and "outsides", which are capable of being "full" of meaning, or "hollow" so that there is no meaning in them. And, of course, the more content "fills" a signal, the more "meaning-full" (Reddy 1993: 168) it becomes.

4. Silence and the *conduit* metaphor

Where does the conduit metaphor place silence then? Unsurprisingly, Reddy does not consider silence in his paper. This is probably due to the fact that silence is usually not thought of as capable of carrying any meaning. Silence is more commonly associated with non-communication or communication breakdown (see section 2 above). The following examples (15–17) from the press illustrate this point to some extent. In all three excerpts, silence is used as a metacommunicative term describing a lack of communication, an inability to express one's views, or a simple background to other activities:

(15) **Russia's hardline speaker silenced** [headline]. The first day of the Constitutional Assembly, intended to edge Russia towards political stability, ended in scandal when President's Boris Yeltsin's chief rival, parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, was denied a chance to speak. [...] (Mark Frankland. "Russia's hardline speaker silenced", *The Observer.* 6 June 1993).

(16) **Palace demands pledge of silence from Princess** [headline]. The Prince of Wales is determined to prevent Princess Diana from speaking publicly about their relationship and the royal family after their divorce. His lawyers will seek a "gagging" clause as part of a settlement aimed at preventing her from causing further damage to the monarchy. [...] (Andrew Alderson–Susan Clarke. "Palace demands pledge of silence from Princess", *The Sunday Times.* 3 March 1996, p. 1).

(17) **Sisters of silence** [headline]. The appeal of silence and prayer is attracting a new generation to take vows in Tuscany [...] It is a life of unbroken silence punctuated by prayer and mediation and interrupted by work in the 1,000-year-old walls of the convent [...] "In this world of crumbling ideologies," says Mother Alessandra, "the need for clarity and the necessity to understand where we are from and where we are going is becoming stronger all the time." [...] (Natalia Encolpio. "Sisters of silence," *The Guardian 2*. 19 October 1993, p. 8).

In example 15 we read about the denial of the right to speech to a politician, and this act *silences* him and the whole of the democratization process in Russia. The public silence of the Princess of Wales (example 16) is seen as desirable to her enemies because if she is *gagged* she can do no *damage to the monarchy*. And the silence of a convent (example 17) is described as a space in which the cognitive processes of self-reflection and understanding *take the shape of* prayer and meditation. In all of these examples silence is pictured as empty or "un-filled."

As has been pointed out above, according to the conduit metaphor view of communication, talk is expected to be "filled" with meaning. However, on some occasions even talk can be meaningless, and then it is represented as equivalent to silence, that is, it is "empty" (cf. Reddy's examples 13 and 14 above). In the following example, the debates in the European Parliament which are perceived as long, boring and irrelevant are inevitably linked with silence.

(18) **Talking into thin air** [cover story headline]. [...]

The lack of attention makes it [European Parliament] a free and easy place. Anyone can get a visitor's pass and wander the corridors. The only people who bother to make use of this are lobbyists. And there is a powerful suspicion that the relationship between some MEPs and business interests might not be absolutely in accord with Burkean principles of representative democracy.

The one place outsiders cannot go is the chamber. But no one goes there. At 7 pm they were debating a report on co-operation in North-South trade. I sat conscientiously listening on the headphones. So did two MEPs. The next speaker was a Signor Mantovani. Somewhere in my head I heard the sound of violins. The last words I remember were "eco-solid trade". The rest was silence. It was 20 minutes before I woke up. [...] (Matthew Engel. "Parliament of snoozers," *The Guardian 2*. 25 January 1994, 2–3).

Thus, talk which is implied to be meaningless can easily blend into silence without any loss of information. "Empty talk" and "silence" become synonyms. However, whereas silence is meaningless by default, "empty" talk is marked (cf. Sobkowiak, this volume). The next example, which is extracted from a report on Prince of Wales's visit to Australia, confirms this by stating that it is actually *frightful* if talk occurs but is filled with no meaning:

(18) The prince gave a speech full of sound and isn't it frightfully awful, signifying nothing. "Ladies and gentlemen, Australia's business leaders face many exciting opportunities in the region. The next few years will be ones of challenge," he concluded, drawing a standing ovation.

This is not the stuff of which tabloid page leads are made. "The Prince of Wales yesterday told Australian business leaders that they have a challenging few years ahead," would not make a splash in the Sun. But then the royal visit is not about words but pictures. The 12-day tour has been organised as one long photo opportunity. [...] (Edward Pilkington. "The lost leader of the pack," *The Guardian 2*. 28 January 1994, 2–3).

In sum, we can argue that due to the prevalence of the conduit metaphor in everyday folk beliefs about language, silence is conceptualized as "empty", i. e., with no content, whereas talk is meaningful, unless proven otherwise. But, from the socio-pragmatic point of view, we also know that silence does carry meaning and performs various communicative functions. How can we then account for this discrepancy between the conduit metaphor view of silence as "empty" and the actual functioning of silence as "meaning-full"?

In order to address this question we need to refer to Reddy's notion of *conflict frame*. Through this notion Reddy explains that there is a difference (conflict) between the way in which the conduit metaphor biases our thought towards the understanding of communication and other possible models of accounting for communication.[1]

5. Metacommunicative references to silence (and speech) as communicative resources

Due to the elusive nature of silence as a linguistic form and the data collection problems that this creates, it may be more useful to account for the way in which silence serves the purpose of communication by

examining some further uses of the terms "silence" as a metacommunicative category. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will explore several examples from the press in which silence is reported on as a *meaningful* category.

5.1. Reported silences

Silence is limited in the extent it can perform the metalingual function associated with language (cf. Sobkowiak, this volume). Whereas we can use (meta)talk to refer, describe or evaluate talk, we cannot use silence in the same way to report or refer to instances of silence. There is much literature on the use of direct and indirect speech in self-reflexive (metalingual) contexts (cf. Coulmas 1986; Lucy 1993), but none of the papers in these publications deals with how people report on their own and others' silences.

Probably the only way silence can be used in direct speech is in something like the following constructed example:

(19) And then he went like this [pause + gesture and facial expression suggesting indignant posture].

Note that the verb of "saying" in this example is *go*, and that Poyatos (1983) refers to this use of silence as "iconic". In writing, silences are sometimes marked by the use of blank spaces or three dots, as in the following example, (another extract from the article on the European Parliament quoted above):

(20) Soon it was Question Time [...] Like most of Europe, Strasbourg has cribbed this idea, but half-heartedly. It takes place at 8.45 on a Wednesday evening and runs through to midnight in a city famous for its restaurants. The Greek Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Pangalos (it is Greece's turn to hold the presidency), and a couple of commissioners were there. Hardly anyone else was, not even the people who had put down questions. The member whose turn it was to wield the little gavel was quite imaginative in finding new ways to describe the same phenomenon:

"Question 42. Mrs Braun-Moser ... is absent. Forty-three, Mr Bowe ... is not there. Forty-four, Mrs Goedmakers ... is also not here. Forty-five, Miss Garcia Arias ... I can't see. Forty-six, Mr Desama ... no. Forty-seven Mr Crampton ... IS!" (Smattering of applause). (Matthew Engel. "Parliament of snoozers," *The Guardian 2*. 25 January 1994, 2–3).

In the above excerpt, the repeated three dots in the second paragraph indicate silences, created by the absence of MEPs whose names are read out by the speaker. The whole paragraph is an instance of direct speech,[2] in which the representation of pauses adds to the dramatic effect intended by the author. The visual representation of the pauses leads to a dramatization of style, as dictated by the light-hearted tenor of the article. On the other hand, when the reporting of "facts" overrides this kind of creating involvement with the reader through stylistic devices, silence is more likely to be reported verbally. The next example is another (constructed) version of example 19, in which the term "silent" is used metacommunicatively:

(21) And then he fell/became/went silent (said nothing, etc.) looking rather indignant.

This kind of metacommunication is common in much newspaper reporting. For example:

(22) **Thatcher's crucial pause mars magnanimity toward Major** (headline). ... Lady Thatcher paused perceptibly when reminded that she had predicted Mr Major would be a great prime minister. Had he made it yet? "I think he has carried out his duties. Each prime minister does it in their own way and in their own style." Pressed to say that Mr Major perhaps needed more time, she said: "A little more time and no threat of leadership elections." [...] (Michael White and Patrick Wintour. "Thatcher's crucial pause mars magnanimity toward Major," *The Guardian*, 1995, p. 1).

Note that in the above extract, Thatcher's answers are put in direct speech, but for quite obvious reasons, her significant silence is reported indirectly, with the use of the phrases *crucial pause* and *paused perceptibly*. In this context, it would be stylistically awkward (or even impossible) to report silence visually by the use of three dots or blank spaces.

5.2. Re-constructed silences in narratives

Spoken and written narratives often contain references to the events which, in the course of the story, may have happened but did not. Such hypothetical incidents may involve verbal statements which the speaker (writer) considered producing but did not. Such non-events may be introduced by phrases such as *And I wanted to say to him/her that ...* and

concluded by *...but I didn't.* These instances serve the function of introducing a topic which becomes part of a story, but not of the narrated events themselves. The effect of this rhetorical device is the creation of solidarity and involvement between the speaker/writer and the audience at the "expense" of the third party who will always remain ignorant of what was *not* said to them. This narrative tactic, which closely resembles the creation of solidarity between speaker and hearer through exchange of gossip, is exemplified in the following extract:

(23) The weather turned hot a couple of weeks back and my boyfriend and I drove to Malibu Beach. On our way home we stopped off at a mini-mall to have a sandwich, and who should we see as we sat down outside some little deli? The drunken movie star who took me to the US Tennis Open last year and put his hand up my dress. He was sitting eating a bagel and chatting up Minnie Driver, the actress who appears in Circle of Friends (a film about a plain, fat girl which stars – *quelle surprise* – a beautiful slim girl). In any case, my boyfriend is unconscionably thrilled that we've run into the evil movie star and starts trying to persuade me to go over and talk to him.

I am adamant that I will not. I am also slightly offended that my boyfriend feels not one iota of jealousy or territorial rage. "You do realise that the last time I saw this man, he was attempting to wrap his tongue about my larynx?" I say. "*Sure*," my boyfriend says, shrugging. "But he probably really regrets it now. Why don't you go over and make friends?" I tell my boyfriend he is a miserable celebrity-hound (I use a ruder phrase) and shortly afterwards, we leave.

As we depart, Minnie Driver is tossing her pre-Raphaelite curls about, much to the movie star's evident pleasure. I briefly consider going over to warn her about him, but on second thoughts, I figure I'll leave her to take her chances (Zoë Heller; no title. *The Sunday Times Magazine*. 28 April 1996, p. 7).

The motivation for refraining from doing such things as making a specific statement, asking a question, or the like in various face-to-face situations can be varied. Lack of interest, keeping a secret, avoidance of imposition or embarrassment, and so on, can all lead to an opting out choice (Bonikowska 1988). Sifianou (this volume) and Sajavaara–Lehtonen (this volume) discuss silence resulting from face concerns and cultural preferences of social interactants. All such factors are likely to be relevant

in the creation and reporting of silences in narratives. Although, paradoxically, such silences may not be consciously perceived by their intended recipients, their re-creation in the story forms a significant new dynamic between the speaker (writer), the audience and the third party.

5.3. Metaphors of silence

When silence is perceived to be an activity it is metaphorically referred to as SUBSTANCE/OBJECT, and when it is perceived to be a state, it is metaphorically referred to as a CONTAINER (Jaworski 1993: 81–84). It is especially common to talk about silence in such ways when it appears to mark extreme emotions such as awe, love, hatred, bereavement, or certain social states such as secrecy, control, power play, and so on. In the next example, there are two instances of reference to silence as a CONTAINER – that is, a setting in which other activities (leaving and crying) can take place.

(24) It's December 1992 and my brother phones. He rarely does, so I know something's wrong.
"It's Dad."
"When?"
"This morning." I feel tears but can't cry. My daughter hugs me.
I'm seven and my grandmothers' died. I'm upset but don't show it – big boys don't. My parents, my older brother and I set off in silence to an uncle's house. [...]
A year after my brother's call, a male friend lends me Raymond Williams' 1964 novel Border Country (Penguin), which includes this plea by a 16-year-old boy, questioning his own and his father's reaction to the grandfather's death: "When will the cry come? Let it come now ... In silence now, taking the strain, we risk being broken. Let the cry come, let the son cry." (John Roberts. "Real men do cry", *The Guardian 2*. 7 January 1994, p. 5).

In the next example, silence is conceptualized as a SUBSTANCE which "falls" over a city. It is probably not accidentally likened to the idea of radioactive fallout which envelopes the area directly affected by the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster:

(25) [Newspaper headline] Child thyroid cancers are growing but does anyone care? Silence over Chernobyl (Anthony Tucker. "Silence over Chernobyl", *The Guardian 2*. 25 November 1993, p. 15).

Nikiforidou (1996) suggested that silence is also metaphorically referred to as a LIQUID (or in general a soft, penetrable) SUBSTANCE. Her examples include the following:

(26) The forest was *sunk into deep* silence

(27) He *plunged into* silence

(28) Nothing *stirred* the silence

Such metaphorical representations of silence as a LIQUID SUBSTANCE seem to refer to the instances on which silence is contrasted with noise/sound rather than with talk. It would be interesting to examine metaphorical references to silence in English in greater detail to check if speakers of English, despite *not* having two separate lexical items for the two types of silence, differentiate between them by choosing different types of metaphorical reference.

5.4. The making and breaking of a taboo

One of the most important uses of silence in every society is maintenance of a taboo. However, the mention of a taboo topic, the breaking of silence, is socially more significant, observable or marked than the maintenance of a taboo itself. Paradoxically, as with many other instances of silence, its study is only possible when it is broken. For example, Coupland–Coupland (this volume) challenge earlier views that death and dying are repressed topics among elderly people and demonstrate how the "unsayable" is thematised in the context of medical geriatric consultations. Likewise, Kallen (this volume) demonstrates how similar taboo topics (death, adultery, murder) have found ways of sanctioned expression in the literary genre of the popular Scottish ballad.

It is increasingly common to find overt references to the "breaking of silence" over contemporary taboo topics (death, sexuality, terrorism, and so on) in today's press. For example, a press review of a children's book on bereavement invokes "death implicative talk" (Coupland–Coupland, this volume) and describes how one of the book's co-authors refused to keep silent about the death of his partner in front of his children:

(29) After Adrian Crimmin's partner, Mandy, died of pneumonia, he made no attempt to conceal his pain from their two boys, Sam, five, and Eddy, three. The children went to Mandy's funeral, sang her favourite Jackson Browne songs at the service, drew pictures on her headstone and shared their father's tears.

For Crimmin, there was no question of keeping a stiff upper lip. "That's not how I deal with things. If something upsets me, I let it out. After Mandy died, I was angry. I smashed chairs, kicked great piles of leaves. I didn't try to hide anything from Sam and Eddy. Why should I? They were grieving as deeply as I was. It's so easy to underestimate a child's emotions" (no author. "Gone but not forgotten", *The Guardian*. 17 December 1991).

The article also mentions how the project of writing a book on death and dying for children was itself almost silenced as it touched on a powerful taboo:

(30) Conceiving the project was the easy part; finding a willing publisher proved almost impossible. "I could get the idea past the editors, who were mostly young and female," Perkins [co-author] explains "but as soon as the word bereavement was mentioned at a board meeting, that would be the end of it" (no author. "Gone but not forgotten", *The Guardian*. 17 December 1991).

The consequences of breaking a taboo (or silence) surrounding a secret can be very grave, including threats to one's health or even life (cf. Kallen, this volume). In the next example, which is extracted from an article on violence in Northern Ireland, the author describes how his attempts to find mural artists in Belfast were met with evasive, incomplete, and generally uncooperative answers:

(31) The biggest mural was on the house wall of an old chap scraping ice from his doorstep.

"It just appeared there," he said. You mean by magic? "No, I don't mean anything. I simply don't know." "Can you be saying someone did that enormous painting on your wall and you know nothing about it?"

"What I'm saying is I don't want to say anything. Ask somebody else" (John Edwards. "Ulster's art of silence", *Daily Mail*. 1 March 1994).

In Northern Ireland, discussing the identities of politically involved individuals or politics in general with people who cannot be wholly trusted is clearly a taboo whose violation is perceived as a real danger to self. Asking too many questions is *not* a good way to stay healthy or alive, and one's safety is ensured by keeping silent. Consider one more extract from the same article:

(32) Now the driver swung over to the Shankill Road. So many murals covered the walls, the whole place was like a gallery to the memory of King William III.

Got any clues about the artists, you asked a man in Percy Place. He was standing in front of a 20ft high splash of colour with the words "No Surrender" in the middle. "I remember it going up," is all he would say.

The driver said it was a good time to go. It's strange nobody knows who's doing the paintings, he was told. The code of life on the streets was silence, he said.

"That's one of the best ways to stay healthy in Belfast."

Even when it's only about murals?

"Even when it's about anything," he said, and gave a wink which was friendly and carried plenty of experience (John Edwards. "Ulster's art of silence", *Daily Mail*. 1 March 1994).

5.5. Silence as a form censorship and oppression

Silencing others and depriving them of their own voices is frequently invoked in discussions of power (cf. Watts, this volume). One such group of people whose voices have been systematically "suppressed" has been that of women (cf. Dendrinos–Ribeiro Pedro, this volume). Many authors have repeatedly stated this point in their scholarly and popular publications. For example, Spender invokes silence as the key notion representing women's oppressed condition in the following excerpt:

(33) Now how is it that society continues to believe that women are the talkative sex when they talk so little in the presence of men? The answer lies in part in what is expected of women. If the ideal woman is one who talks not at all (and this has been the ideal of numerous men from Aristotle to Ruskin and there are many contemporary sages who share this view), then *any* talk from a woman is too much (Dale Spender. "Don't keep your trap shut", *The Guardian*. 23 August 1982, 8).

Silencing for political purposes often attracts commentaries, especially if the procedure is obvious and not particularly effective. Those who are in power positions can grant or deny others access to having a voice. However, censorship may lead to absurd situations, for example when the message of a silenced person is communicated in a roundabout way:

(34) There is no more ludicrous sight on television. A news item on Northern Ireland begins, and follows its usual course until the moment comes for a representative of Sinn Fein to say something. These moments do not come round often, and for the royalist terror groups, which are also restricted, scarcely ever at all.

The reporters' voice over says: "Because of government restrictions, Mr So-and-so's words have to be spoken for him." And then an actor's voice, complete with appropriate accent, is overlaid on the muted advocate of violence for political ends, saying precisely the same words in precisely the same way. But to show that the person whose voice we are listening to is not the same as the person we are watching, the broadcasters go to elaborate lengths to dub them slightly out of sync: the mouth opens fractionally before the voice starts, and closes while the last word is being said. The British public whose security might totter if Gerry Adam's voice were heard in this context on the airwaves, has been protected again by a caring government (John Simpson. "How democracy lost its voice", *The Guardian 2*. 18 October 1993, 18).

5.6. Silence as sound in ambient music

Edgar (this volume) describes many links between silence and sound in music. One of the recent forms of music which Edgar singles out in his discussion of functions and uses of silence is "ambient" music, one of the main representatives of which is Brian Eno. Therefore, it may be useful here to quote Eno himself on the significance of silence in the music making process. In the following extract from a radio interview, the idea of making music is associated with the elimination of unwanted sound.

(35) I explore the use of silence in reaction to something that was happening in contemporary music in the seventies. There was a technological development, namely the development of multitrack machines, which led people to think that the act of making music consisted of the act of making more and more sound, and filling up more and more space with sound. That made for a kind of music that got on my nerves more and more as I heard it, and I started to find myself listening to things that actually had very long spaces in them. I found that I liked film soundtrack music for the same reason, because film music is really

music with its centre missing. Because the film is actually the centre of the music, so you just listen to the music alone without seeing film, you have something that has a tremendous amount of space in it, and that space is important because it's the space that invites you as the listener inside into the music. It sucks me in, that kind of space.

So I started making things that just allowed much more room in them. I'm always trying to subtract as much as add. There's a technological momentum, towards adding. Everything encourages you to do that. I take the message of reggae and daab I suppose, which is to say that sculpting is just as important: cutting things away and leaving peculiar spaces. In fact I've just had an experience of working with Laurie Anderson, which has been interesting like that. There's a song called Tightrope, where we've done something quite interesting. There's a quite dense landscape of sound, and we suddenly collapse it so that it almost disappears and just leaves her voice, and this really is quite chilling, I think. It's as though the bottom drops out of the world (Brian Eno speaking on "Paul Merton's Hour of Silence", BBC Radio 1 FM, 1 January 1995).

5.7. Extensions of silence

Just as silence can be referred to metaphorically (see section 4.3. above), it is also used as a metaphor itself to describe phenomena from outside linguistic communication. Kwiatkowska (this volume) explores how the concept of silence can be applied to visual perception and be accounted for in cognitive terms. Other authors (Hafif, this volume; Withers, this volume) utilize the notion of silence in their discussions of monochrome painting and ambiguity in art, respectively.

Interestingly, monochrome paintings seem to be capable of producing various auditory associations. For Hafif, for example, Agnes Martin's paintings are silent. For other critics they can produce faint but audible voices:

(36) White and white. Whole and semi-skimmed. Snow on snow. Lines so faint they practically rule themselves out. Horizontals tinged with warmth. Dawn pink, haze grey, narcissus yellow. The paintings of Agnes Martin [...] are so harmonious. Nothing disturbs their serenity, their hum (William Feaver. "Paintings white beyond the pale", *The Observer.* 26 September 1993, 7).

Silence has also been invoked in relation to painting in a more basic sense, probably in contrast to such auditory art forms as (spoken) poetry, song and music. Paintings and sculptures (with the exception of some recent "installation" art) are not to be heard. They are *visual*. However, sound can be represented in the visual medium and thus be made "heard", even only if it is to be heard in one's imagination. This is the type of "sound through silence" which is described in Tony Bevan's painting *The Meeting*, which depicts two men singing:

(37) [The men] have been caught in mid-song. Their mouths are open, their faces are arched into effort. They are straining for a high-note. But their silence is deafening (Waldemar Januszczak. "Painting silence", *The Guardian 2*. 17 May 1993, p. 4).

Probably a better-known example of this kind of "deafening silence" in painting is Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

6. Conclusion

The above survey of the metacommunicative and metaphorical uses of the term "silence" and some of its synonyms suggests that wherever there is speech, there is also silence. Both speech and silence are commented on self-reflectively by the social actors, and although silence is generally believed to be the *negative* member of the pair, it merits to be fully treated (although probably in a different way than speech) in the study of linguistic communication.

In some ways, the present book is also an exercise in self-reflection on how silence is used and how it means in different contexts; in this sense the book is no different from other works on language which unravel the "hidden" patterns of communication. The only difference between researching silence as opposed to speech is that in the cultural assumptions prevailing in most communities from which the studies in this book have gathered their materials, talk consists of "vessels" filled with meaning, whereas silence is a void. The authors of this book, following many others before them, have made an effort to challenge, or at least question such negative assumptions about silence. Some have even tried to do so in a more practical way, as Patten (this volume) by actually teaching silence, or as Hafif (this volume) by painting it.

If one of the aims of this book is to raise the awareness of its readers about the positive values of silence, studies which have described communities whose attitudes towards, and recognition of, silence are based on an evaluation of the phenomenon as a valuable resource (see, e. g., Szuchewycz, this volume; Sajavaara–Lehtonen, this volume) may be especially helpful in the process of cultural *consciousness raising* attempted here.

We usually take communication for granted and do not reflect on the significance of our attitudes to its different linguistic manifestations. However, these attitudes and assumptions have important cultural, social and political implications, and future research needs also to address these issues in relation to silence, especially in the context of ideological debates on the "ownership" of discourse, meaning and the social construction of reality (see, for example, the papers in the recent collection by Caldas-Coulthard–Coulthard 1996, and their bibliographies).

Two clear examples of where critical discourse analysis and social anthropology of silence can make a significant impact in deconstructing the accepted power structures, is by examining censorship as a form of silencing (Jaworski–Galasiński, forthcoming), and by considering the implications of withdrawing the legal right to silence. The latter problem clearly rests on an essentialist view of silence as a negative and marked linguistic form whose meaning is appropriated by the power group.

In 1994, the Conservative Home Secretary, Michael Howard, proposed a new police caution to replace the old one.

(39) **The old caution:** You do not have to say anything unless you wish to do so, but what you say may be given in evidence.
The new caution: You do not have to say anything. But if you do not mention now something which you may later use in your defence, the court may decide that your failure to mention it now strengthens the case against you. A record will be made of anything you say and it may be given in evidence if you are brought to trial (Duncan Campbell. "New caution 'ends right to silence'", *The Guardian*. 19 August 1994).

The assumptions on which the quoted texts rest and their implications merit a separate study. For now, let me conclude by stating that as far as the old caution seems to recognize silence as a defence mechanism of the powerless party (the suspect), the new one presupposes a set of inferences to be drawn unilaterally from the suspect's silence by the powerful party (the police). It is monitoring and documenting such abuses of power that

the study of silence may be applied to. Perhaps a first useful step in questioning someone's right to define our silences for us is to realize that white contrasts not only with black but, as in Agnes Martin's paintings, also with white.

Notes

1. This is not the place, however, to discuss Reddy's alternative model of communication. Suffice it to say that it is in principle an inferential model of communication, and the analogy which I would draw here is that it stands in relation to the conduit metaphor framework in the same way as relevance theory stands in relation to the code model of communication (Sperber–Wilson 1986; see also McTear–King 1991).
2. It is worth mentioning that this is probably an instance of "constructed" talk (Tannen 1986), although this fact does change the status of the dotted silences.

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