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The scientific publication the Journal of Sound, Silence, Image and Technology (JoSSIT) grew out of the research group of the same name (SSIT), which is linked to the TecnoCampus centre as part of Pompeu Fabra University (UPF). The journal seeks to bring together academic debate and scientific research on the relation of sound as a broad concept with an audiovisual context.

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Coordination of Issue 4 What silence? Presence and sense
Dr. Daniel Torras i Segura

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Introduction: What silence? A transversal and diverse phenomenon.

Silence is a complex phenomenon. Its ambiguity —or polysemy, depending on how you look at it— and its strong dependence on the context that produces it makes silence a communicative matter that is difficult to analyse, understand, and explain. A specific silence is never repeated; even an audiovisual silence, planned and configured in a fixed audiovisual product that can be reproduced several times is unique for each present moment. As linguist Michal Ephratt, a researcher who continually studies it, states, silence is difficult to define but easy to recognize. For all these obstacles and the difficulties added in their conception, the mentions of silence in scientific articles can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The academic literature on silence as an object of study is very scarce or, where it does exist, it is very specialized or limited to an extremely narrow field of knowledge or discipline (so much so that it is sometimes considerably removed from silence as a psychoacoustic phenomenon).

In the last fifteen or twenty years, a timid change of trend has been observed in academia. Apart from more contributions on and considerations of the phenomenon, this has included more open-mindedness, the inclusion of more transversal perspectives, and the approach of new fields of knowledge in which, needless to say, analysis of and theorizing on silence also has a place. These fields range from audiovisual, persuasion, and psychology to areas such as human resource management and pedagogy.

In this regard, if a single idea can be extracted from this proposal for a monograph, it is transversality and diversity. The organization of this issue covers very different topics, such as photography or everyday life during the pandemic, and cinema and science, indirectly showing how, as a cultural substrate of humankind, silence is everywhere; a ubiquitous phenomenon that only needs to be heard or addressed. Silence is within us. As philosopher Michele Federico Sciacca put it, nothing of me is far from me in the moment of silence. This need to listen to ourselves and even to understand silence has been fostered, often unconsciously, in times of confinement and uncertainty as well as by various means and media that may not even be audiovisual.

With the article "Is silence a sound?", Ángel Rodríguez Bravo suggests ten points to use as a basis for a cross-sectional theory of silence from a rational and rigorous perspective and suitable for several —if not all— fields of knowledge in which silence can be studied. The proposal remains true to the idea of silence as an acoustic phenomenon linked to the sense of hearing, but fortunately goes beyond the qualification of silence as sound or

non-sound. Rodríguez travels briefly through contributions from philosophy and art, bioacoustics, psychoacoustics, theory of form (Gestalt), musicology, semiotics, and pragmatic linguistics to construct broad arguments and corroborate starting principles essential to any investigation into silence from now on.

From a linguistic point of view, but with a great emphasis on sociology and the theory of integrated communication, Rosa Mateu Serra presents the relationships observed between "Silences, press and pandemic". The author emphasizes the perpetually active semantic function of the sign of silence, which oscillates between negative and positive values but always has meaning. The relationship with the press is presented directly, through articles that explicitly talk about silence, or indirectly, offering details about loneliness, death, courtesy, or other elements traditionally linked to silence through our collective imagination. But in addition, new or more current links to silence are presented, such as artistic expression, gender, or a pandemic revaluation of the importance of nonverbal communication. This article clearly shows the daily life and, at the same time, the rooting, of silence in our being and environment.

With the essay "Silence and narrative photography", using photography as an excuse, we could say, José Luís Terrón masterfully talks about elements such as silencing, the concepts of silenced (event) or silenced (image), and silence in itself, all of them terms with timely and necessary nuances for any analysis of silence in a media process. Thus, from an environment as seemingly distant from silence as photography, Terrón reinforces the ubiquity and synaesthesia of the phenomenon of silence. The author includes a fundamental differentiation (extensible to other media and techniques) of the relationships between photography and silence, distinguishing metaphors of silence, works that demand silence, those creations that radiate stillness and calm and that we assimilate as silence and, finally, and very interesting from a conceptual perspective, those works or images that incorporate silence. This article is relevant, and I would dare to say indispensable, for any aesthetic study of silence.

For her part, Carlota Frisón explains how silence speaks to the thoughts of the creative filmmaker, specifically in film-essay. With a pertinent and well-dosed revision of the aesthetic trajectory in the appearance of sound in cinema and the subsequent consideration of the role of voices and silence, Frisón raises an original and unpublished point of view by granting sounds, very subjective sounds, to silence. The centrality of the idea of context as a human construction, together with a critical revision —and with a lexically rich and creative argument with documentary foundations and a brave vision— and a second axis on the idea of performing as an audiovisual expression, make this proposal a unique reflection on silence. The article opens the door to rethinking the relationship with audiovisual silence, and in fact between the whole soundtrack and silence, from the point of view of creativity and artistic expression, with an extremely innovative approach.

Finally, silence researcher Ángeles Marco transfers her literary and anthropological research to the analysis of silence as expressive matter in the work of the famous director Alfred Hitchcock. In an exhaustive review of this filmmaker's filmography, Marco reveals the use of audiovisual silence in a narrative, psychological, linguistic, and semiotic aspect. Hitchcock's silence removes everything that is not relevant, encourages informational imbalances between characters and audience interwoven with suspense, intervenes in the assembly techniques of analysis and synthesis typical of the director, and insinuates riddles by playing with things that are not what they seem. It acts as a sign of the filmic, diegetic universe, but it also reflects a vision of the changing society of the moment, among other notable conclusions. Marco shows in detail the relevance and centrality of silence within the symbolic and creative universe of Hitchcock.
It is with some pride and satisfaction that we can say that this fourth issue of the JoSSIT journal also contributes to both methodological and thematic openness in research on silence and that, in a way, the contributions in this volume are an example and a summary of the latest scientific trend and curiosity surrounding this broad, complex, and exciting phenomenon. Without further ado, we hope you enjoy it.

Daniel Torras i Segura
Editor of the current issue

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Is silence a sound?

Ten principles towards an expressive theory of silence

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the main theoretical and empirical models on which research into silence has been based, intending to locate and articulate the concepts considered to be orienting and practical to deploy a systemic and transdisciplinary review of "silence" as the object of research.

The study was carried out by confronting silence as an object of a phenomenological character triggered by the sense of hearing, whose expressive nature goes far beyond the sonic sensorial universe, and aims to obtain valid conclusions for any of the languages and expressive systems that incorporate it.

To locate and gather the contributions, the essential elements, and the theoretical gaps that may constitute the bases of an expressive theory of silence, the present study conducts a review of the knowledge on silence by grouping it into seven major research currents: philosophy and art, bioacoustics, psychoacoustics, theory of forms, musicology, semiotics, and pragmatic linguistics, while taking the communicative function as its backbone.

Lastly, the paper will propose ten principles for developing and empirical testing of an expressive theory of silence.

RESUMEN

Este artículo revisa las principales tendencias teóricas y empíricas en las que se ha apoyado la investigación sobre el silencio, con el objetivo de localizar y articular entre sí aquellos conceptos que se han considerado orientadores y útiles para desplegar una revisión del objeto de estudio "silencio", sistémica y transdisciplinar.

El estudio se desarrolla afrontando el silencio como un objeto de carácter fenomenológico desencadenado por el sentido de la audición, cuyo carácter expresivo rebasa ampliamente el universo sensorial de lo sonoro, y tiene la voluntad de obtener conclusiones válidas para cualquiera de los lenguajes y los sistemas expresivos que lo incorporan.

Con el objetivo de localizar y recoger las aportaciones, los elementos esenciales y, también, los vacíos teóricos que puedan constituir las bases de una teoría expresiva del silencio, a lo largo del texto se desarrolla la revisión de los conocimientos sobre el silencio agrupándolos en siete grandes corrientes de investigación: la filosofía y el arte, la bioacústica, la psicoacústica, la teoría de la forma, la musicología, la semiótica y la lingüística pragmática, tomando la función comunicativa como eje vertebrador.

Por último, el artículo aporta en sus conclusiones la propuesta de 10 principios para el desarrollo y la contrastación empírica de una teoría expresiva del silencio.

Introduction

Silence is one of the most transversal, suggestive, and slippery perceptual phenomena we come up against in expressive systems. Its polymorphism and ambiguity make it particularly interesting both in audiovisual narrative and in oral and musical communication. However, what really turns silence into a robust and vigorous expressive instrument is that its phenomenology goes far beyond the auditory spectrum; literature, philosophy, art, and popular language also place silence in writing, painting, photography, architecture, and so on; in other words, in multiple forms of non-sonic expression.

All us scholars who have tried to answer questions such as *What is silence? What does silence express? How is meaning assigned to silence? What are the conditioning factors for the use of silence?* etc. have come up against an unexpectedly complex problem with, in general, unsystematized, vague, and very patchy knowledge available. It is true that relevant studies dealing with silence are produced within the framework of pragmatic linguistics and musicology, but their orientation is also diffuse as is the very nature of this object of study.

Thus, the scientific literature on silence is overloaded with terms such as: paralinguistic, multisensory, plurifunctional, contradictory, borderline, heterogeneous, changing, etc., which illustrate the profound ambiguity in which the studies that attempt to approach silence with scientific rigour move and evolve.

This paper reviews seven of the different theoretical and empirical perspectives on which general research on silence has been founded, in order to locate and articulate those concepts that have been considered clarifying, guiding, and valuable for the construction of an expressive theory of silence.

Methodology

Silence will be approached as a phenomenological object of study triggered by the sense of hearing (Basulto, 1974), whose expressive character goes far beyond the sensory universe of sound (Navarrete, 2020; Torres Cantón, 2017), thus generating complex perceptual experiences.

A systemic and transdisciplinary review of the object of study, "silence", will be deployed, and which is intended to be valid for any languages and expressive systems that incorporate it. In order to achieve this globalizing approach, knowledge about silence will be addressed from seven major research currents: philosophy and art, bioacoustics, psychoacoustics, form theory, musicology, semiotics, and pragmatic linguistics, taking the communicative function as the backbone.

This approach aims to locate and bring together contributions, essential elements, and theoretical gaps to form the basis of an expressive theory of silence.

From philosophy and art

It is probably the philosophical perspective that has historically generated the richest and most heterogeneous production on silence. From Cicero's *The Orator* (1967) —106 to 43 BC— to current articles focused on the philosophy of communication, it is possible to find abundant literature explaining the communicative capacity of silence based on the absence of speech (Potestà, 2019; Sevilla Godínez, 2020).

On the other hand, reviewing the current theoretical approaches that approach silence from art reveals that these do not limit its expressive capacity to verbal absence but extend it to any absence perceived by any sense (Torres Cantón, 2017), with silence contemplated from fields as far from the spoken word as photography (Flores, 2020) or architecture (Navarrete, 2020). Obviously, if these two disciplines are approached in their broadest and most inclusive sense, it seems evident that silence can be understood as an internal experience, which is triggered by perceiving the absence of something we expected to be present.

All this richness and diversity makes a systematic and coherent approach to silence difficult. Nevertheless, three clear conceptual elements repeatedly appear in philosophical and artistic approaches to silence: its phenomenological character, its origin in the perception of absence, and its transversality.

Attributing a phenomenological character to silence situates it in the human universe. However, insofar as we face an unresolved problem, it is necessary to turn to broader and more diverse conceptual bases to advance our understanding of it. I will begin by reviewing the contributions that can be made to the understanding of silence by bioacoustics, a discipline whose object of study is the sound productions and habits of living beings in the broadest and most general sense.

From bioacoustics

Research on the use of acoustic signals by wildlife has made it possible to explore such primary behavioural and communicative aspects as defence of territory, alerting others to the presence of predators, attracting the attention of mates, locating individuals, detecting prey, etc., in a wide range of species (Martínez-Medina et al., 2021). If we consider that all these animal behaviours are based on emitting and perceiving sounds, it is not difficult to conclude that bioacoustics brings a new perspective to the concept of the "transversality of silence", in that it extends it to all living beings with a sense of hearing. Obviously, any living being capable of perceiving, recognizing, and processing the presence of a sound form must also have the capacity to perceive, recognize, and process its absence. Consider, for example, how a cheetah and a gazelle use the sound/silence relationship in the environment of a pond in the African savannah to make vital decisions, as the former tries to hunt and the latter to drink.

The essential logic for the communicative use of silence in the predator/prey relationship is to extract information about the presence/absence of sounds coming from the other, because

that information will make it easier for both to react, or not: the predator initiating the hunt and the prey fleeing. This situation shows that the trigger of the communicative process in critical survival conditions – both for the prey and the predator – is not the voluntary emission of signals —which both try to avoid— but their reception and correct interpretation.

I now invite the reader to think about how humans use the presence/absence relationship of sound while crossing a street on a bend with no traffic lights in any urban centre with heavy traffic; in this context, correctly interpreting the noise of engines and rolling on tarmac is also vital information for human survival.

It is true that the human use of silence, for example, in music and speech, can be much more sophisticated and complex. However, a review of the literature on silences in musical language (Arias Puyana, 2018; Arroyave, 2014) and in speech (Méndez Guerrero, 2014; Poyatos, 1994) shows that no abstract units have ever been formalized to assign concrete meanings to silences that go beyond the concept of pause. The truth is that the maximum state of technical and scientific formalization of silence with which human beings operate, both in music and in oral expression, consists of an approximate systematization of the presence/absence of sound as a function of time; in other words, in grouping pauses into different categories depending on their duration and context.

It seems, then, that in terms of the use and interpretation of silences, humans are much closer to other living organisms with an auditory sense than we imagine, and that the interpretative and expressive use that we *homo sapiens* make of silence is, in reality, quite basic and primitive. This reflection also leads us to think that the exploration of the use of silence in other species may provide essential and enlightening clues about our communicative process. An example would be the relevance of a new paradigm that contemplates the entire logic and deep meaning of communication as a result of the constant need to extract information from the environment we living beings have in order to maintain our survival (Rodríguez Bravo, 2008).

From psychoacoustics

Surprisingly, looking for specific research on silence within the strict field of psychoacoustics is a true wilderness. From the first third of the 20th century, with the development of Fletcher and Munson's well-known diagram, which organizes sound sensation into perceptual thresholds relating frequency and intensity (Fletcher and Munson, 1933), to the latest psychoacoustic research on auditory sound processing, silence has been absent as a specific concept of the discipline. It is very illustrative, for example, that in the more than 400 pages of *Psychoacoustics: facts and models* (Fastl and Zwicker, 2007), a scientific compilation of references in this field, the word "silence" appears only once.

Along the same lines as psychoacoustics, psychophysical research on the auditory organ (Sánchez Naranjo, 2004) and neuropsychiatric research on deaf people (Pardiñas, 2008) also do not explicitly address or explain the perception of silence.

In all these psycho-technical fields, silence tends to be seen as an abstraction and is entirely masked by the study of the perception/non-perception of sound in terms of acoustic parameters such as its duration, intensity, frequency, temporal evolution, or harmonic structure. The focus of psychoacoustic research is to formalize sound vibrations' physical characteristics to associate them with the auditory sensations produced during their reception. Those perceptions generated during periods of sound absence are simply ignored. They do not exist.

Nevertheless, the physical-perceptual articulation provided by psychoacoustics has been a source of knowledge and essential methodological support for those disciplines that have approached silence from a communicational perspective. Since silence arises from the relationship between the presence and absence of sound and evolves in the perceptual flow, the acoustic formalization of this presence/absence and its relationship with sonic communication could provide valuable knowledge.

From this psychoacoustic inspiration, some significant advances have been made in the field of communication in terms of knowledge of silence. Specifically, the possibility of formalizing sound in an acoustic way has made it possible to reach two relevant conclusions:

1. The first is the awareness and acceptance that *there is no such thing as absolute silence* (Mateu, 2003; Rodriguez Bravo, 1998; Terrón Blanco, 1991; Torras i Segura, 2021; Torres Cantón, 2017).

Should we accept, then, that silence does not exist? Of course not. In the techno-acoustic disciplines, the relevance of the concept of silence is never discussed or denied. Psychoacoustic formalization shows us that there are no situations in which sound is totally absent and that it is always possible to find and measure some sound. Nevertheless, silence is perceptible; we hear it, and we feel it. This paradox brings us back to the problem of the definition of silence, pointing out the inadequacy of merely describing it as "absence of sound"; and it also indicates the relevance of the philosophical perspective that understands silence as the inner experience we have when we perceive the absence of something we expected to be present.

2. The second is that *silence is a sonorous form*[1] (Rodriguez Bravo, 1998).

In fact, defining silence as the result of perceiving a class of sound forms is the corollary of

1 The author of this phrase, in his work *La dimensión sonora del lenguaje audiovisual,* defined silence perceptively as the "sensation of the absence of sound" produced by certain types of "sound forms", and described these forms as acoustic structures in which there is an abrupt decrease in the intensity of the sound signal after it has been extended in time for several seconds, leaving in its place a diffuse background of sound events of very weak intensity (Rodriguez Bravo, 1998, p. 150).

assuming the paradox that silence exists and, at the same time, that total absence of sound is not possible.

From the theory of forms

The assertion that specific acoustic sound structures make us perceive silence leads to the cognitive universe and the very concept of form. I will now move in this direction, but before reviewing silence from the postulates of Gestalt theory, the reader is invited to imagine the following situation:

> You are walking on a bridge, which spans a large highway of ten lanes, five in each direction. You can see and hear dense and high-speed traffic of hundreds of vehicles in both directions from the bridge. You hear, therefore, a thunderous roar of engines and rolling on the tarmac. It is a place where it is difficult to converse, and other sounds are barely audible because the loud roar of the traffic almost completely masks them.
>
> Now, suppose a few days have passed, and you are back at the same place, on the same bridge over the same motorway, but all the traffic has disappeared for some mysterious reason. Not a single car is moving. As you walk, you hear an eerie silence. Only the sound of the wind, some birds, and your footsteps can be heard. The disappearance *of the roar of traffic* sound form in the soundscape described above illustrates how a given acoustic structure can generate the perception of silence, and that the sensation of silence is perfectly compatible with the perception of other sound forms.

Gestalt theory (Koffka, 1935; Köhler, 1974; Wertheimer, 1923) explains that perceptual processing tends to group similar stimuli (rolling and engine noises of multiple vehicles), segregating the auditory stream into forms that fit the previous informative categories available to the receiver in his or her memory. We are now talking about top-down, concept-driven processing (Matlin, Foley, Ramírez Escoto, & Ortiz Salinas, 1996, p. 128). Since it is common to hear the rolling and engine noises of multiple vehicles when approaching a road with heavy traffic, this acoustic structure is loaded in our memory as the specific sound form of *roar of traffic* and is rigidly associated with visual landscapes containing large roads. However, on the second imaginary visit to the bridge over the motorway, the rolling and multi-vehicle engine noises that we would recognize as the *roar of traffic* have disappeared. This triggers two perceptual effects in us:

1. *The formal recognition of a solid comparative sensory difference*, which is produced by listening to a sound background with natural acoustic details of very low intensity (wind rustling, trills, and footsteps) where before we heard intense and multiple rolling and engine noises;

2. *The perception of absence*, generated when we realize that a relevant part of the soundscape strongly linked to that same place in our memory has disappeared. We do not find the expected sound form: the roar of traffic.

We have processed the two essential dimensions of silence:
a) The sensation of a relevant physical change in the acoustic structure;
b) The perception of absence associated with this change.

The evidence developed so far explains silence by acknowledging the paradox of its acoustic impossibility and its strictly cognitive character. However, there is still another relevant question, also paradoxical, which repeatedly appears in the musical literature on silence and which needs to be explained from the theory of form: the claim that musical forms (and as a corollary, sonic forms) are constructed in the auditory flow on a soundless background, that is, on silence (Chernoivanenko, 2019; Arias Puyana, 2018; Arroyave, 2014).
To the extent that we accept that silence is a sound form and, therefore, a concrete mental phenomenon based on auditory sensations, and also that the natural state of our sense of hearing (since there is no absolute silence) is to be immersed in a permanent and complex sound flow, then by paying attention to silence, sound will become the background, and silence will act as form. Thus, while Gestalt theory postulates that it is the perceptual act itself that endows the stimulus with formal structure and meaning (Martín Jorge, 2010), from the moment we direct our attention to observing silence, silences become perceived as acoustic gaps that are outlined on a continuous and omnipresent sound flow, and not the other way around. In short: silence becomes the form and sound becomes the background.
This reflection on the background/form relationship demonstrates the sound version of the well-known visual inversion effect in which the background becomes the form and the form becomes the background, the same image being perceived as either a white cup on a black background or two black faces on a white background.

From musicology

Silence is an essential part of the formal and expressive structuring of music, and analysing pauses as a structure of the presence/absence of silences is not unusual in music theory. Musical language has developed a thorough coding of rests according to their durations in conventional score notations and by creating new codes based on acoustic analysis (Syroyid Syroyid, 2019). In fact, the musical notation of silence is the most advanced and accurate notation that can be found in human languages if we exclude strict temporal measurement.
Indeed, the most important contributions of music creation and musicology have been to pose and explore the expressive value of silence through sound experience, defin-

ing its structural basis in time and assuming the formal ambiguity of sound absences (Arroyave, 2014; Cage, 1970). From these contributions, musical creation takes us to a particularly suggestive territory, in which silence is granted cultural, aesthetic, psychological, and philosophical meanings, such as stillness, tranquillity, emptiness, absence, discomfort, death, etc. (Chernoivanenko, 2019; Metzer, 2006).
We can see how the conceptual review of silence leads us to its expressive and significant capacity (Torras i Segura, 2015); let us then turn to silence by paying attention to its mechanisms of signification, that is, to the mechanisms from which it generates meaning in the processes of communication.

From semiotics

The academic review to this point has arrived at the following deductions:

a) That silence has its origin in a class of physical structures which, by stimulating the senses, make the receiver appreciate the absence of some perceptible or imaginable object (a sound source, a word or phrase, a situation) that was expected to be present;
b) That the impression of absence associated with these kinds of forms is transverse, in that it is not restricted to the sense of hearing or human beings;
c) That these physical structures act perceptually as forms in the "gestalt" sense of the term;
d) That silence is an internal experience that, in addition to expressing the absence of perceptible or imaginable objects, can also express cultural, aesthetic, psychological, and philosophical meanings.

If we accept that the concept of silence is constructed on the basis of the relationship between a perceptible physical structure (recognition of a form) and a sensation of absence, i.e. that all silence points to some absent object, it becomes evident that silence can act as a sign in the strictest semiotic sense (Peirce, 1982, pp. 244-245). And to the extent that silence generates meaning from its capacity to direct the receiver's attention towards some absent object – just as the silence on the savannah indicated to our gazelle the absence of predators and the silence on the bridge over the motorway the absence of moving vehicles to passers-by – we can say that silences act as indexical signs (Peirce, 1987, pp. 174-175). For this reason, when the *roar of traffic* disappears, we become aware of the absence of circulating cars. That is, we discover that the sound source of the silenced noise has disappeared.
In fact, applied acoustics' methodological orientation is consistent with the thesis that sound absences always act as a sign that is physically connected to the absent elements it reveals. Thus, when silences in speech are investigated for programming systems for automatic emotion recognition (Atmaja and Akagi, 2020), pauses and gaps provide information physiologically linked to the speaker's emotional states. Also, when hesitations (pauses and vowel lengthening) are analysed to characterize speakers for judicial

purposes (Llisterri, Machuca, and Ríos, 2019), absences in the flow of speech provide information on verbal behaviour linked to the identity of the speaker.
In the approach developed so far, we have addressed silence as a primary stimulus, generated without communicative intent, such as the absence of the sound of breathing from the person with whom we share a room or the sudden elimination of the sound of footsteps. However, what happens when silences are located in environments constructed with communicative intent? How does silence manage to express complex cultural meanings such as stillness, discomfort, or death?

From pragmatic linguistics

Pauses and silences in the speech environment have been studied within the framework of non-verbal communication, albeit considering them closely linked to language (paralinguistic). From this perspective, a meticulous and extensive classification of uses of silence has been developed (Mateu, 2003; Poyatos, 1994).
At the same time, from a pragmatic point of view, much research has been done on the interpretation of silence as another communicative sign that can be consciously and multifunctionally constructed. The problem of its significance has been explained based on what is located before and after each silence, who produces it, who receives it, where it takes place, and the type of relationship between the speakers (Méndez Guerrero, 2014). In fact, pragmatic studies specify that in order to explain the meaning of silence, the following five factors must be taken into account:

1. Other verbal and non-verbal signs that precede or appear next to it
2. The context (situational and sociocultural)
3. The social relationship of the participants
4. Previous and shared knowledge
5. Cognitive processes
   (Méndez Guerrero, 2016, p. 181)

The five factors that Méndez Guerrero includes as fundamental to explain the meaning of silences, although their scope of analysis is fundamentally in the domain of language, can also be extrapolated to music, audiovisual narrative, animal vocalizations, biomechanical noises, and environmental noises. That is, to any other expressive system that incorporates silence. Logically, providing we assume that all living beings with a sense of hearing: 1) handle silences as signs – specifically as indices[2]; 2) maintain social relationships; 3) interpret sound absences according to their contexts; 4) share knowledge, and; 5) develop cognitive processes[3].

2 "Anything that concentrates the attention is an index. Anything that startles us is an index, to the extent that it marks the conjunction between two portions of experience. Thus, a fierce thunderclap indicates that something considerable has occurred, even if we don't know what happened" (Peirce, 1987, p. 266).

3 The theoretical approach proposed here to address the social relations, knowledge, and cognitive processes of living beings is the Biological Theory of Knowledge (Castro García, 2020; Maturana & Varela, 1990 & 1998).

However, let us go back to the human environment and review how the meaning of silence works in two sound sequences that narrate the same situation in different ways in an example in which the essential difference is the change of context:

Sequence (A):

– Weak and very relaxed breathing is heard for five seconds with the almost inaudible background sound of the hum of a refrigerator.

– The breath stops sounding while the slight hum of the refrigerator compressor continues for three more seconds.

Sequence (B):

– Weak and very relaxed breathing is heard for five seconds with the almost inaudible background sound of the hum of a refrigerator.

– Against this background, a voice in the foreground explains: "That night Adela was calm, she had said goodbye to everyone, she no longer had to worry about anything else, she only had to abandon herself ... and let herself go".

– After the text, the breath and the faint hum of the refrigerator are still audible, and two seconds later, the breath stops sounding while the slight hum of the refrigerator compressor continues for three more seconds.

The difference between introducing, or not, the presence of a spoken sequence describing Adela determines two very different interpretations of the cessation of breathing, resulting in the silence of sequence (B) being much more transparent and accessible to interpret than that of sequence (A). Since sequence (B) is already located in the linguistic system in addition to the naturalistic context of primary sound stimuli, the significant capacity of the absence of the breathing sound acquires a much higher level of precision and complexity, allowing us to interpret that Adela has expired, she has just died peacefully and calmly, accepting her passage with serenity.

It is important to note that reading the linguistic text in isolation without linking it to the naturalistic sound environment proposed will hardly communicate the same information. In other words, it is essential to note that the information encoded in the silence of sequence (B) comes from the articulation of two sign systems: that of the primary sound stimuli and that of the language.

The previous example indeed shows how the expressive capacity of silence depends on the signs that surround it, but, above all, it shows us that the level of development and sophistication of the languages in which each silence is located determines its ability to communicate complex cultural meanings. Thus, silences located in a sophisticated coding context, such as linguistic or musical ones, will not have the same communicative capacity as those located in environments in which a symbolic system of basic signals is

shared; or those perceived in sound environments whose level of coding is limited to relating the auditory forms with their original sound sources.
However, as shown in the previous examples, when the context in which silence is situated simultaneously articulates several sign systems, its communicative possibilities expand, widely exceeding the expressive universe of sound.

On silence's density

We know that silence is not associated with specific codes (Torras i Segura, 2015) and that its interpretation is a dynamic process that depends entirely on its context (Méndez Guerrero and Camargo Fernandez, 2015). However, we have also deduced that silence is associated with the perception of absence and that its expressive capacity is determined by the degree of sophistication of the languages in which it is contextualized. Conceptual research into silence thus reveals this phenomenon as a complex perceptual experience, but it also leads us to a new question: how can we contrast and disentangle this sophisticated conception of silence?
Music theory proposes the concept of "density of silence" as a parameter related to the "capacity to resonate or dampen, to push or contain the flow of sound" (Arroyave, 2014, p. 153). Thus, the greater or lesser the number of instruments (of instrumental sound flows) simultaneously silenced in a composition, and the longer or shorter the duration of these absences, the greater or lesser the density of silence.
Indeed, we find ourselves before a very suggestive concept, but as is usual in any intuitive approach to the experience of sound, speaking of the density of silence means mixing, and therefore confusing, a physical signal with the sensation that this signal produces in its receivers. Therefore, to avoid confusion between stimulus and perceptual effect, we will replace the concept of density of silence, which is very ambiguous, with the much more precise "auditory emptiness", since it refers clearly to the sensory. Thus, we understand that the perception of silence is triggered from a certain degree of auditory emptiness onwards.
If we assume that:

a) the accumulated synchronous elimination of sound flows is experimentally manipulable and can be measured with acoustic analysis instruments;
b) the sensation of auditory emptiness can be observed and measured through reception tests;

the concept of auditory emptiness provides us with a theoretical approach to silence that can be explained and formalized separately:

1. The relevant physical changes of the acoustic structure that trigger the perception of silence;

2. The type of sound forms and flows whose absence triggers the perception of silence;
3. The different degrees of auditory emptiness that trigger the perception of silence.

Let us look at a new example to explore this approach, now from audiovisual language:

> The screen shows a soldier in a wide shot as he wanders alone and taciturnly among the people amidst the colour and bustle of a fair. The soldier approaches a young woman. Simultaneously, we hear four superimposed sound flows composing the aural landscape: 1) mechanical noises of Ferris wheels, booths, and merry-go-rounds; 2) *the hubbub of voices; 3) strident musical confusion;* 4) *the melody of a violin* that is almost masked by the rest of the sounds that make up the environment.
> As the soldier approaches the girl, the shot closes in, framing them both, and they look at each other. At that moment, the simultaneous and progressive disappearance of three of the four sound flows takes place: all the mechanical noises, the din of voices, and the strident musical confusion disappear, and only the melody of a violin remains in the sound background, which, when heard alone, acquires all the sonorous protagonism. At that moment, the spectators feel the emotion of the encounter that the characters are experiencing.

Let us now review the case from a perceptual point of view: the receiver exposed to this variation of sound stimuli will feel a more significant sensation of auditory emptiness the more sound flows have been eliminated. In psychoacoustic terms: the more the "sound pressure" (Sleifer, Santos Gonçalves, Tomasi, and Gomes, 2013) decreases, the greater the sensation of auditory emptiness. When this auditory emptiness exceeds a certain threshold, the receiver will perceive silence and, from that moment on, will feel the emotional intensity experienced by the characters at that moment of the encounter.
Let us now imagine a second version of the sequence:

> At the moment of the encounter, the effect of mechanical noises disappears, but we continue to hear a soundscape in which competing sounds are: *the din of voices*, the *strident musical* confusion, and the *melody of a violin*.

This second version is unlikely to produce the same sensory impact as the first because, even if the receiver identifies the absence of the flow of *mechanical noises*, the silence has not been perceived; that is to say, the weak drop in sound pressure will not have succeeded in exceeding the minimum necessary threshold of auditory emptiness to trigger silence.
The above observations suggest three hypotheses:

– The degree of auditory emptiness depends on the number of silenced sound flows.

– The sensation of auditory emptiness is associated with the sound pressure drop: the lower the sound pressure, the greater the sensation of auditory emptiness.
– The degree of auditory emptiness determines the thresholds of perception of silence.

If we assume that silence is linked to the unveiling of absences, it seems evident that the perception of silence is a complex cognitive process that, in addition to involving acoustic thresholds, incorporates the recognition of eliminated sound forms. Moreover, it seems obvious that measuring the primary sensation of auditory emptiness through reception tests would allow us to explore the physical realm of the density of silence rigorously. That is to say: the acoustic structures that trigger the perception of absence.
The above example does not allow us to define concrete thresholds for the perception of silence, and this task would have to be solved by an experimental research programme that articulates:

1) The manipulation of sound flows formally recognizable by receivers.
2) The manipulation and measurement of the acoustic pressure of these flows.
3) Perceptual tests that explore separately:
   a) The sensation of auditory absence.
   b) The sensation of silence.

To complete this conceptual investigation, I propose, by way of conclusions, ten principles for the development of an expressive theory of silence.

Conclusions

1. The main conclusion of the present conceptual research is that silence is not a sound but a complex perceptual experience triggered by the sensation of auditory emptiness and the recognition of formal absences. This recognition can provide information at very different levels of complexity depending on its immediate physical context, its receivers' needs and capacities, and the sign systems in which it may be inserted.
2. In order to understand the expressive logic of silence in its most transversal and extensive sense, it is necessary to move away from the anthropocentric and "*audiocentric*" communicative approach. Undoubtedly, communication is a constant and permanent human process, but it is essential to remember that it is not restricted to exchanging messages through verbal activity nor exclusive to humans. To advance in the knowledge of silence, we need to understand the communicative process as an essential function for all living beings, in which it is not the sending of signals with communicative intent that is fundamental, but their reception and processing, for the primary and essential purpose of improving adaptation to our environment in order to survive.
3. From a physical and psychological perspective, silence is constituted from a presence-absence relationship, or the disappearance, elimination, suppression, or lack

of a form – or class of forms – in an identified perceptible environment.
4. When we turn our attention to observing silence, silences come to be perceived as acoustic gaps looming over a continuous and pervasive flow of sound, rather than the other way around. That is to say: silence becomes the form, and sound becomes the background.
5. The perceptual impact of silence is enhanced by the accumulation of synchronous absences (for example, sudden and synchronous disappearance of noises, voices, and music in an audiovisual narration showing the hustle and bustle of a fair). We can describe this phenomenon by saying that the greater the accumulation of absences, the greater the density of silence.
6. Silence is a perceptual experience triggered by any formal void that can indicate absent elements. Therefore, these voids act as signs. In Peirce's (1987) terminology, such forms are always indexical as they direct our attention by indicating relevant absences in any perceptible environment.
7. We do not have a priori standardized codes that allow us to assign a specific meaning to silence. Therefore, it must always be interpreted in terms of:

a) Its perceptual environment.
b) The needs and capacities of its receivers.
c)The sign systems in which it may be inserted.

8. Silence is loaded with information according to its context. This context increases its capacity to express complex meanings according to the sophistication of the language —or languages— in which it is situated.
9. When silence is located in contexts that simultaneously articulate several sign systems, its perception triggers cognitive mechanisms beyond sound's expressive sphere.
10. The relevant methodology to contrast the theoretical model proposed in this article should be experimental, based on perceptual tests, and oriented to study the articulation between:

a) The presence/absence of recognizable sound flows (cognitive perspective).
b) The sound pressure of present/absent flows and their summations (psychoacoustic perspective),

on:

1) The sensation of auditory absence.
2) The sensation of silence.

This methodological approach will also allow exploration of the expressive capacities of silence in its most transversal and extensive sense, empirically and with quantitative precision.

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Silences, press and pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The fact of speaking about silence already indicates a contradiction. Silence, as a sign, always has a value, be it positive or negative, but it is never an empty sign.

In recent decades, research on silence has increased from different perspectives. And without a doubt, the state of pandemic we are experiencing has also contributed to the emergence of other forms of the manifestation of silence, certain existing uses being emphasized in some areas, or unforeseeable uses emerging in contexts other than this unfortunate situation.

In this article I propose to offer some outlines of these experiences of silence, or silences, which have become more evident during the pandemic, using quotes and references from the media, especially the press. Different information about silence will serve as a starting point or anchor to reflect on the presence of silence during COVID-19, to make us sensitive (or more sensitive) to the various textures and functions of silence.

RESUMEN

El hecho de hablar del silencio ya indica un contrasentido. El silencio, como signo, siempre posee un valor, sea positivo o negativo, pero nunca será un signo vacío.

En las últimas décadas la investigación en torno al silencio, desde diferentes ópticas, va en aumento. Y sin duda, el estado de pandemia que estamos viviendo también ha contribuido al hecho de que en este periodo emerjan otras formas de manifestación del silencio, o que se enfaticen determinados valores ya existentes en algunos ámbitos, o que afloren usos imprevisibles en otro contexto que no sea esta desafortunada situación.

En este artículo nos proponemos ofrecer unas pinceladas de estas vivencias del silencio, o de silencios, que se han puesto más de manifiesto durante la pandemia; nos hemos servido de citas y referencias provenientes de los medios de comunicación, especialmente de la prensa. Distintas informaciones sobre el silencio nos servirán de punto de partida o punto de apoyo para reflexionar sobre la presencia del silencio durante la COVID-19, para hacernos sensibles (o más sensibles) a las diversas texturas y funciones del silencio.

Introduction. Notes on the value of silence

Silences are never empty signs and as such are fundamental elements in social and personal communication. Because of this, referring to silence as simply the absence of noise is insufficient[1]. It is one more component of communication that we should qualify as a complement to speech, not as its opponent.

In our Western[2] culture, the use of silence is in some way stressed by the predominant value we give to the word; to what is said, to what is written, to what is explicit. The special essence of silence[3] means that studies on silence from various fields are expanding their limits and allowing new approaches. That said, we live in the so-called era of the communication and information society or, some may say, of the excess of information, which leaves little space for the evaluation of silence. Barthes (1975) alludes to the society of transmitters in which we live: books, texts, invitations, propaganda, publicity texts; while Raimon Panikkar (1997) refers to "logomachy" as the great epidemic of our time and mentions "sigephobia" (fear of silence) as one of the diseases of the 20th century.

As mentioned, silence tends to be evaluated negatively in our Western society (with important nuances and exceptions). It is a sign full of social prejudices that causes us fear, insecurity, and tension. We cling to the word, to the explicit, and we distrust the unsaid, the unwritten, the unmentioned.

As a polyhedral and transversal phenomenon, one of the opportunities to study silence can occur within the scope of the so-called Linguistics of Communication, which encompasses different disciplines and/or perspectives whose common denominator is the importance given to the communicative phenomenon, to the use of language, to the fact of understanding language as a form of action. Among these perspectives is that offered by Pragmatics, which, by having speech acts (or utterances, not sentences) as the focus and also having a component as relevant as communicative *intention* (yet which is intangible, subtle, and ambiguous at the time), and the concept of "interpretation" (activated thanks to the various pragmatic mechanisms), can serve as a framework to explain silence. This approach allows us, for example, to explain certain communicative acts or, in this case, acts of silence, based on various principles or theories; the principle of relevance can clarify why our behaviour becomes more ostensive or relevant when we are expected to say

1 Let us bear in mind Watzlawick's statement that (2014, p. 15) "Nothing never happens": everything communicates; it is not possible not to communicate.

2 We use the qualifier *Western* very generically in opposition, in principle, to Eastern culture. However, within this overall culture there are small and/or large differences in the value given to silence, both from a more theoretical point of view and in its daily uses.

3 Alain Corbin, in his exquisite work *History of silence. From the Renaissance to the present day*, shows how silence has been experienced throughout history through quotes from various authors. In the prelude he uses a term that seems very visual and recognizable to us: the "textures" of silence, which I have taken up again in the abstract. In the prelude to the work, the author also asks, "What better way to experience them [the silences] than to immerse oneself in the quotes of the numerous authors who have undertaken a true aesthetic search? By reading them, each one of us puts our sensitivity to the test. History has tried too often to 'explain'. When it addresses the world of emotions, it must also, and above all, make us feel (...)" (2019, p. 8).

something and do not, or, as Mª Victoria Escandell affirms: "silence (...) has authentic communicative value when it is presented as a real alternative to using the word" (1996, p. 35) and "usually the decision not to speak is slower than that of doing it" (1996, p. 36).

If, from the theory of perception, we conceive of reality in terms of figure/background, then in our Western tradition and under normal circumstances, speech would be the figure and silence the background. When silence becomes the figure placed in the foreground it causes us discomfort. In these conditions we conceive silence as a lack of cooperation with the interlocutor since courtesy prompts us to "say something" in order to maintain social relations. For this reason, "talking for the sake of talking" is not negative, but necessary; small talk (also called minor conversation, banal conversation, light conversation, etc.), according to Estrella Montolío, is important to "keep relationships well oiled" (2020, p. 67) and is very useful to fill in those tense silences mentioned.
From another perspective, we can also relate silence to non-verbal communication which may help reduce discomfort or decipher the intention of this silence when present. In any case, the most interesting and significant silence is perhaps that expressed as a real alternative to words; that voluntary, intentional silence which is not accompanied by gestures (think of the silence in a telephone conversation, for example), whose meaning is magnified and at the same time causes us concern.
Taking into account these prior considerations, I would like to contribute some reflections on those silences that have manifested and continue to manifest most ostensibly in this period of pandemic. As we know, the transmission of the coronavirus has had (and will have) serious consequences in all areas: from health to the socioeconomic and cultural and also the personal spheres.
This article seeks to contribute reflections on the presence of these silences from a transversal point of view by referring to them in different contexts[4]. To do this, I have selected various information from the media, especially the press, but also from academic documents. I have taken into account headlines, reviews, opinion pieces, interviews, and, as indicated above, some other scenarios. Most examples come from *La Vanguardia* between January 2020 and May 2021, but they alternate with examples from other newspapers, as well as quotes from authors and works that have made silence the focus of attention, regardless of the phenomenon of the current pandemic.
The purpose was to observe the news related to the pandemic that had a relationship with silence, both directly and indirectly. The examples provided are intended as a small sample of those values that have seemed most significant to me. My intention is not to discuss these appearances of different forms of silence in an exhaustive way, but to select specific representations as an illustration to give rise to reflection.

4 The article by Nicolás José Lavagnino (2020), "Silences and pandemic", reflects on the fact that the crisis also depends on the silences involved.

Silence and stillness

(...) Ah, in the terrible silence of the room
the clock with its sound of silence! (...)[5]

According to Poyatos (1994), silence and stillness are the pillars of culture. In our culture we usually associate sound with movement and silence with stillness, although there may be silence in stillness and silence in movement[6].

Because of this, we usually associate silence and stillness in everyday contexts with "doing nothing" in a negative sense. Some people need to move continuously to avoid feeling they are wasting time. Others, on the other hand, seek out spaces of silence in order to get away from movement and the hectic day-to-day.

We forget that stillness and silence could or should often occur prior to action, something that is increasingly rare in these times when speed and imposed or self-imposed urgency obtrude on our living space. This may explain the emergence of phenomena such as FoMO ("fear of missing out"), an expression describing a new form of anxiety that emerged after the popularization of mobile phones and social networks and which manifests as a compulsive need to be connected (Torres, 2020).

At the other extreme, and as a result of the above, we are also increasingly witnessing the birth of movements exalting slowness, such as the "slow city" (which proposes greener cities with fewer billboards, reduced speed, etc.) and "slow food", which focuses on enjoying gastronomy and tranquillity.

For a few weeks during this period of pandemic, we were all able to feel a new silence that was previously exclusive to night-time: the silence in the streets and in daily activities derived from confinement. We were not used to it. We associated those moments of silence with specific contexts: hospitals, libraries, churches, etc., or the night.

Just one of the many perceptible changes derived from the context of COVID-19 has been this stillness resulting from the various periods of confinement; weeks in which being able to leave the house or take a walk became an unexpected necessity and luxury. But at the same time, those silent streets have allowed us to perceive or discover sounds normally muffled by constant noise. As David Le Breton writes, "walking is also a journey through silence and an enjoyment of ambient sound, since a spirit that loves to wander along the shoulder of a freeway or the ditch of a national highway is not conceivable" (2014, p. 69). And later, "Some sounds infiltrate the silence, without managing to disturb it; sometimes, on the contrary, what they achieve is to awaken the ear to the auditory quality of a place that until then had gone unnoticed" (Le Breton, 2014,

5 Pessoa (1998), *Poemas de Ávaro de Campos y otros poemas con fecha.*

6 Pablo d'Ors points out: "First of all, it must be said that silence in stillness is very different from silence in movement. It is scientifically proven that eyes that do not move lead to greater concentration in the subject than if they are in motion" (2013, p. 61).

p. 70). This relates to that function of silence as a receptacle for other sounds referred to by Poyatos (1994)[7].

For a while we have been able to partially forget about noise and its adverse effects in the short or long term: the loss of the ability to detect faint sounds, stress and fatigue, sleep and behaviour disorders, decreased cognitive abilities, communication difficulties, irritability in social relationships[8]. Another of its negative consequences are the possible panic attacks that derive from noise in the workplace and that affects the brain. Similarly, according to scientific research, the noise most harmful to humans is that of road traffic, while the most hated are noises from building sites, barking, or the garbage truck (Rius, 2010).

But we should not simply reduce noise to an easily perceptible and measurable phenomenon but should also include noise that is "unwanted by the receiver" and only perceptible in a background silence: "Noise is all sound that is unwanted by the receiver; the sound of the drop of water from the neighbour's sink is of a negligible level, but if it prevents us from sleeping, it becomes noise"[9].

As stated in the presentation of the online event held on 28th April 2021 to mark International Noise Awareness Day:

> Coexistence with sound is sometimes very difficult and the pandemic has further strained relationships. Confinement has opened our ears to new 'unexpected sound sensations'. Suddenly, a large part of the world's population, especially those who live in large cities, have discovered what is known as silence and that it is not the absence of sound.
> (...) Sounds hidden for decades, swallowed up by the noise of vehicles, have returned. What effects has this experience had on people? Because 'silence is quality of life', it is respect for nature and it is also sustainable, now we must talk about silence and much more[10] (GRAUSTIC, 2021).

In relation to this minimized street noise in times of confinement, one of our cultural behaviours that is different to forms of social courtesy in other countries is background noise or the noise that people emit, which is common on transport systems. This noise is more noticeable on buses than on the subway, for example, and at certain times of day.

7 This scene related by Nikos Kazantzaki (1960-1975) and given to us by Le Breton (2014, p. 78) seems to me both beautiful and illustrative: "The word fails when trying to describe the power of an instant or the solemnity of the place. Kazantzaki walks with a friend in the depths of a forest on Mount Athos, on the road that leads to Karyes: «It seemed that we were entering an immense church: the sea, forests of chestnut trees, mountains and above, like a dome, the open sky. I turned to my friend: 'Why don't we talk', I said, wanting to break a silence that was beginning to weigh on me. 'We speak', my friend replied, lightly touching my shoulder, 'we speak, but the language of angels, silence'. And abruptly, as if he had gotten angry: 'What do you want us to say? What is beautiful, that our heart has wings and wants to fly, that we are on a path that leads to Paradise? Words, words ... Shut up!'»" (Kazantzaki, 1960-1975, p. 234-235).

8 These are some of the consequences of noise mentioned in the article "An enemy that is not silent" by Mayte Rius (2010).

9 Santiago Páez, physicist of the Spanish Society of Acoustics, cited by Rius (2010).

10 Terms in quotes are emphasis from the original source.

But we do not commonly find posters or recommendations encouraging us to speak quietly or remain silent on these means of transportation.
During COVID-19, the advertising campaign Sst (March 2021) was announced: "«Sst», the new action on the public transport network promoting the recommendation to travel in silence", a step over and above the prevention measures adopted during the pandemic:

> Using the onomatopoeia "Sst", the ATM is initiating a direct impact action in order to raise awareness among and educate users, who generate far fewer aerosols when silent and therefore help reduce the risk of infection.
> Numerous scientific studies warn of the risk of coronavirus transmission via aerosols, tiny droplets that come out of the mouth especially when speaking. In the face of this warning, the recommendation is to remain silent to ensure safety (Rodalies de Catalunya, 2021).

The silence of the arts

Artistic experiences about silence are numerous and are increasingly produced in different artforms: literature, music, painting, architecture, and so on.11
Special mention should be given to the artist Tres, who died a few years ago and who was behind creative and disturbing shows such as *Muted 1999, Cóctel silencioso, Bosque sonoro, Concierto para apagar*[12], among many other initiatives.
At this point, however, I want to highlight a work by the artist Marina Abramovic, awarded the 2021 Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts in January of this year. This was the headline that appeared in the newspaper *Ara:* "Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts 2021 for the great exponent of 'performance', Marina Abramovic. Her work includes actions such as sitting at MoMA for 700 hours"(Serra, 2021).
As the text recalls, one of her most acclaimed performances was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where she sat in a chair, immobile and in silence, for more than 700 hours locking eyes with visitors, who tried to hold her gaze (in 2010). The review recalls the creator's relationship with another artist, Laysiepen (Ulay), with whom she collaborated on a series of unusual projects, and which ended a few years later. In the aforementioned project, they met again: "they looked at each other and Abramovic's tears fell" (Serra, 2021).
Keeping your gaze fixed on another person without moving is one of the most complex communicative actions. Special control is needed to cope with the strain of the still gaze. The artist was able to endure the situation until her feelings had to emerge through an irrepressible physiological act: crying, in this personal context.

11 An interesting journey through "this seduction of silence through its own language" is provided by Fernando Castro (2019, p. 10).

12 During the performance there was a blackout and a total silence emerged in the Escola Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona (2008).

Another type of event illustrates the situation experienced by another area that has suffered the consequences of the pandemic. The restriction or cancellation of cultural activities has allowed us to show and feel the loneliness of the streets mentioned above. On the occasion of the New York premiere of the play *Plaza Suite* (a comedy about the evolution of a marriage staged at the Hudson Theatre), journalist Francesc Peirón dedicated a few lines to describing the unusual urban landscape left by COVID-19:

> The theatres that abound in that area [Times Square], and that make up the mythical Broadway, are only stone buildings; silent, without that bustle that characterizes that moment when the curtain rises or falls. On their marquees they advertise stories frozen in time (Peirón, 2020).

We are experiencing another particular and parallel example with the reopening of shows, in this case[13]:

> This context of a pandemic and coughing being one of the possible symptoms of coronavirus means that it no longer ruins short or long passages in the musical story, nor does it affect the concentration of the artists and the audience. What has happened to coughing at concerts? Does the presence of Covid19 show that it was possible to suppress it all along? Have we endured it all these decades for nothing? "I am delighted that people are silent. Not even a fly was heard at the recent open rehearsal for Mozart's 'Requiem'. It was delicious", says a marvelling Josep Pons, musical director of the Liceu. He is not the only one who cannot believe it. In these difficult times, live music can be enjoyed more than ever. (...) "It's true – Estefania Sort, theatre manager at the Gran Teatre, corroborates – no one coughs! (...) I don't know if it is because people have returned to the theatre with great respect and enthusiasm, or because we are afraid people will give us dirty looks." Even behaviour has changed, says Sort, people move less from their chairs, "everyone has become very obedient and aware of the situation and the effort being made to reopen" (Chavarría, 2020).

Silence and gender

Confinement has aggravated the situation of gender violence which, unfortunately, adds to a consistently topical issue. According to various studies, however, confinement has also caused "another pandemic":

> The increasing isolation and barriers that make it difficult to file a report and request help have had a direct consequence in an increase in this violence. The paradox is that the decrease in complaints and murders may lead to the mistaken belief that this increase has not occurred.

13 Coughing, like other physiological or emotional reactions (sighing, laughing, yawning, hiccups, etc.) is part of paralanguage, as indicated by the specialist in non-verbal communication Poyatos (1994), together with the physical qualities of sound and quasi-lexical elements, which Poyatos calls "alternatings". Certain uses of silence are also found in this paralinguistic domain.

> Rather, it has been made invisible and limited to the privacy of many homes. Silence is an effective accomplice of violence (...) the pandemic has shown us that other social "syndemic"[14] that leeches off social ties. Invisible violence is powerful because of that same invisibility, because of the family isolation in which it is carried out. The social distance here protects the aggressor and contaminates family ties (Ubieto, 2021).

In parallel, the pandemic has also influenced the decrease in the visibility of male violence against women in the press, which has received "less media attention" due to frequent information about the pandemic: "Covid-19 eclipsed male violence against women in the press. Coverage plummeted by 61% although the decrease in fatalities only fell by 24%"(Neira, 2021).
In another vein, it has been observed that "the pandemic has widened the pay gap for women":

> (...) and it has also postponed dreams. At the European forum 'Women Business & Justice', organized by the Col·legi de l'Advocacia de Barcelona, the President of the Senate, Pilar Llop, warned that Covid "has squandered female talent, which is now at risk of a setback". Many women lack a room of their own in which to pursue their studies, projects, or scholarships. This is evidenced by studies carried out by the Complutense University on the impact of confinement. The old dynamic of the division of tasks persists; before the virus, female researchers spent an average of 6.2 hours per week working on their publications. Today, their study time has been reduced to 1.6 hours while that of men has increased by more than an hour (Bonet, 2021).

Death

A fragment of the article "The return of death" (Puigverd, 2020) is presented below as representative of the situation in terms of the end-of-life care brought about by the pandemic and which, for many, represents a new approach to existence:

> Now the hypothesis of death is varnished, and it shines. The coronavirus is at once a metaphor and an expression of the change of era inaugurated by the fall of the Twin Towers. The ugly face of globalization began then. Every year the uncertainty, the fear, the restlessness shall increase. That is to say, death once again has the prominence it achieved during previous stages of history.
> The 21st century is testing the great era of prosperity and peace that we Westerners have known since World War II. Growth, widespread consumption, vacations and trips, social services, pensions, education (...). We ran on nonstop accumulating excesses. Abruptly brought to a halt by a microscopic virus, we believe we are one step away from the precipice. There is no choice but to rethink the route (Puigverd, 2020).

14 In the RAE Observatory of Words the term is defined as "a neologism not established in general use that is documented to refer to a situation in which several epidemics coexist over time and mutually strengthen each other".

On the other hand, and in line with this, there has been a clear increase in tributes to health personnel and other professionals who work on the front line. The ritual of the minute of silence dedicated to the deceased has grown exponentially. The following information demonstrating how the minute of ritual silence has been prolonged to two (which seems to be the origin of this ritual act) caught my attention:

> The Consell de Col·legis de Metges de Catalunya (CCMC), together with the rest of the professional colleges of the health sector in Catalonia, has convened two minutes of silence at 12 o'clock in memory of the colleagues who have died fighting the COVID-19 pandemic[15] (Col·legi de Metges de Barcelona, 2020).

We also return to one of those many tributes to the victims of coronavirus. I selected this one specifically because of the reading of the poem "Silencio" by Octavio Paz:

> The nurse from the Hospital in Barcelona [Vall d'Hebron] will be the only one of the three people who will speak at a sober funeral honouring and respecting all those who have died due to the coronavirus. (...) actor José Sacristán will read some verses of Octavio Paz's poem "Silencio" (Sen, 2020).

Among so much news and so many medical announcements, interest in writing about or raising awareness of the importance of accompanying people in those final moments of their lives has also increased, as has reflection on the importance of a more palliative type of medicine:

> What do you say to someone who is dying? There are times in life when it is not necessary to give answers. Sometimes what is needed is presence. There are relatives, friends and health workers who say, "I won't see him because I don't know what to say to him", don't say anything to him, be there, accompany him in silence, take his hand[16] (Rius, 2021).

In this same vein, are these words by Antoni Bassas (2021): "But in the midst of so much science and so many statistics, the two doctors remember that in the middle of the twenty-first century, there is still an unsurpassable therapeutic act that no professional should forget: taking the patient by the hand"[17].

The dilemma between explaining the pain of a loss or privately preserving it within each of us is shown in the article "You have to look at the dead child" (Piquer, 2021): "the di-

15 The event took place on May 14, 2020.

16 Words by Montserrat Esquerda, paediatrician and bioethics expert, in an interview conducted by Mayte Rius (2021).

17 This is the final part of a column dedicated to the publication of a book by Argimon and Padrós (Argimon, Padrós and Bruna, 2021) on the medical profession and the pandemic (Bassas, 2021).

lemma between making a personal ordeal public or creating a bigger silence", in this case caused by an unwanted abortion (the article appeared following the publication of the work by Anna Starobinets: *You have to look*).

Around courtesy

As mentioned on previous pages, the use of silence in certain contexts and from the perspective of Western culture is generally viewed as negative. One example is the abandonment of the social network Twitter by Ada Colau, mayor of Barcelona. Among other reasons, Colau says:

> In addition, another phenomenon has been created that I call "the tyranny of permanent presence". It seems we have to think about everything all the time. If you don't suddenly tweet about a controversial topic, someone comes out to say that you are very quiet (...) I will continue in other less polarized and less fast-paced networks[18] (Colau, 2021, quoted in *El País*, 2021).

We ask ourselves, is the non-response or the option of silence a lack of courtesy? Does the supposed freedom of participation in social networks become, on the contrary, a form of slavery? Are there different rules for how public figures use social networks? Also in relation to courteous acts, on the recent death of Xavier Folch, Albert Om wrote him a letter in his usual space on the back page of the newspaper *Ara,* entitled "El pare del meu amic" (Om, 2021) including what he calls "an apparently minor detail":

> That you would rather listen than talk seemed very uncommon to someone with your career and intellectual stature. During lunch I was attentive to your words because I wanted to hear you talk about your experiences and, wherever I was going, I left your house captivated by your complicit silences. You let go of a question, you were silent like you were withdrawing from it, but I always noticed your attentive gaze, your eyes fixed on me to encourage me to talk about projects with your child (...) You didn't talk, but you did talk. You didn't write, but you did write (Om, 2021).

This manifestation of being silent to make way for the other to speak reminds us that the description of the "art of being silent", made explicit in the work of the same title: "[*The art of being silent*], has not lost any of the practical purposes of the rhetorical arts: it is not an art of silence, but rather *an art of doing something to the other through silence*"[19].

18 The quotation marks appear in the original document.

19 The original title is *L'art de se taire: Principalement en matière de religion* (1771). Although this may lead us to think it is a reflection on religious or monastic silence, the content of the work can be extrapolated to other contexts. The italics are by the authors of the prologue to the work, Jean-Jacques Courtine and Claudine Haroche (Dinouart, 1999).

Personal communication: the importance of non-verbality

Allusions to the importance of non-verbal communication, as seen in previous sections, have again been highlighted or have increased during this period of pandemic. Below are reproduced some mentions of the importance of this relevant form of human communication in an article published in *La Vanguardia* (Molins, 2020). In it, we find statements particularly from specialists in the field of psychology, such as the following: "The important thing in communication is intention and with the mask you lose it", says Ignasi Ivern. Or in the words of Mireia Cabero: "In this situation, synaesthetic people have it worse, because they have had to stop touching"; this and other interesting comments remind us, once again, of the consequences that the pandemic has had and will have on forms of personal communication (Molins, 2020).

Lastly, we return to the words of Jordi Basté indirectly illustrating how the absence of words, of the unsaid (in this case, of the unwritten), can also offer relevant information. The journalist expresses this in an article including these words as a reflection:

> A year later [from March 2020][20] politicians have apparently already moved on. It is very telling that the words *health, pandemic* or *doctors* did not appear in the first three pages of political information (16, 17, and 18) in *La Vanguardia* yesterday (Basté, 2021)

In conclusion

The pandemic is changing our lives. We perceive this in our day-to-day experience and will appreciate it in the near future with consequences that we intuit but cannot yet foresee. Much of the information managed by the mass media exposes these insights and reminds us of situations previously experienced or points out prospects on which we will have to reflect.

The ways in which silence is shown, as a necessary option, a complex phenomenon that is always present in forms of communication although not always easily interpretable (but is the word not also interpretable?), can also help us to briefly pause and observe reality with a new perspective.

20 Information in brackets is mine.

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Silence and narrative photography

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ABSTRACT

This paper's subject is silence in narrative photography. In executing this study, we have reviewed texts on silence but, given that there are very few, we have had to depend on others that discuss image. We will begin by characterizing silence as a photographic element, and we will distinguish between silencing, a silenced event/image and silence. The latter could be photographs that demand silence from us, photographs capable of emanating stillness and calm that we assimilate to silence, photographs that use metaphors to represent silence and, finally, photographs that incorporate silences. We will emphasize that silence can convey meaning, and that its meaning occurs when it is contextualized and used, rendering it informative as well as expressive. To develop these ideas, we will analyze various photographs and look at their possible silences, which, insofar as they interrelate with other elements of the image to form a unit, make up the photograph itself. For this analysis, and in the absence of texts specific to this subject, we will use classical Chinese painting as an analogy. This text should be read as an approach to a subject that has received little attention up to this point.

For Felix, who likes to watch so much

RESUMEN

El presente escrito es un ensayo cuyo objeto de estudio es el silencio en la narración fotográfica. Para su realización hemos revisado textos que hablaran de él, pero dada su escasez, hemos tenido que apoyarnos en otros que tratan sobre la imagen. Comenzamos caracterizando al silencio en cuanto elemento de la fotografía y distinguimos entre silenciamiento, silenciado/silenciada y silencio. Este último puede aparecer como fotografías que nos reclaman silencio, las fotografías capaces de irradiar quietud y calma y que asimilamos a silencio, las fotografías que usan metáforas para representar el silencio y, por último, las fotografías que incorporan silencios. Subrayamos que el silencio es capaz de significar y que su sentido se da en la contextualización y en el uso. Un silencio que puede informar y no sólo ser un elemento expresivo. Para desarrollar estas ideas analizamos varias fotografías y deparamos en sus posibles silencios, que son, en tanto que se interrelacionan con otros elementos de la imagen conformando una unidad, la propia fotografía. Para este análisis y debido a la ausencia de textos que lo hagan específicamente sobre este objeto de estudio, usamos por analogía la pintura china clásica. El texto debe de leerse como una aproximación a un objeto de estudio que a día de hoy ha merecido poca atención.

Para Félix, al que tanto le gusta mirar

By Way of Introduction

In 1992 we defended a thesis on silence in radio language. From a theoretical viewpoint, we established that radio language was composed of words, music, noises, and silences, all four with the capacity for meaning. But, of the four elements, silence had never been studied in depth. One of the conclusions of that thesis was that total silence does not exist. What did we mean by total silence? That the limits of our perception (as individuals and as a species) led us to suppose that silence exists where, in reality, there is none. In other words, it was an anthropocentric vision related to the physical phenomenon of sound. Furthermore, although throughout the thesis we tried to establish the interconnection between sound and silence as one of opposites, their interrelationship seemed to be one of dependency: that silence exists as long as there is no sound. Today, we are clear that they are interdependent, and that silence is not what it is but what we want it to be.

Biguenet (2021) recalls Adorno in citing a possible silence. Adorno ponders the (im)possibility of representing the unrepresentable —how to speak about the unspeakables— with reference to the Holocaust. Years later, when dealing with the Rwandan genocide, Edgar Roskis (1995) asks questions of himself and us to warn us what would have been said of a Pulitzer Prize won at Auschwitz. Wittgenstein (1981) had already written in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* that what cannot be talked about is better nleft unsaid. We will revisit these questions later, with a focus on photography. However, if allowed, and even if we distort the ultimate meaning of Adorno's words, in this study we will refer to a possible silence (the one we wish it to be), since physics shows it to be impossible.

Enrique Sacristán (2021) interviewed Álvaro de Rújula, a theoretical physicist, asking if there is any place in the universe where there is absolutely nothing other than emptiness. Álvaro de Rújula replied: "Nothingness is the absence of everything that 'could be there.' It is a philosophical concept, characteristically vague. However, emptiness is a physical concept: it is something observablet." This leads us to maintain that nothingness —silence— is a construct of what "could be there"—a construct of silence itself.

In this article, we do not intend to expand on the different meanings or functions encompassed by the concept of silence. If that is of interest, please refer to the first part of the aforementioned thesis (Terrón, 1992). But we do consider it necessary to enunciate a series of interrelated features that, in our understanding, define and constitute silence. We will revisit some of these later.

The first of these is "verbocentrism", which in this case would be the object (we understand people to constitute a type of object) and would not be understood without its constitutive and enduring functions.

The first words in the Bible come to mind for us all. By way of emphasis, it is better to turn to another constitutive myth:

> Everything has been produced through the Word: Vâc was next to God, the Brâhmana repeats: "All this, in principle, was only the Lord of the universe. His Word was with him. This word was his second. He contemplated. He said: «I am going to liberate this Word and thus it will produce and bring into existence this whole world»" (Panikkar, 1984/85, p. 26).

Whenever reading these constitutive myths, language action theory comes to mind. Let us close this paragraph with a reference to the Dogon people because they understand that there are two types of wordse: *dry* ones, which communicate, and *wet* ones, which enter a woman's ear and leave her pregnant.
On the other hand, we must remember that, for thousands of years, culture has been transmitted mainly thanks to the oral word and osubsequently the written one. The verb makes a culture endure, and it manifests itself in another verb —one pertaining to that culture's subject. Suárez Gómez (2021) tells us that voice is rewarded as the main form of human communication, causing other forms to be forgotten or to be relegated to complementarity. He follows Bauman in stating that only by giving importance to those other forms , can we stop operating under the human-language-speech premise:

> That has silently (mis)informed the categories set by the supposed limits of our existence and that unfortunately continues to determine, as it has done since ancient times, "the porous line between the human and the non-human, between the civilization and savagery" (Suárez Gómez, 2021).

Later he looks at what Derrida calls "phonocentrism". According to Derrida, the voice has conveyed the idea of rationality since ancient times (Derrida, 1977). On the other hand, Chion (1993) speaks of "vococentrism" because the voice hierarchizes the perception around it (cited in Valdés de la Campa, 2018). This leads us to the simple conclusion that silence is usually subordinated to the word (the object), and that it is silence because of the word's absence. Word and silence do not complement each other; silence is subordinated to the word. The notion of contrast prevails over that of interdependence and, to a certain extent, it questions silence's ability to convey meaning, tending to restrict it to its expressive or emphatic abilities, forgetting that it can also describe and inform (Terrón, 1992).
Silence clearly acquires meaning in context, as do words (Lyons 1983), and they acquire meaning when they are used (Wittgenstein, the forerunner of the speech-act theory, formulated it as referring to the unit of speech, and therefore its components). However, the word does not seem to need context and it therefore ranks higher than silence. Let us not omit to add that a text's grammar communicates semantic relationships (antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, paronyms, hypernyms and hyponyms) as well as semantic fields and that, in both cases, the context —which can be the semantic field itself— determines the meaning. To be used and understood, every discursive expression needs context, either before or after it.

However, there is one context —culture— which must be afforded its own place, since we enunciate from a cultural viewpoint, and, to decode the enunciation, that culture must be known. Communication processes are cultural processes. Authors such as Jaworsky (1997), Saville-Troike (1994) and Tannen (1991) emphasize the cultural contextualization of silence and how misunderstandings can occur when silence is practiced by people from different cultures. It is the same with images. For instance, where we perceive emptiness and repetition, a connoisseur of classical Chinese painting would see a balance between three elements (water, mountain and sky) with two-thirds of a composition canonically stipulated to contain nothing; where the emptiness and fullness are one and the painted sections emerge out of the nothingness to form a whole (Cheng, 2016). Does the canon lead to reiteration? Every connoisseur of classical Chinese arts and its culture —even this author— knows the importance of repetition (reiteration) and copying, which is considered a commitment to copied work and not as forgery or an attack on intellectual propertyn. On this matter, see Byung-Chul Han's (2016) indispensable book *Shanzhaiat: Deconstruction in Chinese*). It cites the texts that appear in painting, including the realization of the feeling the work has engendered (the painter of a landscape also tries to convey perceptions, such as stillness, rather than descriptions, thus encouraging the appearance of silence). It is considered normal and there is value in the different owners adding their own feelings (nothing is further from the caption). Incidentally, calligraphy made the ideogram into an art form that became independent of its story-telling function.

This brings us to another feature of silence: its polysemic character rather than its ambiguity. Ambiguity results from the desire to be ambiguous or the inability to communicate what is intended. Silence, therefore, is polysemic and sometimes ambiguous.

We end this section by mentioning noise, which can also be a metaphor for the superabundance or stimuli that do not allow us to isolate ourselves or therefore to reflect or concentrate. Silence—the kind that allows us to contemplate a composition or the objects within a (photographic) composition—would be antipodal to noise. Regarding the superabundance of content, of images, it is worth dwelling on the recent work by Andrea Soto Calderón (2020), *La performatividad de las imágenes* (The Performativity of Images). Soto Calderón tells us that "we could question whether there is an excess of images. Doubtlessly there is a visual excess, but of a hegemony that does not stop repeating the same images" (Soto Calderón, 2020, p. 13). If correct, the problem would lie not so much in the number of images but in that they are always the same and, therefore, always tell us the same thing in the same way. Soto Calderón (2020, p. 14) adds: "However, the biggest problem is perhaps all those realities without images, in other words, that lack the ability to be imaginedt". The issue is that we must consider gazes as problematic (before the camera and its use, there was "the gaze", the way of seeing the world) and, for instance, decolonize them. Further down the line, she states:

> Undoubtedly, there is a dominant information system that selects and eliminates all the singularity of images, extracting them from their contexts, emptying them of meaning and turning them into icons, which is not equivalent to saying that there are too many images (Soto Calderón, 2020, p. 14).

In other words, the zero degree of photography, which has nothing to do with silence. Does this constant exposure to the same images end up trivializing them? We constantly ask ourselves the same thing as Susan Sontag (2014a): would silence not be preferable? It is worth reading a small extract from her interview with Arcadi Espadar, following the 2003 publication of her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*:

> Arcadi Espada: Show the pain. Thirty years ago you said, in 'On Photography', that the repeated display of pain anesthetized perception.
> Susan Sontag: I'm always in discussion with myself. Today I'm already discussing things from this latest book. Imagine what I think of what I wrote thirty years ago. But ultimately, I don't think it's true that the exhibition of images of pain anesthetizes the conscience of man (...).
> AE: What made you change your mind?
> SS: Reality. The image of Christ, for example. How many years have the faithful been contemplating that life-sized, blood-stained, naked, dying man? If it were true that we got used to suffering, Catholics would have ceased to be moved long ago. They haven't. That's reality. Sometimes we have to submit what we think to this type of decisive verification. If you feel committed to certain images, whether you've seen them once or a hundred times, you'll continue to suffer (Espada, 2004).

Silencing

To proceed with this study, we emust first establish the difference between silence as an enunciation of silencing —adapting the distinction established by Puccinelli Orlandi (1993) between silence that has been sought— and *silencing*, or hushing up. However, as a result of exploring the subject thoroughly, we believe that silencing (which is exerted on the photographer from the outside, is coercive and prevents them from showing what is seen) has to be distinguished from silenced (broadly speaking, the subject chooses to stay silent based on viewpoint and photographic choice). This section will be dedicated to silencing, which can arise because of censorship, hegemonic culture (and its taboos), media production routines, aesthetic waves, and even professional ethics.

So as not to extend the scope of this study too much, we are going to limit this section to three cases: the first COVID-19 lockdown in Spain, the Rwandan genocide and the recent repression in Myanmar (2021).

A few months ago, we wrote an article entitled "Cómo representan las fotografías una pandemia" (*How photographs portray a pandemic*; Terrón, 2020), which includes the following quote:

> Aguiló Vidal (2020) wrote an interesting report on the treatment of the pandemic in Spain based on a series of interviews with renowned photojournalists. The report bears the eloquent title 'A blind pandemic' because according to the author —and the photojournalists— his photographic images had been shown, but with limitations (Terrón, 2020).

The fact is that weeks elapsed before they could show the interiors of hospitals, nursing homes and makeshift funeral homes.

> All photojournalists agreed that, in Spain, there was a desire not to show the chaos into which the health system was plunged for weeks. So that it could not be seen, a series of statements were issued from hospitals, residential homes, and government offices/headquarters (Terrón, 2020).

This situation impeded the work of photojournalists. Some photographs reached us, namely those taken by sufferers or their close friends, and by the staff of those institutions where access was denied to photojournalists. This brings us to a very important point: nowadays it is not necessary to be a professional to *document*; to attest. We believe this is an extremely interesting observation: when studying the photographs produced by photojournalists today, we can see that they do not correspond to the images that are produced at an event or incident, and even less so as a synecdoche.
But there are still many images that have not yet been published yin our media, or that have been published very rarely, such as the faces of the mourners and our dead. This brings us back to Sontag (2014a), and how to show pain and death if we hide our faces. Moreover, we have not yet seen what happened in our institutions during the early weeks, since what has been published is still just a small —politically correct— portion of the photographs that were taken. By way of illustration, and to accompany these words, we asked a medical friend for permission to publish some of the photographs she has of those days inside a large hospital. She considered it inappropriate.
Conversely, we know that our colleagues from other European countries were surprised by the harshness of the images reproduced by our media. Meanwhile, we were surprised by others, such as those that circulated in Latin American countries[1]. Some cultures are more permeable than others when it comes to showing certain images. To put it differently, taboos (sometimes veiled by decorum) prevent certain images from being shown. Time and distance allow us to show images, since they are dispossessed of the proximity necessary for empathy. The passage of time will allow us to see many of the photographs of the COVID-19 pandemic that are currently hidden from us. Distance permits us to show the faces of the mourners who are not our own.

1 On this point, see, for example, the photos that were being published in the Mexican photography magazine *Cuartoscuro* (cuartoscuro.com/revista).

In the CAC's (*Catalan Audiovisual Council*) recommendations *Sobre el tractament informatiu de les tràgedies personals* (*On the depiction of tragic events in the media*; 2001), it dedicated part of that document to the work behind the camera. It emphasizes not using zoom shots or close-up shots, while also stating that, if *hard* images are to be broadcast, the audience should be forewarned appropriately and in good time. Its conclusions sinclude: "As far as possible, and as a general rule, we must avoid resorting to images of dead victims, coffins, or the wounded" (CAC, 2001). It is written in the present (from whence the past and the future are written) and the phrase "as far as possible" is accentuated. At this moment in time, in this part of the world and with reference to the pandemic, it is not yet possible. And we are warned:

> The images of pain referring to tragedies happening far beyond the immediate scope of reference of the media that broadcast them must also be treated with special care to avoid causing, through flagrant differences in treatment, the effect of trivializing the suffering of 'others' in contrast to the suffering close at hand (CAC, 2001).

Let us look, more briefly, at the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide4, in which it is estimated that more than 800,000 people were murdered. In a piece that documents how this massacre was covered photographically, Roskis (1995) concisely and accurately entitles it "Un genocidio sin imágenes" ("A Genocide Without Images"). To put it simply, it was not on the media's agenda. Between April 7 and July 15, 1994, approximately 70% of the Tutsis were murdered. During those three long months, there was a complicit silence from the Western powers, even if not collusion with the misdeeds of the Tutsis, especially on the part of France, the former colonizing power. Did this French passivity influence its media? Roskis explains to us that during part of those three months there were two Western photojournalists (that is correct: two) and no journalists touring Rwanda. On their return, they only managed to place a couple of photographs; the newsrooms showed no interest in their images. However, a few weeks later, upon the exodus of tens of thousands of Rwandans and the perpetrated genocide, Rwanda made news headlines across the world:

> It was not therefore the civil war, that planned massacre of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and Hutu opponents, that most inspired photographers, newspapers, magazines and televisions, but the humanitarian liturgy, "exodus and sacks of rice, orphans and dispensaries, murders of human beings and charitable souls in action, images of pain and movements of salvation" (Roskis, 1995, p. 28).

These are, of course, recurring images that illustrate every great conflict; the first that come to mind are those of the Spanish Civil War. Roskis (1995, p. 28) adds: "Let us say that this is

characteristic of images: that they show proportionally more than they hide. Under the protection of such photogenic humanitarian camps, the Hutu assassins have been rebuilding their administrative and military potential"[2]. As we will see, from our point of view, they show as much as they conceal.

The third case is the Myanmar Spring Revolution, which occurred in response to the coup d'état instigated by Min Aung Hlaing, Chief of Staff of the Defense Services. In this case, despite the dictatorship's attempts to silence or divert attention, it should be noted that the protests were front-page news across the world. We saw pain because it was shown to us; we even saw the face of death.

Figure 1. Relatives of a young man mourn his death after he died in the protests against the Myanmar coup. From *Press Bangla Agency;* https://www.pba.agency. Copyright: Press Bangla Agency.

Figure 1 shows a relative crying over a young man who was killed in the protests against the coup d'état. The two faces —of the deceased and his relative— are observed in the foreground. This image contravenes all CAC recommendations, unless publishing it was "unavoidable." Do you think that is the reason? Or do you think it is because the protagonists are unfamiliar?

Silenced Event, Silenced Image

In this section, we will discuss the silencing of an event or an image (sometimes both occur together). As we will show, they are not the same. However, we are aware that separating silencing from a silenced event or image is, in many cases, an impossible task. For instance, even the photographer can be a silencing agent due to self-censorship, and this can be due to external causes or the photographer's own convictions.

We will start with the distinction that Juan Luis Pintos (2003) drew between relevance and opacity. Pintos developed a large part of his thought in relation to social imaginaries,

2 As with the images of ICUs during the pandemic, which medicalize while simultaneously praising technology as a solution and a common good.

"schemes that allow us to perceive something as real, explain it and intervene operationally in what is described as reality in each social system and functionally different subsystems" (Pintos, 2003, p. 27). Imaginaries would operate by distinguishing between relevance and opacity, their blind spot.
One might wonder if we can consider photography to be a social imaginary. If we look at the statement "perceive something as real", we must remember the words of Fontcuberta (2016) regarding photography:

> It would seem that photography is not only a depository of verisimilitude (the quality of visibility), but also of veracity (the quality of speech). On the one hand, it faithfully transcribes reality, and, on the other, it infuses the photographer with an aura of honesty. In both cases, these qualities do not appear as options attributable to the operator's will, but rather as procedural impositions, as an ontological imperative. Therefore, the camera simultaneously brings together the true, the truthful and the plausible (Fontcuberta, 2016, p. 122).

But in photography there is also this opposition between relevance/opacity:

> The focus of the camera that records the visible always produces a difference. Initially, this is material: the visible field that appears a"in-shot", and athe "out-of-shot" field that is therefore invisible from the position or perspective assumed and transmitted by the camera in question (Pintos, 2003, p. 28).

Pintos also states:

> We believe, therefore, that there is no privileged point of view, a point of view not limited by geometry and time from which reality could be linearly defined as unique, as true, as universally valid, as authentic, as certain. We will always find ourselves limited in our definition of reality, since we will have to assume that different perspectives will establish different relevance and ignore different opacities (Pintos, 2003, p. 26).

Pintos's words lead us to look at the frame, and every frame is a point of view that contains both in-shot and aout-of-shot fields. We are not therefore talking about denotation and connotation, or the explicit and the implicit. The connotation and the implicit make us see the aout-of-shot field, the silencing. On the other hand, the in-shot and aout-of-shot fields are both inherent to any photograph and involve selecting the object that will be seen. The point of view is a phenomenon that is at once mechanical and cultural (not forgetting the linear perspective), as well as authorial (what and how it is shown).
Pintos himself emphasizes that "every selection (...) is based on a context of condensation, confirmation, generalization and schematization, that is not found as such within

the environment it is communicating about" (2003, p. 28). Without reference to them, Pintos tells us about production routines, which are simultaneously a reason for silencing or keeping us silent. aaAmong the authors we have studied for this paper, Marzal (2007), Mussico (2007), Sontag (2014a, 2014b) and Cárdenas Chapa (2020) have a great deal to say about the continuity (rather than the contrast) between in- and out-of-shot fields. Mussico's work is entitled *El campo vacío* (*The Empty Field*) and, as the author points out, the empty field is full. In it, he tells us that one of the possible functions of the empty field is the ellipsis. We must bear in mind that the ellipsis can be the place for what cannot or does not want to be shown. Román Gubern (1989) has stated on more than one occasion that pornographic cinema is a genre that fills the ellipsis with cinematographic sexual relations. In the case of photography, for instance, among the series of images within the same narrative act there are usually jumps in time that are not ellipses —they are unavoidable, even if very small. Nonetheless, in the exposure of that series of images, an ellipsis can be embedded perfectly.

In all these cases, we are talking about the total suppression of both in- and out-of-frame afields. But it is common that, either when taking a photograph or during editing, certain images are omitted for different reasons, which can be done by means of the synecdoche or by voluntarily *concealing* part of the photograph mechanically or with people or objects[3]. Broadly speaking, two things can happen: the setting, or part of it, is silenced to highlight an object or living being; or the object or living being itself is silenced.

Finally, in relation to the field and out-of-field shots, we will find that none of the authors studied consider it possible to create a new frame at the moment of editing. At that point, a field that we will see and an out-of-shot field that we will not see are created from the original photograph. This is a way of focusing our attention on something, deliberately concealing certain images, or seeking a more balanced or more aesthetic composition. None of these purposes excludes the others within the same photograph. However, in more than one case, a story is constructed through editing that has nothing to do with the original photograph's narrative. The image is decontextualized, and the result is an aberrant reading.

An extreme example of what we have been saying is the image Brian Wansky recreated from two photographs, which he later had to retract (see Figures 2 and 3).

3 Nowadays there are applications in which anyone can remove objects or subjects from photographs.

VALLEY EDITION

Los Angeles Times

MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2003

Allies, Iraqis Clash in Streets of Three Cities

In Basra, Panic as a Tactic of War

U.S. Brass Stands by Strategy

Figure 2. Cover page of *Los Angeles Times* on March 31, 2003. From "Algunos ejemplos de imágenes manipuladas" ("Some examples of manipulated images"), Jesús de Baldoma; https://fotografialibre.com/articulos/ejembres-imagenes-manipuladas. Copyright: Jesús de Baldoma.

Composition:

Figure 3. Combination of two photographs to create a third image —Brian Walski (2003). From "Algunos ejemplos de imágenes manipuladas" ("Some examples of manipulated photographs"), Jesús de Baldoma; https://fotografialibre.com/articulos/ejembres-imagenes-manipuladas. Copyright: Jesús de Baldoma and Brian Walski.

It is often said that a photo captures an instant and that each photograph is an unrepeatable moment. However, what is not usually said is that narrative photography can observe a series of photographs. This being the case, we can very carefully assimilate each photograph sequentially, causing us to have to analyze the images individually as well as interrelatedly with those that precede and follow them. We will cite two examples to explain the sequencing of some images, knowing that we could have chosen others[4].

Let us turn our attention back to the COVID-19 pandemic. The scientific journals covering those months are full of articles linking communication and COVID, but few of these texts analyze images. None of the authors I have read (except for Rebeca Pardo, 2019) treat epidemic photography as a photographic genre, as advocated by the medical anthropologist Christos Lynteris. As with all genres, it registers some themes typical of pandemics, themes that surprised us so much months ago (the empty streets, the solidarity, the precautions, and so on). We are not that unique, and neither are the photographs, as follows.

The photograph in Figure 4 depicts a group of patients with tuberculosis (another pandemic) from St Thomas' Hospital lying in their beds in the open air alongside the River Thames. The photo dates from 1936.

Figure 4. Tuberculosis patients take air by the Thames. From *The Daily Mail*; https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1326436/Tuberculosis-infection-rates-reach-30-year-high-rise-immigration.html. Copyright: Hulton Archive/Getty Images.

4 For example, the series "The Horse in Motion" by Eadweard Muybridge (1878).

Figure 5. Isidre Correa, with his wife and medical team, facing the beach in front of the Hospital del Mar in Barcelona. From *El Periódico de Catalunya*, David Ramos; https://www.elperiodico.com/es/sociedad/20200603/coronavirus-barcelona-hospital-del-mar-uci-7986021. Copyright: Getty Images/David Ramos.

The photograph in Figure 5 was taken by David Ramos and published by El Periódico on June 3, 2020. It depicts Isidre Correa next to a beach in Barcelona after he had spent days in intensive care. This and other photographs of the same patient facing the sea are iconic images of the pandemic. No one realizes that doctors are successful precisely because they are aware that they are not pioneers, and they are therefore acting in a way they know will benefit the patient. However, for the recipients of care, it is a novel experience (hence much of the reason it is widely known) as they are ignorant about previous epidemics.

We were bombarded with "old" images of people with masks and that was the end of it, almost always limiting epidemics and pandemics that have been photographed to the so-called "Spanish flu". We believe that whatever their research, a researcher who lacks a diachronic (historicist) vision can easily fall into error. From our point of view, and with reference to the pandemic and what we have been writing about, along with the images that are repeated during every pandemic, it would be very useful to know which pictures appear and which disappear. In this way, the images would inform us of changes in popular consciousness.

This is precisely what happens in the second example (Figure 5): the representation of death. We know there was a time when the dead were photographed because that is how they were honored and physically remembered (is this time being relived thanks to cell phones?). We believe that, in many cases, photographs also acted as oratories. In the lines that follow, Morcate (2019), perhaps the greatest expert in Spain on post-mortem photography, talks about how the consideration of the images to be remembered has changed:

> It is precisely in this idealized space (*domestic photographs*) that photographs representing agony, illness, pain or death are generally expelled, because they prevent the perfecting of a story in which there is still only space for joy, fun, and the pursuit of happiness, even though this so-called happiness has often been specially fabricated for the camera (Morcate, 2019, p. 146).

Lierni Irizar (2018) is right to tell us that death is seen as a failure in our society and that, like disease and suffering, they are impossible to accept because of a world that values presentism, happiness, and success; a kind of social infantilization. Regarding death, she adds that "we neither can, nor do we know how to, talk about it" (Irizar, 2018, p. 185). Perhaps this explains Barthes' unease (2020):

> So, is there nothing to say about death, suicide, injuries, accident? No, nothing to say about those photos in which I see white coats, stretchers, bodies lying on the floor, pieces of glass, and so forth. Ah, if only there were a look, a look from a subject; if someone in the photo would look at me! (Barthes, 2020, p. 121).

We evade the representation of death so as to deny it and to feel foolishly immortal. We have moved from representing death to avoiding its representation, and from remembering the dead to wanting to forget death[5]. Linking to the previous section, we must bear in mind that the exclusion of death can also be a silencing. "Fenton, following the instructions of the Ministry of War (Crimea) not to photograph the dead, the mutilated and the sick (...) took care to present the war as a solemn excursion" (Sontag, 2014a, p. 48).

Silence

Having written in the introduction that silence does not exist and that we recreate it, is it worth dedicating a section to the absence of silence? We think so. However, we need to preface what follows with a warning: we intend to avoid the error of creating a taxonomy. Thus, the different relationships with silence we will list are only a means of referencing the relationship between photography and silence. We believe it worth pausing to consider some examples, to clarify our point of view to the reader.

In writing about silence and photography, we must first make four assumptions. The first, and the one furthest from the scope of this essay, consists of those photographs that ask us to remain silent, such as the face that calls for silence and is portrayed by an index finger in front of closed lips. Allow us a brief digression. The Roman god of silence and confidentiality was the Greek god of silence: Harpocrates. This name was in turn borrowed from the Egyptian god Horpajard (the childhood name of the god known as Horus), who was represented as a naked child with his finger in his mouth. During Greco-Roman times, he is portrayed as emerging from a lotus (which we think precedes pictures of the birth of Venus). In short, the finger he brings up to his mouth (as a child he sucks his finger) was interpreted by the Greeks as an indication of silence. This error gave rise to a deity and a symbol we consider universal.

The second assumption refers to photographs that can emanate stillness and calm. We can fall into the error that the images that emanate silence for us are interpreted as such by eve-

5 And this is the ultimate meaning of the applications that claim to give life to a deceased person.

ryone. There is insufficient research to certify whether this is the case or to characterize the predominant features of this type of photography (which are rooted in painting, most ecommonly Western). We assume that they usually depict open spaces in which no movement is perceived and, rather than telling us a story or offering us a description, they show us the stillness we referred to above. Thus, the stills taken by the landscape photographer Ansel Adams are usually understood as capturing images that lead us to contemplation and, with it, to silence (Revenga, 1983). They are photographs to be gazed at in silence. We believe that, to a large extent, this is because black and white are used to transcend viewing objects independently so as to focus attention on the whole. Curiously, traditional Chinese painting reserved color for paintings whose central objects were human beings, animals, and plants. Landscapes used black-based shades.

Third, we must consider the use of metaphors to represent silence in a photograph. As in the first assumption, our most common cultural metaphors should be thinned out so we can then carry out comparative studies with other cultures. Let us take the example of a photograph that has been used as a metaphor for silence, in this case related to the cosmos. We are referring to "The Blue Marble", taken on December 7, 1972, from Apollo 17. In it, we see the Earth as a blue planet floating in a void (incidentally, the image we all know is not exactly the one captured from Apollo 17, as it was subsequently edited on Earth to more accurately depict what we dreamed of seeing). This photograph has an added valuee: that of questioning our anthropocentric vision of the world.

Fourth, and finally, we have to consider the photographs that contain silence —that fifth dimension that Cheng (2016) says constitutes the "emptiness", an element that gels together and connects what is shown. In traditional Chinese painting, it is often defined as the harmony between the *support* (emptiness) and the *ink* (fullness). Panikkar (1984/85, p. 43) tells us that "in Buddha-inspired landscape paintings (*ch'an*), all the elements, mountains, trees and clouds are only there to point out the contrasting emptiness they seem to be emerging from at the very moment they become ephemeral islets". According to Lizcano (1992), the same occurs with the texts in Chinese that are in solidarity with space and realize the aspiration of Apollinaire, whom he quotes: "In a poem, the union of the fragments will not be that of grammatical logic, but rather that of an ideographic logic that enables an order of spatial arrangement contrary to that of discursive juxtaposition" (Lizcano, 1992, p. 67). That is what Mallarmé's poems also seek to attain.

Moving on to the examples, we believe Hengki Koentjoro, born in Jakarta, best exemplifies what we mean by taking classical Chinese painting as an analogy. In the first of his images we show (Figure 6), the union, dialogue, configuration of a whole becomes clear. The object sinks into nothingness, which is what prevails, an object that ceases to be a (fishing) tool and endows the image with a contained abstraction. Silence as a place where meaning breathes.

Figure 6. Composition showing "everything" immersed in silence. "Submerge" by Hengki Koentjoro; https://m.facebook.com/koentjoro24. Copyright: Hengki Koentjoro.

We can see in the second photo (Figure 7) that, rather than using a linear perspective, the foreground and background are layered (as also happens in many Chinese paintings, which never contain a vanishing point). The layers are separated by fog, thus creating a void out of which a landscape is born that ends up fading back into fog (another technique widely used in Chinese painting).

Figure 7. Fog as a layered background and the creation of "emptiness". "Java", Hengki Koentjoro; https://m.facebook.com/koentjoro24. Copyright: Hengki Koentjoro.

Let us now compare the following two photographs, the first by Hengki Koentjoro (Figure 8) and the second by Michael Kenna (Figure 9), who was greatly influenced by Ansel Adams.

Figure 8. Image of the beach in downtown Sanuar, Bali (Indonesia). "Sanuar Beach", Hengki Koentjoro; https://m.facebook.com/koentjoro24. Copyright: Hengki Koentjoro.

Figure 9. Image of Lake Biwa in Takaishima, Japan. "Torii, Study 2", Michael Kenna; https://www.michaelkenna.com/. Copyright: Michael Kenna.

While subtlety and harmony prevail in the first composition, the contrasts in the second —especially the clouds— lend the photograph drama. On the other hand, it is notable that the object is in the center of the image in the second photo while it is located on a jetty (a line) to the right in the first and we see an almost invisible mountain emerging in the background.

Figure 10. Image of Lake Biwa in Takaishima, Japan, taken five years before the previous one. "Torii, Study 1", Michael Kenna; https://www.michaelkenna.com/. Copyright: Michael Kenna.

Perhaps Michael Kenna's second photograph (Figure 10) is more indicative of what we are trying to say. It is the same *torii*, but now it no longer occupies the center of the image and emerges out of a sea that almost blends into the sky. The *torii* is the (Shinto) gateway that separates the sacred space (where the shrine is) from ordinary space. Sometimes there may be a series of *torii*. This picture is of the torii in Lake Biwa and it is the Shirahige shrine's first gateway (the second largest on the mainland). This *torii* must be the most photographed in the whole of Japan and, normally, we are shown it iwith the lake in the background. It is not usually appreciated that it is a few meters from the shore, and that the shore is the space that separates the two *torii*. When photographing the *torii* with the lake in the background, we are actually depicting *ordinary* space. Why then a gateway in the water? For those traveling by boat to enter the sacred space. Sarutahiko-no-mikoto, the shrine deity, offers blessings to those who ply the waters (both freshwater and the sea), among other things. We see how in this case the point of view is of such importance that it distorts the original meaning of the *torii*: "beauty" prevails and the meaning of the narrative is diametrically opposed to the intention of those who built the sanctuary. As Gloria Jiménez and Leyre Marinas (2020) remind us, the photographic gaze precedes the invention of the camera itself and, therefore, we would add, of each photograph. In the case we are reviewing, some spectacular sunsets in front of the sanctuary and a lake —water that reflects the beauty of a *torii*— highlight the surrounding "emptiness".

However, the reading we have been able to make of these photographs is possible thanks to knowledge of their context. Sometimes a caption is not enough, or it is just as "wrong" as the photo itself. The context allows us to read an image, but we must first learn how to do it. Marzal (2007) tells us that we must take into account the following levels to read a

photograph: contextual, morphological, compositional (which includes the in- and out-of-shot fields), enunciative, and global interpretation. The contextual level includes general data, technical and strictly contextual parameters, biographical information and critique. He definitely talks about artistic photography, but even in this case, we need to know more if we really want to read it (merely contemplating it is totally legitimate, whether or not we absorb it), just as we might view the portico of a cathedral or any other narrative that uses other languages in any kind of medium (interfaces).
When discussing audiovisual silence, Torras (2014) distinguishes between diegetic, multiple, narrative and real contexts. From our point of view, this contextual taxonomy is more useful for analyzing the elements that make up a photograph.
However, we do not share areagree with the following words:

> It is well known that the power of images resides in the suggestion they offer to those who observe them. It is the viewer who interprets them and decides their meaning, and it is precisely this lability of interpretation that makes two people attribute different meanings to the same picture (Conesa, 2021).

We believe that this "quality" is not exclusive to photography. It is the case with any narrative, and even more so if we do not have the contextual ability to interpret it.
The last example is a well-known photograph by Robert Capa —one of the few remaining depictions of the Normandy landings (Figure 11). An error on the part of the development technician caused the rest of the shots to be exposed. In this case, the blurring, the objects and the soldier that emerge from the nothingness of the sea (which almost blends in with the sky) provide a plasticity and expressiveness (also due to the contrast between "objects" and void) that transcends the moment and the informative purpose.

Figure 11. US soldier on the 'D-Day' of the Normandy landings, Robert Capa; https://www.magnumphotos.com/photographer/robert-capa/. Copyright: Robert Capa and Magnum Photos.

Conclusions

This paper is an initial approach to silence and photography, an almost unknown subject. Of the few texts we have read on this topic, most are dispensable because they lack usefulness, hence we have relied heavily on classical Chinese painting by way of analogy. Our starting point was that silence is not possible and that, therefore, what we call silence is a representation of silence. It has a series of features and we have selected one feature that seems to us of great importance: silence's ability to convey meaning. As with words (and objects), it needs to be interrelated with other narrative elements and to have a context that renders it intelligible to achieve its objective.

We consider silence to be on a par with the other elements of any language, which gain meaning through unity and use. From our point of view, it should be possible to delve scientifically into production processes and, especially, reception processes in photography studies. We reflect on them but do not know for sure what the recipients read (see). On the other hand, we lack more visual education.

When speaking of silence and photography, we have distinguished silencing, a silenced event/ or image, and silence itself. For the latter, we have differentiated between the photographs that demand silence; the photographs capable of emanating stillness and calm and which we assimilate to contemplation and silence; the photographs that use metaphors to represent silence; and, finally, those photographs, the fewest, that incorporate silence due to their composition.

We are aware of the need to explore this subject more deeply if we wish to define it with more care and precision, so we leave this as an invitation to this author and to all who study photography.

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Four steps towards the words of silence in cinema

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ABSTRACT

On exploring silence, we discover that we are being summoned to relate it, univocally, to a lack or absence of speech, sound or writing. This summons concerns a certain worldview that requires thinking about and locating silence within a descriptive statement about lack and absence. If cinematographic theory has considered silence in cinema, this is essentially the narrativity it has pieced together to conceptualize it. This paper intends to take a step forward and revisit previous considerations, packaging silence in a new way. If we accept that everything that people do is set in contexts and that cinematography takes place gwithin "listen-visible " action, we are faced with a disturbing question: is silence heard in cinema? This article shows how cinema has represented silence with its words, the words that silence is commonly deemed to lack. In cinematographic essays, the representation of silence has found its speech through the words that are uttered. The filmmakers' essayistic procedure has staged the representation of the words about silence and imbued their thoughts and ideas with a listenable body through their voice.

RESUMEN

Cuando se indaga sobre el silencio, se descubre que se está emplazado a relacionarlo, de manera unívoca, con una falta o una ausencia de habla, de sonido o de escritura. Dicho emplazamiento concierne a un determinado imaginario que impone pensarlo y alojarlo en una enunciación descriptiva de carencia y de ausencia. Si la teoría cinematográfica ha pensado el silencio en el cine, ha recogido, primordialmente, dicha narratividad para conceptualizarlo. Aquí se determina dar un paso y reconsiderar lo pensado, proporcionando al silencio una envoltura desemejante a la practicada hasta ahora. Si partimos de que todo lo que las personas hacemos se edifica en contextos y de que el cinematográfico transcurre en su acción "escuchavisible", es entonces cuando una pregunta inquietante se propone: ¿Se escucha el silencio en el cine? Este artículo pone de manifiesto como el cine ha representado el silencio con sus palabras, aquellas que comúnmente se afirma que el silencio carece. Es en el ensayo cinematográfico donde la representación del silencio ha hallado su habla a través de las palabras que transcurren. El proceder ensayístico de los cineastas ha puesto en escena la representación de las palabras que pertenecen al silencio, dando cuerpo escuchable a sus pensamientos, a su idear, mediante su voz.

Step One: Misgivings

The tangled web of assumptions we inhabit responds to the differences that characterize relationships. In relationships, we exaggerate some things so greatly that, to survive such lofty heights, we necessarily set up adversaries and discredit them to the point of trying to strip them of the context within which they operate.

We know that voice as heard in cinema has been stigmatized. There was skepticism when cinema incorporated the ability to listen to the words spoken by its characters. Filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein, Vsévolod Pudovkin, René Clair, Charles Chaplin, and Erich von Stroheim and theorists like Arnheim and Balázs expressed the first misgivings. The main problem they presented was the spoken word's ability to act as the carrier of meaning instead of imagery. They understood that cinema seemed to be becoming more like theater and that image-cinema could turn into filmed theater; that reality would be played out alongside the words being heard and that creative freedom would be enslaved when dialogue and its synchronization became the main adversaries to montage.

Soon, the distrusted use of sound (and especially of music and noise) began to enjoy some protection. Béla Balázs was one of the first to propose that the use of noise and music was not going to become complementary to image, but rather that it would revitalize the action taking place within imagery (Balázs, 1978). The use of voices, and the act of listening to them, took longer to shed the misgivings, and these misgivings still exist today.

The misgivings surrounding sound made it clear that image reigned supreme. Its sovereignty looked likely to be overthrown, and thus sound came to be regarded as an intruder. In *Four and a Half Film Fallacies* (1992), Rick Altman presented four-and-a-half fallacies about sound's incorporation into film. Sound has been understood as a supplement, an accessory to image, and Altman's approach revolves around the idea of the visual essentiality of cinema and inattention to sound. His main considerations focus on the discriminatory idea that visuals came first, that images are the main carriers of meaning, and that, in film, sound is a reproduction of reality, not its representation.

At the same time, Sarah Kozloff highlights that "The prescriptive advocacy of showing over telling is entangled with several endlessly asserted presuppositions about authors, stories, and receivers (literary or cinematic, nonfiction or fiction)" (2013, p. 40). The intrinsic prevalence of image-cinema's visuality has led to the understanding that showing is more vivid, more subtle and more democratic, and that it allows greater ambiguity than telling (focusing on the use of the voice) as a provocateur of transparency or centrality before listening and of producing an unwanted immediacy. Telling through voice is more autocratic (Kozloff, 2013). An "ideology of the visible" (Altman, 1980, p. 76) clearly urges the primacy of the visual and relegates sound to a mere companion.

When sound gained the chance of a cinematic role, in its fledgling context it became clear that assuming the new assemblage induced fear. We know that rethinking a new way of measuring cinematography presupposes a new way of thinking altogether. This

question is also endless, and we can never close the door on it. The insertion of sound alongside cinematographic image modified the cinematic context, recasting a new creative space.

We know that everything that individuals do takes place in context. Everything we do is contextual(ized). What we undertake must be activated, and must occur in mapped territories, each one configured with its own particularities. The territoriality of the cinema, its context, began its journey with imagee alone. It then *deterritorialized* itself for a moment and *reterritorialized* itself again, accompanied by sound. Cinema metamorphosed, changed its nature, and was conquered by a novel way of thinking about cinematography. The remodeling of this new composition can, of course, be hindered, concealed, and interrupted, but also propelled, streamlined and augmented within the new cinematic terrain.

Today we recognize how the voice and the words we hear acquire a new mood and a new aesthetic impulse in documentary cinema, through their axial use in the essay film. In 1958, André Bazin (2000) wrote an article in the *France-Observateur* on Chris Marker's film *Letter from Siberia* (Dauman and Marker, 1958). In the article, he proposed that the director's editing did not follow convention. In other words, it was not constructed on a relationship between one shot and the next (and between one image and another). Instead, its construction was horizontal: a montage from ear to eye. Bazin presented a new relationship between text and image, and compared Marker's film to an essay, stating that the film *Letter from Siberia* was a documented essay, a brand-new way of making cinema. Marker, with his way of operating the cinematic context, shook off the bad press associated with voice and showcased its reflective, meditative ability, presenting it as an open discussion of ideas along with the images.

To quote Michel Chion, the voice's ability and power as developed in the essay film can be questioned by assigning cinema its "vococentric" tendency; by favoring the human voice as a carrier of meaning, and its irremediable "guarantee of an effortless intelligibility of the spoken words" (Chion, 1993, p. 17). In other words, its "verbocentrism". Indeed, listening to voices in the cinema is unnerving. However, thanks to directors and their ability to ennoble the audible voice alongside image, a new constructive geography of conceiving a cinematic idea has been born through technology. To think of hierarchizing the new components is to avoid immersion in the concomitant action of sound and image, the one linked to the other.

Step Two: The Search for Territory

In the new context, cinema's ability to reinvent itself was immense. The territory increased its faculties to such an extent that, as Altman affirms, "Far from being emarginalized by the visible, (...) sound now appears to be a far more clever Jacques than he at first seemed, for it is now apparent that sound uses the visible to further its own cause" (1980, pp. 75-76). Listening to noises, music and words implied the incorporation of a new technique that, in in-

teraction with image, could even improve equanimity, using sound's characteristics to seemingly benefit image. The asymmetric relationship unraveled, and a recognized equity allowed a mutually beneficial nascent relationship .

If we do not identify the context, nothing can be understood. If we want to notice what happens in the process of creating contexts, of any kind, we will do well to recognize that these are an inescapable human invention. In fact, indwelling humanness is a representational invention, a way of organizing living based on what is consubstantially imaginationy. Ortega y Gasset (2004-2010, p. 816) calls it being "children of fantasy". We are imagination and we activate it to live life and *ipso facto* we "*images*". In other words, we "*metaphorize*", creating contexts, "categories of the mind" (Bateson, 2006, p. 120) where we establish a system of relationships.

Living as human beings is invented by activating our intrinsic ability to use our imaginations *by "metaphorizing",* and in doing so we create contexts of action through relating. The relationships that are established within the contexts are akin to chores, tasks relating to becoming, to imagining, in a persistent way. Another issue is the type of contexts we invent and with which relationships.

The new construct of the cinematic context fostered the directors' ingenuity to apprehend it and develop an idea into film within it. Here we find a parental ceremony that was created within the cinematic territory, and the previously thought gap between image and sound ran its course. Now:

> Neither track accompanies the other, neither track is redundant; the two are locked in a dialectic where each is alternately master and slave to the other; this arrangement so suits both tracks that they studiedly perpetuate the myth of cinema's unity —and thus that of the spectator— as if (and they are right) their very lives depended on it (Altman, 1980, p. 79).

In cinema, space is the enclave where an imagined metaphor will be formed, and what is persistent is its visibility (for example, of a black screen or a general field shot) and its "*listenability*" (such as the noise of a horn or characters chattering vociferously). We identify how the *profilmic* space (known as *real*) is transformed into *filmic* space (known as *dramatized*) by using technological devices to turn an idea into film. Cinema is thought to be mediated through technology, and the emerging images and sounds will be imagined territories that will spark off ideas. In that intentional transmutation of *real* space, it will be transformed into *represented* space, and it will shape scenes and sequences, imagined spaces that will be built using vectors (planes) —action cuts— which will representationally construct time (duration, the change that occurs between them). Space is where cinematographic territory is established, and where movement, time, dramaturgy, silence, and more will unfold in their listenable and visible action. Cinema is essentially "*listen-visible*".

Cinema offers what Deleuze formulates as an image-thought, developing alongside the ideas that image-cinema proposes on its journey: "Cinema has always tried to construct an image of thought, of the mechanisms of thought. And that is not why it is abstract, but quite the opposite" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 56). And not only will images make the world (Goodman, 1990), sounds will also shape it. The visuality and listenability of cinema is its primordial and initiatory world.

If silence is part of cinema's *listen-visible* nature, can it be made up of sound? And, in among the cinematic sounds (words, noises, and music), will words be able to configure images in silence? These questions come face to face with the concept of silence we are exploring, defined as a lack, an absence, or a want of words and sounds by most dictionaries. This description has been caused by a confrontation, advocating that silence's existence is shaped by an unspeakable flaw. The word police may not agree with this interpretation, but they invite us to establish and maintain a sovereign relationship between word and silence, and in a disciplined way we have placed word on a podium and silence, with its eternal lack, at its feet. This is how we have legitimized it and turned it into law.

Indeed, silence is one of the most neglected words. Its semiotic category is based on a negativity, an indefiniteness, a prohibition, when defining it by opposition, as Bachelard affirms: "In all cases, silence is presented and defined as something opposite to an activity and therefore, it is constructed as the object of a poetics of No" (Bachelard cited in Boves, 1992, p. 110). The problem with such a definition, or attribution, is that it comes from an ideation that responds to binary ways of thinking, typical of Western thought. This generates irreconcilable limits: "Binary logic and biunivocal relationships continue to dominate psychoanalysis, linguistics and structuralism, and even computer science"(Deleuze and Guattari, 1997, p. 11). The same happens in cinema.

We know that binary logic is based on a cosmogonic narrative that has shaped our lives and that:

> When you are silent, you are what God was before nature and creation, and that is the matter he used to shape them. And then you see and hear what He saw and heard in you before your own wanting, seeing, and hearing had begun (Jacobo Boehme in Le Breton, 1997, p. 136).

Thus, silence is God's habitat and, similarly, silence was the matter from which He created the world as we know it. In this monotheism, silence and God live bound together —attached and without possible disunity. If we also pay attention to the fact that we are led to relate silence to the words nothing ("absolute lack of all being") and emptiness ("lack of physical or mental content"), the outlook is devastating: silence is carefully confiscated and entirely absorbed by a celestial ruler.

In addition, among those who share this belief, it is common to establish contiguity between death and silence. A deceased body is said "to be in silence," in such a way that an action, that of inhabiting the silence, is made to cohabit in a face, a torso and some already-

dead limbs. An experiential world is bestowed upon a human being who no longer imagines, does not represent and cannot activate the ability to symbolize. It is a cadaverous body embedded with a belief that does not belong to it. The person is dead, cannot live and cannot represent silence.

Individuals live in a continuous ideation, but there are ways of conceiving imagining, and our body "is that in which thought immerses itself or must immerse itself in order to achieve the unthinkable, that is, life" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2010, p. 251). It is understood that reality is an invention that humans formulate to organize their existence, and it cannot aspire to be a presentation of the reality called "the world"; rather, it is a way of dealing with the world, a representation.

We have been urged to imagine that the mind and the body are two distinct entities. We have very quickly reconsidered this way of thinking and deemed it to be a calamitous idea, though it was successful and arose from dualistic logic. This way of dealing with the world disconnects the ideas that are imagined within the minds of the bodies that actually put them into practice. In other words, it is akin to separating life from the act of living. We are the founders of our existence, but how and what we invent in order to exist is a matter of choice, and we know there are better and worse paths to take.

At this point, it is necessary to get used to "thinking about being directly, without taking a detour, without first addressing the ghost of nothing that stands between him and us" (Bergson, 2012, p. 38). We, as individuals, are the ones who captained our invention through the body of those who live and act as human beings. In such a way, silence aims to present itself as what it is: an idea invented by humans that belongs to their actions, to the world of the living. We know that the three words (nothing, emptiness, and silence) have been tainted, that we have processed them in an adjacent way, and the action and effects that individuals have rolled into these words are based on the same modal unraveling. We have snatched them from their doing.

The problem is accentuated when we accept the possibility that, in the cinematographic image, silence does not develop into a lack of image or sound; rather, when it is presented in its triggering *listen-visible* context, it is possible to think that silence in cinema is heard and made visible. Here we intend to explore the sound that makes up silence in the visible image and, to enter into its *listenability*, it will be necessary to equip it.

Step Three: The Invention of Silence

In reality, when it comes to talking about silence, many foundations must be removed in order to be able to confront it and its action directly. Before tackling silence in the cinematic context, we must distinguish how, for example, cultural studies have produced works on silence and the different forms of cultural development (Nwoye, 1985; Saunders, 1985; Lehtonen and Sajavaara, 1985; Samarin, 1962). All of them present different ways of using and making sense of silence. When it comes to providing content, there

are dissimilar strategies created by different social organizations, and each one generates proposals on how to give meaningful action and use silence in different areas and moments of life.

In the field of communication, an axiom presented by the Palo Alto College in the sixties affirmed that "there is no way not to communicate" (Winkin, 1990, p. 93). This principle understands that the social actor emits messages continuously, thus choosing silence as a way of exchange will never be devoid or absent of significance. In order to configure silence, it must not be activated and expressed as "negativity —the non-sign, which is of course both verbal and extraverbal— but said negativity has, in its turn, a semiotic category" (Castilla del Pino, 1992, p. 80). Therefore, it is truly active and effable ideation in silence. In silence, the words will not be heard by the interlocutor but they will be interpretable.

In *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (1994), Dan Sperber (an anthropologist, linguist and researcher in cognitive sciences) and Deirdre Wilson (who is also a linguist and researcher in cognitive sciences) state that communication implies that the information being transmitted is relevant and that the context is an enclave where the assumptions that are being formed modify and renew the information: "Interpreting a statement (...) implies a decisive way of extracting the consequences that add that assumption to a set of assumptions that, in turn, have already been processed" (1994, p. 151). The researchers suggest that relevance is just as important and necessary for the understanding of statements used in communication as the contextual effects that are processed when putting them into practice.

For optimal communication, "the cooperative principle" (Grice, 2005, p. 516) is undoubtedly essential. But when the voluntary, intentional decision is to avoid something by communicating in silence, communication with the other will be triggered, and this "is no longer not saying". It is being silent, silencing what is not wanting to be said, or that should not or cannot be said (...) With silence, I communicate that I do not want to communicate, or that I must not or cannot communicate" (Castilla del Pino, 1992, p. 80).

A neighborhood in Caracas was baptized as El Silencio (The Silence). The name dates from 1658 and came about due to an epidemic that affected the entire city, but its effect on that neighborhood was particularly brutal. This baptism expressed a desire to reclaim the lives before those deaths, since it is obvious that silence only pertains to the world of the living. After that baptisme, the neighborhood was incidentally occupied by poor and marginalized individuals. The State neglected to afford any dignity to the lives of those new settlers, and that was when the name El Silencio became the perfect fit. The new inhabitants were poor, and they were forced to hide and marginalize their insolvency and prostitution to silence their activities. All that reality was compelled to live silently within the walls of El Silencio without dispersing. So the verb derived from silence, to silence, will in this case form

part of what one does not want to see or hear. It was decided that the area should be "modernized" in 1942 and, within two years, it was totally demolished.
This stilling, silencing, shutting up —and the consequence of causing a silencing, a quietening— is produced by taxation on bodies.

> It would be necessary to try to determine the different ways of keeping silent, how those who can and cannot speak are distributed, what type of speech is authorized or what form of discretion is required for both. There is not one silence but several silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and cut across the discourses (Foucault, 1978, p. 19).

Through norms and laws, with legal status, sometimes silences are used for what individuals should or should not silence, quieten and shut up. Through their actions, none of silence's domains are devoid, empty, or lacking. They are all full of inferable meaning .
In the 18th century, in his book *The Art of Silence* (2011), the Abbé Joseph Antoine Toussaint Dinouart describede ten different types of silence: prudent silence, artificial silence, complacent silence, mocking silence, intelligent silence, stupid silence, approving silence, contemptuous silence, humorous silence, and political silence. All of them correspond to different ways of using silence and to attitudes that can accompany them. There can be numerous strategies by which one is silenced, and also numerous silencing attitudes agreed upon and approved within each culture.
All of these are deeds done in silence, actions executed in specific silences with a performative function within themselves. The philosopher John L. Austin (1982) presented this function, stating that words have the power to influence the world by giving rise to actions. When one person exclaims to another, "It's very cold in here !", one possibility is that they may be communicating that the air conditioning is too low. The act of speaking leads to the action of increasing the air temperature or opening the window so that the heat from the street enters the room. It is what is done by speaking. By emitting a statement, the speaker is performing actions, effects, on the listener such as giving an order, offering a suggestion or advice, and so forth. These actions transform the relationships between the interlocutors and trigger behavior that entails meaningful action .
Those things that are spoken and learned involve "*performing*" reality by creating it, obeying an intention and producing effects. Similarly, silences have the power to affect the world, prompting actions in what are here described as silent acts, deeds carried out in silence, which involve *performing* reality through their implementation.
An individual who is alone engages in intrapersonal communication that generates a discourse between the same sender and receiver. This is made up of remnants or totalities of experiences constructed in thought. That speech will not be audible or visible to the observer, and, indeed, should the observer be asked to describe what the other individual is doing, they would say: "That person is silent". As Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes:

> What deceives us here, what makes us believe in a thought that would exist for itself prior to expression, are the already constructed and already expressed thoughts that we can silently invoke, and by means of which we give ourselves the illusion of inner life. But, in reality, this supposed silence is a murmur of speech, this inner sight is an inner language (Merleau-Ponty, 1975, p. 200).

We identify language as a preferential symbolic code that structures ideas into thought. In solo communication, the series of words do not occur in the same way as when we dialogue with others or when we write. In silence, the words will flow, sometimes set free from syntactic rules, at others forming completely meaningful sentences .

People talk of being silent and we practice being silent, for example, when we look at the stars, lie on the sofa inside our homes, and so on. In all environments where we put it into action on our own, its stay will be built on our thoughts, our thinking, which is found in our imaginary minds, creating and experiencing it as brimming over not only with words but also with images and sounds. In silence there is an intimate hybridization of words, images and sounds. Their blending will combine and shape thought in the same way that words, images and sounds may or may not resemble those that surround us or those that memory calls to mind. We might think of a doorbell that sounds like a goose squawking, or an image of a column in a room with a diameter that fills the whole space it stands in. All this is a matter of imagination, of the ideas that take place in the imaginary realm. Alternatively, individuals may remain silent, giving more weight to words or sounds or images, but, in themselves, all three develop in a miscellaneous way.

The ideas and representations we formulate in our minds are made up of words, images, and sounds, not in their literal sense but rather in an off-center flow. To disambiguate what is constructed in silences is to afford it the presence it already has. The silence reflected from immanence will dwell full, and any ideation of it will keep existing. This is when it is necessary to state that silence inhabits a paradox, since the domains of silence, and what constitutes it, are full of what has been denied.

We know that our thinking process is always in motion, devising worlds, which we inevitably do to activate life. Thinking, devising, mentalizing consists of a constant exercise of imagining, and this action will maintain a kinship with our surroundings and our perceptions, alongside the music already heard, the books already read, and the company already chosen, in short, alongside everything we have inhabited and the way we have experienced it.

The univocal experience of thinking, and its use in silence, is a vivid event that remains ever active in its preliterality. And in that virtual habitat, there is no lack or absence of any kind between images, sounds and words. They coexist boisterously, without omission, belonging to a radically heterogeneous order within an abundant imaginary where there will be no room for the muteness of words, the deafness of sounds and the invisibility of images.

Having presented silence's actions up to this point, it is possible to establish how the sonic is the listenable builder of silence in the cinema, by establishing a concomitance between silence and its foundations and between cinema and its *listen-visible* action. And it does not seem unreasonable to add that, among the sounds that occur in the cinematographic image (words, noises, and music), there are listenable words in the cinema that construct silence in their utterance.

Step Four: The Representation of Silence in Cinema

When we speak of words in film, we think of characters having a conversation in a scene, a sequence, or voiceovers. In all cases, the words are representational discourses forming the antipodes of silence. It is no longer a question of opposing words and silence and falling back into the binary logic that encloses royals and subjects in droves. The classic idea of silence in the cinema and its distancing from listening to words will have to be circumvented. That is to say, it is necessary to present which words will be part of the silence, relating them to the ability cinema has developed when representing thought thanks to its context.

Regarding the thought that is developed in film, here it is understood to be produced in the images, and that "it is possible to understand a genuinely cinematographic thought, that is, a thought generated by a subject using the cinematographic device of the moving image to reflect it" (Català, 2014a, p. 15), as in the sounds. In *Filmosophy* (2006), the writer and filmmaker Daniel Frampton proposes a surprising rapprochement between cinema and philosophy. His book presents it as "a study of cinema as thinking, and contains a theory of both film-being and film form" (2006, p. 6). He sets out his understanding that film itself not only presents acts of thought but that it thinks for itself, thus distancing its creators from the actual thoughts.

> The "*filmind*" is not an empirical description of film, but rather a conceptual understanding of the origins of film's actions and events . [...] "*Filmosophy*" conceptualises film as an organic intelligence: a "film being" thinking about the characters and the subjects in the film (Frampton, 2006, p. 7).

Despite disagreeing with his premise about the film's ability to think for itself, the plot terms he uses to present his thesis are interesting: on the one hand, he cites the triggering origin of cinematographic events and, on the other hand, its endowment with organic parts that make up the whole. This study has proposed that people do everything in contexts, and these contexts must be triggered in order to exist. In addition, we suggest that cinema is activated within its audible and visible discourse, and this forms its organicity, not viewed as separate parts but as a relational system that, apprehended and empowered by filmmakers, builds a decidedly cinematic idea into a film's action sequences.

Cinema creates thought in all its filmic modalities, not only through the operations carried out by film directors through the cinematographic device but through the viewer performing the exercise of thinking as the film progresses. However, in the essay film where thought is discovered at the core, we are facing a cinema-thought. The essay film "is a form that thinks about itself. Every essay film reflects on its way of reflecting" (Català, 2019, p. 18), and it does so through sound and image, its visible and listenable activating materials.

Hans Richter was one of the pioneers who clarified the nature of the essay film. In the 1940s, he presented the differences between it and the classic documentary:

> In this effort to give body to the invisible world of imagination, thought, and ideas, the essay film can employ an incomparably greater reservoir of expressive means than can the pure documentary film. Freed from recording external phenomena in a simple sequence the film essay must collect its material from everywhere; its space and time must be conditioned only by the need to explain and show the idea (Richter cited in Rascaroli, 2008, p. 27).

In addition, Richter stated that as "it will look for images for mental concepts, it will strive to make the invisible world of concepts visible" (Richter cited in Català, 2019, p. 16). Many authors have tackled the definition of the filmic essay, and there have been many characteristic creases in light of the diversity that its filmmakers have engineered. Important references in the essay film field of study are, among others, Michael Renov (2004), Philip Lopate (1996), José Moure (2004), Christa Blüminger (2004), Timothy Corrigan (2011), Laura Rascaroli (2008, 2009, 2017) and Josep M. Català (2014a, 2014b, 2019). Thanks to their work, the cinematographic essay has gained theoretical substance that allows enormous clarity. The fundamental characteristics with which this type of film have been presented suggest recognizing that its character is heterogeneous, open (far removed from closed and outdated realities, as Nietzsche would say), unpredictable in its course, open to error, personal (with autobiographical connotations) and with a borderline status (of, for example, fiction and non-fiction). However, Laura Rascaroli (2008, 2009) proposes two idiosyncrasies as substantial axes: subjectivity and reflexivity.

Undoubtedly, both are mainstays in the unfolding of the filmic essay, but in them the key piece that Josep M. Català sets out, the subject, invariably flies over our heads and lands. He reintroduces it as:

> An essential element for the existence of a new subjective structure (...) And this subject who reflects cannot avoid being aware, in the case of the essay film and due to the characteristics of the medium it uses, of the need to make decisions about the way in which it articulates its ideas through images and other complex formations (Català, 2019, p. 19).

This subject is found on the surface of the essay film's constitutive process, and its authorship will become audible and visible. And, while coursing/wending its way through the film, the tsubject will not only show its thought (and hence the self-reflective characteristic that is attributed to these films) but also the thought process that constitutes it.

The filmmaker's reflection will be free, since "its scope is not known in advance but will be exposed as the essay itself does it" (Català, 2019, p. 35). Furthermore, it will be constructed with images and sounds and, among the sounds, voice will prevail. The thought that takes place in the filmic essay, which consubstantially meanders from idea to idea *rhizomatically* rehearsing itself, captures the surface of the film through voice.

The voice. We must once again recognize the rejection of voice —it being put in check— alongside the word heard in film theory, when we see that it is named *voiceover*, which implies its subordination to the visible image. Christian Metz explained that sound is never *over*. It is either audible or it is not, and:

> In a film a sound is considered "off" (literally off the screen) when in fact it is the sound's source that is off the screen, therefore an "off-screen voice" is defined as one which belongs to a character who does not appear (visually) on the screen (Metz, 1980, pp. 28-29).

We have fused the term *voice*over for an action that does not equate to listeningf, so we should therefore allude to *bodies*over, not *voice*over. Surely it is due to a "screwing ideology," as Chion affirms (2004, p. 136), a clear stubbornness of matching voice to mouth. Technically, the common designation of *voice*over is useful, and, similarly, so is dividing a film script into scenes, though in reality they are both scenes and sequences. But there are preferable ways of recognizing and naming the voice in cinema.

One approach is to think about voice according to its effect on image. Serge Daney raised this in his text "Back to Voice: on Voices *over, in, out, through*", published in 1977 in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* journal. He proposed four different designations: on the one hand, the invisible voices —the *over* voice (that "runs parallel to the sequence of images and never intersects with it"; p. 19) and the *in* voice (that participates in the image and will provoke a response, since this will challenge the characters in the diegesisd); on the other hand, the visible ones— the *out* voice (that arises directly from the mouth) and the *through* voice (that is expressed within the image but outside the mouth, although it makes some part of the speaker's body visible, such as their back) (Daney, 2013). Michel Chion picks up Daney's approach in his famous book *La voz en el cine*, proposing a new and suggestive term: the acousmatic presence. Based on Daney's idea of effect, the "acousmatic" voice maintains a relationship between what is heard and seen:

> It is "out-screen" and therefore, for the viewer, outside the image and at the same time "it is in the image" (...), at the same time inside and outside, looking for a place to settle. Especially when they have not yet shown us the body that normally inhabits it (Chion, 2004, p. 35).

Within the *acousmatic* voices, some see everything and others have partial vision, but all will have power until, as sometimes happens, the "decousmatization" —the incarnation of the voice— takes place. He also presents the distinction between the *I-voice* and the *voice*over, which, as he puts it, being acousmatic, is a voice that occurs behind the image, narrating, presenting and commentingI. This is explained through Hitchcock's film *Psycho* (1960), starting with the final scene specifically. Norman (Anthony Perkins) is alone in a cell and hears his mother's voice. The *I-voice* defines it as involved on the screen, wrapping itself within it, occupying the space in contiguity to the spectator's ear, and causing identification: "it is a close, concrete, insinuating voice, without an echo, it is a voice-ray that so much vampirizes Norman's body as the total image, and even the viewer himself. A voice *with an inner image*" (Chion, 2004, p. 60). In the same film, he distances the I-voice from what he calls the inner voice, which is the one that resounds in the head of the character Marion (Janet Leigh) when she flees by car.

Beyond the simple voiceover designation, the origin of its source and its screen presence or absence, both Michel Chion and Serge Daney present the relationship of the voices alongside the action that occurs in the image and the physical specificities within which the sound of the words takes place. However, what happens when listening to the voice belongs to a different order of things, as when it takes place in the essay film? Let us start with the fact that the filmic essay is exploratory. It looks for unknown routes and unexpected relationships presented through voice and image. If we pay attention to the voice and its words in essay film, we can tease out that searching for its source will no longer be relevant. We recognize that it is thought. Whether it coincides with the visible image or not will no longer be important. It will always happen alongside it and whether it has physical characteristics or not will cease to be of consequence, because, without a doubt, it will have them, and they will be unmistakably specific and motivated by the freedom the filmmaker's imagination affords them.

The words heard in the essay film are the audible articulation of thought, the filmmaker's intimate introspection, speaking, thinking and inventing. Moreover, this particular way of representing the imaginary recalls what we do on our own, in silence. If, in silence, in one-person communication, the state of words and images occurs in the imaginary mind in constant interaction, and this, as it has been presented here, is virtual, then the essay film has achieved the unexpected. It has represented silence, has *performed* silence's words and has rendered images visible.

In the visual essay, silence's words and images materialize. It is within the precious hodgepodge that takes place in the essay filmmakers' imagining thinking that silence

takes shape during the *listen-visible* of their essay films. Making silence's words —its voices— enunciable in film creates an epistemological risk. Yet to speak of it in the context of action-cinema is to supply it with its ability to *metaphorize*, to represent itself, in its *listenability*. If silence was ever masked in cinema, the proposition here has been to unmask it and to think about it from the standpoint of its rhetorical action, which takes on an articulable surface.

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Silence in Hitchcock's cinematic language:
the eloquence of silence

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to highlight the importance of silence in Alfred J. Hitchcock's cinematic language, a fundamental element for addressing and understanding the complexity of the British filmmaker's symbolic universe. Understood in its ambivalence as a linguistic and communicative phenomenon on the one hand, and as the matrix of non-verbal language and semiotics in general on the other, and not forgetting its presence in the structure of the narrative fabric, silence is an essential part of the master's style. His style subscribes, in a very personal way, to the "aesthetics of silence" that characterize 20th-century artistic language.

RESUMEN

El objeto del presente artículo es poner de relieve la importancia del silencio en el lenguaje cinematográfico de Alfred J. Hitchcock; elemento fundamental para abordar y entender la complejidad del universo simbólico del cineasta británico. Y es que el silencio, entendido en su ambiva lencia, como fenómeno lingüístico y comunicativo, por un lado, y, por otro, como matriz del lenguaje no verbal, en particular, y de la semiótica, en general, sin olvidar la presencia de este en la estructura del tejido narrativo, es esencial en el estilo del maestro. Estilo que se inscribe, de una forma muy personal, en la "estética del silencio" que caracteriza el lenguaje artístico del siglo XX.

Introduction

In the pages that follow, we will briefly see how the British filmmaker weaves his cinematic universe in silence[1]. Unsurprisingly, Hitchcock himself observed that "the true nature of cinema does not reside in the word, but in the image" (Truffaut, 2001, p. 58), as in its infancy with silent films. Conversely, we must not forget that the British filmmaker reflected contemporary thought, Nietzsche's philosophy and Freud's psychoanalysis, which were key to the evolution of art and culture in the 20th century. He was also influenced by the avant-garde styles that emerged during the first half of the century, like expressionism and surrealism, forging in his filmography a personal "aesthetics of silence" (Sontag, 1997, p. 10), which filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, or Ingmar Bergman d(rooted in the tradition of Nordic cinemad) would see through. Silence came to be a metaphor for the culmination of the artistic and cultural process in western history, which manifested itself in all the arts, from music and painting to audiovisual arts such as cinema (Marco, 2001, p 88).

Silence is omnipresent in three areas of Hitchcock's work: in the narrative, in the linguistics and semiotics, and in the psychological, not forgetting silence in the isolation that haunts modern man and that plays a major role in his work. Each of these spheres is formed based on silence; they are intimately interconnected and converge in a superior unit that is the unsettling and silent universe of Hitchcock's style. In some way, the master's cinema shows "the crisis of language and culture that occurred throughout the last century and that will determine the revolution of contemporary artistic language"[2] (Steiner, 2000, p. 28).

First, silence is present in the narrative structure of his films. This is inherent to the genre of suspense, as the fabric in which information is inserted, cleverly administered by the British director, to create intrigue for the viewer. Another dimension of silence is implicit in the semiotics of the visual media that come into play in each frame, and in each sequence, as the plot develops. In this sense, we would say that silence is a special space where each of the visual symbols dwells, isolated while simultaneously connected. The camera's eye isolates the objects that the director wants to highlight, giving them a disturbing prominence in the narrative. Hitchcock shows keen symbolic intuition by recreating the symbols that make up his semiotic universe. As well as being objects (everyday or not), these symbols are the space in which the characters develop and which say a lot about their psychology and their inner world, the use of black and white —the haunting language of light and shadow inherited from expressionist filmmakers— and symbolism in the technique of color (Truffaut, 2001), among others, not forgetting the auditory dimension —apart from verbal language— that is so significant in his films. This applies to music, a fundamental element

1 Silence as a sign or symbol, as well as a channel of communication and a form of behavior, has been one of the focuses of Semiotics, Linguistics, Pragmatics and Communication Sciences in recent decades.

2 "The excess of information imposed by the media, in the modern world, has eliminated the space of silence in the intimacy of contemporary man, reducing him to a mere automaton" (Steiner, 2000, p. 89).

in many works such as Rebecca (Selznick and Hitchcock, 1940), *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) or Vertigo (Coleman and Hitchcock, 1958). In any case, every one of these elements that make up the grammar of the teacher's cinematographic language is in and based on silence, where they find their essence and their reason for being.

In a psychological sense, silence is hugely relevant in Hitchcock's filmography. Thanks to this silence, we know what the characters are like. We get to know the complexity of their inner world not through words, but through their silences. Consider the eloquence of those close-ups in which the director shows the protagonist, sometimes in a piercing zoom; the almost hyper-realistic shots capture the character's facial expression, through which we gain access to their mind and the agitation that occurs in their psyche, as if through a window.

Closely linked to the characters and the environment in which they move, we must underline another aspect of silence that is essential in the master's cinema: his desire to demonstrate the enormous difficulties of human communication. In this sense, we see that the characters' interactions are generally structured around non-verbal communication (including facial expressions, looks, gestural language, proxemics, and body kinetics) or are articulated based on silence itself as a communication channel. The characters say more with their silences than with their words. As a visionary, Hitchcock illustrates this, preempting the theories of communication that emerged in the 1960s in Palo Alto (California) that are still so relevant to communication and the social sciences today. In this integrated holistic theory of communication, silence and body language are given great importance in interpersonal interaction, opening up a field that was completely unexplored until that point.

Silence in Hitchcock's cinematic language: the eloquence of silence

Silence is integral to suspense, a genre that the British director raised to its highest form (Truffaut, 2001). Hitchcock maintains the intrigue from beginning to end with a steady hand throughout the plot. He does it through each shot, sequence, movement of the camera and, above all, montage, when silence becomes the true protagonist in Hitchcock's syntax. This is the moment to create the magic of suspense, "juxtaposing the images so that they provoke the maximum tension and the greatest degree of intrigue in the viewer" (Truffaut, 2001, p. 237). The montage, envisioned in synthesis and, therefore, in silence, is the cornerstone of his cinematographic language. Using this technique, the master creates climactic moments throughout the story. Through a simple arrangement of highly connotative images, he creates as much psychological tension as possible by silencing everything that is not relevant. In this way, Hitchcock's visual rhetoric preempts important discoveries in the pragmatics of language and communication, as well as in the field of textual rhetoric, in the final decades of the 20th century, such as Grice's conversational inferences (1991, pp. 511-530), and Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory

(1990, pp. 5-26), and the semantic relationships implicit in Van Dijk's pragmatics of textual discourse (1980, p. 10). This research highlights the importance of silence and the tacit in every act of communication. Thus, the master's cinematographic style complies with "the conversational maxims"[3], which relate to the principle of relevance, both in terms of synthetic language and the techniques used. Conversely, his symbolic discourse in images has become a source of inferences and idea connections. Synthesis, relevance and inference are the hallmarks of the British filmmaker's universe, with silence ultimately being the phenomenon that underlies all these mechanisms implicit in communication.

Hitchcock's montage technique revolves around two narrative resources: analysis and synthesis. In both mechanisms, the director plays with the time of the story (Truffaut, 2001, p. 92), moving in the space of the silence, since his films' most emblematic scenes are silent. In analysis, time expands; in synthesis, in contrast, it contracts. Both cases involve ellipsis[4] and silence. One montage example that illustrates the analysis technique is the death sequence of Agent Gromek (Wolfgang Kieling) in *Torn Curtain* (Hitchcock, 1966). Across various shots, Hitchcock shows the viewer, somewhat ironically, that it is not easy to kill a man. To that end, he presents a succession of images in absolute silence, showing the extreme rawness of the situation. The scene takes place on a farm, where Professor Armstrong (Paul Newman) and a peasant woman (Carolyn Conwell) try to kill a KGB agent, to no avail. After numerous attempts to kill the agent, the camera shows the oven in the foreground, from which we infer that this is the last resort to achieve their objective. In an overhead shot, the camera focuses on the great efforts of Armstrong and the farmer. They eventually stick Gromek's head in the oven until his hands go still. The woman resolutely closes the gas valve and Dr. Armstrong, exhausted, falls into a deep silence.

The quintessential type of montage in Hitchcock's movies is based on ellipsis and synthesis, both of which are articulated in silence. In addition to creating intrigue in the plot, this technique introduces the protagonists to the story, immediately capturing the viewer's attention. In *Chained* (Hitchcock, 1946), the first appearance of Devlin (Cary Grant) is from behind[5] at a party. However, the most expressive ellipsis, a source of relevant inferences in the plot, is when Hitchcock presents the protagonist of *Marnie* (Hitchcock, 1964). The film opens with the camera zoomed in on a yellow handbag under a woman's arm. The camera moves away, and we see her from behind walking down a platform. She stops and waits for

3 Ellipsis, as a rhetorical device, is the bedrock of Hitchcock's cinematic language. With ellipsis, everything that is not relevant in the audiovisual discourse in which the plot unfolds is silenced. Ellipsis is also a necessary economic mechanism in communication because, as Ortega y Gasset says, "man cannot say everything he wants, either because of social taboo, or because, simply, it is impossible to say everything one thinks or feels" (Ortega y Gasset, 1996, p. 225-257).

4 There are three conversational maxims: 1. Quantity: "Don't make your contribution more informative than necessary"; 2. Relationship: "Get to the point"; 3. Mode: "Be concise and avoid being verbose" (Sperber and Wilson, 1990, p. 5-8).

5 This mechanism is used by Steven Spielberg to introduce the character Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson) in Schindler's List (Lustig, Molen and Spielberg, 1993). The presentation of the character from behind has a symbolic effect, showing a split in his identity over the course of the plot.

the train. Next, in an office, several people talk about an employee who has stolen a sum of money. The owner of the company makes a detailed description of the suspect: a young brunette woman with a good figure. The next scene is silent again; the camera follows the woman from behind into a hotel room, where she empties the money from her bag. And then the camera shows us one of the most fascinating visual metaphors in the history of cinema for presenting a character: after a close-up that shows the water darkening in the sink, the woman throws her hair back and looks at herself in the mirror, smiling triumphantly[6]. That is when we see Marnie's (Tippi Hedren) face, radiant before the viewer's eyes, now with shiny blonde hair. Bernard Herrmann's musical band emphasizes that tremendous moment as a splendid epiphany. In this way, through very few shots, we learn about the identity of the protagonist: an enigmatic and chameleonic woman, who we infer has had a long criminal career, judging by the various identity cards that she keeps in her purse.

The situation we have just described shows us how the filmmaker, in a few seconds and through a synthesis of silent shots, creates a virtual universe that pulls and subjugates us as viewers. The master's cinematographic language is highly suggestive and expressive in its essentially visual and mute nature. He sets each film up as san elaborate artifact[7] (Van Dijk, 1980) to stimulate vision and intelligence, and he does so in the matrix of silence, or else emphasizing the emotion he wants to convey, with music intermittent with the imagery. With each shot or sequence, not only is our nervous system put to the test but also our ability to infer[8] ideas, through visual and mental connections, and generate metaphorical and symbolic propositions[9]. Watching each Hitchcock film inspires in the viewer an uncontrolled world of sensations, emotions and ideas. We can thus affirm that the master's cinematographic language is revealed as the purest expression of the eloquence of silence.

Beyond what we have just pointed out, silence in Hitchcock's movies came to be the subtle mesh in which the different semiotic structures, both visual and auditory, reached their greatest significance. Each of his films is a structure of semiotic structures. The signs —or symbols, according to Teodorov (1978)— that appear in each frame are what create the reality that the viewer perceives. In this way, the close-up of the rope that ties together the books in *The Rope* (Bernstein and Hitchcock, 1948) has a recurring symbolism: the everyday object is the murder weapon. According to Rohmer and Chabrol, Hitchcock "elevates

6 The mirror is a recurring symbolic object in Hitchcock's movies.

7 Van Dijk uses the noun "artifact" when referring to textual discourse and the complexity that this entails.

8 The phenomenon of inferences and conversational implications in the pragmatics of language (Grice, 1991, pp. 511-530), relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1990, p. 9) and the hidden code (Hall, 1976) —all these theories of communication and the social sciences of the last decades of the 20th century point to the principle of relevance and to the tacit knowledge of man. As individuals in a society, we share a common cultural heritage —a hidden code—, and we participate in implicit norms of connection and deduction, to understand the utterances of everyday language. The principle of linguistic economy in sentences, both verbal —or silent— and written, appeals to the cognition and context shared by speaker and listener. n"Human beings automatically aspire to the maximum relevance, that is, the maximum cognitive effect with the minimum processing effort" (Sperber and Wilson, 1990, p. 9).

9 Van Dijk (1980) studies the cognitive implications that explain the processes of understanding the textual artifact.

the anecdotal to the quintessence in which background and form are united in an indivisible unit" (Rohmer and Chabrol, 2006, p. 17). The form creates the content, just as a painter expresses their work on canvas, or an architect organizes matter in space. This indivisible unity of form and content is revealed in silence. And just as the concept of emptiness is fundamental to Zen Buddhism because it harbors the essence of things (Watts, 1976), silence works in a similar way in Hitchcock's films because it enables symbols to take on their full meaning, as we have seen.

Paradoxically, Hitchcock's cinematographic language swings between silence and eloquence. In each shot, the director expresses more than he silences. Following the principle of transparency, a prerequisite in narration, Hitchcock "suggests to the viewer all the information they need to orient themselves in the thread of the story" (Truffaut, 2001, pp. 86-87), although he later surprises them constantly, breaking with the principles of obviousness and predictability —"key concepts to understand what is tacit in saying" (Ramírez, 1992, pp. 15-45). He does so with powerful symbolic language where light and shadow (or, as the case may be, Technicolor), objects, and space and time recreate a disturbing reality that seems to overflow, drowning the viewer in a state of absolute discomfort when it does not end up in the abyss of terror.

Another of the British filmmaker's fundamental strategies to awaken emotions in the viewer's subconscious is to present the situation across numerous shots, accompanied by disturbing music. This is what happens in the shower scene in *Psycho*, a flagship horror movie, in which Herrmann's music is as relevant and meaningful as the image itself. We perceive the sound of violins as auditory stabs, functioning as hurtful synesthesia, while we see Marion's (Janet Leigh) murder in a series of extremely violent shots. As viewers, we hear and feel those stabs that end her life in seconds with the same character. With works such as *Rebecca, Vertigo* or *Psycho*, Hitchcock illustrates Nietzsche's concept of art, insofar as "it has the virtual capacity to create a reality superior to the truth" (Nietzsche and Vaihinger, 1980, pp. 3-7).

This complex semiotic universe, interwoven in silence and paradoxically eloquent, follows Hitchcock's notion of suspense and, beyond that, his vision of the world. In a world as volatile and changing as ours, there are no absolute truths. In modern society, reality is inconsistent and nothing is what it seems. Hitchcock seems to illustrate Jean Baudrillard's (1978) idea of "the culture of the simulacrum": objects have lost their nature as symbols, becoming part of an illusory world of papier-mâché. In this sense, silence is the space of the simulacrum of language, at the same time paradoxically becoming the place of noise (Marco, 2001, p. 66). In this regard, it suffices to recall the first images that appear in *North by Northwest* (Coleman and Hitchcock, 1959). The camera focuses on the reflection of Manhattan's urban chaos in the windows of a skyscraper, accompanied by Herrmann's suggestive music. Furthermore, we would say that Hitchcock preempts that postmodernity that disintegrates into atoms, meaning the concept of "liquid reality" by

Zygmunt Bauman (2002). The director presents stories that involve a changing and kaleidoscopic reality, between the silence that surrounds a disguised reality and the perspectivism of the characters; the camera's point of view and that of the viewer. Thus, as if it were a game of mirrors —a very Cervantine idea— Hitchcock displays a disturbing reality —implausible or, as the case may be, dreamlike— showing us a multiform universe that goes beyond the limits of fiction again and again to invade the realms of the viewer's reality. It is worth mentioning Susan Sontag's corresponding words about modern art:

> In light of the current myth, by virtue of which art aspires to become a "total expectation" that commands all the attention, the strategies of reduction reflect the most sublime ambition that art could adopt (Sontag, 1997, p.28).

The American thinker is referring to the ambition of achieving total consciousness of God. And this is exactly how the master is presented to us in his films: a wise demiurge like Prospero, the magician from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2016).

The suspense story: a plot woven into the canvas of silence

Silence is the canvas on which a suspense story is woven. An enigma is the common thread along which the plot unfolds. But for Hitchcock, what is relevant is not the mystery itself but rather weaving the spider's web and catching the viewer from the very beginning (Truffaut, 2001, p. 127), even from credits, as happens in *Vertigo*[10]. In this sense, Hitchcock shows his *horror vacui*, since there is no shot without content in the narrative fabric; every symbol is relevant and must enhance the suspense, as we have seen. In any case, the symbolism of his language and all the visual resources that come into play are subject to two fundamental elements in the plot that are inscribed in silence: first, the perspective from which the enigma is perceived —and from where things are not what they seem— and second, concealment of the characters' identity.

The perspective from which the enigma is perceived

In Hitchcock's films, the story revolves around a hidden truth involving the protagonist which is the backbone of the intriguing situations in which the characters are immersed, and to which they react by giving free rein to their feelings and emotions (Truffaut, 2001, p. 128). This hidden or silenced truth that haunts the protagonist can be shown through two different gazes that determine the perspective from which the story is told. One is the gaze of a character that matches that of the viewer, knowing nothing about the reality that torments the protagonist (Truffaut, 2001, p. 144). In this case, the perspective is internal to

10 In *Vertigo*, the credit titles already arouse the mystery in the viewer. The eyes and the enigmatic gaze of the woman, together with the spiral design —a metaphor of the eye that perceives a deceptive reality— suggest the sinisterness of the plot that is going to unfold before the viewer's gaze.

the story, as occurs in *Suspicion* (Edington and Hitchcock, 1941) where we see in the end, with the same bewilderment as Lina McLaidlaw (Joan Fontaine), that her husband Johnnie Aysgarth (Cary Grant) is not a murderer. Everything has been the result of her neuroticism and strict Catholic upbringing.

The other gaze is that of the viewer who, unlike the protagonist, knows the truth (Truffaut, 2001, p. 105). In this external point of view, the camera presents the story laid bare like an omniscient demiurge. In *The Rope*, the camera lens shows us the horrors committed by the villains. The viewer knows the truth, witnessing the tortuous path that the protagonist has to travel to unravel the mystery. Rupert Cadell (James Stewart) discovers with horror at the end of the macabre party that not only have his former students[11] committed a murder but they have been capable of celebrating their crime with the corpse of their friend present at the party.

Reality is silenced: things are not what they seem

In this visual game, in which situations and characters veil (silence) and "unveil" reality before the astonished gaze of the protagonist and us as spectators, in a reality in which nothing is what it seems, we are shown a set of mirrors or illusory truths that vanish when we approach. This is the case in *Saboteur* (Lloyd and Hitchcock, 1942), in which the protagonist is unjustly accused of an act that he has not committed, as in many other Hitchcock films[12]. Barry Kane (Robert Cummings) begins a journey in search of the truth that is riddled with surprises, twists and situations in which people are not what they appear to be. The list of silenced truths around the character is endless, forming a vast spider web in which he is trapped. The Kafkaesque reality that Kane experiences responds to the Chinese box structure: within each "supposed truth" there is another, and so on, until the plot ends.

Concealing identity

At the same time as concealing the facts, the characters' identity is silenced, a narrative resource that plays a key role in the plot. In some cases, the protagonist themself adopts a false identity to achieve their purpose, which usually involves fleeing from villains and, ironically, the police while simultaneously discovering the truth; that truth that is reluctant to emerge from its silence and be "unveiled". In *The 39 Steps* (Balcon and Hitchcock, 1935), Richard Hannay (Robert Donat) adopts different identities to escape from his pursuers. In this case, the concealment becomes a source of comedy. However, in most films, the villain is the one silencing their true nature behind a mask of alluring amiability (Truffaut, 2001, p. 180), like the charismatic Robert Rusk (Barry Foster) in Frenzy (Hill and Hitch-

11 Brandon (John Dall) and Phillip (Farley Granger) take Nietzsche's theory of the superman to its highest form. They believe that they are superior beings and that they can elevate murder to the category of art.

12 We see the most tragic case of an innocent protagonist accused of murder in *The Wrong Man* (Coleman and Hitchcock, 1956). While Manny (Henry Fonda) is in the dungeon, we see the superimposed image of the killer walking the city's streets. In an ellipsis, Hitchcock shows us that the innocent are victims of men's righteousness.

cock, 1972) and so many others. Or sometimes the other characters hide the identity of the villain, like in *Rebecca*, where not only has Mrs. Danvers (Judith Anderson) sublimated the image of the late Mrs. de Winter but all the characters, including Maxim himself (Laurence Olivier), contribute to creating the aura of a woman unattainable in the eyes of the viewer and the protagonist through their silence.

Intimately linked to the theme of concealing and silencing identity, we have the theme of the double[13], which is highly symbolic. The double gives us all the dualities that make up reality: speech/silence, light/dark, and good/bad, among others. An insightful psychologist, Hitchcock[14] knew that shadows abound within human beings —as the Romantics recognized in their time— and that social actors only present the mask that social conventions permit. The theme of the double, which implies a show/silence ambivalence structured around the good/evil dichotomy, is a fundamental feature as he builds his characters (Spoto, 1993, p. 10). This splitting can occur in the psychology of the same individual or in the contrast between two characters. Thus, in *Rebecca*, the protagonist's identity is constructed in vivid contrast with the personality of the notable absentee: the late Mrs. de Winter. The capital R for Rebecca, a symbol of her omnipresence in the mansion, contrasts with the young woman's lack of a name throughout the film.

On other occasions, the theme of the double is present within the same character, as is the case of John Aysgarth in *Suspicion*. He is a charming man who, after a certain point, is seen through his wife's and our eyes, as viewers, as an alleged murderer. Consider the disturbing scene in which Aysgarth climbs the stairs in the dark with a glass of milk for his wife. Johnnie's silent shadow is projected on the wall, a metaphor for that other self that supposedly lives inside him, while the bright white glass seems to be a bearer of death (Truffaut, 2001, p. 133).

The theme of the double is a constant in the master's cinema, forming a gallery of disturbing characters, some dangerous and mentally disturbed, others victims of their own evil. Perhaps the most tragic and sinister example appears in *Vertigo*: the Madeleine-Judy pairing, both played by actress Kim Novak. In this case, it is not strictly good versus evil but truth versus lie (Spoto, 1993, p. 219). It is about the impersonation of an elegant and sophisticated woman by a girl from a modest background. In this game of mirrors and silences, the only truth is that Scottie (James Stewart) falls in love not with a woman of flesh and blood but with an idealistic image onto which he projects his desire.

The ominousness of discovering the truth

Hitchcock knows that discovering the truth (*alétheia*) is traumatic, especially when things that should remain hidden —and silenceds— are revealed before our eyes. Discovering

13 This theme is a constant throughout Western culture, illustrated in modern literature by novels such as Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (2006) or Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (2000).

14 Donald Spoto defines the British director's personality as "a warehouse of all that is contradictory in human nature" (1993, p. 69).

something sinister is horrifying to us. "The sinister —understood as the limit of what we can bear— must remain veiled", says Eugenio Trías (2001, p. 10). Crossing this limit comes with pain. However, pain and moral acceptance of limits are intrinsic to the path of initiation to life. Discovering the truth means waking up from the dream of innocence. We have this traumatic path of initiation in *Rebecca* and in *Shadow of a Doubt* (Skirball and Hitchcock, 1943), where Charlie (Teresa Wright) discovers to her horror that her uncle, whom she idolizes, is a murderer.

Sometimes the pain is more than we can bear, as Freud observed. The truth hides in the subconscious and trauma appears (Freud, 2014). Hitchcock is fascinated by the world of the subconscious, that silent universe that bubbles away within us and seems strange and alien. It is no surprise that some of his characters are marked by childhood traumas. In the film *Spellbound* (Selznick and Hitchcock, 1945), the disturbed mind of the protagonist, John Ballantyne (Gregory Peck), takes refuge in amnesia to overcome the guilt he feels for his brother's death as a child. Hitchcock draws on the enigmatic world of dreams to delve into the subconscious and reveal the root of the character's trauma. On the one hand, he uses the symbolic language of surrealism to release the protagonist's psychological repression; on the other, he uses Freudian psychoanalysis through Dr. Constance Petersen (Ingrid Bergman), who manages to reveal the meaning of Ballantyne's fixation with parallel lines, which induce him into a state of shock when he sees them.

Hitchcock is part of mythological tradition, in the deep sense that Hans-Georg Gadamer gives to the term: it "is the bearer of its own truth, in the voice of a wiser original time, for the explanation of the world" (Gadamer, 1977). Furthermore, the filmmaker reveals himself to be a visual rhapsodist of the problems of modern man, becoming a creator of postmodern myths. *North by Northwest* is a picture parable of the loneliness of modern man. And in *Rear Window* (Hitchcock, 1954), he recreates his *voyeurism* as he succumbs to the television screen, living a virtual reality instead of his own existence.

Hitchcock's symbolic universe

The master's style lies in a very visually powerful, connotative language with multiple meanings. As Hitchcock himself said, his mind thought in images, so his films are essentially visual (Truffaut, 2001). Drawing a parallel with Nietzsche's view of language (Nietzsche and Vaihinger, 1980), the master's symbolic universe is autotelic and a metaphor for the phenomenological world.

Hitchcock's narrative transparency is supported by two resources that are added to synthesis and silence: symmetry and contrast, whether of images, characters or environments, among other aspects (Spoto, 1993, p. 73). The director presents one reality and then immediately contrasts it with its opposite so that the viewer gets the message straight away. More often than not, there is an ironic or humorous intention. In this way, when *Rebecca's* young protagonist makes her entrance into Manderley, as the new Mrs. de Winter, she does so in

a disheveled way. The girl's simplicity stands in contrast to the strict protocol Mrs. Danvers has arranged for her welcome. At other times, this contrast has a dramatic purpose to emphasize the danger that lies in wait for the protagonist. Consider the first shots of *Shadow of a Doubt*, which show us Uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten) in a room of a boarding house in the suburbs of New Jersey. In a sequence shot, the camera recreates the sordid environment that surrounds the character —a metaphor for the darkness that dwells inside him. The next sequence shows us a panoramic view of a sunny city; the lens zooms in through a window with curtains and we see a cozy family home. The sequence ends with a close-up of Charlie, the niece, also stretched out pensively on the bed, just like her uncle. The two sequences contrast sharply to show us the uncle-niece dichotomy, an omen of the tension between good and evil which will unfold in the plot.

Hitchcock's metaphorical language extends to all areas: "from a careful staging, of interior or exterior spaces, to atmospheric phenomena (a sunny day or a stormy day), passing through objects —as we have seen. Any visual detail in the camera frame has something to say about the characters and their inner world" (Spoto, 1993, p. 70). The channel and the code used are always audiovisual, outside of verbal language. "It is easier for the receiver to retain a visual or acoustic image —music or noise— than words" (Truffaut, 2001, p. 134). We refer to the significant presence of music, in films such as *Rebecca* or *Vertigo*, which emphasizes the most climactic scenes in the plot. In *Rebecca*, Franz Waxman's violin melody accentuates the dreamlike atmosphere in which the protagonist immerses herself at Manderley —an atmosphere that simultaneously fascinates and torments her.

In Hitchcock's symbolic universe, spaces have as much prominence as the characters or objects. In many cases, they represent a psychological extension of the protagonist, when the latter does not empathize with them. More than a mansion, Manderley symbolizes the beauty and mystery that surrounds the memory of *Rebecca*. But just as with the identity of the characters, spaces are not always what they seem. In *Psycho*, we initially understand that the house on the hill is the sinister place where Norman Bates's (Anthony Perkins) mother lives; only at the end do we realize that it is a metaphor for the character's devious mind. Besides these examples, the spaces in which the characters interact can be interior or exterior and are generally urban. Interior spaces are the setting for intimacy, so it is common for protagonists to meet in a train car. Trains hold a special symbolism in Hitchcock's films as the space where two strangers meet at a specific moment in their lives, each with their past and their silence[15] and the psychological burden that this entails.

Another symbolic space is the inside of a car, which is key to developing intrigue. Scottie's uncertainty crescendos when following Madeleine through the streets of San Francisco in a stifling and dreamlike atmosphere until we witness one of the most fascinating scenes of

15 With their fears and frustrations, with their desires and secrets. According to Michelle F. Sciacca: "Silence has a psychological weight that we cannot find in any word (...)(...) In an instant of silence all the weight of our life is collected: it is loaded with all memories, with all the presences and absences, with all the hopes and disappointments. In an instant of silence, a whole life is gathered" (1961, p. 103).

Vertigo. Scottie's long journey through the city ends in a dark alley, where he gets out of the car and enters a sinister place. In the darkness, he opens the door and we suddenly witness an explosion of beauty. The image of Madeleine in the flower shop, surrounded by flowers, is like a dream for both the protagonist and the viewer. At that moment, Scottie's fascination with the mysterious stranger takes shape.

The house is another important space, a metaphor for the character's inner self. Always ready to surprise the viewer and break with predictability, Hitchcock shows us the private life of the *Rear Window* protagonist who, instead of living his own life, spends his time spying on the neighbors. In any case, inside a house we find a silent universe with a great psychological burden. Symbols like doors connect two different psychological spaces (Spoto, 1993, p. 220). In the opening shots of Rebecca, the camera flashes back to immerse us in a dreamlike atmosphere, while we hear the protagonist explaining the dream of her trip to Manderley as a voiceover. She stops before the gate, which indicates the limit between the known world and the mysterious and Gothic otherness of the mansion. Other symbols would be the staircase and the corridor, places of passage that connect the threatening outer space with the safe interior. In Notorious, the ladder has dangerous connotations for Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman). Once Alexander Sebastien (Claude Rains) discovers his wife's identity as an American spy, he dedicates himself to his idea of murdering her.

"The objects, whether or not they are everyday, have a marked symbolism, investing in recurrent psychological and metaphysical connotations in the plot" (Spoto, 1993, p. 55). For example, the mirror image is essential to understand the theme of the double in *Vertigo*, and the stuffed birds[16] in Norman Bates's gloomy living room in *Psycho* are a clue to the young man's troubled state of mind.

If the interior spaces are significant, the exteriors also play an indisputable role. They are generally dehumanized metropolises, like San Francisco or New York, or European cities, like London or Stockholm. However, Hitchcock also situates his characters in idyllic places, far from the noise of civilization, such as Bodega Bay in *The Birds* (Hitchcock, 1963) — although the peaceful routine of this heavenly place is soon disrupted with the arrival of the unusual and unexpected.

The characters' silence

Hitchcock valued silence more than words (Truffaut, 2001, p.56), and that is how we get to know his characters: not through their words but through their silences, as well as through the non-verbal language they display in communicative interaction. They communicate even when they do not want to, as happens when Marnie, faced with the approach of her husband, Mark Rutland (Sean Connery), takes refuge in a cabin corner[17] and shuts herself

16 The stuffed birds are a symbol with which Hitchcock preempts his film of the that name and there is a symbolic reading: those tired of human arbitrariness decide to rebel against civilization.

17 According to Hall, spaces say a lot about speakers in communicative interaction (1984, p. 198).

up in "postural silence" (Watzlawick, 1984) and quiet. "Like what happens to a musician in an orchestra, whether they want to or not, (Hitchcock's characters) are immersed in a feedback process, where each gesture or silence is relevant in communication. The individual, even if he remains silent, does not stop communicating his feelings and emotions" (Bateson, 1984). "The social actor cannot not communicate even if he entrenches himself in a hermetic silence" (Watzlawick, 1984).

Besides silence being another communication channel (in the same way as verbal and non-verbal language), we contemplate this phenomenon in characters' interactions from a linguistic perspective in integrated communication theory, as proposed by Muriel Saville-Troike, since these silences are translatable into words (1985, pp. 16-17). Furthermore, in the pragmatics of communication, these silences behave as a "form of behavior" (Fierro, 1992, pp. 47-78), since they cause the same effects as a "speech act" (Searle, 1990). In the first sequence of *Torn Curtain*, Sarah Sherman (Julie Andrews) learns at a press conference that her fiancé, Professor Michael Armstrong (Paul Newman), has crossed the "Iron Curtain" to render his services as a scientist. Her incredulous, reproachful look pierces her fiancé. In this "act of silence" supported by the gaze, the three functions of a speech act are fulfilled (Marco, 2001, pp. 224-31): the locutionary and illocutionary (conventional act), and the perlocutionary (unconventional). With the first two, silence manifests itself as "saying nothing". Sarah does not speak—she cannot, as social protocol forbids it. Although the message is clear, it could be translated into the following statement: "Are you a traitor? I can't believe it. No, you're not. Or am I wrong?". The message's disapproving connotations are clear. The effects of the perlocutionary act are not far behind: Armstrong's expression reflects his discomfort, seeing that Sarah has found out what he wanted to hide from her.

Characters say more with non-verbal communication and silence than with words. When they do speak, their words often mask the truth rather than reveal it. As Shakespeare says, "language is the domain of lies" (2016, p. 25), unlike body language which generally does not lie, as Birdwhistell points out (1984, pp. 165). With their facial expressions, looks, bright eyes or swaying, the characters do not lie, especially when they are in love. Recall the look exchanged by Roger Thornhill and Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint) in the game of seduction when they meet for the first time in the train dining car and she asks him to light her cigarette. However, characters can even lie with their body language. In such cases, the camera determinedly focuses on the character from a telling point of view, in either a high-angle or low-angle shot, to reveal and unmask them. In Psycho, the camera lens captures the face of Norman Bates in different shots from above as he talks with Detective Arbogast (Martin Balsam), who is investigating Marion's disappearance. The young man lies to the detective with both his verbal and body language, but he cannot lie to the camera, which is positioned above the characters like a demiurge. The camera knows everything about the protagonist: his tormented soul and his crimes. Behind that innocent and timid face, and the fierce voice of a domineering mother, there is a sinister truth that must be revealed.

Likewise, when the character is alone, the camera's omniscient point of view captures his most intimate thoughts. As mentioned earlier, Hitchcock places great importance on the psychological dimension of silence, a matrix in which not only do feelings and emotions take shape but also the sinister and that which cannot be verbalized. Through the voiceover, we learn how Norman Bates's divided mind resolves the conflict. Sitting in the dungeon under a blanket, the young man shows a hint of an enigmatic smile while we listen to the voice of the old woman. At that moment, we infer who has won the psychological struggle between mother and son.

Noise versus silence: indicators of dramatic climax

The noise/silence dichotomy is how Hitchcock expresses dramatic and psychological intensity with efficient use of resources, presenting us with climactic scenes in the plot. Consider the final scenes of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (Coleman and Hitchcock, 1955) when, after a few moments of long-drawn-out anguish at the end of the corridor in the Albert Hall Theater, Josephine McKenna (Doris Day) alternately observes the barrel of the assassin's gun, hidden behind some curtains, and the prime minister; meanwhile, a choir performs a cantata by Arthur Benjamin on stage. Seconds before the cymbals sound —the moment the shot should be fired— Josephine is unable to stifle a scream of terror in the middle of the room. The unexpected outburst distracts the murderer, who misses the shot, and the prime minister escapes the attack unscathed.

Another scene that illustrates this significant noise/silence contrast happens in *The Birds*, a film with no musical soundtrack. The squawking of the birds progressively takes over the scene after the first half-hour of the film. Hitchcock painstakingly prepares for the scene's climax, locating the camera at different angles to capture what happens inside and outside the bar, where the townspeople have taken refuge when fleeing from the massive bird attack. The bar is a few meters from a gas station, where we suddenly see that one of the gasoline tanks is losing fluid, forming a stream. A man lights a cigarette and tosses the match, causing a huge explosion. The camera shows us an overhead shot from the point of view of the birds, who watch the scene from the sky in terrifying silence, and we see the river of fire reach the bar, where the main couple is: Melanie (Tippi Hedren) and Mitch (Rod Taylor). This overwhelming silence is only comparable to that of certain theophanies in which the noise vs. silence contrast appears. The noise precedes a great silence, as in the *Apocalypse of Saint John* when the last trumpet sounds and the lamb opens the seventh seal: a long silence ensues, giving way to the greatness of God (New Jerusalem Bible, 8: 1, 1775). Silence is a sign that something spectacular must be coming (Eliade, 1981, p. 60).

A variant of this noise/silence contrast would be the opposites of a moving image vs. positional silence or stillness. Hitchcock introduces this contrast as a wink to the viewer, as he does with his cameos, for humorous effect; we can also interpret it as a tribute to silent cinema, the cinema that he admired, "the cinema par excellence" (Truffaut, 2001, p. 76). Non-

verbal language becomes a source of humor in some scenes in his films, such as in his last film, *Family Plot* (Hitchcock, 1976), in which Fran (Karen Black) and her friend George (Bruce Dern) are driving along the highway. The brakes fail and they go spinning, with Fran dizzily clinging to her friend, like Harpo Marx. In this same film, the director's cameo happens on the other side of a glass door. We see the silhouettes of two people talking and we recognize Hitchcock, who communicates with eloquent gestures like silent film actors did.

The persistence of Hitchcock's legacy

Hitchcock's work illustrates the history of cinema, as well as the evolution of 20th-century culture. Apart from the homage that he paid to silent films, his creative process echoed the linguistic crisis that induces the contemporary artist to conclude their expressive search in an "aesthetics of silence". Likewise, the British filmmaker's visual rhetoric preempted fundamental 20th-century theories in the pragmatics of language and the human sciences, which emphasized the importance of silence in communication. Hitchcock also became a pioneer of new technologies, inasmuch as he pushed all the possibilities of cinematographic language to the limit, creating a symbolic universe of great virtual power. The master's creative genius, as with all great artists, transcends the coordinates of space and time and has a heuristic scope.

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