

THE SILENCE OF FEAR, SILENCING BY FEAR AND THE FEAR OF SILENCE

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Although the aim of this paper is primarily to provide a theoretical contribution to our understanding of silence, it is also based on an ethnographic study conducted in Lika, a region of Croatia marked by a history of conflict and violence. Silence, in addition to having diverse functions and effects, is also characterised by different durations (it can be measured in seconds as well as in decades). It can be, and often is, filled with other potentially communicable non-verbal aspects (emotions and affects, gestures, sounds, etc.). It can also be more or less dependent on – and even steered by – the opinions, experiences and viewpoints of other individuals and communities. In short, this paper deals with the silences found in the course of the research within the framework of numerous typologies of silence, focusing on contextually dependent and ambivalent effects of silence, its “emptiness”, duration and actors (both individuals and communities). This paper deals with silences and silencing at the macrolevel (which includes their affective and social functions), as well as their effect at the microlevel of interpersonal interaction, everyday life and fieldwork encounters. The effects of the network of silences on the public presentation of the findings resulting from studying silence will also be discussed.

Keywords: silence, fear, anxiety, typologies of silence, “emptiness” of silence, duration of silence, actors of silence

[M]ore suffering is lived through than is seen from the outside. It seems that mankind prefers to suffer in silence, prefers to live in the world of silence, even if it be by suffering, than to take its suffering into the loud places of history. (Picard 1964: 73)

[S]ilencing is [...] in danger of being assimilated by its rival, language. (Thiesmeyer 2003a: 13)

1. INTRODUCTION

Before¹ I became interested in the concepts of silence, concealment, (self-)silencing and the state of being silenced, both as communicational phenomena and important factors in the transmission of knowledge and experience pertaining to the war and the post-war period, as well as constitutive elements of the affective atmosphere² in which personal experience is lived and narrated, I was particularly interested in the forms through which and in which fear and anxiety are recounted. From the present perspective, the line leading from narrating fear to communication through silence seems to point to a logical and expected path of development; however, looking back, this journey was also emotional, curious and uncertain. Identifying, recording and studying silences related to different forms of intimidation and fear, trauma and anxiety constitutes a kind of “backdoor approach” (Seljamaa and Siim 2016) to the study of cultural, affective and narrative practices which make up the affective atmosphere of the war and post-war periods in Croatia, primarily at the level of narrated and narrative events, and their “audibility” in society as a whole. Therefore, silence can also be seen as a phenomenon which acts as a “window on the elusive and overt roots of power” (Achino-Loeb 2006a: 1), which means that it also enables access to that which is less visible and less accessible to the researcher at the cognitive level, but which is nonetheless strongly present in the affective realm. This paper deals with silences and silencing at the macrolevel (which includes their affective and social functions), as well as their effect at the microlevel of interpersonal interaction, everyday life and fieldwork encounters. The effects of the network of silences on the public presentation of the findings resulting from studying silence will also be discussed.

Although this paper primarily aims to provide a theoretical contribution to our understanding of silence, it is also based on a study conducted in Lika, a region of Croatia marked by a history of conflict and violence (World War II, the war of the 1990s).³ The fundamental hypothesis, elaborated over time, and the main reason for choosing this locality, is the fact that Lika, due to an “excess” of history marked by conflict and violence, represents a space of collective anxiety (cf. Marković 2018).⁴

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² For more on affective atmospheres, see Anderson 2009; Wetherell 2013; Michels 2015; for more on the affective atmosphere in Croatia and its effects, see Marković (2018a: 128–130).

³ I conducted research in Lika on several occasions. Ivona Grgurinović, a colleague from the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Zagreb, participated in two field studies in 2017. On one occasion, we were also joined by students Lorena Drakula, Dinko Duančić and Tijana Tadić. The same research was continued in 2019, when I spoke on two occasions with members of a family who had recently moved to Zagreb from the same part of Lika. I also talked to members of an association active in the same area (the registered office of the association has been left out).

⁴ Helmut Gaus (2003) believes that anxiety is a strictly individual matter. We can only speak of collective anxiety, Gaus claims, when “a large section of the population is threatened by the same disaster” (2003: 48). Collective anxiety presupposes that a member of the group is aware that other members of the same group are also anxious. It is often preceded by a period of collective fear with the same premise.

The focus of my research was not the content of historical events, but rather the ways in which stories of these events are created, including the tension between the dominant narrative and other, “small” stories as well as that which remains unsaid in such accounts. “Small”, personal narratives are often emotionally intense, and they reflect the fear of narrated and narrative events, as well as the fear which is a result of social tensions, silencing and elision. Therefore, rather than being assigned to verbalised and visual forms of knowledge and information (even though these make up the majority of what is considered ethnographic material), priority is given to that which often remains outside of the grasp of the interpretative apparatus, to that which is experienced through the use of different senses and is interpreted in the emotional register, often remaining without its (adequate or expected) verbalised component.

Narratives about fear and in fear (of violence) are difficult to study because one of their key components is silence in various forms, with different functions and effects on the conversation and the discursive and affective practices which make up the affective atmosphere of the communities in which fear is created, processed, accumulated, reoriented, transmitted, communicated, changed and sometimes resolved, either through speech or silence. Silence, in addition to having diverse functions and effects, is also marked by different durations (it can be measured in seconds, as well as in decades). It can be, and often is, filled with other potentially communicable non-verbal aspects (emotions and affects, gestures, sounds, etc.). It can also be more or less dependent on – and even steered by – the opinions, experiences and viewpoints of other individuals and communities.

The realisation that silence is a frequent mode of communicating and concealing fear has motivated me to try to detect the conditions under which fear (acute fear, low-intensity fear and/or anxiety) can be recounted in the first place, which includes: the way fear is recounted in the field, in everyday communication, public discourse and academic texts. More specifically, in order to study the conditions under which fear and its effects can be narrated, I focused primarily on the places where there is an absence or reduction in verbalisation – where silence is the result of an intimidating object and/or intimidated subject, i.e. their “contact zone” (Ahmed 2014). I focused on the areas where narration cannot occur or is not desired, which does not necessarily mean that communication and a transfer of knowledge and personal experience were not realised in these instances.

The initial event which I consider decisive for my turn towards identifying, recording and thinking about fear through the practice of silence and omission took place in a village in Lika.

THE PUB⁵

Marija is the owner of an eating establishment where we were taken by our gatekeeper, who is perceived as a person of trust by the local community and who, much like Marija,

⁵ Examples were given titles for more convenient referencing later in the text.

shared a similar wartime and post-war fate as a member of an ethnic minority. We spent more than two hours there. We tried to steer the conversation towards her “terrifying experience” (as described by some of her neighbours, and also the reason of our visit) a number of times, but she successfully avoided our attempts, choosing instead to talk about government grants, EU funds, the new kitchen she wanted to get and the furniture she wanted to reupholster. In this specific situation, as in all similar ones, I (and my colleague) tried to keep autobiographical intrusions at a minimum, while also trying to respect the interlocutor’s implicit and explicit decisions and signals with regard to the management of the narrative content. The situation we found ourselves in would not have been as interesting if Marija had not embraced us tightly as we were leaving and thanked us repeatedly for coming and for being interested in her story (which remained untold). She was very emotional. Her eyes were full of tears. We interpreted her silence at that time as a method of exercising her right to her own story (through silence) and a means of establishing an intersubjective connection, strong empathy and affection between those participating in the conversation. Her gesture at our departure enabled us to see her silence as thematic.⁶ The content of that which remained unsaid is still unknown to us, even to this day; however, in the context of studying the narration of fear, this is of lesser importance. The thematic omission which manifested itself as “garrulous” silence was not without linguistic, situational and conversational significance, and was certainly not unimportant. It enabled interaction and the transmission of emotional intensity pertaining to an experience the exact constitutive events of which remain unknown.

Muriel Saville-Troike points out that we cannot understand a communication system without taking into account the ways in which “silence serves variously as prime, substitute, and surrogate, as well as frame, cue, and background” within that system (1985: 17). By analogy, I believe that individual and collective narratives created in fear or about fear, as well as the affective atmosphere in which fear is cultivated, processed, dismantled and communicated, cannot be understood without taking into consideration the practices of silence, omission and (self-)silencing. This statement should be given special attention because the studied group does not have “the privilege of explicitness, the luxury of transparency, the presumptive norm of clear and direct communication, free and open debate on a level playing field that privileged [groups] take for granted” (Conquergood 2002: 146).

Fear and related emotions, and the various forms of silence resulting from them, are deeply embedded and present in almost all phases of scholarly inquiry in this area – from planning the research, theoretical positioning, fieldwork to presenting the results. This is a consequence of choosing to work with interlocutors who are members of an ethnic minority with which the majority group shares a long history of violence, conflict and life alongside each other. The original hypothesis that this was a locality brimming with fear, anxiety, trauma and a long history of related silences was justified by this fact.

⁶ For more on thematic silence, see Kurzon 2007.

2. WHAT IS SILENCE: PART ONE

Language and silence belong together: language has knowledge of silence as silence has knowledge of language (Picard 1964: xx)

TEARS

After a suggestion from the same gatekeeper who arranged our meeting with Marija, Lidija also agreed to meet us in a restaurant. We briefly described our intentions. Soon after that, we started recording the conversation. Sixteen minutes from the start of the recording, Lidija ended her war story in tears:

Jelena: And what did your departure from this place look like?

Lidija: It is, and that would be the best way to describe it, a scream from your soul. [Crying] May it never happen again. You are abandoned by everyone. Pack what little you have, take your child and go. But go where? Into the night? To whom? You create a life for yourself and then they say you have to leave. Why? What did I ever do to deserve this? You can't imagine living through it.

NO WORDS

When Lidija was able to contain her tears, she remained silent for about thirty seconds, although it seemed to last much longer (my colleague and I also remained silent). She then continued to tearfully describe her experience in great detail. She would sometimes end the episodes she was describing with the following formulations:

Lidija: That night. Fear, terror, sadness, desperation. I don't know if there is a word you could use to describe it.

Even though Lidija was a skilled storyteller, and even though she did not show any obvious inhibitions, she would often conclude her stories with similar expressions, suggesting that words were not enough to fully relate the experience. Nonetheless, she invested great effort into finding the "right" words and giving meaningful structure to the story.

THE WALK

The day after describing her experience, Lidija took us for a walk through the abandoned village, which included a stop at the cemetery. We started recording the "tour" as soon as we met up. What little we did speak was not thematically related to her wartime experience. A lot of the information about the village and its devastation were communicated to

us the day before, so we did not require context for what we saw. I found the tour of the village and the cemetery very emotional. None of those present wanted to abruptly break the silence. For the most part, these were so-called “eloquent silences”⁷ (also known as “pregnant silences”), i.e. silences filled with the presence of un verbalized thoughts and feelings. We found ourselves connected by this silence. Our shared anxiety was, in a way, comforting. It functioned as a means for creating interpersonal connections.

BIRDS

Miro⁸ and Marta, a married couple, visited some of the devastated villages after the war. At one point, they said the following:

Miro: I have the silence in [...] on camera. Listen, that is one of the scariest things imaginable.

Marta: No birds, nothing. Nothing.

Miro: Nothing, no life.

Marta: Everybody has left, even the birds. Not a single bird there.

Miro: No chirping, no sounds, nothing. Completely dead. That’s probably what kills you the most. Hey, the birds have left.

Marta: Yeah, there was nothing there.

Miro: Birds.

Marta: Not a single one. A single one.

Miro: Horrible.

GUILT

Tamara “suffocated” her story of emotionally intense and traumatic experiences with repeated (unexpectedly excessive) claims that neither she nor any member of her family had ever caused harm to anyone else, that her suffering and fear were undeserved, and that it was not the result of her actions towards the object of fear, as the generally accepted and officially endorsed narrative of the war implied. For example:

Tamara: My husband never did anything wrong, my father never did anything wrong, my father-in-law never did anything wrong. [...] What am I to do? We never occupied anyone. We’re in our own house. My family never did anything wrong to anyone. Why run? But you get swept away by this mass fear. Mass fear takes over you and, well, you’re not crazy. They will come and kill your children, who knows what they’ll do to you,

⁷ For more on eloquent silences, see Ephratt 2008; also see e.g. Tannen 1985; Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1997; Kenny 2011.

⁸ Miro is the only interlocutor who identifies as a member of the majority ethnic group.

⁹ The name of the locality was left out to protect the identity of the interlocutor.

and then you say: Don't be foolish! How? Who would that? What? Who? [...] But you get carried away by mass hysteria. Fear.

During our interaction, I interpreted the suffocating overuse of such formulations as a manifestation of the need to relieve her story of collective guilt, and to present it as her own.

THE SON

Tamara is a mother of two. She described her impressions of her son's experience, which he prefers not to talk about, as follows:

Tamara: The girl was four and my son was ten years old. He hadn't even turned ten yet. When you have to carry your ten-year-old son in your arms because he's paralysed with fear... Yes. It stays with you. It stays with you in a scary way.

Jelena: Does he remember this? Does he ever talk about it?

Tamara: He doesn't like to talk about it because... Again, it's the way he was raised, you see. They are six years apart, I thought he was already a mature child and all that. He was very happy to hear that he was going to get a baby sister, and I've raised him since the day she was born that she should mean everything to him and that he should take care of her. In those moments, he was very worried about keeping his sister safe and he would always hold her close. He always held her close. Hugging her. For example, he spent the entire journey with his knees pressed against his chest. He would hold his legs close to make room in the trailer so that his sister could lie down. And he doesn't like to talk about it. He doesn't. Well, he's a man. He probably sees this differently than I do as his mother.

HISTORY

Lidija suggested that we talk to Goran. We explained to him that we were interested in hearing about his wartime experiences. This is how he started the conversation:

Goran: I got the impression from Lidija and over the phone that you were serious people. [...]

Goran (ironizing): You are going to misuse this and take advantage of me anyway.

After several exchanges, he continues:

Goran: I speak freely. It's all the same to me. Even if you were... I respect people, and I divide them into good and bad people. Everything else, political beliefs, I'm not interested in that, especially not in genocide and killing. Whatever. In order to tell the story I promised to tell, I need to say that.

His story of the war begins with historical events in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the interests of great powers in the geopolitical area he lives in. Despite our attempts to steer the conversation, Goran avoided speaking from a personal perspective during the entire interview. In his case, silence refers to the omission of a personal perspective and personal

experience. He mostly related his vision of “grand history”. The way he shaped it into a story was a clear reflection of his political positions.

PITS¹⁰

Lidija: See, that’s exactly why it started. They say there were pits before so there will be pits again [...]. That, that is the thing nobody wants to say out loud, but I’m openly saying it to you now.

THE CHANDELIER

Lidija has no chandeliers in her apartment. Bare light bulbs hang from her ceiling. When my colleague and I entered her house, she told us that she would not buy a chandelier again. She used to have a chandelier before the war, “a beautiful one” which she paid “over 1000 German marks” for. This chandelier was destroyed together with her house. She told us about the pointlessness of buying expensive things when you can lose them in a second. On the one hand, the light bulbs hanging from the ceiling are a quiet reminder of the past in the everyday life of the family, a memento, vestige and metaphor for the “difficult past” marking the presence of that which is long gone (Kidron 2009: 6); on the other hand, they are also an anticipation of future evil.

THE CUP

Davor: The only trace of my pre-war life is this cup which I found among the burned remains of the house [he points to a charred cup positioned at the very centre of the glassware cabinet in the living room; after this, a long silence ensued].

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE

Zdravka: It’s water under the bridge. May it never happen again. We need to move on. We need to accept it. When I think... I can’t even think about it. It’s not my... Or maybe it is. It’s hard to do it again... We’re in this situation. There’s no person smart enough to... It would be better... No point. Water under the bridge, may it never happen again to anyone. It’s not worth talking about. It’s not. How could I talk about it? There are no words. May it never happen again.

The transcribed account lasted for nearly two minutes.

¹⁰ The pits in question are mass graves for victims of war crimes.

ABSOLUTE SILENCE

My colleague and I visited Sanja and Branko, a married couple, on two occasions. During all our meetings, Sanja would talk about her experience without inhibition; Branko, on the other hand, would not, but would regularly join in if we engaged in small talk. A number of times, he would leave the house and then come back after a while. At one point, he unexpectedly joined the conversation and said:

Branko: My approach is absolute silence. Because if I had thought that I should give my account... OK. The worst thing of all is that I made it a rule for myself to say that I'm not responsible for anything. It's all falling apart and I'm just sitting there smiling. Like the village idiot.

These examples show some of the forms of silence which I noticed, and which will be discussed in the text. I am aware that not all readers will see silence in all these cases. Silence is an important aspect of communication, one of its indispensable parts, but it can also be easily overlooked or incorrectly (re)constructed. Silence can go unnoticed, but this does not mean that it will go away (cf. Kenny 2011: 49). Silence is effective precisely because it allows us to believe “that the unspoken is nonexistent” (Achino-Loeb 2006a: 11); at the same time, that which is left unsaid does not disappear – it is only reflected in a different way (ibid.). “Silence never ceases to imply its opposite and to depend on its presence” (Sontag 1969: 10). In the examples given above, silence is seen as a productive and effective cultural and affective practice which produces the margins of language and/or society.

3. WHAT IS SILENCE: PART TWO

In this section, as in the examples presented before, I will try to provide a partial answer to the question: what is silence? It seems that this could be a “deceptively simple question that does not yield simple answers” (van Elferen and Raeymaekers 2015: 262–263). Is silence only the absence of verbal communication or could it also be a means of communication? If we consider silence to be one of the active aspects of communication, how can we know that something has been left unsaid? How do we know what was left unsaid? “How does voice inform silence and, [...] how does silence inform voice” (Fivush 2010: 88)? When communicating, how can we know whether a specific silence is communicable or incommunicable? How do we know whether it is intentional or unintentional? Who is allowed to be the arbiter, and based on what criteria? If silence is always connected to a certain discourse, is the following question relevant: does silence make sense? Or, what sense does silence make (cf. Dauenhauer 1980)? Is it more important to know what silence means or what it does (cf. Guillaume 2018: 482)? How can we create a typology of silence and which criteria should we use? Can the duration of silence always be

measured? Is silence limited to a conversational encounter or do long-lasting silences spill over into conversations? Is silence a negatively marked absence which weighs as a burden over individuals and communities or can it also act as a constitutive environment, as the imagination of freedom? Is it just the individual who is silent or is he a member of a community? What is contained within the “emptiness” of silence?

Over the last seventy years, these and other complex questions were discussed in numerous academic texts belonging to different scholarly traditions from all over the world. An overview of studies about silence definitely cannot be introduced with the familiar academic formula that something (in this case silence) has not been sufficiently discussed or has not been adequately examined, or that different aspects and perspectives had not previously been taken into account. Therefore, if one considers the amount and scope of existing research on the topic of silence, we could say that this overview will be disproportionately brief and incomplete.¹¹

The emergence of scholarly interest in silence can be traced to musicology and essays written during the 1950s and 1960s (see American composer John Cage (1961)¹² and Swiss writer Max Picard (1964)); however, linguists were the first ones to introduce the topic into academia, with two distinct approaches emerging (see Ephratt 2008: 1910). The first approach was influenced by philosophy and literature, with its view of the topic limited to a pragmatic interpretation of eloquent silence from the perspective of its function (e.g. Jensen 1973; Bruneau 1973). The second approach focused on acoustics, more specifically, chronometric analysis of speech (for an overview, see Ephratt 2008: 1910). However,

¹¹ Silence has been discussed from the perspective of linguistics (sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, etc.) (e.g. Bruneau 1973; Jensen 1973; Saville-Troike 1985; Tannen and Saville-Troike 1985; DeVito 1989; Jaworski 1988/1989, 1993, 1997, 1997a, 2005; Kurzon, 1998; Jaworski and Galasiński 2000; Wajnryb 2002; Nakane 2007; Ephratt 2008; Schröter 2013), musicology (e.g. Cage 1961; Nyman 1974; Beeman 2006), cultural anthropology (e.g. Trouillot 2005/1995; Achino-Loeb 2006, 2006a, 2006b; Fernandez 2006; Kidron 2009; Pagis 2010; Sue 2015; Seljamaa and Siim 2016; Seljamaa 2016), folklore studies (e.g. Goldstein 2009), historiography (e.g. Winter 2010; Freund 2013; Sheftel and Zembrzycki 2013; Corbin 2018), communicology (e.g. Kenny 2011; Berger 2004), rhetoric (e.g. Scott 1993; Farmer 2001; Glenn 2004; Grant-Davie 2013), international relations (e.g. Guillaume 2018), psychology and psychotherapy (e.g. Williams 2001; McKinney 2007; Fivush 2010; Sorsoli 2010; Pasupathi and McLean 2010; Valle 2019), sociology (e.g. Luhmann 1994/1989; Zerubavel 2006, 2010; Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger 2010), legal science (e.g. Godwin Phelps 2004), philosophy (e.g. Dauenhauer 1980; Nudds 2001; Maitra 2004; Gilkey 2007; Nudds and O’Callaghan 2009; Sorensen 2009), art studies (e.g. van Elferen and Raeymaekers 2015) and other disciplines, as well as within the broader interdisciplinary domain of the humanities and social sciences (Jaworski 1997a; Clair 1998; Mazzei 2007; Sim 2007; Glenn and Ratcliffe 2011; Kenny 2011; Boldt, Federici and Virgulti 2013; Muñoz 2014).

¹² Composer John Cage created the composition 4’33” in 1952. The entire piece consists of environmental sounds from the space in which it is performed. During the performance, the musician sits at a closed piano. The title refers to the duration of the composition. Cage proved that the discomfort experienced by the audience while “listening” to the composition is actually the key to defining and understanding silence. Rather than standing for a complete absence of sound, the silence in Cage’s composition consists of ambient and unintended noise. He demonstrated to the audience “that distinguishing music from silence is a problem of cognitive framing” (Beeman 2006: 24). For more on Cage’s composition, see Dodd 2018. A video of the performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTEFKfIXs4>.

more recent studies insist that silence is not just an acoustic phenomenon but also a cultural construct. Silence is also considered to be a kind of sound (Beeman 2006: 24).

Initially, researchers approached silence as a bound phenomenon which could be easily identified (Tannen and Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993), only to later switch to the idea of “*silence as metaphor for communication*” (Jaworski 1997: 3); this was done to make possible the formulation of the concept of silence which would go beyond the idea that it is just the absence of sound or communication. Sociolinguist Adam Jaworski emphasises the symbolic link between speech and silence, where silence is always a part of the linguistic context: “silence and speech do not stand in total opposition to each other, but form a continuum of forms ranging from the most prototypical instances of silence to the most prototypical instances of speech” (1993: 25). Therefore, he insists on a view which sees silence and speech not as binary opposites but as complementary concepts (1993: 44, 46). Another designation given to silence is that it is also a metaphor for power, perceived either as absence or repressed, unobtrusive presence (Achino-Loeb 2006a: 1–2). Metaphorical silence forces us to consider the gaps in our knowledge of the world and represents a kind of “epistemological haunting: it represents the fear of the unknown by acting as an un-sonic announcer of uncanny returns” (van Elferen and Raeymaekers 2015: 264).

In the 1970s, linguistic studies also focused on bringing silence into relation with the negatively marked absence which is indicative of passivity, negative emotions, avoidance, silencing, inability, powerlessness and so on, i.e. with the absence of speech, meaning or intention. This approach was later also taken up by researchers in other disciplines (e.g. Bruneau 1973: 18; Dauenhauer 1980: 5; Zerubavel 2006: 13; Achino-Loeb 2006a, 2006b; Thiesmeyer 2003, 2003a; Schröter 2013 and others).

Trends in linguistics in the 1980s show the introduction of different aspects of eloquent, communicable silence, i.e. silence which can be “heard”, silence which “speaks” (Tannen 1985; Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1997; Kurzon 1998 and many others). This laid the foundations for the later increase in interest for the concept of eloquent silence in other disciplines, e.g. anthropology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, law (for an overview, see Ephratt 2008: 1933), historiography (especially in studies relying on oral history, cf. Farmer and Strain 2011; Sheftel and Zembrzycki 2013; Freund 2013).

3.1. TYPOLOGIES OF SILENCE

Beginning with linguistics and communicology, a number of typologies of silence were created across various disciplines using different criteria depending on the specific research tradition or research focus (for example, see Jensen 1973; Bruneau 1973; Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993; Langton 1993; Kenny 2011; Kurzon 2007; Ephratt 2008; Winter 2010; Schröter 2013; van Elferen and Raeymaekers 2015; Valle 2019). From the earliest to the most recent examples, typologies of silence tried to systematise its ubiquity,

dependence on context, elusiveness, its multiple meanings for different actors and its varying duration (which is often not measurable in chronometric terms), etc. Typologisation was used in an attempt to understand the aporia of its (in)comprehensibility, the relation between its duration and its prohibitiveness, its “emptiness”, the relation between the unspoken text and the type of silence, the intentions of the silent individual, and the power relations emerging in silence and influenced by it. I will attempt to consider these different typologies from the perspective of the contextually dependent and ambivalent effects of silence, its “emptiness”, its duration and the actors involved (individuals and collectives); additionally, I will try to further elaborate on these features of silence by using examples from the described fieldwork, with my goal being the comprehension of the different forms of silence I witnessed in specific circumstances.

3.1.1. The functions and (ambivalent) effects of silence and silencing

One of the first typologies was created by Vernon Jensen in 1973. He identified five basic communicational functions of silence: linkage function, affecting function, revelational function, judgemental function and activating function (Jensen 1973). According to Jensen, each of these five functions can be realised in two ways depending on the context. Silence with the linkage function can bring people closer together, but also isolate some of the participants of the conversation. The affecting function may be wounding, but it might also have a healing effect. Silence can also reveal or conceal states of psychological distress. The revelational function means that silence can reveal or withhold information. The judgemental function can point to agreement or disagreement over an issue. As for the activating function, it refers to the notion that silence can be indicative of activity but also of the absence of activity. This typology is important because it shows that silence can have different functions, as well as varied effects on individuals and communities.

Psychologist Robyn Fivush (2010) insists on the useful, albeit simplified distinction between the concepts of *being silenced* and *being silence*. *Being silenced* implies a kind of contrast with voice and can be understood as imposition; furthermore, it stands for the loss of power and the loss of the storytelling right (see the examples “Guilt”, “Water Under the Bridge”, “Absolute Silence”). Silence can also be conceptualised as *being silence*, which implies sharing, understanding, a different mode of communication, knowledge and emotion transfer. This mode does not require a voice and does not have to be supplemented (or at least not to the same extent) with the verbal component of language (see the examples “The Walk”, “The Chandelier”, “The Cup”). To sum up, Fivush believes that silence can be imposed on someone (*being silenced*) or shared as the background for shared knowledge and the comprehension of that which does not need to be verbalised (*being silence*) (cf. Fivush 2010). However, both types of silence can manifest themselves as their opposite and have contradictory effects.

Silence can be conceptualised in numerous – sometimes even opposing – ways: it can ruin potential opportunities for communication, but also encourage them and help create more meaningful and substantial relationships. Being silenced is often seen as a negative absence, with the implicit or explicit (internal or external) stipulation that some experiences and/or themes should not be talked about. It is a form of tacitly established social contract. A violent past is in itself a powerful factor of silencing. The suppression of language can also be understood as an attempt to deal with affects in order to prevent future conflict; however, resistance towards language should also be interpreted as the creation of an alternative system of communication which is not linguistic.

Experiences of war which cannot be absorbed into the dominant narrative are marked by silence, especially due to fear of transmission of the narrative within a broader social context (see “The Pub”) or if it is believed that the recipient at the conversational level would not be able to hear, accept or understand the experience being narrated, as well as if it is not desirable or possible to believe that the experience is true (see “Guilt”). Lidija, for example, is aware of the contextual dependence of her story and its possible effects, along with being aware of the context and effects of the silence marking the affective atmosphere of the society in which her story is received.

Lidija: If you hadn't heard this side [referring to her experience, her “side” of the story], sitting on the other side, you would say: “Impossible, it did not happen like that.” Only when you hear it, you can understand.

Miro offered a possible vision of what could happen if his “terrifying” stories broke out from the zone of silence. However, from his statement, it is clear that he does not see this as a possibility.

Miro: If it were possible to hear these stories, it would bring a huge amount of pain. It would destroy some of those preconditions. Because it destroys life itself. When you have been raised for thirty years to believe that they [the ethnic Other] are like that, then it is extremely painful when somebody says that isn't so. What then, should I erase those thirty years? These stories can't go out because the majority would have to deal with a lot of pain. It would be a huge break. It would be unbearable.

Shared silences can also be the cause and consequence of meaningful, functional and affectively aligned relationships as in the examples “Tears”, “The Walk”, “The Pub” and “The Chandelier”. Along with being an indication of communicational breakdown, shared silence can also be “a silent attunement, a sense of simply being together in the moment, that may actually promote healing” (Fivush 2010: 92). Shared fear and anxiety, much like shared silence, can also connect people and act as a kind of social magnet. Silence is, therefore, also a sign of an individual's affective and/or emotional alignment.¹³ Moments of silence can bring people together and create common histories and emotional connec-

¹³ “The Walk” contains elements of what Kurzon refers to as situational silence (Kurzon 2007: 1681–1684), characteristic, among other things, of commemorative practices. The tour of the ruined village and cemetery was, in many ways, commemorative.

tions. Silence can create a shared space in which all those participating in communication are emotionally harmonised; conversely, it can also encourage emotional alienation, distancing and intolerance (cf. Fivush 2010: 92).

The ambivalent effects of silence, put simply, also resulted in the formation of two dominant approaches to silence (see Pagis 2010: 312) connected to fear, trauma, violence and anxiety. The first approach sees silence as the consequence of a heavy psychological burden, as an indication of the “unspeakability” of a traumatic or terrifying experience – but also as a sign of political repression. The second approach goes beyond the logocentric interpretations of silence and tries to see it as the constitutive environment of (the terrifying and traumatic) experience, and sometimes even a sign of resistance (cf. Fivush 2010: 93 and later) and the imagination of freedom (cf. Brown 2005/1998: 96).

According to the first approach, silence is an intense psychological burden which does not allow the victim (the one suffering in silence) to create an intersubjective space around their own experience (Butler 1982). From this perspective, silence connected to trauma is discursively shaped as the stifling of speech, which does not stem from one’s own personal will, but from the unspeakable nature of the experience which is beyond narration. The traumatic event creates a rupture in the linear flow of experience, so any attempt at verbal representation has to inherently resist narration (Caruth 1995; cf. Kidron 2009: 7), as can be seen in the example titled “Water Under the Bridge”. In this case, speech is given the property of being able to relieve one of fear and anxiety, which is not what happens in the example. The western idea of mental health also incorporates this notion. The goal of many psychotherapeutic procedures and processes of reconciliation among mutually hostile communities is to bring to light that which was silenced despite the complex circumstances and mechanisms which originally created and continue to uphold the state of silence, where such a state is usually seen as having a negative effect on the individual’s mental health and the sustainable coexistence of different groups (cf. Valle 2019). In psychology, silence connected to trauma is framed as a failure of speech, i.e. as dysfunctional absence of voice which requires a therapeutic procedure to restore voice and create a meaningful narrative about the traumatic experience (Kidron 2009: 7). Michal Pagis believes that this approach “is part of modern Western culture’s emphasis on speech – both as a democratic right and as an important part of sociality” (2010: 312).

Some interlocutors pointed out that talking about their difficult past, fear and trauma retraumatises them. Silence is a kind of (temporary) protection from retraumatisation. In other words, silence is a declaration of trauma and prevents it from entering language.

Miro: No, when we start talking about these things then... We get completely screwed up. But that’s why we don’t go back to them that often, you know.

Sanja: People find it difficult to open up. We have forgotten. Why would you bring it up again? It’s not fear. After conversations like that, you need some time to collect yourself. Now you’ve set it aside and you live with it in the back of your mind, but let me be, I’ve had enough of it.

The first approach also sees silence as the result of oppression and a conspiracy of silence, where silence is understood as the denial of voice and where to be silent means to be silenced (Zerubavel 2006; Thiesmeyer 2003, 2003a). From this perspective, silence can also be considered the result of power relations in society. Self-expression is thus limited by silence, resulting in a feeling of isolation among individuals and groups who can no longer know whether others also share their experiences, which then only reinforces silence.

Maria-Luisa Achino-Loeb sees silence as the “vehicle for the exercise of power in all its modalities” (2006a: 3). Silence is implied in power at the level of everyday interactions, as well as in the processes of silencing the Other in order to gain power or keep it. In that sense, the practices of silence are part of every identity experience, where they constitute a discrete entity; they are the substrate of identity, but also practices which serve either domination or resistance (ibid.). On the other hand, silencing is a part of the process which creates social hierarchy and contributes to it (Thiesmeyer 2003a). Silencing is an act which can either be a one-time or repeated occurrence, and it is based on unequal negotiation; in other words, it is an act which tries to shape or uphold the relationship in which there is an obvious or symbolic disproportion in the social value of the exchange (cf. Thiesmeyer 2003a: 3–4). It is a long-lasting process, but should not be considered linear or circular. This process is susceptible to various oscillations and changes in direction, and is also continuously involved in the creation of new relationships in which the position of the speakers is not always equally (dis)advantageous. Silencing is an active socially constructed practice (cf. Thiesmeyer 2003a: 4).

The second approach sees silence as a meaningful, constitutive (constructive) environment (cf. Pagis 2010; Kidron 2009). In *Perspectives on Silence* (1985), Muriel Saville-Troike already established a broader ethnographic framework that could be used to study silence. She claims that silence can have propositional content which can be determined from the context. Silence, she argues, “is more context-embedded than speech” (1985: 11). Silence possesses an illocutionary force and, therefore, “may be used to question, promise, deny, warn, threaten, insult, request or command” (1985: 11). Silence does not have to designate a negatively marked absence even when the unspoken is something uncomfortable, dangerous or burdensome. It does not necessarily signal, as implied by the first approach (strongly influenced by “western” psychosocial norms), the processes of avoidance and repression or the collective processes of political subjugation or socially suspect processes of personal secrecy (cf. Kidron 2009: 6). Logocentric interpretations of silence have neglected the role of silence as a medium of expression, communication and knowledge transfer which is not dependent on speech. The extreme espoused by the second approach emphasises that forms of knowledge which resist articulation and collective enlistment, and which exist as non-verbal, intersubjective, embodied and material traces of the past in everyday life, can be transmitted to others in silence or through the use of it (Kidron 2009: 7). In actuality, it is communication which takes place below the surface of socially noticeable forms. These are silences which bring together families

and small groups in which they are communicated. The examples “The Cup” and “The Chandelier” point precisely to such non-narrative practices which keep the difficult past present through the silence of inanimate “witnesses”, designating “the presence of the past [in the] daily fabric of domestic life” (Kidron 2009: 13). Practices like these can be seen as a powerful factor in the transgenerational transfer of knowledge of the past. As illustrated in “The Chandelier”, the return of evil is still expected in Lidija’s house, two and a half decades after the war. Even though the experience of fear is most often perceived as a discomfort in the present (and this discomfort also extends to the future), this type of fear dwells in the background of “normal” life, family affection, love towards one’s home, and the struggle to make a living. The light bulb hanging from the ceiling instead of a “beautiful” chandelier is a “domesticated” reminder of the painful past, but it is also a token of hope for a better future, or at least one in which there will not be as much to lose. It expresses the same idea as the one found in verbalised minimalist forms such as “it’s water under the bridge, may it never happen again”. Such exchanges of knowledge occur outside of specific locations or recordable moments of interaction. A non-verbal intergenerational exchange of knowledge is thus realised, empathic relationships are established and understanding fostered – despite the fact that this process was neither “linear” nor verbal (cf. Kidron 2009: 16).

3.1.2. “Emptiness” of silence and/or “fulness” of sound

[T]he silence we think we perceive in the world is not real silence: in fact, we hear many things but negate or virtualize them into an Imaginary silence. (van Elferen and Raeymaekers 2015: 268)

Melani Schröter refers to one of the most important and most studied aspects of silence as the “emptiness” of silence (2013: 16). The “emptiness” of silence refers to the presence of other potentially communicable content, e.g. gestures, visual stimuli (as in the example “A Walk”, where there is a kind of synaesthesia – looking at the ruined houses, we see “silence”), sounds or their unexpected absence (see “Birds”), the affective and emotional charges which constitute the so-called pregnant or eloquent silence (one which is filled with the presence of non-verbalised thoughts and feelings, e.g. sadness – see “Tears”; trauma – see “Water Under the Bridge” and “No Words”; guilt – see “Guilt”), and so on.

This “emptiness” can also be filled with verbal expressions used to avoid the topic of the conversation, which can be either agreed upon or imposed; thus, it can also be seen as “garrulous silence” in which speaking serves as the “carapace of speech” (Kenny 2011: x), as in “The Pub” or partly in “History”, in which a more personal perspective is being avoided rather than the topic itself.

Silence, therefore, cannot be defined based on the absence of speech, as there are many forms of silence which do not rule out the presence of speech. Melani Schröter

(2013) has identified three types of silence which cannot be defined based on the absence of speech. The first type is characterised by structural empty slots such as pauses, zero morphemes, ellipsis, aposiopesis (see Schröter 2013: 17). The second type is characterised by semantic and/or logical empty slots such as presuppositions (cf. Huckin 2002; Jalbert 1994), connotations, allusions and implicatures¹⁴ (cf. Schröter 2013: 17). In specific situations, such as the one in the example titled “The Pub”, logorrhoea can also be a form of silence. The third type of silence which does not rule out speech according to Schröter (2013: 17) is concealment, which is often more eloquent. Verbal communication can have the function of concealment. Silence, therefore, does not necessarily mean concealment; similarly, verbal communication does not necessarily mean that there is no concealment taking place. The amount of speech is just one of the aspects around which we construct our impressions of our own or somebody else’s silence (cf. Jaworski 1993).

In their interdisciplinary analysis of silences as cultural practices and artistic interpretations of silence, Isabella van Elferen and Sven Raeymaekers (2015) devised a typology consisting of five different forms of silence, bringing together the phenomenological, ontological, metaphysical, psychoanalytical and metaphorical approaches to silence. This typology clearly shows that absolute silence is not possible within our perception of reality, but is vital for understanding the “emptiness” of silence.

Their typology consists of the following: a metaphorical form of silence, two different phenomenological forms of silence (silence by negation and virtual silence), an ontological form of silence, and a metaphysical form of silence. Their typology is important because the “emptiness” of silence is taken to its logical extreme in the concept of the so-called metaphysical, or absolute, silence. All the forms of silence identified in this analysis are defined based on their relation to the “ultimate form of silence: an absolute silence, silence in and of itself that is not limited to being the horizon of sound” (2015: 270). For example, in the case of metaphysical silence, the authors believe that silence “represents the absence: the absence of emotion, of sound, of speech and of language” (2015: 264). Even though it denotes absence, silence also denotes presence because it is always “filled” with something. For example, a temporary or permanent absence of language and/or speech, as in the examples “Tears”, “The Walk”, “Birds”, “No Words” and “Water Under the Bridge”, does not mean that there was also a lack of shared emotional charge in the conversation. Silence can, therefore, function as a metaphor for the unknown, but can also denote *stasis*, which can be interpreted as tension, stillness, and contrast to the flux of life – but also as balance, repression or oppression, etc. (2015: 264).¹⁵ One of the two phenomenological forms of silence defined by the authors based on its relation to absolute silence is silence

¹⁴ For more on conversational implicatures, see Kordić 1991.

¹⁵ Similarly, Adam Jaworski distinguishes between two distinct features of silence, which he describes using the following metaphorical conceptualisations: “silence is a substance/object” and “silence is a container” (1993: 82). The first one pertains to “heavy, tomblike silence” or “a wall of silence”, whereas the second one is related to silence as an environment in which activity can go on without words (to eat in silence, to make love in silence, to exercise in silence, to walk in silence).

through negation: “a relative form of silence that is positioned between sound and complete soundlessness, a form of silence that consists of and exists amid ignored sound” (2015: 265).¹⁶ This was the silence so intensely experienced by the protagonists of the example “Birds”. In this example, the silence “heard” by the protagonists is not absolute – instead, it refers to the absence of the usual and expected ambient sounds at the site. They ignored the remaining environmental noise in favour of the “silence” they “heard”.

The last form of silence, which van Elferen and Raeymaekers refer to as “actual” or “ontological silence”, can be understood by acknowledging that the ontology of silence is “inextricably linked with that of sound” (2015: 267). “Sound is thus defined and limited by silence. Silence, in turn, is defined by the absence of sound and limited by the occurrence of sound” (2015: 267). They also consider silence to be sound’s photo negative (2015: 267). By analogy, the ontological view of silence, or the “emptiness” of silence, is defined based on the “fullness” of sound. Accordingly, when a verbal exchange fails our expectations, we register silence.

A more detailed inquiry into the “emptiness” of silence raises another interesting question. Silence can be misinterpreted and can be noticed even where there is none, but are there silences which cannot be linked to communication in any way?

German sociologist and political philosopher Niklas Luhmann believes that within communication, the world is given to communication only as a paradox (1994/1989: 26). The world is not something which has to be understood (or not understood) for communication to proceed. The enactment of communication severs the unity of the world, i.e. it affirms this unity implicitly by severing it, while also negating this unity by implicitly reconstructing it (ibid.: 26). The world cannot be communicated, but when it is included in communication, it appears as the paradox of the unity of difference, “a paradox that requires a solution if things are to continue at all” (ibid.: 26). In that case, the world remains incommunicable. Only that which has been noticed and described is communicable. In that sense, “[t]he thematization of incommunicability in communication can then also be viewed as an indicator of the fact that the world is carried along” (ibid.: 26). Interpretation of silence can be understood as the autopoiesis of communication (ibid.: 35),¹⁷ i.e. as a self-sustaining and self-producing system with its own distinct features and limits. If silence is not communicable, then it is a silence which no longer desires to be understood or communicated, which does not require the distinction between speech and silence. For something to be characterised as “silence”, it has to be recognised as communication or something pertaining to communication. In reality, silence is not an activity which occurs outside of society; instead, it is “only a counter-image which society projects into its

¹⁶ The second phenomenological form of silence only appears as such, but includes the anticipation of sound “created by the combination of technological means and listener perception” (van Elferen and Raeymaekers 2015: 269). This is the silence which occurs before an acoustic event.

¹⁷ As an example of the autopoiesis of communication, Luhmann mentions professions dealing with communication with elderly and sick people, to whom people working in such professions offer entertainment, education, comfort and so on (Luhmann 1994/1989: 35).

environment, or it is the mirror in which society comes to see that what is not said is not said” (ibid.: 33). Every system, Luhmann claims, co-produces that which does not enter the system and which we could call [!] “silence”, but it also produces silence “without the ability to connect” (ibid.: 34).

In different typologies of silence, no matter the sample used (silence caused by anxiety and fear, strained relationships or avoiding the topic of the conversation), it is evident that many of the included silences do not manifest themselves through the absence of speech or sound. Many silences are directed and purposeful, i.e. marked by the absence of conventional verbal exchanges, and not necessarily by the absence of sound. Silences are either that which goes beyond words and verbal expression or that which has been left out or replaced with something else, and which has not met the expectations set forth by the context of what is being discussed. Silences are never absolute. As snippets, allusions, signs, atmospheres, shared or conflicting emotions, they penetrate through the verbal structure of language and our perception of communication. However, could it be concluded that it is highly likely that many silences still go unnoticed? Does this mean that they do not exist or that they do not have meaning?

There are silences which can be noticed and those which do not want to be noticed or which lack meaning (cf. Kurzon 1998). We can discuss silence within the framework of the complex network of intentions of the different participants of the conversation, the assumed (non-)communicative silences and the many different expectations of the participants. Scholarly literature dealing with silence often distinguishes between communicative and non-communicative silence, as well as intentional and unintentional silence. The first distinction largely refers to the recipient’s, whereas the second one refers to the speaker’s domain (i.e. that of the “owner” of silence).

Adam Jaworski believes that “[j]ust as there are different types and forms of speech, silence will also be perceived as taking different forms, depending on one’s expectations toward a given communicative event” (1993: 73). In regular circumstances, even if communication is not expected, we will take notice of the realisation of speech and try to assign meaning to it. However, if we are not expecting communication, we will not register silence nor will we try to interpret it and give it meaning (ibid.: 77). Only after a detailed analysis of the context could we determine “what *could* have been said yet *wasn’t*” (Huckin 2002: 353; original emphasis).

Dennis Kurzon makes a clear distinction between intentional and unintentional silence. This dichotomy forms the backbone of his typology (1995; 2007). He believes that the main requirement for a silence to have meaning is the speaker’s intention to be silent. If there is no intention on behalf of the speaker to leave something unsaid, then it is a silence which is linguistically meaningless (1998). The act of intentional silence or omission requires some kind of implicit reference to speech.

The process of searching for implicit references to speech and/or the “emptiness” of silence is actually a projection (not necessarily erroneous) made onto the communicational

field. Silence is a social construct, a projection of the recipient's/researcher's habitus onto the microtext of the interaction in accordance with the broader social context. The assessment of what constitutes the remains of communication in what was left unsaid, or of its "emptiness", is not something which can be validated, confirmed or proven. The status and meaning assigned to a particular silence by the recipient can, but does not have to be the same at the moment of occurrence and at the moment of recollection. Therefore, silence can only be studied in the form of a trace or residue of meaning, or as the non-verbal framework for meanings which cannot be interpreted (cf. Watts 1997; Javorski 1997). Without interpretation "experience cannot be parsed into selective absence, rather it collapses into absolute simultaneity; presence and absence become one" (Achino-Loeb 2006a: 1).

3.1.3. The duration of silence

Some typologies show the link between the duration of silence, the number of participants in the interaction and its prohibitiveness more clearly.

Communicologist Thomas Bruneau believes that silence is shaped by language (1973: 20). He devised one of the first typologies which focused on the relationship between silence and the perception of time. Applying this perspective, he identified the following types of silence: psycholinguistic, interactive and socio-cultural silence (ibid.: 23–42). Psycholinguistic silence, Bruneau believes, is very short in duration. It manifests itself in the form of hesitation or intentionally slowing down the tempo so that the recipient could follow what is being recounted. Additional manifestations include self-corrections, stuttering and so on. On average, interactive silence lasts longer than psycholinguistic silence and is connected to interpersonal relations. It manifests itself in the form of intentional pauses in the conversation. Finally, socio-cultural silence can be interpreted on the basis of cultural codes and norms; according to Bruneau, it also includes the other two types of silence – psycholinguistic and interactive silence – in the sense that they can be manipulated by social and cultural norms (ibid.: 36). Bruneau's typology implies that even though some silences can appear short in the given situation, they can also be reflections of other, long-lasting silences.

The duration of silence can have a significant influence on its interpretation. Some silences require the shortest possible duration (hesitation pauses), whereas others are generally not as short and have a tendency towards prolongation (cold silence, silence as punishment, isolating silence) (Schröter 2013: 16). Eviatar Zerubavel also warned of the "cumulative nature of silence" (Zerubavel 2006: 58). He believes that the intensity of silence is not only affected by the number of participants in the conspiracy of silence – it is also affected by its duration. The longer a silence lasts, the more prohibitive it becomes, with consequences for society as a whole also increasing in severity (Zerubavel 2006: 58). What we consider silence is largely dependent on our expectations of what was supposed to happen, but also over what period of time, how fast (Muñoz 2014: 20).

Based on Bruneau's typology (1973), and all other typologies which focus on the duration of silence, it is evident that the duration also depends on whether a particular silence is institutionally, group or individually determined, or non-interactive (Saville-Troike 1985: 16–17). Using these criteria, linguist Muriel Saville-Troike consolidated twenty different types of silence with the conclusion that silences which involve a large number of participants, as well as those which are a result of conflict, generally last longer. Institutionally determined silences are also rarely short (*ibid.*).

Linguist Dennis Kurzon (2007) devised a more complex typology of silence in social interaction. He took into account the numerous factors which affect silence: the number of participants in the interaction, the identity of the text that is left unsaid, and the intentions of the silent individual. Based on these criteria, Kurzon differentiates between four types of silence: conversational silence, thematic silence, textual silence and situational silence. Although Kurzon's focus is not on the duration of silence, he does point out that “three of the types of silence may be measured in time, while one – thematic silence – may be considered a metaphorical expansion of the term” (Kurzon 2007: 1687). By doing so, he identified the potential benefits of considering thematic silence within the broader social context, outside of specific cases of conversational interaction. Keeping in mind the duration of silence, we should examine conversational and thematic silence. According to Kurzon, conversational silence can manifest itself as the silent answer to a question or simply as the decision not to participate in the conversation. Its effect can be equal to that of speech, but it can also be a sign of subjugation. The text of such a silence is often unknown (Kurzon 2007: 1676). In the case of conversational silence, Kurzon believes, silence can be both intentional and unintentional,¹⁸ which implies that the potential speaker cannot, does not want to or is not allowed to speak. According to Kurzon, thematic silence is closely related to conversational silence because it often takes place in dialogical context (but can have external, broader social and cultural causes). The difference lies in the fact that, in conversational silence, there is a complete lack of verbalisation, whereas thematic silence still includes verbalisation, but what is being said is not related to the topic at hand (*ibid.*: 1677–1679).

Kurzon's point of differentiation – the fact that conversational silence lacks verbalisation and that thematic silence avoids the expected topic – should be taken with a grain of salt, especially because thematic silence is the only one which he claims cannot be measured temporally. Such a clear distinction between conversational and thematic silence cannot be that easily drawn. In the examples “Absolute Silence” and “Water Under the Bridge”, should we speak of conversational or thematic silence? In “Absolute Silence”, we can see that conversational silence can leave a verbal trace in the form of self-thematisation of one's own silence (see the *autopoiesis of silence* earlier in the text), while still essentially being thematic silence. “Water Under the Bridge” can be seen as an example of conversational silence (which can be measured chronometrically), but is also basically thematic

¹⁸ Compare with the concept of “involuntary speechlessness” (Berger 2004).

silence which was not substituted with a different topic. Even though Kurzon's typology took the duration of silence into consideration, we cannot consider his approach complete in the context of this paper. All the examples (including the aforementioned ones, but also, for example, "Tears" and "The Walk"), contain silences which can, in principle, be measured; however, these silences and acts of silencing have lasted for decades and involve a large number of people, even whole societies, no matter the extent to which personal experience is or is not thematised in such examples.

The definition given by historian Jay Winter takes a deeper view into the cultural, social and historical determination of silence in its individual and collective manifestations, emphasising its temporal aspect. According to Winter, silence is

a socially constructed space in which and about which subjects and words normally used in everyday life are not spoken. The circle around this space is described by groups of people who at one point in time deem it appropriate that there is a difference between the sayable and the unsayable, or the spoken and the unspoken, and that such a distinction can and *should be maintained and observed over time*. Such people codify and enforce norms which reinforce the injunction against breaking into the inner space of the circle of silence. (Winter 2010: 4, emphasis J. M.)

His definition goes beyond the narrow linguistic view and considers silence not just at the level of individual expressions but also at the level of social relations, which are, essentially, the sum of an array of concrete practices of omission, silence and silence-based communication. Defined in this way, silence presupposes the existence of a long period of time for its constitution and maintenance, even though it can be temporally measured in specific interactions.

3.1.3.1. Long-lasting silence: minimalist forms and extensive narratives

The duration of silence cannot be considered directly correlated to the "size" of the utterance or the narrative complexity of the story. Long-lasting silences which weigh as a heavy burden over whole communities can manifest themselves at the microlevel as minimalist, concise and synecdochal narrative forms in which the largest part remains unsaid; as we have seen before, they can also be realised in the private environment as "minimalist" and "synecdochal" everyday non-narrative practices and reminders of being in silence connected to experiences of fear, loss and trauma. However, long-lasting silences can also manifest themselves as "garrulous" silences in which speech conceals the topic or perspective expected by the recipient.

In states of acute fear, we often remain silent because we want to avoid the object of fear, run away or take up the smallest (verbal) space. "In fear, the world presses against the body; the body shrinks back from the world in the desire to avoid the object of fear. [...] Such shrinkage is significant: fear works to contain some bodies such that they take up less

space. In this way, emotions work to align bodily space with social space” (Ahmed 2014: 69). In “The Son”, Tamara describes a narrated event in which her son, the protagonist of the story, has a physical reaction to fear and experiences fear with minimal movement in silence. As the intensity of fear decreases and time goes on (as we become more adapted to its unpleasant effects), talking about it becomes a possibility (in “The Son” this happens from the perspective of a witness).

To say “silence is golden” means to tell a story in a literary-minimalist sense. According to literary scholar Josip Užarević (2012), one of the basic structural-poetic determinants of (oral) literary minimalism is binomiality. He believes that the essence of a phenomenon is not found in the maximum number of its features but in its necessary, existential minimum. Two words, Užarević claims, can create a whole world. They “can function as a complete language, i.e. a medium through which complex messages can be moulded, transmitted and stored (archived)” (Užarević 2012: 52). In other words, to say “there were pits before, so there will be pits again”, as in the example “Pits” (or with even less words: “pits once, pits again”), does not necessarily mean that something was left out from the narrative. In Lotman’s words: this could be the finite model of an infinite world (Lotman 1970: 256 in Užarević 2012: 33). In this way, language constructs the relationship between itself and reality (ibid.: 28). A narrative about fear or narration in fear, therefore, do not need more than two words. A story about fear can be just one or two years which are somehow related. Some years function as synecdochal stories. These years stand for complex historical nodes in which numerous fears and terrifying stories are both accumulated and left untold. The fear which stands out the most is the fear of history repeating itself, the fear that the year as a narrative will repeat itself. When a year is understood to be a narrative, every narrator will find a different repertoire in it; however, they will share the same object of fear which is usually predetermined. In place of complex historical nodes, we can sometimes also find just one terrifying war narrative or personal experience. Their effect supports the idea of history repeating itself. History is, in that sense, alive. It lives in every open wound, as Ahmed says (2014: 33).

“The Pub” and “History”, although different, can be seen as examples of the so-called “garrulous” silence. Marija refused to adhere to the topic of the conversation, but still expressed her gratitude for the opportunity which she did not take; Goran avoided speaking about the personal perspective of a historical experience. In both of these examples, we can safely conclude that both silences are long-lasting, but different strategies were used to deal with them. What brings them together is the large amount of speech in the conversational encounter. In her book *The Silence: How Tragedy Shapes Talk* (2002), Ruth Wajnryb states that the focus on the political and historical aspects of a traumatic experience is actually a substitute for the personal, i.e. that personal feelings are managed by speaking about politics and history. Any attempt to create a space for talking about the personal aspect of tragic events would make the conversation totter and eventually collapse (Wajnryb 2002: 30). Goran, despite his initial caution, did not hide his political perspective and personal valorisation of history; however, he completely omitted his personal experience, even though it was reflected and hinted at in the “grand narrative”.

3.1.4. Actors of silence: private and/or imposed silence?

From the narrow linguistic focus on silence in specific interactions, the perspective eventually expanded to include silences characteristic of powerless or silenced groups (e.g. Langton 1993; Houston and Kramarae 1991; Jaworski and Galasiński 2000), the discursive, affective, cultural and social practices of silencing (e.g. Thiesmeyer 2003, 2003a) and censorship (e.g. Anthonissen 2003, 2008; Jaworski and Galasiński 2000), forms of institutional silencing and social control (e.g. van Dijk 1993; Mumby 1993), conspiracies of silence (Zerubavel 2006), and so on. This broader perspective, in my view, raises one important question: is silence a choice and/or necessity for the individual as the actor in an interaction, or is it a choice and/or necessity for the individual as a member of a community? Put differently, the question could also be: should silence be seen as a private, personal choice or is it almost always imposed on the individual through the opinions and attitudes of others, even if the silence in question is a form of resistance?

Many authors see silence as a social construct at the level of conversational interactions between the speaker and the listener, as well as at the level of groups or society as a whole (cf. Fivush 2010; Winter 2010). In both cases, voice and silence are “negotiated, imposed, contested, and provided” (Fivush 2010: 89). Different forms of absence of communication at the level of specific interactions, as well as the level of collectives, can have the function of “protector, enabler and maintainer of that what matters” (Seljamaa and Siim 2016: 6).

Silences provoked by some inconvenient, painful, shameful, dangerous or traumatic memory can manifest themselves as the suppression of communication caused by external factors such as social expectations, friction or pressure; however, it can also manifest itself as the resistance towards communication motivated by internal factors such as guilt, shame and (self-)protection. However, the internal and external factors of silence are often two sides of the same coin. Self-censorship, for example, is the act of denying oneself the opportunity for verbal expression, whether due to one’s concern for the feelings and opinions of others or due to fear of some form of punishment. Silence is rarely the result of an autonomous individual choice, i.e. a choice which would be made without some sort of external pressure affecting the narrative. Even in “Absolute Silence”, the example in which the speaking subject states that the thematic silence is their own choice, it is evident that a number of external forces are preventing their narrative from being told. The decision to voluntarily enter the zone of silence is often influenced by the decisions, opinions and attitudes of other people, i.e. it is often affected and directed by another discourse which silences. In that sense, silencing is closely linked to social and political judgements on what can and what cannot be thought or communicated. Consequently, silence in such cases is more like a reflection of one’s inability or one’s need to avoid “status anxiety” (de Botton 2005), or the desire to achieve a less unfavourable social position, rather than being the result of personal choice. There are many discursive methods of silencing, but only some of them are coercive (cf. Jaworski 1993; Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). Lynn Thiesmeyer believes that silencing can create different forms of silence within a community

discourse: “unwanted silencing, complied-in silencing, even unrealised or [...] self-imposed silencing” (Thiesmeyer 2003a: 2). However, in order to understand the silencing of specific discourses, we must consider not just how one discourse is imposed over another but also the social and discursive borders between “imposition, compliance, and self-silencing” (Thiesmeyer 2003a: 2). “[S]ilencing is discourse, working through language and operating within the structures of social norms and negotiations” (Thiesmeyer 2003a: 22).¹⁹

Cultural and literary theorist Stuart Sim believes that silence can sometimes, depending on its meaning within the discursive context, also be understood as the “site of social conflict” (2007: 13). Silence in the political sphere can be in the service of conflict management by preventing the escalation of verbal (but also physical) conflict, along with potentially increasing the inequality of opposing discourses and the existing social and symbolic inequalities.

Silence and silencing discourses, therefore, also function as mechanisms for the production of hegemonic social relations. Silencing discourses are disseminated through various channels, e.g. the media and the education system. They are incorporated into everyday affective and narrative practices, publicly acceptable emotions and discourses (cf. Sue 2015; Sheriff 2000). In the background of these processes, we can sometimes find conspiracies of silence the function of which is to make “a group of people tacitly agree to outwardly ignore something of which they are all personally aware” (Zerubavel 2006: 2). This type of silence serves to cover up issues in society which are known to everyone, but which should not be talked about. “Conspiracies of silence are all-encompassing; the topic is unmentionable at all levels of society and everyone is expected to maintain the silence” (Sue 2015: 116).

Discourses have the power of silencing and exclusion over some forms of expression and knowledge, which also includes the ability to exclude Others. In doing so, there is no need for constant reminders of what happens to those who speak up; similarly, punishments do not have to be meted out in every single instance. What lies at the centre of this concept is the fear of negotiating with and resisting the discourse which happens to be more powerful, dominant, accepted, louder; in such situations, the dominant discourse hesitates or outright refuses to reconsider its foundational tenets and values.

Silencing is most effective if it is hidden, i.e. when it replaces what has been silenced with another discourse, or when it conceals and filters out undesirable content through

¹⁹ Philosopher Rae Langton identified three possible levels at which silencing can occur (1993). At the most basic level, it occurs when members of a particular group are intimidated or believe that nobody will listen to them. They do not speak at all and they do not show signs of resistance due to fear, or they consider any attempt at resisting futile. In this case, the “speakers fail to perform even a locutionary act” (Langton 1993: 315). Xavier Guillaume refers to this type of silence as “locutionary exclusion” (2018: 482). Langton refers to the second type of silencing as “perlocutionary frustration”. It occurs in situations when “people will speak, but what they say will fail to achieve the effects that they intend: such speakers fail to perform their intended perlocutionary act” (Langton 1993: 315). Langton refers to the third type of silencing as “illocutionary disablement”, and it occurs “when one speaks, one utters words, and fails not simply to achieve the effect one aims at, but fails to perform the very action one intends” (Langton 1993: 315).

an acceptable, or simply *more* acceptable, discourse. Those who are silent are familiar with the attitudes, interpretations and values of the dominant discourse and they adjust to it, whether by choosing not to speak, challenging the dominant discourse or resisting it through speech or silence.

3.1.4.1. Silences of/in the academia

Zerubavel refers to silence as the “soft” version of a taboo (2006: 29) and points out that what we avoid or ignore as members of society is also what we avoid and ignore as researchers (2006: 13). In the academia, fear and anxiety manifested in the form of “silenced” or restrained scientific work and academic writing stem from the collective imaginary of fear and the collective conspiracies of silence, which seep into the academic domain from everyday life. Nevertheless, I believe that some silences in academic text should not be discussed in the context of the author’s personal lack of courage or responsibility; instead, I prefer to see them as an ethically and epistemologically justified and effective inhibition through which the authorial subject can partially identify with the subject of their research: namely, fear and taboo. Therefore, entering the “zones of fear” drives the researcher towards the same strategies of concealment which they normally witness in everyday life. Academic language is also the part of language which “evades” communication, the ability to contain it and create distance between the subject of research (fear) and its articulation. In this process, the researcher, much like their interlocutors, is often confronted with the agony and inability of not being able to articulate their own or another person’s fear.

Our writing about silence is, on the one hand, a kind of colonisation of the silence of our interlocutors (Freund 2013: 235), seeing that it grants insight into knowledge which is undiscussable, unmentionable, and untellable. On the other hand, as researchers, we are aware that places of silence are sometimes the only possible spaces of (academic) freedom. Political theorist Wendy Brown is critical of “the practice of compulsory discursivity” in a time of “diarrhetic speech and publication” (2005/1998: 95) and believes that we should resist the notion of “the presumed evil of silences” (ibid.: 85). In this context, she suggests that we reconsider the relationship between silence and the lack of power, and that we start seeing the capacity to be silent as “the measure of our desire for freedom” (ibid.: 96).

In the academic field, freedom is not absolute. This field is sometimes a “dangerous” space that cannot absorb all the voices which could claim a right to it. To be completely honest, no matter how much we would like to believe otherwise, the academia often encourages the production of acceptable over critical discourses, along with supporting only those topics and approaches deemed “proper” (cf. Thiesmeyer 2003a: 9). This is why I believe Brown is right when she relates silence to freedom: the freedom to be able to reveal just enough to satisfy both our need to resist silence and our need for silence. I

would say that this was also what my interlocutors did. Seeing that the fieldwork was well-prepared and that there were no major inhibitions or personal distrust, the interlocutors largely satisfied their need to resist silence (sometimes in the confessional form, which also brought them relief), while also transferring onto my colleagues and me the burden of their need to leave a part out within a low-risk context. Both the researcher and their interlocutors are aware that research itself does not have the magic ability to effortlessly surmount long-lasting, complex walls of silence, or to somehow relegate them to a “dangerous” place without affective, sociocultural and political consequences.

Some interlocutors gave their own vision of how the things which were concealed and silenced in their stories could be studied and presented, i.e. their own idea of how the gap between these two discourses – that of the silenced and the one doing the silencing – could be bridged. One interlocutor suggested the following:

Miro: These [horrors of war and the post-war period previously described] are visible things. Whatever you show, these are visible things. So, they can be seen. But the worst is what cannot be seen. And I think that you, the people who do this type of job, should probably work on revealing the invisible rather than visible things. You only confirm, this is this. But what lies behind it? Why is there such a system in place? [...] There is no big picture, just microspace. [...] Starting from the big picture, you can't... You can't look at the big picture because you can't perceive all of it. However, I can look at microspace and use that to explain the big picture. There's no other way to do it. Try to approach a problem from the side. You won't tackle it head-on. No way.

The same interlocutor even expressed his concern for me since I had now heard his “terrifying” story. He believes, much like Zerubavel, that those who break the silence often do not fare well because “they disturb our cognitive tranquillity” (Zerubavel 2006: 74).

Miro: How you will manage that, I don't know. You will have to find a way not to get hurt. What would they say in Zagreb if you revealed all of this? [...] I'm not sure if it should be up to you to raise all of these questions. [...] Somebody will take notice and hint that you switch to a different topic.

Studying the narrations of fear in post-conflict societies in no way excludes situations where one encounters topics which society does not allow to be discussed, i.e. topics which Hirschauer characterises as unmentionable (Hirschauer 2006: 425–426). By transferring unmentionable knowledge onto the researcher, the burden of the prohibited is also transferred (although I am not sure that the quest for that which is not spoken about is in itself viewed with much approval). These are narratives which drag all of those involved into an unsafe space. They cannot be simply transposed into academic discourse by invoking academic responsibility and freedom. Stefan Hirschauer decides to take the middle road by stating that the best measure for ethnographically describing what is unmentionable should be “just enough to leave room for [...] imagination” (Hirschauer 2006: 426).

There is something naive and childish in concealment in academic texts. Readers of academic papers are trained to “read” what was concealed in such texts. The position

of a researcher who opts for concealment reminds me of a child who hides by covering their eyes, thinking that others will not be able to see them. This ludic element makes the researcher a liminal figure in the field of speech/silence. In ideal circumstances, researchers should enable a mobility to marginalised discourses recorded in the field. However, in post-conflict societies, this idea should be thoroughly reconsidered, seeing that these are definitely far from ideal circumstances.

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ŠUTNJA STRAHA, STRAHOM UTIŠANO I STRAH OD ŠUTNJE

Iako je rad zamišljen kao teorijski prilog razumijevanju različitih praksi šutnje koje su povezane s poviješću konflikta i nasilja, on se temelji na istraživanju koje je provedeno u Lici, hrvatskoj regiji koju autorica prepoznaje kao lokalitet koji je rezervoar strahova, anksioznosti, trauma i njima pripadajućih šutnji s dugom povijesti. Osim što šutnja ima različite funkcije i učinke, ona ima i vrlo raznoliku trajnost (može se mjeriti sekundama, ali i desetljećima), može biti i često jest popunjena drugim potencijalno komunikabilnim neverbalnim aspektima (emocijama i afektima, gestama, zvukovima i sl.) te može biti

više ili manje ovisna o mišljenjima, iskustvima i stavovima drugih pojedinaca i zajednica te upravljana njima. Ukratko, u tekstu se šutnje zabilježene tijekom istraživanja promatraju u okviru brojnih tipologija šutnje te se pomnije razmatraju kontekstualno ovisni i ambivalentni učinci šutnje, njezine “praznine”, trajanje i njezini akteri (pojedinci i zajednice). U tekstu se raspravlja o šutnjama i utišavanjima na makrorazini te njihovim afektivnim i društvenim funkcijama kao i o njihovim učincima na mikrorazini u interpersonalnim interakcijama i svakodnevnom životu, etnografskim susretima. Raspravlja se i o reperkusijama mreže šutnji na javnu prezentaciju rezultata istraživanja šutnje.

Ključne riječi: šutnja, strah, anksioznost, tipologije šutnje, “praznina” šutnje, trajanje šutnje, akteri šutnje