

# How to do things with silence: Rethinking the centrality of speech to the securitization framework

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## Abstract

This contribution offers the first steps in a novel conceptualization of how international relations and security studies can provide an analytics of silence. Starting with an analysis of a paradigmatic use of silence in the field, Lene Hansen's 'Little Mermaid', the contribution shows the limitations and issues with an analytics that concentrates on the meaning behind silences. Silence as meaning is problematic because analytically what is offered solely is the overinvestment of the analyst's 'horizon of expectation' upon a sign that is not generally meant to be one. Mobilizing a feminist reading of pornography as speech act, the contribution shows how silence may also be performative, in the sense that it does something to a specific logocentric order at the heart of our analysis of the international or security. The contribution finally offers a possible way of thinking about silence as doing rather than meaning and shows how this can be a possible analytical path to invert our analytics of the international and security from the perspective of the state/the powerful to that of the subaltern.

## Keywords

International relations theory, power, securitization, security, silence

## Introduction

Social and political life, even life itself, is almost universally premised on the ability to speak and to utter. That is, social and political life requires voice in order to establish this life in the first place. Voice is also essential in the constitution of social and political boundaries, identities and communities, or to express pleasures, desires and suffering (see Le Breton, 1997, 2011). Since the linguistic turn, language has had a similar centrality in many approaches to social sciences, international relations and security studies. This centrality can be described as a logocentric order:<sup>1</sup> an onto-epistemic order that privileges language and the voice in order to inscribe and analyse a presence. This logocentric order can take two, non-exclusive forms: an order of practice and/or an order of analysis.<sup>2</sup> Even among approaches in security studies that seemingly have not embraced the

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linguistic turn, such as Kenneth Waltz's structural realism, language is taken into account as an order of practice. Thus, rather than considering *whether* language is central to security, it is better to explore *how and why* it is so, even if such analysis is limited to offering a reflection of reality for the purposes of analysing an order of practice (see Fierke, 2002). Even such a limited understanding of language as an order of practice is premised on the idea that communicative practices are meaningful. The question becomes one of interpreting what these practices actually mean, for example in situations of uncertainty, like a security dilemma (Montgomery, 2006). But what of practices that are not necessarily meant to produce meaning? What if the order of practice was not premised on language? How should we engage this from the perspective of an order of analysis? How, then, should we make sense of silence, the potential absence of meaning *par excellence*?

This article is interested in developing an argument about silence not just as an absence of voice, or a specific rhetorical-strategic device in a situation of interaction from which meaning has to be retrieved (see Glenn, 2004, or Schröter, 2013). Rather, it aims to pave the way to theorize silence as productive of specific language games (see Wittgenstein [1953, 1958, 2001] 2009: §23), understood here as situations of interaction that are produced by the silence of politically relevant actors rather than one in which silence is interpreted through a pre-existing framework to which silence is a reaction. The central claim of the argument is that logocentric orders are privileging, perhaps unwittingly, forms of analysis that, even when analysing subalterns, premise their analysis on the (in)ability to speak as paramount, and silence as a negative effect. The assumption, stemming from a hegemonic position, is that one *ought to* be speaking if one could. While such situations exist and need to be analysed, this problematization misses that silence may also be productive. The first type of analysis methodologically considers silence as meaning: what would be said if one were not silenced? The second conceptualizes silence as a form of doing and asks, 'What is produced/interpellated by being silent?' While the second does not premise silence on an absence, the first is ontologically and epistemologically positioning silence in relation to speech, or other forms of communication. Silence is thus often understood as a specific form of silencing; in this conceptualization, silence *cannot* be considered a choice, but rather an indicator of an inability to voice (see Grayson, 2010).

The aim of this article is to demonstrate how, in the securitization framework, silence cannot be ambiguous; this is a problem, as silence's ambiguity is recognized as one of its prime characteristics within the literature on silence (Ferguson, 2003; Glenn, 2004, Le Breton, 1997: 79). On the contrary, if silence is understood as an absence of voice, it becomes necessary to retrieve traces of voices, as the absence of signs is an unbearable hermeneutic moment, even when such absence is seen as participating in the constitution of the political (Bhambra and Shilliam, 2009). Yet, to paraphrase Roland Barthes, the risk is that silence is assumed to signal the absence of speech/voice, an assumption that may differ from understandings shaping its deployment in a political context (see Barthes, 2002: 54). The way in which silence is conceptualized is therefore a window onto the type of ontological, epistemic and normative premises at work in a specific approach or analytics. Silence is security studies' 'Pandora's box' because, apart from situations when the meaning of someone's silence is made explicit through other signs – say a silent demonstration against police violence – what silence means is always premised on the interpreters' own 'horizon of expectation' (Block de Behar, 1995: 7). The ambiguity of silence makes possible myriad meanings; it invites an overinvestment of the interpreter's own meaning to fill it. This hermeneutical overinvestment is linked to the fact that the literature in international relations and security studies is dedicated to uncovering what (a) silence means (see Dingli, 2015). This is problematic as it does not enable us to conceptualize silence as more than just the absence of sound/voice/speech – that is, as a negative property of speech.

In order to unpack this issue within the securitization framework, this article starts with how silence is conceptualized within that framework. The first section shows how this conceptualization is largely premised on a specific, and limited, understanding of silence as forceful silencing and an understanding of political life in which one *must* speak. To illustrate how the securitization framework (and security studies) cannot afford *not* to have meaning, I contrast it with a feminist conception of speech act theory about silence and silencing. This demonstrates that even when voicing is possible, there might nonetheless be an absence of meaning. It is important to stress here, however, that far from contesting the actual necessity and relevance of such analysis made by different authors on silencing, the purpose of this theoretical contribution is to uncover some of the conceptual and analytical limitations behind such articulations. Finally, the article offers a conceptualization of silence-as-doing that takes into account that silence is more than an absence.

## The silent security dilemma

Concentrating on constructivist security studies, broadly understood, is especially relevant to silence because language is taken as both an order of practice and an order of analysis within such studies. More particularly, the place of language is central in the so-called Copenhagen School or securitization framework (see Wæver, 1989, 1995; on the inadequacy of the ‘school’ terminology, see c.a.s.e. collective, 2006).<sup>3</sup> According to this approach, social and political realities are constituted through acts of language possessing a performative capability. This has translated for a constructivist security studies into an emphasis on security as resulting from the ability of certain actors to speak (in)security – that is, to define threats (see Weldes et al., 1999) in such a way that an audience agrees that extraordinary measures are necessary (see Buzan et al., 1998) – or to (de)limit the conditions of possibility of the good life in a society (see Booth, 2007; Huysmans, 1998). Even among more practice-oriented approaches to security (Bigo, 2006), for which security emerges from the competition among security professionals in their engagement with/in a specific field, language remains an important factor in understanding what security does in making those subject to it unable to voice their disagreement or alternative conceptions of the good life (see Bigo and Tsoukala, 2008).

Naturally, the importance of speaking and the silence of others are not new topics in security studies or more broadly in the social sciences. In feminist scholarship, silence has long been associated with powerlessness or a specific situation of being at the margins (Ferguson, 2003: 52–53). Marginal positions in society, occupied by women, minorities or lower classes, are reflective of their ‘lack of public power and being the object of other people’s power’ (Enloe, 2004: 21). Importantly, if individuals are silent, it is because they are ‘those who are silenced’ (Enloe, 2004: 22), even though ‘not all silences come from a sense of being silenced’ (Enloe, 2004: 70). This is forcefully evoked by Enloe as she speaks of the inability of the discipline of international relations to fully tally ‘the actual amount and the amazing variety of power that are required to *keep* the voices on the margins *from* having the right language and enough volume to be heard’ (Enloe, 2004: 23, emphasis added). In bell hook’s ([1989] 2015: 29) words, ‘it is the act of speech ... that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice’. What feminist literature thus points to is a lack of attention to political dynamics that are central in silencing women, such as the trivialization, if not outright denial, of forms of violence and inequality that are argued to be outside of proper political discussion. Indeed, a key means through which ‘political silencing’ takes place is the classical dichotomy identified by feminist thinkers between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ (Enloe, 2004: 72–73; see also Fraser, 1990). This is one of the many mechanisms through which ‘gendered silencing’ (Enloe, 2004: 75) works.

Postcolonial approaches have also engaged with silence as a symptom of the exclusion of subalterns from hegemonic, Eurocentric discourses that construct the political as the elision of the (racialized) other (Bhambra and Shilliam, 2009). As in feminist scholarship, silence is important within such approaches for describing the space of those voices that are not heard and, in Spivak's ([1988] 1994) famous words, 'cannot speak'. Silence then presents itself with a difficult paradox. On the one hand, silence represents an exclusion of those silenced and politically requires offering a voice to those who lack one. Yet, on the other hand, there is a danger and even impossibility for speaking for those who are silenced. Paralleling bell hooks' ([1989] 2015) criticism from an intersectional perspective, Mohanty (1988) has criticized feminist international relations scholarship for objectifying non-Western women in its quest to speak for those it perceives as being silenced. The risks of essentializing and silencing while aiming to offer space and voice are very present. As we will see, these are central to the issues the securitization framework has faced in engaging with those who are silenced and demonstrate its inability to move outside the centrality of speech.

Within the securitization framework, the centrality of voice has already been criticized by some (see, for instance, McDonald, 2008; Wilkinson, 2007; Williams, 2003). One of the most compelling critiques has come from a feminist-inspired conceptualization of the securitization framework. Lene Hansen (2000) explores the theoretical and constitutive inability of securitization theory to account for gender in its theorizing. Moreover, she provides an important critique of the inability of securitization theory to pay attention to the silence of those who are prevented, often violently, from speaking security. The argument put forth in this article is that even if the securitization framework can go beyond verbal speech by integrating other modalities of signifying, such as the body, as 'excessive' (Hansen, 2000: 302) forms of speech, the original starting point of the securitization framework still is premised on a limitation in its conceptualization of silence as both the absence of speech and the lack of an ability, or willingness, to voice. In other words, the securitization *framework* is premised on a conception of the world in which it is impossible *not* to communicate, leaving silence as a function of the framework's interpretation of what individuals or groups *would* say if they were to speak, rather than an actual modality by which interactions and situations are produced.

In her article, Hansen argues that it is precisely because of securitization theory's partial account of the ability or inability to speak security that it has a problem accounting for the place of women, and more largely subaltern groups, in the process of securitization. Securitization theory is rightly criticized for being premised on 'a situation in which speech is indeed possible', while the necessity to understand whether social actors have an 'ability to speak security' is prioritized by the securitization framework, as they might be 'prevented from becoming subjects worthy of consideration and protection' (Hansen, 2000: 285, emphasis added). As these quotations make clear, even when taking silence into account, the securitization framework is itself premised on the *necessity* to speak in order to be a subject, and to 'speak security' in order to become someone 'worthy of consideration and protection' by the state. Taking the example of honour killings in Pakistan, Hansen highlights how women face what she calls a 'silent security dilemma' (Hansen, 2000: 286).

This 'silent security dilemma' possesses two components. On the one hand, the dilemma is of 'security as silence' (Hansen, 2000: 294–297), which means that even though women might want or need to speak security in order to become a referent object, they are socially and politically unable to do so, or might even face more insecurity if they were to do so. The second component of the dilemma is 'subsuming security' (Hansen, 2000: 297–299), which means that it is impossible for these women to fully become a referent object because that would require that gender be recognized as distinct and located as a specific community within the societal sphere, without overlapping with 'national, religious, and racial referent objects' (Hansen, 2000: 298). Yet Hansen (2000: 299) rightly points out that there is an interlinkage between gender and other forms of identification such as the

nation, the state, religion, and so on, that cannot be undone in practice. Before exploring in more detail how Hansen engages with securitization theory in the light of this ‘silent security dilemma’, it is important to focus on the ontological assumptions underlying the securitization framework as they already present an indication of where silence is positioned in that framework.

Given the difficulty, and even impossibility, women face in reporting their insecurity and in becoming referent objects of security through speaking security, Hansen notes that they are in a situation of ‘security as silence’ – that is to say, ‘a situation where the potential subject of security has no, or limited, possibility of speaking its security problem’ (Hansen, 2000: 294). This impossibility is linked to a specific context of oppression that is not taken into account by securitization theory (but should be) because of its implicit and explicit expectation that potential securitizing actors are living in a condition in which a form of speech is indeed possible (Hansen, 2000: 285; Wilkinson, 2007). Silence, in other words, means an inability to voice. It does not, and I would argue it cannot, mean something else in the securitization framework. Pakistani women facing or contesting honour killings are subjected to even more risks if they try to raise the issue. As Hansen remarks, ‘the *security strategies chosen* by Pakistani women have, as a consequence, *often been silence, denial, or if the incident has become known, flight*’ (Hansen, 2000: 295, emphasis added). Silence is therefore situated in a specific ‘horizon of expectation’ in which voice is the primary means of articulating security concerns.

Clearly, in these situations, ‘the verbal act of speech’ (Hansen, 2000: 294) is disabled for these women. Even worse, exercising voice could place their existential security at additional risk. Here, the classical distinction laid out by Albert Hirschman (1970) provides a helpful heuristic: in terms of security, these women are only left with the choice to exit the political field. In the ‘horizon of expectation’ laid out by the securitization framework, this signifies that they have decided to opt out from speaking security. Voice is not an option because of its potentially deadly consequences, yet loyalty is not to be assumed either. By remaining silent, as they are silenced, these women do not necessarily express acceptance of their situation or of the specific social norms linked to honour killing, nor do they offer an alternative position rejecting altogether the dilemmatic space in which they are positioned. The securitization framework thus assumes that silence is a lack; it is an absence with negative connotations.<sup>4</sup> At this stage, these women are deprived of a ‘security strategy’, voiced through speech acts, that, from the perspective of securitization’s ‘horizon of expectation’, would enable them to potentially become referent objects of security and thus become worthy of protection by the state.

However, this lack of voice leads the securitization framework to analytically engage with securitization theory at the level of the production of discourses rather than limiting oneself to ‘identifying instances of securitization’ (Hansen, 2000: 300). Hansen here rightly points to the verbal limitations of speech act theory as inspired by J. L. Austin ([1962] 1975) and to the necessity to integrate the body and the visual in an analysis of this production (Hansen, 2000: 300–304; see also Hansen, 2011). More particularly, whether mobilizing, for instance, Judith Butler’s (1988) conception of the performative body, Emanuel Schegloff’s (1992) notion of proximate and distal contexts, or W. J. T. Mitchell’s (2007) theory of the image, questions from the securitization framework ultimately remain attached to a form of non-verbal voicing. This is not to be conflated with silence: ‘*Can the body speak security even when the word/text does not? ... [E]ven in the cases of verbal silence, security might be spoken through the body*’ (Hansen, 2000: 301, emphasis added). Explorations of the securitization framework beyond spoken or written words have engaged with the gestural as well as the proximate and distal contexts of expression of meanings (see, for instance, Wilkinson, 2007, 2010). More recent explorations have taken into account the visual aspect of securitization (e.g. Hansen, 2011; Heck and Schlag, 2013), highlighting the intensification of communicative speed and scope behind visual securitization moves. Yet the primacy of voice remains,

whether in the light of the type of cases chosen, such as political demonstrations in Claire Wilkinson's case, or in the actual primacy of the word over the image (Hansen, 2011: 53).

Even when analytically concentrating on other modalities of expression, the securitization framework cannot do with an absence of voice. Speech and voice retain their primacy, here epistemic and/or normative, as the securitization framework is reclaiming a potential and actual voice for the subalterns, if not verbally than corporeally. Silence is not an option. Should voice be abandoned, the only options left are to exit or, worse in this implicitly liberal normative framework, to remain loyal to an alienating and even oppressive social, political, international or religious order. Turning back to the question of silence per se, this has two different but related consequences for the securitization framework's approach to security and silence.

On the one hand, verbal silence should not necessarily be taken as the absolute absence of speech and therefore of an incapability to speak security. The ability to speak security should not be premised solely on the ability to speak verbally, since forms of oppression preventing speech from certain categories of the population, such as women, in specific socio-economic and cultural contexts would be missed by the securitization framework. This means, however, that silence is to be avoided on normative grounds. Silence means an irreducible inability to speak security, which is considered the sole relevant political option at hand for these women. On the other hand, silence is a technology of power (see Hansen, 2000: 304), in the sense that silence is an effect of silencing, whether by harming, threatening, not listening or not addressing those who are *de jure* or *de facto* silenced. Yet, even when engaged by the securitization framework directly, silence is still primarily premised on the normative assumption that voicing, and hence a form of 'speaking', is preferable and is something that *ought to* emerge from the subaltern. The anxiety here is that silence, in any form, is a 'threat to politics' and henceforth to society (Ferguson, 2003: 53). The agential ability of the subject remains pervasive, even in the most recent assessment of the place of silence in international relations (Dingli, 2015: 726). Moreover, the securitization framework's engagement is also premised on another important assumption that 'a person cannot *not* communicate' – that is, produce signs and meanings. Thus, silence should constitute a form of communication, whatever the intent or lack thereof, whose meaning is open to the interpreter (Glenn, 2004: 15–16, emphasis in original; see also Ferguson, 2003: 50–54).

In the implicit normative framework present in the securitization framework, (verbal) silence, if not a result of being forcefully silenced, is a form of acknowledgement and subordination of the subaltern to forms of domination. That is why silence is an impossibility, because silence would then be what is normatively unthinkable for the securitization framework. The body has to be what makes the subaltern speak because the subaltern should be speaking. While it might seem that Hansen or Wilkinson, for instance, are echoing Gavatri Chakravorty Spivak's ([1988] 1994) questions about the ability of the subaltern to speak, it is worth remembering that Spivak's problematization has more to do whether we are listening to what is said and how it is said (see Glenn, 2004: 26–27). This is key in understanding the impossibility of silence for the securitization framework. To further unpack this understanding of silence as a form of oppression *in the light of* the securitization framework, I now turn to a re-engagement with speech act theory and silencing. To do so enables us to identify how the securitization framework cannot afford *not* to have meaning, even if such meaning emerges from the body and is not necessarily meant to be meaningful. This consequently opens up a new conceptualization of silence, not as meaning, but as doing.

## The (im)possibility of the absence of voice

To re-engage with speech act theory is not to promote a return to a solely linguistic understanding of security via speech acts. Austin himself acknowledges the possibility of limited but nonetheless

non-verbal acts (see, for example, Austin [1962] 1975: 121–122). To re-engage with speech act theory enables us to show two important consequences of the securitization framework's conceptualization of silence: First, even when mobilizing the bodily performative, gestures, contexts or visuals, its understanding of silence is tied to the impossibility of voice. Second, this understanding of silence cannot be anything but this, thereby reinforcing, rather than counteracting, securitization framework's own political horizon of expectation (see following section). In order to counteract securitization theory's political horizon of expectation, I follow Hansen's steps in mobilizing a feminist standpoint in regard to speech acts by engaging with a feminist critique of pornography as a form of silencing speech for women (see Langton, 1993; Hornsby and Langton, 1998; for a counter-argument, see Bird, 2002). To recall: 'Silence is a powerful political strategy that internalises and individualises threats thereby making resistance and political mobilisation difficult' (Hansen, 2000: 306). In other words, when women are silenced they are faced with the daunting risks of (verbally) voicing, and when they dare to do so they are threatened or even killed. Thus, they remain silent. Yet, for the securitization framework it is a matter of finding ways by which voice is communicated even though speech is *impaired*. As we will see, Rae Langton's (1993) analysis of whether pornography silences women's speech acts poses a critical political problem for Hansen's conception of the performative body as compensating for verbal speech, or by extension for any of the securitization framework's privileging of voicing. Langton's analysis establishes how one can face the possibility of not being able to produce material or statements to be invested with meanings at all. This possibility should then invite us to rethink *not what silence may mean but what silence does*.

Langton argues that pornography is a type of speech act – again taking into account that all 'speech' need not be verbal – that disables women's own speech acts. In her subsequent analysis of how hegemonic speech acts can have such silencing effects on subordinate groups, she identifies three possible ways through which silencing occurs. The first one, locutionary exclusion (my term), happens when 'members of a powerless group may be silent because they are intimidated, or because they believe that no one will listen' (Langton, 1993: 315). Locutionary exclusion is the most common understanding of what usually is understood as silencing: 'The action of silencing is accompanied by social and political judgements of what is acceptable and unacceptable.... [T]o understand silencing ... we must not only look at the imposition of one discourse on another, but also at the social and discursive boundaries among imposition, compliance, and self-silencing' (Thiesmeyer, 2003: 2). Rae's locutionary exclusion is exactly what Hansen is analysing: 'Adopting the security terminology, the situation can be described as one where one group of private actors ("women") are being abused by another group of private actors, but where the state fails, or refuses to protect the formers [*sic*] security' (Hansen, 2000: 293). Silence here is the *result* not only of violent actions against women who speak, forcibly being silenced, but also of a lack of trust, from those who do not speak, in their ability to be heard. Yet what about situations, which are not really engaged with but hinted at by Hansen, in which speech acts are uttered, verbally or otherwise? Langton's two other forms of silencing precisely take this into account.

The second form of silencing Langton identifies is 'perlocutionary frustration'. This refers to situations where 'people will speak, but what they say will fail to achieve the effects that they intend' (Langton, 1993: 315). This is an important point, as the, often-implicit, assumption in the securitization framework is that an audience will be present, whether in the form of the state or the international community (on the importance of the audience in the securitization framework, see Balzacq, 2005). Then, it is a case of whether an illocutionary act's felicity conditions are met. Hansen's conception of silence points to this perlocutionary frustration, as the Pakistani women she discusses are in a situation in which their excess of speech via the body (Hansen, 2000: 302) cannot have the effect – to cause them to become a referent object of the state's security – that

might be intended. Their possible illocutionary act is frustrated as it cannot transform the hegemonic convention, a patriarchally dominated society defined via ‘legal–religious–political practice’ and texts (Hansen, 2000: 305), by establishing a different one (see Sbisà, 2002). Finally, Langton identifies a third form of silencing: ‘illocutionary disablement’, which is:

a kind of silencing that happens when one speaks, one utters words, and fails not simply to achieve the effects one aims at, but fails to perform the very action one intends.... [A]lthough the appropriate words are uttered, with the appropriate intention, the speaker fails to perform the intended illocutionary act. (Langton, 1993: 315)

For Langton (1993: 319, 321), pornography as a speech act creates a context, a convention (see Sbisà, 2002) of illocutionary disablement, because it creates a convention whereby a woman’s speech does not count. It is not a case of whether she can achieve something by speaking (perlocution), but whether in saying ‘no’ to sexual advances (illocution) she can even utter words that will be accepted as meaningful. To put it differently, the situation is not one in which her words do not achieve perlocution by saying ‘no’, but one in which her words do not even come across as meaning ‘no’ through their own force. The conventional force and meaning that should reside in an illocution are not present because ‘uptake is not secured’ (Langton, 1993: 321; see also Austin, [1962] 1975: 117–118); words not only have no effects, they also literally do not mean what was intended when they were uttered. By not securing uptake, inviting a response or taking effect, her words do not even have any illocutionary presence (Austin, [1962] 1975: 118).

In all cases of silencing, though for different reasons, reciprocity is then denied. ‘When there is reciprocity among people, they recognize one another’s speech as it is meant to be taken’. When physical or epistemic violence is applied, a woman cannot achieve ‘the communicative thing that she intended’ (Hornsby, 1995: 134). Worse still, the expectation is that it won’t be achieved anyway. Yet illocutionary disablement is something that is not thinkable for the securitization framework, because in this context one is denied the ability to produce any meaning at all. This is because the securitization framework cannot afford *not* to have meaningful articulations. This is why it has to retrieve them from bodies, gestures, contexts, visuals, etc.

### **Silence-as-meaning to silence-as-doing: Moving silence beyond securitization framework’s horizon of expectation**

What Langton’s discussion of pornography as a speech act, and its relations to silencing, highlights is the primacy given to voice as a reflection of the horizon of expectations of those who can speak in the first place. It refers us to the power asymmetry between those who can speak (security) and those who are facing an inability – circumstantial and/or structural – to do so. The invitation to invert the terms of the ‘equation’, then, should direct us to what silence *does* in this asymmetrical relation, rather than to infer what it may mean. As we have seen, for the securitization framework, silence can only be ontologically, epistemically and normatively a *negative* function of speech. But what if silence was not to be retrieved from the perspective of speech/voice? What if silence was more than the absence of speech? Or, to paraphrase Barthes (2002: 54), what if one refrained from retrieving silence as an absence of speech/voice from what is not necessarily produced to be an absence (of silence)? More fundamentally, what if silence was not taken as deviant (Ferguson, 2003: 54)?

Key to moving beyond this *negative* understanding of silence is the agreement found in the literature on silence that one of its primary characteristic is its ambiguity (Ferguson, 2003; Glenn, 2004; Le Breton, 1997: 79). For example, it can *mean*, non-exclusively, both deference to power



and the deployment of power; however, it can also mean neither. This is well captured by Michel Foucault's (1976: 133) analysis of sexuality as multilayered constellations of utterances, or lack thereof, that are more than coherent blocs (re)affirming the dominant discourse *or* blocs undermining it. Silence's ambiguity is first of all linked to the extreme difficulty in documenting it because it is rarely possible to attach it, even fleetingly, to the wilful expression of an intention. Silence can be 'self- or other-initiated, self- or other-derived.... But the function of silence – that is, its effects upon people – varies according to the social context in which it occurs' (Glenn, 2004: xii). This functionalist reading provided by Glenn, however, should be resituated from a political perspective as 'the politics of silence ... are not reducible to any particular political functionality' precisely because silence operates 'in multiplicitous, fragmentary, even paradoxical ways' (Ferguson, 2003: 58). Silence as meaning is multiple, fragmented, ambiguous and even paradoxical. Silence should not be taken as a straightforward sign, as it might equally and simultaneously *be read* as acknowledgement, respect, defiance, indifference, resistance, contemplation, and so on. Yet there is a normative and analytical tendency to look at silence in terms of what it may mean, so as to find the best ways to interpret it (see, for example, Dingli, 2015: 730, 733–737).

To understand this ambiguity, and to start offering an alternative analytic to silence as meaning, it is important to return to the distinction that was made in Latin between *tacere*, or verbal silence, and *silere*, which meant 'tranquillity, the absence of movement and of noise'. While *silere* has become the most common root to things related to silence (though think of 'tacit'), it has taken on the meaning of *tacere*, which means that 'silence is now only speech' (Barthes, 2002: 49–50). *Silere* is disturbing for social sciences because it ultimately means an absence of a materiality from where meaning can be derived (Barthes, 2002: 49). Yet the securitization framework is largely premised on the primacy of the spoken, of voice, whether ontologically, epistemologically or normatively, and thus prone to overinvest in what silence means: from its 'horizon of expectation', silence can only *mean* submission, acknowledgment, accommodation and/or (resistance to) oppression.

Speaking is epistemologically and normatively premised on the assumption of the direct access interpreters have to what is voiced, or what is not voiced. More so, what is voiced is assumed to mean what is uttered. Normatively, speech, especially in liberal traditions, is rarely taken as multilayered (Ferguson, 2003: 50–54). When the subaltern becomes the focal point, her/his speech is rarely taken as a type of language in which nothing that is said, or written, is necessarily straightforward (see, for instance, Scott, 1990). Subaltern speech often is akin to an Aesopian language: it is a way of producing meaning in which speakers and writers are using 'linguistic devices ... to communicate with audiences in situations where their words are either overtly or covertly restricted' (Allen, 2001: 111). This restriction, as Michel de Certeau reminds us, is not necessarily censorship or actual surveillance, as was the case in 19th-century Russia, where the concept of Aesopian language took roots. In effect, de Certeau argues that:

[the act of speaking] operates in the field of a linguistic system; it puts in play [Fr. *met en jeu*; see below, esp. note 6] an appropriation, or a reappropriation of language by locutors; it institutes a present relative to a moment and a place; and it posits a contract with the other (the interlocutor) in a network of situations and relations. (de Certeau [1980] 1990: xxxviii–xxxix, 56–57; see also Scott, 1990: 136–182)

In other words, when one speaks, one enters into a specific (usually asymmetric) contract with other interlocutors, a language game (Wittgenstein, [1953, 1958, 2001] 2009: §23), in terms of what can be said and how things can be said. Yet most locutors, and even more so locutors not possessing the capital/power to delimit what are the contours of the 'field of a linguistic system', are simply operating within a field that others define and delimit for them. Locutors, however, also

possess an ability to (re)appropriate this field and make it their own for a fleeting instant, in the present, while remaining unable to modify or transform it in full.

In Certeau's terms, and to transcribe this movement to security, this contract is actually a conflict between those who can articulate the field in which security can be spoken and those who are, or are not, uttering security (see de Certeau, [1980] 1990: 56–57, 62–63). From the perspective of the primacy of speech/voice in this situation, silence should not be taken as univocally as it might equally and simultaneously *be read* as acknowledgement, defiance, indifference, accommodation, resistance, contemplation, and so on. In other words, looking at what silence means, we cannot escape our own horizons of expectation about what is silence. Yet those who can speak seem compelled to impose their own horizon of expectation over those who cannot. Thus, the latter's silences *do* something to the former by interpellating the rules by which these silences are to be interpreted as meaning something.

Let us now turn to silence as possibly enacting more than an absence. As noted, while the meaning of (a) silence will rarely if ever be ascertained *in abstracto*, the literature on silence argues that silence is more than just a lack. While generally associated with oppression, silence can also be constitutive of a community and/or be resistance (see Ferguson, 2003). Silence can be oppression, community or resistance, among other things, because *it does something* that has certain effects on the ways in which specific contexts of actions and enunciations unfold. In that respect, it is important to remember that, as Maurice Blanchot (1969) has demonstrated with regard to the figure of Bartleby in Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*, one who does speak can also have an effect in a language game equivalent to that of silence. What is achieved through performing, or having others perform, depends on the configurations at play – that is, the polemic conflict through which these actors interact with one another (see Berkman, 2011: 33, 41–42). Bartleby's 'I would prefer not to' and his silent attitude to the queries of the narrator demonstrate how the latter overinvests meaning into Bartleby's 'silences'.

A first possible step, then, in taking into account silence qua *silere* would be to consider that if silence is an absence, then it is an absence 'with a function' (Glenn, 2004: 4). A dimension that is important to dispel before discussing how one can think of silence as more than what it means is that silence is not (necessarily) passive. As Glenn (2004: xi, 18) shows, silence can be a form of rhetoric, or a form of communication (see Schröter, 2013): something is actuated (not necessarily enacted) through silence in certain rhetorical contexts, as silence and speech are concomitant. Silence is not just the absence of speech: the absence of speech is what makes silence more apparent, just as silence is what makes speech more apparent (see Glenn, 2004: 4). Glenn's interest, however, is in silence as a rhetorical tactic. Ultimately, there can be instances where silence can be, albeit with difficulty, recorded (Glenn, 2004: 2) and in which silence takes meaning because of a 'rhetorical situation' (Glenn, 2004: 9). This rhetorical situation is a 'voice' situation in which silence can be a strategic choice or an enforced position (Glenn, 2004: 13–15). Thus, silence can determine the 'rhetorical success' of someone who is/remains silent because success is dependent on the 'the rhetorical situation' (Glenn, 2004: 13).

Glenn's story, though, largely remains within the purview of intention: 'ever sensitive ... to the appropriateness and timeliness of the occasion, of words, or of silence, we attempt to fashion our communication successfully' (Glenn, 2004: 13). The main issue in attempting to save an intentionality behind silence, or even to ascribe an unintended intention behind silence, is that it relies on a need for silence to be straightforwardly meaningful. Yet, even if most of her account is still premised on intentionality, Glenn also acknowledges that 'this is not to say that silence is always strategic, empowering, or patently engaging' (Glenn, 2004: 18).

This functionalist reading provided by Glenn, however, could be resituated from a political perspective because silence's multiplicity, fragmentation, ambiguity and paradoxical constitution

represents a site and moment of *indeterminacy*. Silence possesses an unsettling quality in that it *does something to a language game*. Glenn (2004: 4) observes the difference between ‘expected silences’ and ‘unexpected’ ones, the latter ‘often making us anxious about the specific meaning’. Silence, in effect, is often considered in the West as a ‘disruptive gap’, for ‘ideally, there should be no gaps and no overlaps, no competition for speaking, no worries about silences’. Silence does something because it breaks the expectation of a flow of words that ‘fill up social space’ (Glenn, 2004: 6). This break is an *irruption in a logocentric order*. Silence qua *silere* therefore is something that puts stress on a logocentric outlook because it forces us to look anew at the relations that exist between the different players in a language game.

One can illustrate this in a basic example such as the right to silence in law, commonly associated with the Miranda warnings in the US legal system (see, for instance, Chalus, 2009; Strauss, 2008–2009). The central idea behind the right to silence is that one should not be in a position to incriminate oneself or be coerced into doing so. Thus, as a form of protection, one can choose whether one speaks to law enforcement authorities. A right to silence can be said to have now been adopted and recognized in most legal systems; even ‘international jurisprudence tends to affirm its universality’ (Chalus, 2009: 343). Usually, this right to silence is attached to an analysis of silence-as-meaning – that is, to the modalities by which one can ensure that a right to silence is claimed, even when one actually remains silent. As Marcy Strauss (2008–2009: 784–802) demonstrates, US courts, especially lower ones, have tended to require an *unambiguous* statement for the right to remain silent to take effect. Even remaining silent, thus not verbally claiming the right to remain silent, is largely seen as an ambiguous position, usually a strategy to gain time (Strauss, 2008–2009: 792). Even in scholarly analysis, from a socio-pragmatic perspective, unintentional silences in the right to silence are seen as akin to ‘psychological inhibitions’ (Kurzon, 1995: 59–60).

But what if we read the right to silence differently? What if we read the right to silence as an answer to a specific interpellation that this possible silence performs? In other words, what if the right to silence was a reordering of reality when faced with a specific irruption, an irruption with which one chooses not to engage? By doing so, one does not participate in that order by taking part in the specific legal and security language game being mobilized. In effect, silence creates an anxiety for the state, which is why silence is resituated to a situation of either intending not to speak or being unable to do so. By giving a right to silence, as in the Miranda warning, preempting what your silence may mean politically, the state is not only positing an order – legal as well as social, economic, political, international, etc. It is also, through this definition of an order, positing what disorder is and what it means. Accordingly, the state defines the parameters of what is transgressive within the parameters of that order (Boltanski, 2012: 42–43; see also de Certeau, [1980] 1990: 60–61). So the state defines what silence means, while its preemption of what it may or may not mean is an indication of what silence does (creating this necessity to preempt or fill the gap silence creates) to the language game that the state has created. A silence interpellates an action to fold back onto reality, onto an order. Silence-as-doing therefore offers an analytical window onto the language game of that order, how it is played, by whom, and how silence affects the game through the reactions to, and thus interpretations of, the silence that is (potentially) present.

This fundamentally relational configuration is an invitation to see how we can shift our own situatedness as researchers from a focus on the state/the powerful to a focus on the everyday,<sup>5</sup> in order to provide a different analysis of security. Accordingly, one can argue that security studies (whether in more mainstream or critical strands), and more generally the field of international relations, would suffer, as Luc Boltanski has shown in terms of the emergence of the social sciences in the 19th century, from being situated on the side of the state/the powerful as a result of its reaffirmation of the latter’s primacy as the master of reality (see Boltanski, 2009, 2012). The emphasis is usually put on the ability of the state, related agencies, (para-)agents and elites to establish ‘a series

of regularities maintaining themselves whatever the situation is and framing every event, however singular' (Boltanski, 2012: 30). Security studies is interested in these regularities because they 'enable [analysts] to trace the boundary between the possible and the impossible and to offer a possibility to enact a general framework enabling a certain predictability or, if you want, an order' (Boltanski, 2012: 30–31). Silence qua *silere* should thus be an invitation to complement our current analytics, which tend to focus on how that order is created, managed, controlled and implemented without taking into account how the latter is a reaction to quell the irruption of what Boltanski refers to the real – “everything that happens” ... and even to everything that may happen, and [thus] to the impossibility to know it and to master it in totality' (Boltanski, 2012: 22). Within the frame of this article, the real also includes unsettling silences.

To consider silence as doing something to a specific language (such as that of security) is to consider it as an irruption of the real in that order (the reality). It is an irruption because it compels reality to reinstate its order – that is, a logocentric meaning – over what is de facto a 'refusal' to enter that order. The term 'refusal' is problematic, of course, hence the quotation marks, as it hinges to a re-inscription, and thus a re-ascription, of intentionality behind (a) silence. Rather than re-inscribing to it intentionality, silence is to be read as a social fact that is linked to the inaudibility and invisibility of segments of a population in terms of social class, gender, race, and so on, that define them as subaltern to that order (see Farge, 2009). Hence, silence-as-doing unveils the more quotidian pole of the asymmetry between the state and individuals/groups. What an analytics of silence-as-doing offers is a possible opening up of the polemical, rhetorical and material strategies and tactics of the weak when engaged in political conflicts – that is, an analytics of the 'struggles or the games between the strong and the weak, and the “actions” that remain possible for the weak' (de Certeau, [1980] 1990: 57, 60–63). Within this polemology, the weak are only able to manoeuvre by deploying certain tactics.

In effect, for Certeau, while strategies reflect the ability of certain actors to define the contours within which one can be, act and speak, tactics, on the contrary, reflect an ability on the part of actors who do not possess the necessary means to deploy strategies to divert and appropriate these contours, even if for a limited time, without redefining or redesigning them. As we have seen, however, de Certeau is still setting the parameters of tactics within the ability to enunciate, even if this enunciation is a (re)appropriation of language to play the game differently than it is supposed to be played. This enables, by establishing an art of saying, a redistribution of the space that is defined by those who have the ability to define a 'proper' (de Certeau [1980] 1990: 35) reality. In other words, an art of saying, or an art of doing, 'creates [in this reality] at least a bit of game/play, that is a bit of a gap,<sup>6</sup> to enable manoeuvres between unequal forces as well as utopian landmarks and hideouts [Fr. *repères*]' (de Certeau, [1980] 1990: 35).

Yet, as Scott has shown with regards to the weapons of the weak, the polemology of the weak still is an accommodation to reality. The weak still participate in the reproduction of an order and reinforce how order defines the possibility of disorder (Scott, 1985: 292). Forms of irruption within the parameters of order are not radical irruptions because they do not necessarily have a transformative potential. More importantly, they do not necessarily prompt a reaction from that order to reimpose itself onto them. Abstractly, an irruption is a situation in which there is a mismatch, a discordance, between a certain state of affairs (Fr. *état de choses*) and the 'symbolic forms that are officially associated with them, in order to qualify them' (Boltanski, 2012: 110); yet acts of doing and saying are not necessarily, unlike silence, an interruption of that order.

So why is silence qua *silere* a radical irruption? If we refer back to de Certeau's understanding of enunciation, which he applies to both verbal and non-verbal acts, any enunciation is an effectuation of a linguistic system, a system of meaning, a logocentric order, through the act of speaking, through a verbal or non-verbal speech act if you wish. In the case of arts of saying or doing, these constitute a (re)appropriation of – that is, fleeting forms of resistance to – reality. Through this

(re)appropriation there is a shift in the game from a polemology of the strong to a polemology of the weak through a play on the contract that is established between interlocutors through the fleeting and momentary deployment of a present that is an alternative to the present reality. One can think of humour, for instance. Humour is not necessarily or primarily transformative but (re)appropriates a moment by turning it around for an instant. In any case, the researcher's analytic emphasis is still largely relying on the primacy of the state, of the powerful, of logocentrism, as that which humour often positions itself against.

Silence qua *silere*, however, can be said to be a radical irruption for it does not constitute the implementation of any 'linguistic system', as there is no operationalization through an 'act of speaking'; silence thus radically destabilizes a logocentric order. As noted, not all silences have that possibility, as silence (qua *tacere*) can be a specific manoeuvre and thus would constitute an art of not-saying (Glenn, 2004). Yet remaining silent in situations when/where it is allowed or assumed to be the norm still remains an effect of the symbolic and political borders within which reality is working. Silence qua *silere*, however, does not constitute a (re)appropriation because it decentres and dissipates the place of voice in the polemological relations between strong and weak. In saying or doing, even within the situatedness of the arts of the weak, one is still taking part in the establishment of the contract between interlocutors, or what Scott (1990: 4–5) would call public transcripts. Silence qua *silere* is a radical irruption in the social and political contract between the state/the powerful and the rest that lies at the heart of the premises behind security studies and international relations (see Huysmans, 1998). It 'refuses' to enact that contract because it does not partake in a reaffirmation of an order, even by contesting it, that has been set by the state/the powerful.

## Conclusion

The fields of international relations and security studies have primarily conceptualized what the international and/or security are via an (implicitly or explicitly) premised ontological, epistemic and normative primacy of voice and speech that has largely concentrated on the asymmetric relations between the state, individuals and groups by privileging government. As demonstrated via the case of the securitization framework, security studies and international relations more broadly have usually concentrated on the polemology of the strong. In paying attention to the 'power relations [*rappports de forces*] defining the networks in which [verbal and non-verbal operations] inscribe themselves and delimit the circumstances they can take advantage of' from the perspective of the state (or elites), the securitization framework has highlighted how the struggle, or the language game, is set from the perspective of the strong. It has neglected to pay sufficient attention to how the game is played from the perspective of the weak (de Certeau, [1980] 1990: 56–57). Analysing silence from the perspective of those defining the game/field in which it is enacted means that what is left unsaid is read as the absence of what should have been said.<sup>7</sup> What is given attention is how the game is established by the strong rather than how it is played by the weak. As a result, how silence can do something to affect, if not alter, that game is ignored.

Silence creates an anxiety for the state, and by extension for the securitization framework – and security studies. Otherwise why would silence be resituated to a situation of either intending not to speak or being unable to do so (for example, as in the case of Miranda warnings)? The state, in effect, is not only positing an order – social, economic, political, international – but also, through this definition of an order, it demarcates disorder and what disorder means. In other words, the state/the powerful defines the parameters of what is transgressive within the parameters of that order (see Nandy, [1983] 2009: 2–3, 11, 24–25, 52). So the state/the powerful largely defines what silence means; however, the state/the powerful's preemption of what silence may, or may not, mean is also an indication of what silence does (i.e. creating this necessity to preempt or fill the gap

that silence creates) to language games that the state/the powerful creates. One can thus understand silence as a situation that does something to asymmetric relations. One cannot posit a priori what this understanding achieves as it requires first establishing the language game that is being played and by whom. It also necessitates tracing out asymmetries and how silence affects the game. This can be achieved by analysing the reactions to, and thus interpretations of, the silence that is present. This article thus offers a first conceptual step for opening up novel analytical perspectives about silence in security studies and beyond.

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## Notes

1. I am not using Jacques Derrida's concept of logocentrism per se (see Derrida, 1967: 11–13, 23, 65–66, 104–106), but I would like to retain here one of its primary impetuses, which is to underline the absolute primacy of the voice, and hence of the activity of voicing, to inscribe a presence. Moreover, and more in line with Derrida, logocentrism reflects as well the lack of 'ontological' difference between speech and writing when it comes to representing something, and hence to an inability to understand beyond what is expressed phonetically.
2. I would like to thank one of the reviewers for highlighting this distinction.
3. While the securitization framework does not encompass what critical security is – far from it – it remains the case nonetheless that it epitomizes an understanding of security as being something constructed via language. Hence this contribution limits itself to an analysis of the securitization framework in its tension with the more narrowly defined securitization theory of Buzan et al. (1988) (on the distinction between theory and framework, see Vuori, 2016).
4. I am not assuming that this might not be the case and that Hansen is wrong in her interpretation. Rather, the point is elsewhere. By showing how Hansen or others consider what (their) silence means, it enables us to see the working premises behind the security framework critique and how they are similar to that which they criticize.
5. A note of caution is necessary here. As Michael Sheringham rightly points out, once we make the everyday an 'object of scrutiny' it dissolves into something else because it becomes something that is treated as an event (which it is not) (Sheringham, 2006: 360; see also Blanchot, 1969: 357). The move to engage with the everyday is to shift our focal point, our situatedness, when thinking about what security is.
6. In French, Michel de Certeau writes 'elle [i.e. an art of saying/doing] y [inside that reality] crée au moins du jeu' (de Certeau, [1980] 1990: 35), which is a play on words, as while the sentence literally means that some form of game or play is created, 'du jeu' also refers to something loose, to a gap, an interstice. In other words, arts of saying/doing are enabling spaces, through their use of temporality, which literally are these gaps, interstices.
7. To be clear, I also refer by 'those defining the game/field' to those researching it (Huysmans, 2002).

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