

The Saliency of Silence: The Silence of Saliency

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Abstract

This is a unique study of an almost silent and still film of the organisation of silence. The film 'Into Great Silence' (IGS) shows how Carthusian monks organise silence, punctuating and structuring it with recurring rituals and routines. Carthusian silence is discourse: it is their way of communicating, interacting and sustaining their organisation. The salience of Carthusian silence is that it is where they can discern divine presence. By studying IGS, the researcher overcame the challenges of access to the monastery, of studying silence, and of appraising the implicit salience of Carthusian silence. The film invites viewers to silent introspection through sound art, visual poetry, and a silent metaphorical discourse that relies on symbols. IGS utilises reverse visual metaphor, with metaphorical images that move the audience from images to abstract territories. The researcher also reflects on his own personal experience during his stays at a Carthusian Charterhouse, when he was a novitiate candidate in the sole English Carthusian Monastery (St. Hugh's Charterhouse, Parkminster,¹ near Horsham in West Sussex, England). Although he did not pursue this vocation, his two periods in the monastery left him with an indelible impression of a religious order that has not changed for nearly a millennium, and which imparted a deep awareness and appreciation of silence, solitude and stillness. The paper draws out lessons for research and organisations.

Keywords

Carthusians, metaphor, religion, religiosity, silence, spirituality

¹ St. Hugh's Charterhouse can be viewed online at <https://www.parkminster.org.uk> and in virtual reality here:

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Parkminster/@50.9736001,-0.2797591,243a,35y,257.96h,44.9t/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x4875947fd02e2dcf:0xc07c8c47a28e8551!8m2!3d50.969666!4d-0.279213>

Introduction

Silence

Why study contemplative silence? Silence is an important but neglected subject in organisation studies (Brown and Coupland, 2005). Such muteness about silence is surprising given that it is pervasive in organisations (Van Dyne et al. 2003; Fletcher and Watson 2007) on both individual and organisational levels (Clair 1998). Indeed, silence occupies a vast space, given its limitlessness and all that it can imply (Sendbuehler 1994). Because it engulfs the space where it appears, some confuse silence with absence - although it has a function, just like the zero in mathematics (Glenn 2004). Contrary to how some scholars have discussed it, silence does not equate simply with an absence of sound or speech, as “all human silences are a form of communication” and hence one “cannot not communicate” (Hao 2010, 16). We continue to communicate with others during voice abstention (Luhmann 2001): “we communicate when we talk and we communicate by our silence when we don’t” (Ellis and Beattie 1986, 16).

There are many silences, all integral to the strategies of discourse, and there is no binary division between the said and the unsaid, as silence is “an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies” (Foucault 1990, 27). Indeed, the source and destiny of all words is silence (Pieris 1988; van Manen 1990). Accordingly, there is a continuum between sounding and silent voice (Mazzei 2007) as intertwined phenomena (Creed 2003) that are co-constituting, each being a pre-condition for the other (albeit one or the other having pre-eminence) (Dauenhauer 1980). For example, Fletcher and Watson (2007) examine the interplay of voice and silence in organisations.

This continuity reinforces the notion that silence is not fixed; it varies in meaning (Hao 2010). Silence is meaningful, interactive in the presence of others, takes different forms and has varying uses (Scott 1993). It also has various motives, such as “ineffectual, relational, defensive, diffident, disengaged, and deviant” (Brinsfield 2013 671) – or it might be caused by awe (Dauenhauer 1980), as in the case of the current study. Thus, when compared to speech, silence is more ambivalent so the motives for it can be misunderstood (Van Dyne et al. 2003). Despite its ambiguity and indirect nature, silence is “capable of expressing a whole range of discursive and propositional meanings, and displaying the same illocutionary effects as verbal speech acts...” (Jaworski 2005, 2-3).

Silence is not a unitary phenomenon but has different meanings and effects depending on who enacts it, when and where (Brown 2007). For example, perceptions of silence differ cross-culturally (Acheson 2008). Furthermore, the many different kinds of silence include commemorative, withdrawal (Brown 2007), privileged, polite, unintelligible, intentional (Mazzei 2003), veiled (Morison and Macleod 2014), spiritual reflection, code of conduct (Poulos 2004), and purposeful alienation that acts as a space for critique (Driver 2003). In the field of public relations, Dimitrov (2015, 645) suggests “four types of silence: absolute, defensive, preserving and anticipating”, while Knoll and Dick (2013) identify four forms of employee silence: quiescent, acquiescent, prosocial, and opportunistic. Moreover, individuals can make tactical choices in speaking up (Piderit and Ashford 2003), decline to communicate issues upwardly (Milliken et al. 2003) or “be more likely to speak up when they believe that their position is supported by others, and remain silent when they believe that it is not” (Bowen and Blackmon 2003, 1393). One’s voice can be absent (Driver 2003), moderated through self-monitoring (Premeaux and Bedeian 2003), silenced (Brown and Coupland 2005), erased through socially produced silences (Rosiek and Heffernan 2014), suppressed or

censored (Ward and Winstanley 2003). Moreover, silence can be at the level of the individual or organisation (Driver undated), and experienced as a negative or positive force.

Traditionally, silence is conceptualised as rather passive behaviour (Van Dyne et al. 2003) but it is actually an active (Dauenhauer 1980), “cultural performance” (Hao 2010, 303). Moreover, literature tends to conceive of silence as having predominantly negative associations, opposed to voice (Driver undated). For example, Freire (1970 106) argues that “silence suggests a structure of mutism in face of the overwhelming force of the limit-situations.” More recently, Morrison and Milliken (2000) portray organisational silence as where power causes employees to withhold information about problems, leading to systemic silence and restraining organisational change. Park and Keil (2009) find that such a climate of silence affects an individual's willingness to blow the whistle, whilst Maria (2006) argues that organisational silence and managerial secrecy can interact, increasing corruption. Silence not only restricts information but also influences employee outcomes; for example, acquiescent silence mediates “the relationship between overall justice perceptions and emotional exhaustion, psychological withdrawal, physical withdrawal, and performance” (Whiteside and Barclay 2013, 251). Moreover, abused subordinates remain silent at work owing to their feelings of emotional exhaustion (Xu et al. 2015). Overcoming moral silence in organisations requires managers “to move beyond a compliance-oriented organizational culture toward a culture based on integrity” (Verhezen 2010, 187). However, the organisational literature remains mute on the benefits of silence to organisations.

At least the above studies establish that silence discourses (Sendbuehler 1994) and is salient to organisational life. However, the current study counterbalances views of silence in organisations as rather negative and dysfunctional, instead taking a positive turn by studying the Carthusians, a Catholic monastic order that dedicates itself to silence. In such contexts, silence is valued as a space for spiritual growth (Poland and Pederson 1998). Contemplative

silence is a core aspect of spiritual rituals and social interaction, being regarded “as a fullness of experience that is allowed into being by the removal of talk, which is seen as a distraction” (297).

The current study occupies a similar space to that of Molina-Markham (2014), who analyses Quaker meetings for business, where silences prepare participants for decision-making. She sees silence not as absence or opposed to speech, but as meaningful communication. Equally, the current article aligns with that of Pagis (2015), who shows how silent interaction rituals in Vipassana meditation retreats enable silent social attunement to emerge. The current paper conveys a positive experience of organisational silence, one where silence serves as a beneficial quiet space in which individuals detach from external events, quieten external (hyper)activity, reflect, discover meaning and listen to an inner voice (Driver 2003). However, the current article differs in its monastic subject, innovative analysis of an almost silent film, study of almost total silence and white space, and the conclusions of how Carthusians and IGS organise contemplative silence.

Contemplative practices in management are an enduring theme in this journal (for example, Roberts 2012) and the current paper develops this theme. Lychnell (2017, 255) examines “how managers apply a meditative attitude to work”, so that work becomes meditation. Furthermore, Petchsawang and Duchon (2012) show how spirituality relates to work performance and meditation practice mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality and work performance. Petchsawang and McLean (2017, 216) reveal that “the level of workplace spirituality and work engagement were found to be higher in organizations that offer meditation courses than in those that do not.” Moreover, Norlyk Herriott et al.’s (2009, 195) study shows how “subjects reported that their meditation practice enabled them to cultivate inner experiences.” Finally, Pavlovich’s (2010) paper describes a course design for creating consciousness awareness in management education, contributing to developing

practices of reflection, mindfulness and deeper awareness. The current article takes this contemplative turn further by examining the salience of silence for contemplation.

The contemplative life involves waiting and listening in silence (Merton 1973), which expands awareness; “silence is not simply about the absence of sound waves. It is concerned with attention and awareness. Silence and awareness are in fact one thing” (Laird 2011, 44). This kind of silence is one that is meditative (Glenn 2004), contemplative (Poland and Pederson 1998), liturgical and mystic (Dauenhauer 1980), an “institutionally-determined silence” (Saville-Troike 1985, 14) that is used “to carry out various kinds of ritual interaction” (6). In terms of Blackman and Sadler-Smith’s (2009) taxonomy, this silence proceeds from withheld voice and privileges insightful ways of knowing.

The research question of this study is; how is contemplative silence organised? The paper examines Carthusians’ largely silent discourse, emphasising how discourse and its analysis are not confined to speech. It highlights the salience of contemplative silence and reveals how white space provides its ground. Carthusian monasteries possess fundamental similarities to other organisations: each monastery is economically autonomous (through agriculture and artisan work) and provides services (prayer offerings) and products (books and the famous Chartreuse liquor) (Carthusian Order 2015). However, the paper will draw out lessons from the order’s most notable differences – its silence and white space – for other organisations, in terms of the significance, utilisation, reflection upon, and interpretation of silences. This is important because one first needs silence in order to listen to organisation (Moriceau 2007).

Carthusian silence

The IGS film is a study of a religious organisation situated in a high, remote and snowy Alpine valley, a monastic white space known as the ‘Desert of the Chartreuse’. It is the home

of a reclusive religious order, a community of hermits, who share a predominantly silent discourse: *Le Monastère de la Grande Chartreuse*, at Saint Pierre de Chartreuse, north of Grenoble in France. It is the head monastery of the most ascetic of Roman Catholic orders, the Carthusians, founded by Saint Bruno (c. 1030–1101) in 1084. Currently, the Order has 450 nuns and monks in 24 monasteries in 3 continents. Priests dedicate themselves to the contemplative life while Brothers meet the monastery's physical needs by working outside their cells (e.g. cooking, carpentry, laundry, and forestry) (Carthusian Order 2015).

Carthusians sculpt and space their contemplative silence. The monastery has three main parts: the main cloister connecting the cells, communal areas (church, chapter, refectory, kitchen, and laundry room), while the noisy workshops (farm, mill and ironmonger) are at sufficient distance from the monastery, so as not to disturb the silence. Individual hermitages and the surrounding enclosure walls secure silence, while the cloister links each cell to the church and other monastic buildings (in the cloister, monks greet and pass each other in silence). Carthusian solitude has three characteristics: cloistered separation from the world, the monk's cell (a two-storey hermitage) and interior solitude. However, this solitude is not absolute but somewhat balanced by community life in the forms of shared liturgy, a common silent Sunday meal and meeting, and a bimonthly hike (Carthusian Order 2015).

Carthusians dedicate themselves to the contemplative life and their principal endeavour is devotion to "the silence and solitude of cell" (Carthusian Order 2015, Statutes 4.1). For them, "silence is the air the solitary breathes. The Fathers called it 'the language of the world to come.' From being an exterior discipline it is gradually interiorised, a mystery of awareness ... that so surpasses our busy words and concepts" (St. Hugh's Charterhouse 2005). The whole community lives a solitary life of prayer and work but in two different ways: the priests in their cells and the brothers dedicated to the monastery's daily tasks. They dwell within a vast white space in their snowy and remote geographical setting, surrounded

by towering Alpine peaks that offer further enclosure beyond that already secured by their high-walled monastery, huge cloister and individual cells. Monks strengthen their solitude and silence by having little direct contact with the media, not receiving guests, and by imposing the limit of biannual family visits. The monks have no apostolate but communicate their teachings silently through anonymised texts. They place great importance on the symbolism of rituals that provide a silent narrative. Characteristics of Carthusian liturgy are silence, absence of musical instruments, and a Gregorian chant that is decked with silent intervals. The communal midnight service of around three hours punctuates the “great silence” of the monastic night (Carthusian Order 2015).

With little speech but much discourse, Carthusians imbue their silent space with significance. They secure outward silence in order to condition inward silence, which in turn enables attentiveness to and awareness of divine presence. Initially, Carthusians can find silence burdensome but then it seeps within; “there will gradually be born within us of our silence itself something that will draw us on to still greater silence” (Carthusian Order 2015). Therefore, strict observance of silence is of vital importance: monks must not speak indiscriminately, with whom they please, or for as long as they prefer. Instead, they must speak quietly with few words about matters affecting their work. Otherwise, they must not talk to other monks or strangers without permission: they can only and simply return greetings, respond briefly and excuse themselves as being without permission for further speech. They are to exercise prudence and judge according to necessity whether to speak and to what extent, as Carthusians consider that long and protracted conversation causes more dissipation than a few words. On Sundays, solemnities and recollection days, monks especially observe silence. In the evening, perfect silence reigns throughout the monastery (apart from the long night office), as they regard this time as especially conducive to recollection and divine encounter. The brothers are vigilant in observing silence and interior

recollection in order to “attain perfection” and “diligently strive to live always in the presence of God” (Carthusian Order 2015).

The monks’ silence is practical: sharpening memory, enabling divine awareness, and aiding reflection on their religion (Gilbert 2014). The monks maintain a “perpetual meditative silence” and “one popular subject of that meditation was how every careless word would be brought to account on the Day of Judgement” (MacCulloch 2013, 99). With their ‘suspicion of language’, coupled with a location that is conducive to silence, the Order controls language, so that silence rules over talk, governing the purposes to which they put words: “the book of the world could be opened better in silence than in ‘dialogue and dialectic’” (Gilbert 2014, 379).

Carthusians search for ‘quies’ (rest, stillness, and spiritual peacefulness), solitude, silence, calm attention, and the absence of worldly desires and images. They have neither external apostolate, nor radio, nor television in the monastery. The Prior receives external news and informs the monks of only what they need to know. These are external prerequisites for the development of internal silence. Carthusian quiet and exterior practices go together, producing “calm, peace, silence, orderly thinking, mastery of the heart's passions...” (quies.org).

Carthusians devote themselves to the silence and solitude of their cells. They see it as holy ground, a place where they develop friendship, conversation and unity with God. Although an arduous journey, Carthusians regard their cell as necessary for salvation and life, providing they occupy it usefully and in a structured manner. In the cell, the monk reads, writes, recites psalms, prays, meditates, and works (e.g. chopping firewood, gardening, transcribing, and pottery) (Carthusian Order 2015).

Researching silence

Qualitative research does not fully appreciate silence (Kawabata and Gastaldo 2015), often failing to consider it in its own right or overlooking it altogether (Poland and Pederson 1998). More specifically, discourse analysis often denies the function of silence (Bruneau 1973), rarely referring to it as a component of interaction, thus wasting many research opportunities (Poyatos 2002) given that silence can play an integral role in organisational discourse (Ward and Winstanley 2003). Researchers ought not to dismiss silences as omissions or absences of empirical data but realise that they are meaningful and purposeful (Mazzei 2003). In order to appreciate silences as complex, neither simply as a backcloth for speech nor as its absence, researchers must routinely study them as events, just like speech and action (Acheson 2008). This should include entering and listening to silent presence, which can aid understanding of multiple meanings (Mazzei 2007).

Much of the current analysis is of the IGS film but the researcher also draws on his own personal experience of the Carthusian Charterhouse, as “silences occur within a social context of language and meaning” (Charmaz 2002, 308) and can be analysed through a reflexive approach that reveals implicit meanings (Kawabata and Gastaldo 2015). Accordingly, the researcher reflects on his own two periods with the order, when he was a novitiate candidate in the sole English Carthusian Monastery (St. Hugh's Charterhouse, Parkminster, near Horsham in West Sussex, England). Although he did not pursue this vocation, his two periods in the monastery left him with an indelible impression of a religious order that has not changed for nearly a millennium. Like all Charterhouses, the monastery is aesthetically stunning. For example, the author remembers walking from cell to church at midnight with an oil lamp, through immense stone-arched and glazed cloisters (measuring a total of one kilometre) for three-hours of Gregorian chanting in the dark silence and stillness of the night.

On first approaching Saint Hugh's Charterhouse, the author remembers alighting from a full and noisy public bus into quiet woodland, walking along a lane through the wood to the immense monastery with its awesome silence. The author was impressed by the vast space of the monastery, a site of symbols and rituals, matured over a millennium, which all signposted the silence and stillness within. Unaffected, uninfluenced and unmoved by whatever was happening in the world around it, this desert monastery was a steadfast, solid and silent rock amidst turbulent waters: this was the 'still point of the turning world' (part of the Carthusian motto). After the author left the monastery for the last time, he was left with a life-changing and profound experience that lasted from his youth into old age, an experience that invaded and affected his interior life as much as a major surgical operation. This was open-heart surgery. His was an encounter with a steadfast desert of immutability, transcendence, and infinitude that instilled a lasting understanding of the values of silence, solitude and stillness. Silence deeply infused the monastery and it soaked into the soul, leaving an indelible impression and lasting respect for such quietude. Between his arrival and departure, the deafening silence, the moving stillness, and the solitude of the community made the deepest of impacts. The author's own experience sensitised him to the salience of the symbolism that the IGS film portrayed.

The study focuses on visual data, such as objects, buildings, clothing, body language, rooms, and living bodies (Emmison and Smith 2000, ix, xi, 1). The researcher noticed the monks' body language and gestures, looking for implicit meanings, thus "making participants' meanings and metaphors the starting point of analysis rather than forcing our narrative frames on them" (Charmaz 2002, 305).

The traditional focus on words as discourse overlooks what silence articulates, so the researcher listened to the meaning and purpose of silences (Mazzei 2004). The exploration of silence as a fundamental part of communication can cast light on the complex nature of social

relations (Clair 1998). Instead of deprivileging silent practices, the ethnography of communication provides opportunities for theorising silence in a culturally inclusive and relevant manner (Covarrubias 2007).

The study examines a pre-existing and evidently ethnographic film of the Carthusians (as outlined below). There are several reasons to explore how film represents organisations that are relevant to this study. It attends to the embodied and personal nature of organisational life, discloses the hidden and overlooked aspects of organisations, offers vicarious experience that substitutes for personal experience, imparts what organisations feel like in different cultural contexts, and enables immersion of viewers in other spaces (Bell 2008).

Poland and Pederson (1998, 297) caution that “social groups or gatherings that are predicated on a reverence for silence (e.g., monastic life) present unique challenges for researchers who wish to give voice to mostly silent participants through the mostly verbal explication of experience using interviewing...” Silence is also problematic for interpretation and understanding (Randall and Koppenhaver 2004). Moreover, in silence, the nondeterminate is pre-eminent in humanity (Dauenhauer 1980), although film can help capture its meaning.

Certainly, academics could despair at the idea of studying Carthusian silence. However, to ignore monastic silence would be to overlook a reality simply because of challenges in accessing and capturing data: instead, researchers should “break the silence...to understand it better” (Wichroski 1997, 281). Given the strict seclusion of the monastery and the fact that it does not accept guests - and that film is a conducive medium for recording and studying silence, the current study necessarily observes Carthusian life through Philip Gröning’s film ‘Into Great Silence’. First released on 10 November 2005, the movie is 2

hours and 49 minutes long. Despite the subject matter, and the almost silent and still delivery, the film received critical acclaim, several awards, and box office success.

Gröning waited for sixteen years after making his initial request before the monastery accepted the filmmaker's proposal. He spent around six months – day and night, in different seasons – filming the visually stunning architectural space of the monastery, its awesome Alpine setting, and the monks' liturgy, routines, rituals and work.

Following Deleuze's ([1985] 1989) thinking on cinema, Mazzei (2010) draws out four strategies for methodology in respect of silent films that apply to the current study. Firstly, the researcher (de)naturalised voice, focusing on hearing the seen rather than seeing what is heard. Secondly, there was a focus on "seeing speech", considering how the monks "give voice, not in ways that are deemed absent as silent, but in ways that are meaningful as noiseless"; for example, by considering the intertitles, images, symbols and rituals "that function to convey voice" (Mazzei 2010, 517). Thirdly, with regard to "the problem of 'filming' voice", it was necessary to "unthink voice" (517) and to "think a voice without organs, a voice that is not contained by a singular speaking subject, but a voice that is communicated, performed, seen, read, and heard" (517-518), for example by noticing the sounds, nonverbal cues and gestures that enact voice. The fourth strategy of disequilibrium recognises that often "speech-acts are used to fill space" and "the barrage of speech-acts blurs meaning and hides subjects" (518) and that we need to recognise "those speech-acts that hollow out space and fill it with a fullness of absence" (518).

The aim of the current study is to consider "the possibilities present in discursive practices that are performative expressions of voice rather than pronouncements" (521). It examines a virtual sphere that logic cannot grasp in propositions, an interesting silence of logic that is akin to Zen Buddhism (Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994).

The still movie of the sound of silence

The following section examines how the IGS film portrays the silence and white space of *Le Monastère de la Grande Chartreuse*; and mediates a shared space that enables the film's audience to experience monastic silence. There is also a discussion of how the monastery and the film organise silence through 'punctuation', and of the salience of silence. IGS contributes to our understanding of silence as a site where one can sense God. Silence allows one to hear God by moving beyond the language of this world to the silence of another realm, just as solitude facilitates an awareness of divine presence. Monastic silence and white space are not experienced as absence but as a presence, making tangible the intangible, and allowing processes of sanctification, healing, and illumination to take place.

White space and silence

The film conveys a monastic white space that is illuminated only by available natural light. Its largely silent, still, studied and meditative approach mirrors that of its subject, as there is no character development, story or musical score. There is no narration, which would have detracted from the stunning visual account, usurped silence, and interfered with the audience's imaginary encounter with the monks. Interviews would have had the same deleterious effect. Instead, there is one brief monologue from a blind monk and there are also 'silent interviews' (where the camera dwells close-up on individual monks, who look into the lens, silently, seriously, calmly, motionless and without expression).

The movie is slow, almost to the point of photographic stillness, with dwelling (not flitting) camerawork. It contains very little speech, conveying silence, but is not quite silent. Gröning comments: "You cannot use language to describe a world that revolves so far beyond the realm of language" (Gröning 2015). However, there is a difference between acoustic and communicative silences (Sobkowiak 1997). IGS is not acoustically silent, as the sounds of

nature, liturgy and activities emerge into the foreground: for example, we hear the sounds of the Alpine Winter and the monks performing their manual work.

The film presents silence and white space not as an absence but as a presence: inexpressible and unintelligible, yet significant and remarkable. By recording and capturing the silence, it becomes tangible and noticeable. With no narrator or interviewer, the camerawork becomes more significant, searching and observant. The lens becomes both narrator (silently portraying silence) and interviewer (when it interrogates the silent faces of the monks).

Shared space

This deeply immersive experience, stripped of superfluities, allows the audience to engage with Carthusian contemplative life. This was Gröning's stated goal in making a film that,

more than depicting a monastery, becomes a monastery itself...A monastery and a cinema in a certain way are so similar...They are both spaces where you exclude outer influences, and you create a structure of time that will open up a channel to an inner space for the [participant] (Gröning 2018).

Thus, monastery and film blur into one. Gröning also believes that the near absence of language (which passes through time), both in the monastery and the film, allows the monks and filmgoers to dwell only in their present space (Gröning 2018). The film incorporates the audience into monastic experience in other ways, as follows.

IGS conveys and shares silence with the audience, simply by either recording silence or the small sounds that emerge when speech is silent. The camera studies water dropping slowly from a pail. Another time, it records the sound of the pail as it gently rocks back and forth on its side until it comes to rest. The movie records not just silence but also the monks

being silent. There is a scene of the monks exchanging no words, when each established monk silently embraces new entrants, who are committed unto solitude and silence. In another scene, the monks exchange very few words when a monk receives a haircut in the monastery's barbershop.

Occasional shots of the snow and mist on the surrounding Alps deepen the sense of solitude, silence and white space. A contrasting and surprising scene also serves to highlight monastic silence. White-robed monks slide down snow-covered Alpine slopes, sharing laughter, banter and applause, all echoing against the surrounding rock cliffs. There follows an elevated shot from one of the mountains that looks down into the chasm below to the monastery, with a bird of prey silently circling in the vast space beneath them.

Gröning metaphorically mediates Carthusian stillness through still-life cameos. At various times, the camera studies fruit, vegetables or a meal on a table, white habits hanging on a white wall, or bright white shafts of daylight, falling onto a cell floor. Other items studied include a cup of water, an illuminated pew, and a vase drenched in daylight. Such cinematic 'photographs' illuminate still monastic artefacts in a strong natural sunlight that metaphorises supernatural and timeless divine illumination.

Organising silence through punctuation

'Punctuation' transforms silence-as-absence into silence-as-presence. Normally, written punctuation, the white space between words, and the brief pauses of spoken discourse, insert silences between words. However, the monastery and the film-as-monastery mediate silences by punctuating them with sound. For example, IGS opens with silent scenes of monastic life, punctured by the bell that calls the monks to prayer. Contrastingly, silence punctuates sound, as when the monks intersperse each verse of the long Gregorian night chant with a brief

moment of intervening silence. Individual routines (e.g. solitary prayer) and organisational routines (e.g. the mass) structure, organise, and frame silence.

In addition to formalised sounds, informal noises also punctuate silence (e.g. the loud clattering and thumping of boots on bare wooden floors, as the monks enter and leave the church). The monastery and its cinematic representation constantly alternate silence and noticeable noise, as in the juxtaposition of clattering feet with mountain silence. IGS characteristically slightly over-amplifies sounds with close-up microphones, so that noises such as the cutting of firewood, hair and cloth provide an 'audio chiaroscuro' effect that serves to accentuate silence. Alternatively, IGS also conveys 'mirror images' of silence that have the same effect, as in shots of the still silent cirrus sky spliced with a monk in silent prayer.

Similarly, the film conveys stillness either directly or by way of comparison or contrast. The camera dwells on the stillness of the Alps and intersperses shots of expansive skies with those of cells, cloister and church. Alternatively, the movement of the sky or a jet moving across it contrast with the stability of the monastery, with scenes such as monks studying scripture. Again, there is a deliberate contrast made between the stillness of the monks in prayer and their movement when they go out on their fortnightly group hike.

In addition to 'audio chiaroscuro', IGS conveys a heavenly and reflective white space through visual chiaroscuro in what is almost a black and white film. That Gröning films in colour is not always readily apparent, with colour only occasionally becoming obvious. White-robed monks dwell in their stark white monastery, surrounded by huge dark cliffs and snow-laden Alpine peaks. The film focuses on such scenes, along with the white pages of the Bible and chanting book, the white beard of a monk, and with constant displays of monastic life illuminated by shafts of inpouring natural daylight. Chiaroscuro effects include the dark

cell contrasted with daylight or long dark corridors illuminated by handheld candle-lights. Moreover, there are frequent silent narrations of white space achieved through camerawork that compares vast external spaces with the large internal spaces of this immense monastery.

Without spoken discourse either in the monastery or the film (apart from when the blind monk speaks), various other strategies convey messages. Firstly, there is the instrument of repetition. For example, frequent studies of monks in solitary silent prayer in their cells underscore the rhythm and constancy of monastic life, together with essential themes of solitude, stillness and silence.

IGS focuses on the organisation of communal and individual silence. Camerawork dwells on the impenetrable rocks within which monks enclose their community: the Alps and the monastery's high walls, cloister and cells. Contrasting shots that move between cell and the wider monastery portray the monks' tensively double lives as solitary hermits in community. The film emphasises that this is indeed a community, portraying cameos of the monks standing in a circle around the altar for Mass, sharing their Sunday meal and walk, and helping each other (e.g. cutting hair, administering medicines, and preparing food).

Silence and salience

The film highlights the salience of Carthusian silence with very sparing use of speech and intertitles. A blind monk expresses gratitude for his visual loss, which he sees as a blessing that helps him to discern the "sense of God." In the context of a silent order, it is ironic that he values not sight but hearing – and hearing silence. He values silence as monks "allow the Lord to speak one word to us – that he is." One intertitle states that "God was in the silence" and another quotes the "still small voice" (citing 1 Kings 19, 12). A further intertitle is screened a few times: "Anyone who does not give up all he has cannot be my disciple", highlighting the salience of renunciation, surrender, simplicity, austerity, and silence. The

film visually conveys a monastic life stripped of possessions and words but it is important that the spoken and written words explain what silent discourse cannot – why the monks live their lives in silence and frugality.

One monk explains the importance of their symbols and rituals as signifying core meaning: tearing down these symbols would constitute tearing down the walls of your own house. Their symbols replace speech, conveying meaning whilst also allowing the maintenance of a shared silence. IGS dwells on both formal and informal symbols. One example of a formal symbol is where the camera lingers on the pedestal of holy water, drawing out its meaning (of sanctification). Informal symbolisation includes a monk silently applying white cream to another's flesh, which symbolises community, the absorption of silence, and the mortal "heart of flesh" that has just been cited. Frequently, the camerawork connotes monastic contemplation with studied meditations on small details, such as raindrops or frost on plants, thus drawing attention to monastic stillness. However, the most pervasive symbolisation is the use of light to convey heavenly ethereality and the divine light of the world: starlight, oil lamps, dawn, and bright shafts of daylight that illuminate white monastic habits, monastery walls, and Alpine snow. Monastic and Alpine white spaces echo each other when the camera captures illuminated white floating dust in a shaft of daylight in the cell and mirrors this with falling snow, stars moving across the sky, and a carpet of snow on the mountains.

Reflective space

Parker's (2002, 157) analysis of the culture industries and the demonology of large organisations argues that films often portray anti-managerialist "conspiratorial and unhappy images" indicating that management lacks authenticity, and counterpoise "individualism

versus corporation, freedom versus constraint, conspiracy versus truth.” Contrastingly, IGS offers a positive film portrayal of organisational life.

IGS paints with visual poetry; a type of serious, slow and serene non-narrative cinema marked by introspection, the study of moods, metaphorical reflections that move the audience from images to abstract territories, and the use of intense silences and stillness to represent the ineffable (Planes Pedreño and Pérez Díaz 2015). To achieve this, visual poetry employs two main cinematic strategies; plot-stripping discourses and the juxtaposition of images/sounds to create concepts and emotions. Visual poetry is an ideal choice for mediating monastic life, as the genre is also characterised by “the meticulous rhythmic distribution of its sentimental flow under musical laws, the cadence, hence the use of terms as ‘ritualization’, ‘ceremonial’ or ‘liturgy’” (134).

Ironically, although IGS is a study of silence, it also possesses the characteristics of sound art (Voegelin 2010). It shares the time and space of its subject, inviting involved participation rather than detached viewing, presenting the subject in dynamic production instead of as an artefact. IGS portrays experience instead of replacing it with ideas. The film witnesses Carthusian life, aiding the development of contemplative practice and suggesting strategies for engagement. Its sonic sensibility illuminates “the unseen aspects of visibility” (xiii) and “connects the experience of sound with the notion of virtuality and possible worlds that are not linked to the logic and rational [sic] of a visual reality” (xiii-xiv). IGS provides filmgoers with direct experience of Carthusian silence in the way suggested by Voegelin (2010, xv):

In the quiet sounds of Silence the listener becomes audible to himself [sic] as a discrete member of an audience. Silence provides the condition to practise a signifying language

that takes account of its sonic base: it embraces the body of the listener in its solitude, and invites him to listen to himself amidst the soundscape that he inhabits.

The notion of “silent works and silence in the acoustic environment not as the absence of sound but as the beginning of listening as communication” (xv) is highly resonant of IGS’s strategy of enabling listeners to hear the sound of silence. Silence is not silent: “silence is about listening, listening to small sounds...” (81) and “where there is nothing to hear, so much starts to sound” (83) so that “sounds in silence are what I hear” (84). Voegelin could have been talking about IGS when discussing his personal experience:

...the external sounds are so small, embalmed in the white silence of snow ... in silence I comprehend, physically, the idea of intersubjective listening: I am in the soundscape through my listening to it and in turn the soundscape is what I listen to, perpetually in the present (83).

Silence is at once reflective and encompassing: taking into itself all that is audible to echo back to me my own listening engagement. It provides a thick surface in which I hear myself listening to my surroundings, to gain a knowing about these surroundings from myself within them. Silence binds me into its sensorial materiality, and I start to build my own narrative between the heard and the anticipation of what there is to hear next (89).

Carthusians punctuate and structure their silence through their daily schedule of liturgy, rituals (e.g. bell ringing) and tasks. Equally, silence is the all-pervading organising mechanism of Carthusian life. Philips (1985, 210) argues, “in interaction structured through silence, silence fulfills obviously different functions than in interaction structured through talk. Quite simply, silence is not a gap in structure, but structure itself in the organization of interaction.”

Structuring aside, monastic silence is discourse. In her study of a contemplative order, Wichroski (1997, 278) considers that “their mode of silence is merely another way of communicating” that sustains a community, using a form of interaction that is independent of talk. Their shared silence is not a void but provides a sense of belonging that is non-contingent upon verbal affirmations.

Conclusions

Silences are not omissions or absences. Silence discourses and is meaningful, ambivalent and polyvalent, with multiple motives, meanings and effects. It is an active cultural performance, integral to the strategies and tactics of discourse; such that discourse and silence are co-constitutive, inextricably interrelated and on a continuum with each other. Silence is pervasive in and salient to organisations, influencing employee outcomes. It can occur at the level of the individual or organisation, and experienced as a negative or positive force. Unfortunately, the organisational literature remains rather mute on the benefits of silence to organisations.

Brown and Coupland (2005, 1064) complain that “the silences in organizations have rarely been heard, and that by attending to who speaks, theorists and empirical researchers have all too frequently lost sight of those who remain quiet.” This study goes some way to address this deficiency by focusing not just on silence but specifically on what is arguably the most silent organisation in the world. This distinctive article provides an innovative and positive appraisal of organisational silence in a unique study of a still movie of the sound of silence. The paper departs from views of silence in organisations as negative and dysfunctional, taking a positive turn by studying a Carthusian monastery as a space for spiritual growth.

The Carthusians and IGS organise communal and individual silence, punctuating and structuring it with repeated rituals and routines. Equally, silence structures and organises monastic life. Carthusian silence is discourse, their way of communicating, interacting and sustaining their community. Their outer silence conditions inner silence, which enables attentiveness, awareness and insight. The salience of their silence is that it is where they can discern divine presence.

The article elaborates the problems of researching silence and specifically the enclosed monastic variety. However, the researcher overcomes the challenges of access to the monastery, researching silence, and appraising the implicit salience of Carthusian silence by studying IGS. The film's meditative qualities not only enable it to record contemplative silence but also to invite viewers to silent introspection. It does this through visual poetry, where the cadence and musical laws of ritual, ceremony and liturgy are ideal for mediating monastic life. IGS communicates the sound of silence through sound art, which merges monastic and cinematic time and space, inviting and aiding audience involvement and reflective practice. The sonic sensibility of IGS illuminates the unseen aspects of visibility, and connects the sound of silence with another world.

In this silent order, metaphorical discourse relies not on speech but on symbols that convey community, interiority, sanctification, divine presence, and the internalisation of space, silence and stillness. Normally, metaphor transfers an abstract notion into a concrete image. However, IGS utilises reverse visual metaphors with metaphorical images that move the audience from images to abstract territories. It records intense silence and stillness to represent the ineffable. Symbols replace speech in order to convey meaning whilst also maintaining shared silence. Among the many symbols, the one most oft used is that of light that metaphorically conveys divine illumination. This white space provides Carthusians and the IGS audience with a ground for reflective silence.

IGS metaphorically merges monastery and film, incorporating the audience into monastic white space and silence. This still movie silently narrates Carthusian life, mediating it so intensely that the cinema becomes an otherworldly silent space that excludes the external world in order to convey another. For nearly three hours, the audience almost become monks, immersed in and sharing their silent discourse. IGS is devoid of narrative, plot, and developments in characters and events, replacing them with a rhythmic repetition of activities and a focus on a silent and still life, thus transporting the audience into monastic space. Equally, through lingering camerawork that dwells on monks, artefacts, monastery and Alpine surroundings, IGS transforms silence-as-absence into silence-as-presence.

The paper now draws out lessons, firstly for research and secondly for practice. Clair (1998, xiii) posits that organising silence “refers to the ways in which the interests, issues, and identities of marginalized people are silenced and how those silenced voices can be organized in ways to be heard.” However, silence can be a positive force for the individual and organisation, and organised as such, providing a source of inspiration and reflection, a way to develop critique and to challenge organisational goals (Driver undated). Having said this, it can also negatively affect organisational effectiveness, through restraining voice and action (Driver undated). Hence, researchers could explore the benefits, disadvantages and effects of organisational silence – but with more of a balance towards the benefits than has been evident thus far.

Often involving qualitative, ethnographic and participant observation, movies are accessible and engaging, although they might constrain critical questioning (Bell 2008). IGS offers no critique (not even a portrayal of the challenges of monastic vocations). This is of particular concern for film, which can shape individual subjectivities, foster false consciousness, feed propaganda, and exercise control to serve the interests of economic systems (ibid). However, one reason to focus on film is its potential for critical analysis

through exploring the social relations in managing – although IGS does not do this. Bell (2008, 202) argues that “...film plays a role in producing systems of discourse which help to shape our collective perceptions of management that continue to inform our experience of organized work.” Accordingly, more films like the as ‘The Magdalene Sisters’ (which portrayed the nuns’ abuses of young single mothers) need to develop various critiques of monastic life.

Finally, what are the implications for organisational life? The ‘desert’ (monastic) movement is a symbol of social protest against worldly values that infect society (Pieris 1988). Equally, in the context of discussing the environments that are conducive to the generation of critical theory, Heilman (2003, 265) notes that “retreats, silence, and reflection are important.” Just as words spring from silence, so struggle springs from restfulness, and action springs from stillness (Pieris 1988). Accordingly, organisations could consider practising periods of collective silence (as in mindfulness meditation).

One might assume that silence undermines social interaction but silent interaction rituals can facilitate equanimity, a shared emotional state and peacefulness (Pagis 2015). Laird (2011) differentiates exterior silence and the silent mind, where the former facilitates the latter, although the silent mind provides space and stillness for silently responding, without commentary, to exterior noise. Thus, the experience and practice of silence can enable organisational members to be less reactive and more reflective. However, silence “is more easily upheld in a homogeneous community where meanings are shared” (Wichroski 1997, 279); hence, silence as a practice might not be universally applicable in all organisations.

Silence could be embedded within organisational routines. For example, there could be pauses within meetings to allow members time for reflection. Equally, the ‘noise’ of

electronic communication could be paused with email-free days. Silence could structure, organise, and frame organisational life, with identified and common times for silence (e.g. a silent shared meal) and reflections throughout the day, to enable silent discourse and engender attentiveness, awareness, and silent social interaction and attunement. The aim would be to provide a positive experience of organisational silence, one where silence serves as a beneficial quiet space in which individuals detach from external events, quieten external (hyper)activity, reflect, and discover meaning. As with the example of the Quakers, silence can prepare participants for decision-making.

Managers and staff can be educated in the uses of silence; its negative connotations but also its beneficial effects. It might even be helpful to show the IGS film to staff, not as a study of religion but as a lesson on the importance of silent reflection in organisations. Members can be trained to use silence in discourse, particularly to promote effective communication but also to encourage reflection amongst listeners. They would need to understand how silence can play an integral role in organisational discourse and to interpret the silences of others; so they need to be acquainted with the many types, forms, motives, meanings and purposes of silence, depending on contexts and cultures. This is important because understanding silence is a prerequisite to understanding organisations.

Finally, managers could consider how the (re)design of their existing/new buildings could offer opportunities for silent reflection. How can architecture sculpt contemplative silence? This is particularly important in the context of open-plan offices, increasing work intensification, the insistent ubiquity of mobile communications and social media, tendencies of staff to take breaks at workstations, and the withdrawal of staff facilities for recuperation and relaxation.

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