

Summer School 2022: Tacet ad Libitum! Towards a Poetics and Politics of Silence



The Summer School will open with the Münster Lectures which seek to combine the merits of theoretical and literary insight of renowned scholars, prominent writers, and cultural activists to discuss current debates, both scholastic and social. The Münster Lectures are open to doctoral candidates, post-doc researchers, humanities students, and the general public. The Münster Lectures aim to strengthen not only the interdisciplinary exchange among members of the university, but also bridges the gap between the university and the city of Münster.

Concept Note:

The Summer School 2022 “Tacet ad Libitum! Towards a Poetics and Politics of Silence”, organized by doctoral students of the Graduate School Practices of Literature, aims to question silence, its logics, poetics and politics, in contrast to those of speech (logos), with a view toward “silence” as *tacere* (or Schweigen) and secondarily as *silere* or Stille. Considering the global panorama of active participation in socio-political movements (of both oppression and insurrection), we intend to forefront silence’s political dimensions within each panel. We want to disengage the topic from aesthetical views which focus mainly on the concept’s negativity, the ‘unsayable’, or the insufficiency of language. Thus, perspectives which especially highlight silence’s ethical and political interactions will be given preference. Moreover, we are interested in how, on the one hand, totalizing mechanisms of power which sustains complete namability and visibility among their populations (as in surveillance states) cannot tolerate silence and concealment. It is in these contexts that the renouncement of speech can potentially amount to an act of insurgency. At the same time, we are also interested in its corollary: how totalitarian acts of speech are based on a logic of exclusion producing margins, i.e. marginalized individuals (e.g., the subaltern) which are banned to muteness and desubjectification. Thus, we want to investigate the research field of silence which departs from the aporias between absolute revelation / concealment, withdrawal / appropriation, complicity / subversion, knowledge / ethics, and identity / post-identity. Can a new understanding of silence bring new impulses against thetical and teleological forces that effectuate an “interminable marginalization” by reinterpreting temporality, ethics, politics and (post-)identity?

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: SUMMER SCHOOL 2022

»TACET AD LIBITUM! TOWARDS A POETICS AND POLITICS OF SILENCE«

WWU MÜNSTER
GRADUATE SCHOOL PRACTICES OF LITERATURE
24-29 JULY 2022

Silence (*tacere* or *Schweigen*) has been considered by Franz Rosenzweig among others as a subversive act or defiant stance of the tragic hero against overwhelming power mechanisms of necessity, i.e., totalization and universality. It has also, however, been regarded as an epiphenomenon (or a result) of marginalization and oppression by postcolonial theorists. The latter's understanding marks silence as an *end*, a potential violent effect of the logics of exclusion and marginalization by "signifying machines". The former understanding marks silence as a *means* of rendering mechanisms of powers inoperative. Therefore, the significance of silence appears to oscillate within an aporia of means and ends, singularity and universality, *a-thesiology* and *thesiology*, performance and logos. For the Münster Lectures and Summer School to be mutually complementary, we want to re-explore these known aporias from the perspective of silence as a concept which may occasion an ethics, poetics, and politics of "pure means" or violent ends. Can a logic of silence call for something more than resignation or defiance, complicity or conformity, and if so, how can the notion of silence be expanded into the realm of political action, or into new realms with new voices? The Summer School will be divided into three sections: **Theory**, **Poetics** and **Politics**. We do, however, foresee a continuous interaction between the three fields.

MÜNSTER LECTURES



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Jennifer Kamau from International Women* Space Berlin will share her story of being a refugee woman in Germany and give a talk on her work as a political activist. Jennifer's talk will be complimented by Urvashi Butalia's talk. Urvashi Butalia co-founded Kali for Women in 1984 and in 2003, Zubaan, has over 35 years of experience in feminist and independent publishing. She has been long involved in the women's movement in India, and is a well-known writer, both in academia and in the literary world. These two talks will be followed by a conversation between the two speakers. The Münster Lectures are free and open to the public.

SUMMER SCHOOL 2022: TACET AD LIBITUM

Panel 1: Theory

The first panel will discuss the concepts of silence (*silere* and *tacere*) which revolve around the paradigms of (a-)representability, (a-)temporality, (a-)historicity, and (a-)teleology. Under what ideological premises can silence be considered subversive and/or oppressive? Does the concept of silence require a rethinking of temporality? If silence is understood as a withdrawal from the sphere of semantics (or meaning), what consequences does this have on the processes of signification and representation that allow to address injustices? How does silence remain politically relevant today given its former exclusiveness to the tragic hero? Would it be possible to rethink the primacy of speaking over silence, or meaning over performativity?

Panel 2: Poetics

The second panel focuses on works of art in search of a poetics which transcends the mere re/presentation of silence. This panel is deeply interested in the various functions that silence partakes in works of art, which are reflected in the formal/structural/narrative strategies that it employs. Does silence merely conceal the inappropriable, hinting towards negativity in language? Does silence function as a residual manifestation of what is sayable, or does silence hint at the need for a re-understanding of language and signification? Are there any commonalities between mediality and silence? How does the concept of silence interact with ideas of genres? If the subject is created by the instance of speech, how does a work of art give accounts of non-subjects (of silenced subalterns or those who prefer not to speak)?

Panel 3: Politics

The third panel will interrogate the ethical and political implications of the aforementioned panels: Does silence lead to new ethical paradigms or does it ask for reactionary political concepts of tragedy and necessity? Can an adequate understanding of silence articulate community and commonalities outside the primacy of “thetical” language and positive law, beyond normative and imperative approaches of community-building based on exclusion and the interminably marginal? Can silence constitute a bridge towards thinking about post-identity, or does it remain a mode of concealment of injustices and unbridgeable differences?

Student Conference

On July 27, the participants of the summer school will be asked to present their work-in-progress on the topic. The conferences will be divided in three panels: theory, poetics and politics, which will be moderated by two speakers each.

Concluding Remarks

The final day, July 29, will conclude the summer school with a roundtable discussion among all the participants.

HOW TO APPLY?

Applications require three parts: Part 1: A **letter of motivation** describing your interest and involvement with the topic of silence along with a statement of financial need and any further requests, such as child care. Part 2: An **abstract** of your proposed presentation paper which describes your argument and its relevance to the topic of silence. Part 3: include a **short biography**. Applications should be submitted via **Indico** (<https://wwuindico.uni-muenster.de/e/silence2022>), together with the author's name and institutional affiliation (if applicable). The **deadline** is **15 May 2022**, and selected participants will be notified by the end of May. The conference language is English.

PARTICIPANTS, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE & SPECIAL NEEDS

The Summer School is open to doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers and advanced MA students working in the humanities of all disciplines of cultural studies, philosophy, history, literature, political science, sociology, and related fields of research. Submissions from early-career researchers and from researchers of diverse backgrounds are especially encouraged.

Some travel funding may be available for candidates under special circumstances, e.g., financial needs. If you would like to apply for travel funding, include with your submission a one-page statement of financial hardship with a declaration that you are unable to receive funding from another university institution.

If you require child care and/or wheelchair access, include this in the field "Special needs".

KEY DETAILS

Events	Münster Lectures, Summer School 2022: “Tacet ad Libitum! Towards a poetics and politics of silence.”
Dates	24-29 July 2022
Location	WWU Münster, Germany
Organizers	Hector Feliciano, yashka, Michael Aaron Mason
Language	English
Participants	max. 30
Registration Fee	100€ (not including accommodation)
Application Deadline	15 May 2022
Website	silencemuenster.wordpress.com
Twitter	@sigetics
Indico	https://wwuindico.uni-muenster.de/e/silence2022
Contact	Selection committee, silence2022@uni-muenster.de