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Speaking Silently and Overnarrating in Fyodor Dostoevsky's Krotkaia

> ...I spoke almost silently. And I'm a master of speaking silently, I've spent my whole life speaking silently and have silently lived through whole tragedies with myself. Oh, but I was also unhappy!
> (246-247)

> ...говорил почти молча. А я мастер молча говорить, я всю жизнь мою проговорил молча и прожил сам с собою целые трагедии молча. О, ведь и я же был несчастлив!
> (*Псс* 24; 12)[1]

Speech saturates Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Krotkaia* (1876), wherein the first-person narrator, a loquacious grieving pawnbroker, seeks to comprehend the cause of his wife's suicide. But this speech, strangely, is often as silent as it is voiced. The conditions of the narrator's marriage to his young wife, the meek one of the story's title, are laid out frenetically: he paces back and forth in his home, hovering over the fresh corpse; he ceaselessly speaks, surrounding himself with his own voice in the silence of his wife's temporary crypt. Circular speech, repetition, justifications and explanations float through the ether, transplanting themselves onto the written page, creating what Dostoevsky dubs a realistic, but fantastic story. The 'fantastic' form of the story points to a major theme of

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1 The English translations from *Krotkaia* are taken from Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Meek One*, in Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Eternal Husband and Other Stories*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), pp. 233-277.

the text: the problem of communication.[2] Reading *Krotkaia*, I follow the seemingly ceaseless speech of Dostoevsky's narrator, but will also listen to the pauses, speechless moments, and silence. In doing so, I discuss the audible and inaudible in *Krotkaia*, positing that reevaluating the relationship between speech and silence calls for reconsideration of the work's narrative landscape.

This paper's epigraph, "I spoke almost silently. And I'm a master of speaking silently, I've spent my whole life speaking silently and have silently lived through whole tragedies with myself" (246-247; *ПСС* 24; 14), encapsulates the contradictory nature of speech and silence in this work. But, what does it mean to speak silently? Can silence ever constitute a communicative mode? Susan Sontag negotiates this seemingly antithetical relationship in "The Aesthetics of Silence". According to Sontag, silence exists in a dialectic with noise or speech: silence cannot exist without speech, nor vice versa.[3] In his analysis of silence in *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, Malcolm V. Jones similarly observes that discourse is not possible without silence, which is fundamentally polysemic.[4] Silence, in other words, is not something apart from speech; it is an integral part of speech. The phrase "to speak silently" implies that the speaker successfully imparts a message to the listener without ever having uttered the message. In this wordless exchange the silent subject (the speaker) imbues silence with speech and communicative potential, this potential is then actualized by the listener, who imputes speech to the wordless interlocutor.

In *Krotkaia*, the narrator attempts to impart just such an unarticulated message to his wife. Silence materializes as a primary communicative mode within the text and defines the relations between the pawnbroker and the meek one. Silence functions dynamically in the text, changing in accordance with the fluctuating circumstances of the couple's marriage. It is first introduced into the relationship by the pawnbroker as a pedagogical tool – he withholds speech in order to control his wife and her perception of him. He aspires to have his wife understand the essence of his being and to solve his unspoken riddle. Instead, under the tyranny of her husband's wordlessness, the meek one falls silent. In this article, I investigate the pawnbroker's dubious teaching method, showing

2 Dostoevsky writes, «Я озаглавил его 'фантастическим', тогда как считаю его сам в высшей степени реальным. Но фантастическое тут есть действительно, и именно в самой форме рассказа, что и нахожу нужным пояснить предварительно» (*ПСС* 24; 5).

3 Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence", in Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), p. 11.

4 Malcolm V. Jones, "Silence in *The Brothers Karamazov*", in Horst-Jürgen Gerigk (Hrsg.), *Die Brűder Karamasow: Dostojewskijs letzter Roman in heutiger Sicht* (Dresden: Dresden UP, 1997), S. 30.

it to be an oppressive measure that the meek one appropriates and, ultimately, uses against her 'teacher'.

The communicative potential of silence carries more weight in *Krotkaia*'s narrative than has generally been suggested in scholarship to date. The dominance of first-person narration in the work has at times led scholars to focus solely on the pawnbroker's voiced discourse. The meek one, on the other hand, is commonly seen as either a silent victim, imbued with Christological significance, or a plot device that motivates the first-person narrator's confessional mode.[5] Scholarship that explores *Krotkaia*'s Christological message or that posits the corpse as a physical embodiment of Mikhail Bakhtin's unfinalizable word seems to ignore the crisis of communication that haunts this couple's marriage and the story's composition.

At the story's beginning, the pawnbroker looks upon his wife's body, passionately lamenting her death. Soon after, however, the lifeless figure that is provocatively laid out on the table disappears into the background of the logorrheic pawnbroker's narration, only to reappear as a character in the story of the *pawnbroker*'s disgrace and subsequent failed marriage. In his analysis of *Krotkaia*, Bakhtin observes that the story "is directly structured on the motif of conscious ignorance. The hero conceals from himself and carefully eliminates

5 The meek one (and her silence) motivates and facilitates the pawnbroker's narrative and has, accordingly, been read within a feminist framework, wherein the female character functions entirely in service of her male counterpart. Barbara Heldt observes that "heroines of male fiction serve a purpose that has little to do with women: these heroines are used lavishly in a discourse of male self-definition". See Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987), p. 2. The female plotline is often a mere episode, which serves to delineate the conditions that have contributed to a man's development. Analyzing gender, dialogic discourse, and narrative structure in *Krotkaia*, Harriet Murav, like Heldt, highlights the nominal space afforded to the female character in nineteenth-century Russian literature. Her formulation, however, differs in that she locates the source of elision in discourse. She interrogates the applicability of Bakhtinian dialogism to women through exploring how and if the female character in Dostoevsky participates in the author and hero's dialogic relationship. Murav finds that male confessions in *Krotkaia*, *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (1864), and *Besy* (1871) require a female victim: "The female protagonist in Dostoevsky provides the occasion for her representation as a victim in the confession of a male hero". See Harriet Murav, "Reading Woman in Dostoevsky", in Sona Hoisington (Ed.), *A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1995), p. 46. Elizabeth Blake likewise explores the gendered side of silence in "Sonya, Silent No More: A Response to the Woman Question in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*", *Slavic & East European Journal*, 50, no. 2, 2006, pp. 252-271.

from his own discourse the very thing that is constantly before his eyes".[6] This paper shifts attention back to this silent presence on the table and asks: Can we push beyond the notion that the meek one is nothing more than a sounding board – first silent, then dead –, an imagined construct for the narrator?

I argue that we can, that silence in this work is highly communicative. *Krotkaia* centers on an asymmetrical dialogic relationship,[7] in which the husband and wife are unable to communicate. The polarization of communication between "overnarration", discussed in the first section of this article, and silence, discussed in the second section, delineates and exacerbates the unequal power dynamics in the couple's marriage and defines the narrative logic of the story itself. Silence materializes as abuse, but simultaneously opens up space for the meek one to develop her *own* silence, one that undermines and circumvents her living counterpart's oration. If we read the meek one's wordlessness as communicative, the plot of *Krotkaia* becomes one of reversal, a plot in which the silent object of narration actually cultivates narrative agency and, in so doing, provokes the narrating subject's speech.

1. Overnarration

Krotkaia engages in overnarration, a neologism that I have developed with *Krotkaia* in mind to describe the story's dominant narrative style, which depends upon and grows out of silence; the act of telling all is diametrically opposed to silence, but, nonetheless, cannot exist without it. The pawnbroker's narration, in other words, is made possible by the silence of his imaginary interlocutor(s), as well as the eternal silence of his wife. The pervasive silence in which the pawnbroker finds himself at the time of the story's telling originates from conflicted communication within the diegesis: silence drives the plot forward; it produces and prolongs conflict as it comes to define the couple's marriage, a marriage that develops out of inequality, usury, and exploitation. This term

6 Bakhtin goes on to argue that the narrator's monologue forces the narrator to admit "what he has in fact known and seen from the very beginning". See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 247. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.08865

7 My use of this term is informed by Ilya Kliger's analysis of the anamorphic plot in *Krotkaia* and Dostoevsky's novelistic narratives – in the anamorphic plot, he observes, "dialogic partners [...] rarely find themselves on an equal footing". See Ilya Kliger, "Anamorphic Realism: Veridictory Plots in Balzac, Dostoevsky, and Henry James", *Comparative Literature*, vol. 59, no. 4, Fall 2007, p. 304. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40279382

provides a framework within which to examine the formal implications of first-person narration in *Krotkaia* and explains how these formal characteristics are employed by the narrator in an effort to engulf his wife's image and voice.

I ascribe a double meaning to overnarration. It is a formal, stylistic narrative technique, as well as a communicative mode through which a speaker asserts dominance over an interlocutor. As a prefix, 'over' denotes excess and effort (for example, 'overkill'; 'overdrive'); as a preposition, it localizes an object in relation to another object ("He was standing over her"). In this sense, 'to overnarrate' resembles the verb 'to overwrite', which can mean both to write in an overwrought style and to write over the surface of an object. Keeping in mind *Krotkaia*'s experimentation with communicative modes, – write seems limiting and much too authorially – centered; – narration more aptly describes the text's *orally-transmitted* narration. In overnarration orality and the written word can coincide.

1.1. Formal Techniques

Overnarration as a formal technique explicitly relates to a text's style. It can be identified within a variety of narrative forms, but it most often dominates first-person narratives, where the subject of the text is its narrator and the object of narration is its narrator's life.[8] Dostoevsky frequently employs overnarration in first-person narratives that emphasize self-reflexive (self-centered) subjectivity, bordering on emotionality. *Krotkaia* and *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (1864), classified respectively as soliloquy and diatribe by Bakhtin,[9] are two of Dostoevsky's most demonstrably overnarrated works. In overnarration, emotionality pervades the language, tone, and structure of a text. As well, overnarration is characterized by repetition, non-chronological sequencing, interjections, asides, contradictions, and the like. Most times, these features exist within the span of a single page or even a single paragraph.

This is precisely why I call it *over*narration and why it effectively captures the essence of *Krotkaia*'s narrative style. This is an excessive style that is inextricable from the tragic circumstances that motivate the pawnbroker's narration:

8 Overnarration is not simply synonymous with first-person narration. It is a useful concept for reading not only *Krotkaia*, but also *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, and, even, *Podrostok* (1875). Conversely, the term does not productively apply to the first-person narration of *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* (1860), due to stylistic differences that are beyond the scope of the present paper.

9 Bakhtin, p. 154.

the meek one's suicide. The narrator seeks to come to grips with the suicide: "I keep pacing and want to figure it out for myself" (235; *ПСС* 24; 6).[10] Identifying the cause of the meek one's suicide is fundamental to the story's plot. However, as Irina Paperno posits, Dostoevsky recognized the inaccessibility of suicide and, accordingly, chose to externalize the enigmatic act, offering the reader a suicide recounted entirely through the voice of the suicide's husband.[11] Thus, it is not the suicidal subject who narrates, but the one who is left behind to contemplate the act. Dostoevsky positions the subject of suicide as the object of narration and tasks the pawnbroker with identifying the suicide's cause– but, in a complicated twist, the pawnbroker must grapple with the very real possibility that *he* is its cause; a fact that, inevitably, contributes to the manner in which he tells his story.

The pawnbroker's emotional and moral investment in the plot is communicated directly, in his *own* voice, and it is here, in the story's delivery, that the plot's complexity lies. The pawnbroker's inner workings are revealed through a ceaseless, unfiltered stream of thoughts, memories, and explanations: "He is in bewilderment and has not had the time to collect his thoughts. He paces his rooms and tries to make sense of what has happened, 'to collect his thoughts to a point'" (233; *ПСС* 24; 5). The story's overnarrated style is doubtless a realistic consequence of the pawnbroker's bereavement, and the proximity of the act itself. It is also a consequence of silence. Shortly before his wife's death, the narrator breaks the silence that has pervaded his marriage, falling at the feet of the meek one with a melodramatic confession. When his wife dies, however,

10 Like his narrator, Dostoevsky, sought to *figure out* suicide in his fictional and journalistic writings; notably, he did so in *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* (1873; 1876-1877; 1880-1881), where he published *Krotkaia* in November 1876. In *Dnevnik*, he examined suicide through the lens of positivism, religion, and the contemporary moment, publishing reports on real-life suicides and engaging with his readership in written correspondence about them. *Krotkaia* was published after the contentious "Dva Samoubiistva" (October 1876), in which Dostoevsky discussed the suicides of Liza Herzen, daughter of Alexander Herzen, and of a seamstress, Mar'ia Borisova. *Krotkaia* differs substantially from these events, but retains one detail from *Dnevnik*'s real-life cases, borrowing Borisova's icon. For "Dva Samoubiistva", see *ПСС* 23; 144-148. This subject has been written on extensively; for more, see Irina Paperno, *Suicide as Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky's Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997); Kate Holland, "The Fictional Filter", in *Dostoevsky Studies,* New Series, vol. 4, 2000, pp. 95-116; and Leon Burnett, "Effacement and Enigma in the Making of *The Meek Girl*", in Robert Reid and Joe Andrew (Ed.), *Aspects of Dostoevskii: Art, Ethics, and Faith* (New York: Rodopi, 2012), pp. 149-166.

11 Paperno, p. 183.

his confession transforms into a seemingly endless, hysterical soliloquy that is dominated by self-contradictions, repetitions, exclamations, and interjections.

1.1.1. Self-contradiction

The pawnbroker's narrative is rife with self-contradiction: "Despite the seeming consistency of his speech, he contradicts himself several times, both in logic and in feelings" (234; *ПСС* 24; 5). Because opposing interpretations of events exist side by side, unfiltered and unedited, they emphasize the process of narration as being a conduit for understanding.[12] The pawnbroker's monologue is ostensibly an attempt to understand why his wife died and to puzzle out the timeless question: who is guilty? Self-contradictions emphasize the pawnbroker's desire to *figure it out*, but undermine his postured authority. The pawnbroker is coming to grips with what has happened as he paces around his wife's corpse and is, accordingly, developing his terms in real time. Describing what constituted a quarrel, he states: "[...] there was a quarrel the next day. That is, again, there were no quarrels, but there was silence and – and a more and more bold look on her part" (248; *ПСС* 24; 15). The idiosyncratic definition of quarrel – a prolonged, unresolvable silence, punctuated with glares – must be derived from the narrator's meandering speech.

As the citation above suggests, self-contradiction does much more than represent the pawnbroker as an unreliable narrator. Self-contradiction also lays bare the opposing impulses at play in the story's power dynamics. For instance, after his wife attempts to kill him in his sleep, the pawnbroker claims that he is delighted by the thought of her suffering, hating her while desiring to punish her. Conversely, in the same breath, he expresses forgiveness (264; *ПСС* 24; 25). He then concludes his thought, saying:

On the contrary, in my eyes she was so defeated, so humiliated, so crushed, that I sometimes pitied her painfully, *though for all that* I sometimes decidedly liked the idea of her humiliation. It was the idea of our inequality that I liked... (264; *ПСС* 24; 25 – emphasis mine *C.P.*).

The pawnbroker relishes inequality. In his marriage, as I show in the second half of this article, he maintains control over his wife by withholding information, speech, and touch. Conversely, he seeks control over his readers/listeners

12 Gary Saul Morson identifies "processual intentionality" as a primary element of *Dnevnik*'s design. See Gary Saul Morson, "Editor's Introduction", in Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. by Gary S. Morson (Northwestern UP, 2009), p. xliv.

(the imagined *gospoda*) by granting them access to too much material.[13] On the level of the text, the pawnbroker overloads his "gentlemen" with conflicting information. In his tangled web of thoughts, feelings, and opinions, the pawnbroker anticipates and accommodates contradictions. In so doing, he seeks to control all possible interpretations of his story and, thereby, maintain the position of power he so coveted in his marriage. But, as in his marriage, he fails to attain his goal in his narrative.

1.1.2. Repetition

i. Repetition is a rhetorical device that emphasizes the narrator's characterization of and emotional reaction to events. Given below are the most frequent ways in which repetition materializes in the text: Frequent use of words such as 'naturally' [*razumeetsia*], 'however' [*vprochem*], 'in a word' [*v odnom slove/ odnim slovom*]:

These words are typically meant to clarify or succinctly summarize an observation. However, when employed with excessive frequency, these words emphasize the narrator's lack of control over his own material and thoughts. They also contribute to the text's colloquial style, functioning in a similar way to the colloquial English interjections 'like' and 'you know'. For example:

> *Naturally*, she didn't explain anything to me herself that time. It was later that I found out about *The Voice* and everything. She was then spending her last strength to advertise, at first, *naturally*, with pride [...]. *Naturally*, all this was

13 The imagined audience is particularly important within the context of this story's unconventional narrative transposition. It is also an essential component within the stylistics of overnarration. In *Krotkaia*, the reader is presented with what Dorrit Cohn refers to as an autobiographical monologue. The autobiographical monologue is a recitation of the speaker's life to himself. In this sense, it does not disambiguate oral and written communication, leading to the problem of who the speaker's audience truly is: the autobiographical monologue, "create[s] a highly stylized rhetorical effect, since reciting one's own biography to oneself does not appear psychologically plausible. Or rather, it appears plausible only if the speaker pursues a definite aim with this recitation, an aim of public confession or self-justification". See Doritt Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), p. 181. The audience's invisible presence influences speech characteristics, such as the frequent use of the imperative and explanatory asides. The repetition of the particle *-ka* also denotes a degree of subservience on the part of the speaker in relation to his audience. For example, see *ПСС* 24; 14.

> added to the advertisement gradually [...] (237; *ПСС* 24; 7-8 – emphasis mine *C.P.*).

ii. Repetition of expressions word for word, or identical constructions:

> [...] this was a *beast*, this was a *fit*, this was a *beast* in a *fit* (251; *ПСС* 24; 17 – emphasis mine *C.P.*);
> *Why*, then, did I love her, *why* did I esteem her, *why* had I married her? (255; *ПСС* 24; 20 – emphasis mine *C.P.*);
> Oh, I was never *liked,* even at school. Never and nowhere was I *liked*. Lukerya is also unable to *like* me. The incident with the regiment, though a consequence of the *dislike* for me, was undoubtedly of accidental character (261; *ПСС* 24; 23 – emphasis mine *C.P.*).

Repetitions such as these are emphatic and contribute to the charged emotional style evident throughout the narrator's account. They give the impression that the narrator is imploring his listener to understand the stakes of his narrative. These repetitions are characteristic overnarration: they create a surplus of words, saying in multiple iterations what would be comprehensible within a singular, concise expression.

1.1.3. Interjections, exclamations, and asides

Interjections, exclamations, and asides contribute to the text's oral quality. They are the narrator's running commentary on his own narrative. The most frequently used interjection in the text is 'oh'. 'Oh', which traditionally introduces an *exclamatio* in tragedy, is notable in that it functions both as a pause and as an expression of lamentation. It is often coupled with repetitious statements, compounding the emotional and the rhetorical. These expressions tend to appear when the pawnbroker addresses his audience. In almost all cases, exclamations resemble asides, which are meant to clarify any ambiguity in the pawnbroker's intended message. Interjections, exclamations, and asides are marked by the use of the imperative, exclamation marks, and parentheses. Repeated words, followed by an exclamation mark, within parentheses compound all of the above. Some examples include:

> Oh, filth! Oh, what filth I dragged her out of then! (244; *ПСС* 24; 12);
> Oh, incomprehension, oh, my blindness! (272; *ПСС* 24; 32);

> Oh, wild, wild! *In*comprehension! *Im*plausiblity! *Im*possibility [*Nedorazumenie! Nepravdopodobie! Nevozmozhnost'*]! (274; *ПСС* 24; 33 – emphasis mine *C.P.*);
> But I didn't understand it then and ascribed her color to humility (the veil!) (265; *ПСС* 24; 26);
> And what childlike laughter, so dear, just as before, when she was my fiancée (one instant! one instant!) (271; *ПСС* 24; 30).

If the number of quotations cited above seems extreme, it is not because I have unwittingly adopted the pawnbroker's tendency to overnarrate, but because I want to emphasize that these speech characteristics appear excessively frequently. Disambiguating these stylistic categories is challenging not only because they occur so regularly, but also due to the fact that they often occur together, within a single sentence or over the length of a paragraph. The combination of these categories within short spans of text lends a certain rhythm to the pawnbroker's speech that is at once manic and calculated. The reader becomes so accustomed to this colloquial style, to emotional inflection, to repetition, that the poignancy of these rhetorical devices becomes meaningless. At the same time, this overnarrated style is stifling, it slows down the plot by opening up space for detours.

1.2. Narrating (over) the meek one

Overnarration can also describe a particular style of authorship. In this aspect of overnarration, the object of narration is narrated over, such that the object is diminished by the subject in a subjugating manner. The narrating subject (in this case, the pawnbroker) seeks to reach an understanding about the object of his narration (his wife) through the act of authorship, which, in the overnarrated mode, is overdetermined by the subject's perception and interpretation.

'Narrating over' the meek one limits the reader's access to her. It inhibits her verbal, gestural, and physical communication. The narrator provides the reader with glimpses of the meek one's body, with snippets of her speech and silence; however, her inner life is inaccessible. Even her most autonomous acts, her moments of rebellion, explored in the second section of this article, are presented to the reader through mediated physical expression, through her husband's identification of a "mocking wrinkle", (249; *ПСС* 24; 15) or a "bad smile" (251; *ПСС* 24; 17). The meek one is fragmented: she is limited to a flushed face, a set of lit up eyes, a stomping foot. At the story's end, she is syn-

ecdochally represented by her empty boots, which will forever wait by the foot of her bed to be filled.

During the couple's courtship, the pawnbroker observes the meek one in order to familiarize himself with her character; he fixes upon fragments that suit a preconceived narrative that he will later impose upon her. Describing the first time that he truly noticed her, the narrator says: "This was at the very beginning, and I, of course, didn't distinguish her from the others: she comes like everybody else, well, and so forth. But later I began to distinguish. She was so slender, fair-haired, medium tall; with me she was always awkward, as if abashed" (235; *ПСС* 24; 6). He begins to distinguish her from others like her; she is particularized only because he finally manages to see her and to write a story for her.[14] She emerges out of the crowd as a collection of features and characteristics that he perceives and then interprets. He continues to engage in the interpretive act during their marriage and, especially, after her death, narrating the story of her life and suicide to an imagined audience that has no recourse to the story's object for verification.

In this way, the pawnbroker engages in "scripting", a term developed by Sarah Young in her analysis of *Idiot* (1868) to describe an interactive narrative process, whereby characters enact their own stories by persuading (or, often, coercing)[15] others to participate in their realization. "Scripting" is a defense of one's loophole and a refusal to "[lose] the final word about [oneself]".[16] Characters who submit to others' scripts are at risk of losing control of their own narratives and of being objectified.[17] In the overnarrated text, scripting loses its interactive character; it is, instead, hierarchically determined by who is narrating the text itself. The pawnbroker's narrating over the meek one is very much a consequence of his desire to control not only the meek one, but also his own narrative (as well as, his reader's understanding of that narrative). The pawnbroker's overnarration aspires to objectivity in its purported goal. However, because his object is not an active participant in meaning creation on the level of the text,

14 It is after this episode that the narrator begins to inquire after her and find out about her financial destitution. He is only able to formulate the likelihood of their marriage when he understands the extent of her lowly position and powerlessness. It is from this moment that her story begins to be formed within the narrator's mind. On the role of money in *Krotkaia*, see Boris Christa, "'Money Talks': The Semiotic Anatomy of *Krotkaia*", *Dostoevsky Studies,* New Series, vol. 4, 2000, pp. 143-152.

15 Sarah Young, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative* (London: Anthem, 2004), p. 18.

16 *Ibidem*, p. 19.

17 *Ibidem*.

she seems to serve as nothing more than a conduit for his self-edification. His failure to make his marriage work is partially accounted for by his unsuccessful attempt to script the meek one: he thinks he can control this seemingly malleable sixteen-year-old girl and write her into his own story, but, as we will see, he is mistaken in his belief that her life was created to embellish his own.

The couple's struggle for narrative control is further elucidated in the second section of this paper, but it is worth noting that the autonomy of the pawnbroker's soliloquy is threatened not solely, to quote Gabriella Safran, by his wife's "renunciation of the role of intrageneric narratee".[18] Dostoevsky, too, declines to grant the pawnbroker total authorial control of the narrative. He first does so in the story's title, which, through implicating the work's subject as the meek one, emphasizes her crucial role in the narrative. In denying his titular heroine a name, however, Dostoevsky also underscores her obfuscation.[19] The author then prefaces the narrator's unreliability in his "Ot avtora," alerting the reader to the overnarrated nature of the story to come. He additionally undermines his narrator in his inclusion of the meek one's (non)verbal communicative acts, which, despite their mediated character, alert the reader to the pawnbroker's inability to grasp his wife's opaque inner life fully. In those moments, Dostoevsky cues the reader to listen to the meek one. He overwrites the pawnbroker, just as the pawnbroker overnarrates his wife. Envisioning this story as a hierarchy, one finds Dostoevsky writing, squarely located above his narrator, who, pacing, is squarely located above his wife. At the bottom, one finds the meek one – around whom the story revolves, but who is always the object, never the subject. Both in the diegetic world and on the level of the narrative, the subject controls the object.[20]

Having explored voiced discourse on the level of narrated text, in the next section I explore silence as an absence and excess, with the aim of understanding how silence functions within *Krotkaia*'s narrative texture and how it is that the meek one, refusing to be narrated over, becomes a 'master of speaking silently'.

18 Gabriella Safran, "The Troubled Frame Narrative: Bad Listening in Late Imperial Russia", *The Russian Review,* 72, no. 4, October 2013, p. 568.

19 Unlike Dostoevsky's other nameless characters, such as the Underground Man and, even, the pawnbroker, who narrate their own stories, the meek one is the anonymous object of a story that, despite bearing her moniker as its title, is really all about her husband. Her moniker is not a self-imposed anonymity, but merely marks her as a submissive character, who is at the mercy of another's actions.

20 The issue of gender and, in particular, the gendering of the right to speak in *Krotkaia* deserves further analysis, but is beyond the scope of the present study.

2. Silence

Silence occupies a significant place in *Krotkaia*, a story so loquacious (or overnarrated) as to be excessive: there is too much speech, too many emotions, too much information – speech pours forth from silence and is a result of the absence of open communication that dominates the conditions of the characters' marriage.

What is silence? How can we define it? Among the synonyms that Dal' gives for *molchat'* are 'to keep silence' (*bezmolvstvovat'*), 'not to speak' (*ne govorit'*), and 'not to make a sound' (*ne izdavat' zvuka*).[21] *Molchat'* because, in *Krotkaia*, it and various derivations of *-molch-* appear forty-two times, as opposed to *-tish-*, which appears four times and *-tikh-*, nine times. This is important, because *molchanie*, of all the Russian silences, relates precisely to human speech – it is the silence that takes place when people are not speaking, whereas *tishina* refers to a lack of noise, a sense of inner peace, making it rather more neutral and multifaceted than *molchanie*.[22]

Even in Dal's definition, it is clear that silence cannot exist without its opposite. As Sontag writes, "one must acknowledge a surrounding environment of sound or language in order to recognize silence".[23] And, so, silence exists in a dialectic with noise or speech. In this way, according to Sontag, there can never be pure silence – silence becomes a part of dialogue and is, by extension, a form of speech. Silence is communicative: "somebody's silence opens up an array of possibilities for interpreting that silence, for imputing speech to it".[24] For Sontag, silence simultaneously invites and bars communication.[25] This formulation

21 Владимир И. Даль, *Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка*, т. 2 (Москва: Изд. книгопродавца-типографа М.О. Вольфа, 1881), с. 350.

22 Jones has argued that a dialectic of silences, *molchanie* and *tishina*, is fundamental to the deep structure of Dostoevsky's novels. For more on this topic, see Jones, pp. 29-45; Михаил Эпштейн, *Слово и молчание: метафизика русской литературы* (Москва: Высшая Школа, 2006); Benjamin Jens, "Silence and Confession in *The Brothers Karamazov*", *The Russian Review*, 75, January 2016, pp. 51-66.

23 Sontag, p. 11.

24 *Ibidem*, p. 16.

25 The expansion and limitation of interpretive potential that Sontag describes, in the simplest terms, can be explained by the following imagined scenario: Two friends are speaking. Friend A asks Friend B, "where would you like to go for dinner?" Friend B answers with silence, which prompts Friend A to fill the silence with increasingly specific questions (for example, about the type of food or the price point of the restaurant). Friend B's facial expressions, given in response to each question, provide Friend A with information about

may seem to be contradictory, but, in truth, it points to *the* precondition of silence's existence: a subject/object or speaker/listener relationship must exist in order for the narration or recognition of silence to take place.

Silence and speech, then, can productively coexist on the level of narrative. However, within the context of this story's diegesis, the same cannot be said of how silence and speech affect human relations. The pawnbroker's overnarration arises as a direct consequence of silence; it depends upon and develops out of silence: the silent corpse, the silent relations between husband and wife. Silence makes narrative possible and mirrors the evaluative process that the pawnbroker engages in when he ascribes meaning to his wife's silence. In this way, silence is a locus of absence and excess in speech, in narration.

Silence appears in the text in three distinct, but interrelated ways. These three modes of silence contribute to the meek one's seemingly contradictory dual status as an oppressed and autonomous figure. Interestingly, however, they also reveal the degree to which the pawnbroker's silence infects the meek one.

2.1. *Oppressive silence*

The first form of silence is oppressive silence. The pawnbroker introduces silence into the household, using it as an educational measure. Though the pawnbroker never states his pedagogical intention outright, in the drafts for *Krotkaia* Dostoevsky twice mentions that the pawnbroker seeks to reeducate (*perevospitat'*) the meek one. The verb *perevospitat'* first appears in a note, written above the phrase, "For what, for what did she die?" that reads: "To reeducate her [*Perevospitat' ee*]" (*ПСС* 24; 323 – translations from drafts are mine, *C.P.*). It then appears in the phrase, "I wanted to reform [*perevospitat'*] her character" (*ПСС* 24; 332). In its first use, Dostoevsky seems to offer an answer to the pawnbroker's question, intimating that the meek one died as a result of this cruel *perevospitanie*.

The pawnbroker's description of the couple's honeymoon period poignantly illustrates the oppressive character of this coercive reeducation:

> The main thing is that from the very first, though she tried to hold back, she threw herself to me with love, she would meet me with rapture when I came

Friend B's opinion. From this scenario, it becomes clear that silence, rather than barring communication, created space not only for Friend A to interpret Friend B's silence, but also prompted Friend A to pronounce more utterances, to overcommunicate.

> home in the evening, told me in her prattle [*lepetom*] (the charming prattle of innocence!) all about her childhood, her infancy, her parental home, her father and mother. But I immediately doused all this ecstasy at once with cold water. It was in this that my idea lay. To her raptures I responded with silence, benevolent, of course…but all the same she quickly saw that we were different, and that I was – a riddle (245; *ПСС* 24; 13).

This passage reveals much about how the meek one is characterized. She tells him about her childhood in her prattle (*lepetom*). *Lepetom* is often associated with the speech of a child – here, it colours her manner of speech as childlike. This is one of the few instances in which the pawnbroker acknowledges that he has married an innocent, young girl. Read in light of her age, the drafts' *perevospitat'* (derived from the verb 'to rear', *vospitat'*) implies that the pawnbroker is a father figure, occupied with the upbringing of his child. At the beginning of the marriage, she is open, perhaps even excited and exuberant, whereas the pawnbroker is withholding, a characteristic that is evident not only in his emphatic silence, but also in his lack of touch.[26] The meek one throws herself at him with love and he denies her affection. To her prattle, he replies with silence. Silence becomes something that the pawnbroker (and the meek one) can wield. To answer with silence is to instrumentalize it, as is reflected in the Russian's use of instrumental case (*molchaniem, ПСС* 24; 13); "you could cut the silence with a knife" provides the perfect example of how silence takes on material qualities in metaphoric speech. It is also telling that the narrator elides the meek one's speech in this passage. He silences her telling in his telling and focuses attention onto himself. And he does so forcefully – he says, "I immediately doused all this ecstasy at once with cold water" (245; *ПСС* 24; 13).

The pawnbroker's pedagogical imperative, then, is to exercise control over his wife by taking her voice. He douses his wife's exuberance with cold water in an effort to temper her youthful vitality. In actuality, he is exercising his power over her. The pawnbroker nurtures the trauma of a failed duel and his subsequent discharge from the regiment, carrying it over into his profession and marriage.[27] This failed duel constitutes the pawnbroker's shame, which he

26 The story avoids any direct reference to sexual intimacy. It is only after the episode with the revolver, when the marriage is already "dissolved" (*rastorgnut*), that the narrator alludes to physical relations by passively punishing his wife, banishing her to an iron bed that is cordoned off by a screen (*ПСС* 24; 22).

27 Robert Louis Jackson observes that "the concept of the duel is central to the [story's] idea and structure". See Robert L. Jackson, "The Temptation and the Transaction: *A Gentle Creature*", in Robert L. Jackson, *The Art of Dostoevsky: Deliriums and Nocturnes* (Prince-

overcomes only after the meek one is "defeated" in the couple's unconventional, silent duel (259; *ПСС* 24; 22). Because of his cowardly inaction, he falls in the ranks, loses his income, and wanders St. Petersburg as a beggar.[28] Information about this duel gradually emerges throughout the text; first through the appearance of a former acquaintance, Efimovich, with whom his wife secretly meets, then through the meek one's taunting. He attempts to keep his shameful past a secret, while at the same time punishing the meek one as if she were its cause. When the pawnbroker says, "I was – a riddle" (245; *ПСС* 24; 13), he really means, *I have a secret*.

Prior to their marriage, the pawnbroker tests the meek one, assessing her capacity for discovering and understanding his secret. He begins this evaluative process early on, when the meek one comes to pawn her petty worldly possessions in order to advertise in the daily newspaper, *Golos* ("The Voice"). The meek one, desperate for work, publishes a personal advertisement, which is paraphrased by the narrator on the story's first page as follows: "here, say, thus and so, [*vot, deskat', tak i tak*] a governess, agrees to move, and to give lessons at home, and so on and so forth [*i proch., i proch.*]" (235; *ПСС* 24; 6 – *translation modified*). In the mouth of the pawnbroker, the meek one's written composition is transformed into fragments that are couched in colloquial phraseology, like *deskat'*, *tak i tak*, and *i proch., i proch*. Later, the pawnbroker further elaborates on the content of her advertisement, directly quoting her; despite the direct quotation, he nonetheless ends his citation with "etc., etc., [*t.d., i t.d.,*] the same old stuff!" (237; *ПСС* 24; 8). These phrases render his future wife's situation unremarkable and underscore the ubiquity of her precarious position by suggesting that the reader can very easily fill in the predictable blanks left by the narrator's "etcetera" and "thus and so". The meek one is just one more nameless suicide readily found in the miscellany (*smes'*) section of the daily news. Appraising the value of her petty trinkets, the narrator simultaneously seeks to identify, evaluate, and confirm the extent of her precarity.

The meek one comes to know the pawnbroker, then, as a result not only of her lowly position, but also of the necessity of communicating this to a broader public. When she places her advertisement in *Golos*, she harnesses the power of the news to try to better her station. Here, the news is a positive medium for

ton: Princeton UP, 1981), p. 244.

28 Lucjan Suchanek observes that the pawnbroker becomes an underground man after his discharge from the regiment. See Lucjan SUCHANEK, "Молча говорить – повесть Ф.М. Достоевского *Кроткая*", *Dostoevsky Studies*, vol. 6, 1985, p. 129, sites.utoronto.ca/tsq/DS/06/125.shtml

self-improvement and empowerment; at the same time, it puts the meek one in a highly precarious position – as a body for sale. This message, however, goes unanswered but for the pawnbroker's response. Michael Holquist observes that Dostoevsky's inclusion of *Golos* was not motivated by the mere fact of its actual existence as a popular St. Petersburg daily. Instead, he writes, "it is named on the first page of this particular story in order to announce the terms of the tale's dominant structural metaphor: the human voice, and the myriad kinds of silence it fills".[29] The power dynamic built into this brief scene in the couple's life foreshadows the communicative model that will follow thereafter. The meek one speaks up, but does so only to be silenced.

It is notable, then, that the meek one remains entirely silent during the early transactions at the pawnshop: "And all silently. Others, they argue, beg, bargain in order to get more; this one no, just what's given..." (235; *ПСС* 24; 6). He takes this silence for desperation, but also detects rebelliousness, calling her silent exit from his shop on her second reported visit a revolt (*bunt*) (*ПСС* 24; 8). Her passivity, coupled with her defiantly flashing "blue, big, pensive eyes", strike the pawnbroker and present a challenge (236; *ПСС* 24;7). He proceeds to provoke the meek one and to test her limits. He attempts to manipulate her through modulations in his tone of voice, for example. He first speaks to her in a "gentlemanly" tone, keeping to "a few words, polite and stern. 'Stern, stern, stern' [*Strogo, strogo, strogo*]" (236; *ПСС* 24; 7). It is, notably, "with sternness [*pod strogost'iu*]" that he later brings her into his home (*ПСС* 24; 13 – translation mine, *C.P.*). This establishes him as a figure of authority. He then abandons this tone briefly in favour of a more familiar one, "I entered into friendly conversation with unusual politeness" (237; *ПСС* 24; 8). He relies on the spoken word as a tool for control; here, with the intention of diminishing the meek one's ability to oppose him.

Gaining momentum, he "ventured then to test [*ispytat'*] her for a last time" (237; *ПСС* 24; 8). He proceeds to read her what he deems a successful advertisement in *Golos*, using this as an occasion to critique the effectiveness of *her* advertisement, implicitly blaming her for the hopelessness of her situation. The verb *ispytat'* reflects the pawnbroker's desire to assess the meek one's viability as a wife. The provocation of his final premarital trial serves as the first instance wherein the pawnbroker takes the meek one's voice away from her, rewriting (or overnarrating) her message in his words so as to underscore her inferiority.

29 Michael Holquist, "The Either/Or of Duels and Dreams: *A Gentle Creature* and *Dream of a Ridiculous Man*", in M. Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977), pp. 148-149, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.32258

The pawnbroker assumes, and counts on the fact, that the meek one, having passed his tests, will solve his silent riddle and read the prescribed narrative he writes for her and for himself.[30] The riddle he poses is an oppressive punishment, masquerading as an educational measure; it provokes and prolongs the extremes of excess and absence that define their relationship. Ultimately, the only thing that the pawnbroker teaches his wife is how to wield silence, interpret another's silence, and punish the one who is silent. That is, she provokes *him* to speak, to fill in gaps of excessive silence. Even before they marry, when the pawnbroker asks for the meek one's hand, silence intensifies the desire to speak. After he proposes, the pawnbroker pauses, thereby allocating the floor to the meek one. (This is called turn-taking, a silent pause that fulfills a procedural role in dialogic interaction.) The meek one, however, does not respond fast enough for the pawnbroker and her silence takes on an emotive, rather than procedural, function. The pawnbroker grows intolerant of the silence and probes her:

> I must add: right there at the gate she thought for a long time before she said yes. She got so thoughtful, so thoughtful, that I already started asking: 'Well, what is it?' – and even couldn't help myself, asking with a certain chic: 'Well, what is it, miss?' – adding a polite touch. 'Wait, I'm thinking.' (243; *ПСС* 24; 12).

The pawnbroker, confident that the meek one will accept his proposal, is unsettled by the meek one's silence. His self-assurance quickly transforms into feigned obsequiousness with his ironic use of "*slovoers*" ("*Nu chto zhe-s"*, *ПСС* 24; 12). This dialogic exchange demonstrates silence's emotive force and foreshadows the impact that the meek one's silence will later have upon the pawnbroker.

2.2. Repressive silence

The pawnbroker's failed duel motivates the text's second mode of silence, repressive silence: the repression of communication with others and oneself. The pawnbroker is a humiliated figure, whose silence (*molchanie*) originates from disgrace. Indeed, as Jones has shown, *molchanie* (as opposed to *tishina*) in

30 Kliger observes that the pawnbroker marries the meek one precisely because he believes that she can "solve the enigma of his identity and thus re-stage and reverse the disgrace that has hung over him since the day of his expulsion from the regiment". See Kliger, p. 302.

Dostoevsky is a silence "of prohibition, of repression, of forgetting".[31] Repressive silence shows through in the pawnbroker's, "You see, gentlemen, there are ideas ... that is, you see, certain ideas, once they're uttered, expressed in words, come out terribly stupid. They come out shameful for oneself" (249; *ПСС* 24; 16).[32] He is afraid to utter his innermost thoughts aloud, to say them aloud opens them up to the judgement of others and himself.[33] Thomas H. J. Dyne observes that lack of transparency in *Krotkaia* is fundamentally at odds with the pawnbroker's "narrativizing, totalizing gaze".[34] The pawnbroker withholds information in an effort to control all facets of his narrative. However, his lack of transparency prompts his wife to fill in the gaps, seeking out other sources of information. The narrator loses control of his narrative precisely because he represses his "shameful" ideas and past.

In the weeks leading up to the suicide, the pawnbroker can no longer control his speech or repress his emotions. On a "bright and sunny day" in April, the pawnbroker hears his wife quietly singing (265; *ПСС* 24; 26). It soon dawns on him that, despite his recent efforts to repair their relationship, she has "forgotten" about him (266; *ПСС* 24; 27). Safran observes that this song startles the pawnbroker and prompts his subsequent outburst precisely because "it is not meant for its listener".[35] According to Ilya Kliger, the meek one's song forces the pawnbroker to recognize that his wife is not merely an embodiment of his "exteriorized gaze", but that she has an inner

31 Jones, p. 43. Jones identifies a repressive impulse in Ivan Karamazov's *molchanie*, see Jones, p. 36.

32 The hero of *Podrostok* expresses a similar sentiment when he states: "Ваша мысль, хотя бы и дурн**а**я, пока при вас, – всегда глубже, а на словах – смешнее и бесч**е**стнее" (*ПСС* 13; 36). Like the narrator of *Krotkaia*, Arkady's repression of communication precipitates his verbose autobiographical first-person narrative.

33 Jason Cieply explores the problem of articulation and reception, considering Fyodor Tiutchev's elided intertext, *Silentium!* across Dostoevsky's oeuvre, as well as the import of silence within Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky and his early philosophical works. Cieply accommodates silence in the polyphonic novel, showing that it is fundamental to unfinalizability. See Jason Cieply, "The Silent Side of Polyphony: On the Disappearances of *Silentium*' from the Drafts of Dostoevskii and Bakhtin", *Slavic Review*, vol. 75, no. 3, Fall 2016, pp. 678-701, http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.5612/slavicreview.75.3.0678

34 Thomas H. J. Dyne, "'That's the horrible part: I understand everything!': The Narrative Ethics of Misreading the Other in Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk* and *The Meek One*", *Slavic & East Euroepean Journal*, vol. 64, no. 3, 2020, pp. 455-456.

35 Safran, p. 568.

life.[36] He accordingly attempts to regain control of his story, counteracting her opacity by introducing transparency; he confesses all (about the duel, his intentions for the future, his feelings for his wife): he falls at the meek one's feet and showers her with unwanted embraces. In these moments of rupture, the pawnbroker histrionically expresses all that has been repressed; he begins his overnarrated story. The abrupt shift from silence to speech is not, however, consensual or reciprocal – it is registered, in the context I present, as an attack.

2.3. Rebellious silence

Rebellious silence, the third form of silence, is, notably, the only type of silence that is exclusive to the meek one, for whom it is a direct response to the pawnbroker's oppressive and repressive silence. While the pawnbroker only engages in the latter types of silence, his wife mobilizes her husband's signature silences, as well as rebellious silence. The meek one's silence is particular to her because it is predominantly represented as provocation, indignance, or disdain; it is an emotive rejoinder and, as such, is dissimilar to her husband's calculated and severe silence. Rebellious silence also occurs at a very specific moment in the text. It is foreshadowed in the pre-marital scenes addressed earlier in this article, but takes on a derisive character only after the pawnbroker rejects his wife's embraces and intensifies his silence: "these were morbid, hysterical impulses, and I needed firm happiness, along with respect from her" (248; *ПСС* 24; 15). His silence is met with silence, but not with the respect he so desires. Instead, her "silence" and "bold look" connote rebellion (248; *ПСС* 24; 15). She has been oppressed, her speech has been repressed, but her eyes and body continue to speak.

One of the meek one's most affected acts of rebellion begins gesturally. It is triggered in "*Krotkaia buntuet*" when the pawnbroker, scolding his wife for accepting a pledge that he had previously rejected, declares his independence and states that he has never hidden anything from her. Hearing this categorical (patently false) declaration of transparency, the meek one "suddenly jumped up", "stamped her feet", laughed in her husband's face, and exited the apartment (251; *ПСС* 24; 17). She wordlessly leaves home for the next two days, prompting the pawnbroker to seek her whereabouts. When he discovers that she has been

36 Kliger, p. 303. Jackson also identifies this as a decisive moment in the spouses' power reversal. See Jackson, p. 257.

out, uncovering all that he has, in fact, been hiding, he realizes that his wife is solving his silent riddle, but is refusing his script.

The pawnbroker, attempting to temper his wife through silence, has unwittingly taught her independence. Such is made particularly clear in the meek one's voiced discourse, which is no longer that of a prattling, effervescent child. On the eve of the meek one's rendezvous with Efimovich, a "portentous scene" (252; *ПСС* 24; 18) takes places, during which the meek one, now a "violent and aggressive being", disdainfully questions the pawnbroker about his past (253; *ПСС* 24; 18). By the end of her interrogation, she has succeeded in proving that, contrary to his aforementioned declaration, her husband has not been transparent, but has entered into their marriage with shameful secrets. However, still unwilling to relinquish control, the narrator continues to withhold information (namely, his knowledge about the upcoming rendezvous) and, thereby, tacitly allows their marriage to dissolve. Following through with his plan to spy on the illicit meeting instead of diverting her beforehand, he prolongs a silent struggle for power that culminates in attempted murder, the meek one's illness, and, finally, in her complete dissociation from the marriage. The meek one succeeds in disproving her husband's categorical claim to truth, but she, nevertheless, fails to usurp control over the marriage through her (un)voiced rebellion, which serves only to stimulate the pawnbroker's desire to conquer her and ceases with the commencement of her illness.

The meek one's rebellion, both voiced and gestural, sets in motion the course of events that derails the pawnbroker's plans to educate (control) her. What began with bold looks, stomping feet, and provocative questions, culminates in the most pregnant silence of all: a gun to the head. However, it is, finally, her unvoiced rebellion of indifference that forces the pawnbroker to speak. The meek one only manages to gain the upper hand when her silence becomes oppressive and forces the pawnbroker to abandon control of his externally-imposed narrative. Throughout the marriage, she transitions from an open creature to a silent "tyrant and tormentor" and, finally, to an enigma just before her death (250; *ПСС* 24; 16).

In *Krotkaia*, silence expands communicative space and invites unchecked interpretation. Unarticulated, inaudible communication is ultimately the source of the couple's unhappiness. After all, the meek one engages in all of the same silences as her husband: oppressive and repressive silence are embedded within her rebellious silence and, in this way, she becomes his double. The pawnbroker's failed duel causes psychological strain that infects his speech patterns and communicative potential. This trauma is then projected onto his marriage in the form of (non)verbal abuse. The meek one's silence draws the narrator's

words from him. She withholds everything from him and then forgets about him. Forced to recognize that his wife is but a mere reflection of his own silent self-effacement, he abruptly transitions from one extreme form of communication to another. This sudden shift in communicative modes threatens the meek one's hard-won, though sorrowful, autonomy and she flees from her husband to her death.

Speech and silence exist as reciprocal extremes that facilitate and determine the asymmetrical nature of the struggle for power in this unhappy marriage. At first, silence might be a marker of the meek one's victimization, but as the story progresses, it becomes the source of her agency; a progression that, in the end, makes this a plot of a reversal, in which the meek one appropriates the tools of her husband in order to rob him of the power he so desperately sought to wield, first through silence and then, overnarration. She leaves him alone, listening to the sound of his own voice.

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