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## "Pushing Yourself into Existence": Language, Trauma, Framing in Pat Collins's Silence (2012)

Dara Waldron

### Abstract

The article considers Pat Collins's feature length debut *Silence* (2012) as a film concerned with responses to trauma. Opening with a definition of epistemology and film-imaging as framing, the article then focuses these concerns around language or language-use. A parallel is then drawn between the thematising of "silence" around the journey of the protagonist (Eoghan) in *Silence* and "silence" as thematised in the final proposition of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (1922). This parallel is used to explore an obligation, perceived as coming to prominence in the course of Eoghan's journey, to resist the desire to frame the experience of trauma; resistance defined by an ethics of "silence." The article's middle section develops this discussion of ethics to explore the "window" as a visual motif in *Silence* (considered pertinent to reading the ethical), arguing that this motif gives the perceived obligation to remain silent (in the case of Eoghan's journey home in the film), to resist framing, a crucially aesthetic context. The final section addresses these issues in the wider sense of the film as an allegory on Ireland; concerned with accepting the limitations of language regarding the traumatic or the experience of trauma.

### Keywords

framing; Ireland; language; trauma; knowledge

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Pat Collins may perhaps be better known for his engaging documentaries but this year sees the release of his debut feature film in the UK. *Silence* is a stunning debut film, full of philosophy, poetry and visual beauty. The film shows a confidence within the new form as well as an expert use of layering... Pat Collins: Originally some of my ideas for the film emerged from a book called *The Hidden Ireland* by Daniel Corkery. It had a big impact on me, imaginatively. And I was always fascinated by the folklore collectors who went around Ireland in the 1930s and 1940s – people like Seamus Ennis and Seán Ó hEochaidh – who travelled from house to house and collected stories and songs and folklore. It's a romantic notion I suppose. Patricia Hill Collins (born May 1, 1948) is a Distinguished University Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park. She is also the former head of the Department of African-American Studies at the University of Cincinnati, and a past President of the American Sociological Association Council. Collins was the 100th president of the ASA and the first African-American woman to hold this position. "Pushing yourself into existence": Language, trauma, framing in Pat Collins's *Silence* (2012). January 2014. D. Waldron. The article considers Pat Collins's feature length debut *Silence* (2012) as a film concerned with responses to trauma. Opening with a definition of epistemology and filmimaging as framing, the article then focuses these concerns around language or languageuse. A parallel is then drawn between the thematising of "silence" around the journey of the protagonist (Eoghan) in *Silence* and "silence" as [Show full abstract] thematised in the