**Book Report Lies of Silence**

**by Eva Sijtsma**

Business data

Title: Lies of Silence

Author: Brian Moore

Publisher: Vintage Books London

Year of publication: 1990

Point of view/perspective

Lies of silence is written from a third perspective. Quote: *‘At a quarter to nine, just before going off work, Dillon went down to reception to check the staff roster for tomorrow. Two of the six women who came in to make breakfasts were reporting sick, so room service would be short staffed in the morning. He told Eileen, the clerk on the front desk, to ask Duffy to ring around and see if he could find replacements. But it would be a wasted exercise. He then went down the hall and had a word with Collis, the banquet manager.[[1]](#footnote-1)’* The actions of the main character, Michael Dillon, are always indicated with ‘He’ or ‘Dillon’.

Genre

Lies of silence is a thriller. You can recognize this by the following characteristics: high storytelling rate, the main character is a hero and beside the action there is also a romantic storyline.

Chronology

The story has a chronological time sequence. There are no flashbacks and no flash-forwards.

Time span

The story takes place within around one and a half week. Pretty quickly it becomes clear that one chapter tells about one day most of the time.

When and where

Most of the story takes place in Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland. The last chapter of the book takes place in London. This becomes clear in the following quotes.

Quote 1: *‘ ’This American hotel group I’m working for has just bought the Clarence Hotel. They want me to manage it for them. And it’s the last thing I want.’*

*‘So what are you going to do?’*

*I’m going. If I go to Belfast now and make a go of it, they’ve promised they’ll bring me back to London and put me in charge of one of their hotels here. Which is what I do want.’ ‘[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Quote 2: *‘An hour later he stood in Heathrow terminal watching the Ulster passengers collect their luggage and move off into the crowd, swallowed up in this kaleidoscope of different sights and sounds. He and Andrea found a taxi and drove to the Hampstead address where her friends had their flat. It was on the upper floor of a large Victorian house in a street just of Primrose Hill.’[[3]](#footnote-3)*

The story probably takes place just after the second World War. In the story the main character Michael Dillon is taken hostage by the IRA and forced by them to place a bomb in his own hotel. After the Second World War the IRA is known for its bomb attacks in Northern Ireland against public buildings.

Quote: *‘As he spoke, he remembered the boy outside. He looked out the window. The boy was still there. He was now standing behind the peering children at the toyshop next door, pretending to watch the display of moving mechanical cars. ‘Look over there,’ he said to her. ‘See the one in the U2 T-shirt. He’s following me. This is the IRA we’re mixed up with. You know very well we could be killed. Is that what you want?’*

 *‘That’s a good question,’ she said, ‘coming from you. What do you want? Did you want to see me killed the other day? Supposing it had been your girlfriend the IRA were holding in the house? Would you have picked up the phone and called the police? Would you?’ Suddenly, the tea-shop noises seemed unbearably loud.’[[4]](#footnote-4)*

Title explanation

At the ending of the book Michael is asked by the police to testify against one of the IRA members. After a lot of doubt Michael decides it is better to keep his mouth shut, it will prevent him from a lot of trouble. But by being silent Michael is actually lying. As an alternative title I thought of something like ‘Every second counts’. Aside the time while placing the bomb in the hotel, time keeps a main role during the whole story. Literally every second counts.

Main characters

Moira Dillon:

* Unemployed
* Bulimia
* Low self esteem
* Insecure
* Predominant
* Reckless
* Deceived
* Cares a lot about her looks
* Attached to her parents
* Does not like to listen to other people

Michael Dillon:

* Heroic
* Thoughtful
* Easy to persuade
* Unfaithful
* Caring
* Quiet
* Workaholic
* Distrustful
* Friendless
* Unselfish

The following quotes describe the character of Michael Dillon:

Quote 1: *‘It is happening just as they planned it. We are all part of the team, I, the delivery boy, that girl, the people in the white Ford, the masked ones at my house. The bomb is in place. It will go off any minute now. I have one more thing to do. Buy something here, cigarettes, sweets, so that they will have time to bring the taxi up. When I get in the green taxi it will all be over. The people in the check-out queue moved forward. He looked around the shop. He saw no pay phone. He looked out of the shop window. The girl in the yellow muffler was standing outside on the pavement, her back to him. Suddenly, in a rush, he pushed past the people in the check-out line and leaned over the woman at the cash register. She looked up at him, a stout, red-faced woman with bad teeth. ‘Is there a phone in here somewhere?’ He said. ‘Please, it’s an emergency.’ She looked at the other people in the queue, then looked at him. ‘There’s a phone in that wee room back there. That wee office. Go ahead.’ He ran down the aisles of tinned goods. At the far end of the store was a white door, its upper panel clear glass. Inside, he saw rows of shelves, a jumble of cartons on the floor, and in the middle of the room a cluttered desk with a phone on it. He pushed the door open. He picked up the receiver. In that instant it was as though he heard the flat Belfast voice say, Do a nut job on her. Trembling, he looked back at the door. Framed in the glass panel, staring in at him, was the girl in the yellow muffler. At once he bent over and dialled 999. He looked again as the phone began to ring. She was gone. On the third ring a voice said, ‘Belfast Central.’ ‘I want to report a bomb.”[[5]](#footnote-5)*

Quote 2: *‘To enter the city’s central shopping area he was forced to leave his car in a car-park three streets away. As he passed through the security check at the entrance to the pedestrian malls a teenage boy wearing a T-shirt with ‘U2’ blazoned on it waited at the other side of the security gate. The boy looked at him, and as he went down the crowded shopping street he saw the boy follow him. The Bon-Bon was a tea-shop, next door to the large toyshop which he had passed that morning. As before, a number of children were peering in at the display of moving toy cars. Dillon stopped by this window and, looking back, saw the boy idling by a sports shop further up the street. He kept looking at the boy. The boy turned slightly and looked in his direction, then, realising Dillon was watching him, he went in at the entrance of the sports shop as if to make a purchase. At once, Dillon ducked into the Bon-Bon tea-shop. ……… As he spoke, he remembered the boy outside. He looked out the window. The boy was still there. He was now standing behind the peering children at the toyshop next door, pretending to watch the display of moving mechanical cars. ‘Look over there,’ he said to her. ‘See the on in the U2 T-shirt. He’s following me. This is the IRA we’re mixed up with. You know very well we could be killed. Is that what you want?’ ………… As he stood, searching for her in the moving mass of people, he saw the boy still standing outside the toyshop. A young girl came running up the street, running towards the boy. The boy smiled and they kissed. He put his arm around her and they walked off, innocent lovers, disappearing into the crowd.’ [[6]](#footnote-6)*

In quote one you can read about the moment Michael Dillon decides to no corporate with the IRA, and to report the bomb by the police. He risked his own life to save many other people. This quote shows that Michael Dillon is very heroic and caring for other people. In quote two you can see that after Michael got mixed up with the IRA he became very distrustful. It is not weird you get suspicious quickly after you’ve been true such an awful experience, but with Michael it really starts to control his life.

The following quotes describe the character of Moira Dillon:

Quote 1: *‘She turned and went back into the bedroom, sitting at her triptych mirror to begin the nightly brushing of her hair. As she picked up the brush she leaned forward and angrily plucked out a long strand, bright as a silver wire, examining it as though it were infected. Her blue cotton nightgown was cut in a deep V, exposing her long white back, the vertebrae like knuckles down her spine. She took up the brush again and began to comb her hair forward over her face with a jerking movement which brought back to him the sight of her kneeling at the toilet bowl, her finger in her mouth, retching as she vomited up half a box of chocolates or part of a cream cake, eaten less than an hour before. Not that she had bothered to conceal her illness from him, once he discovered it. ‘It’s something that happens to me,’ she said. ‘It’s called bulimia and there’s nothing I can do about it. I suppose I should have told you before we got married. Yes, of course I should. Anyway, I don’t want you telling people, now. Do you hear me, Michael? I mean it.”[[7]](#footnote-7)*

Quote 2: *‘As they reached the landing, the angry one came towards them, his voice trembling with rage and anxiety. ‘She’s been in there far too long. And the last wee while she’s been pullin’ on the chain. She’s coverin’ up somethin’.’ Suddenly, Dillon thought of the bathroom window with its ten-foot drop to the roof of the garden shed below. He moved quickly past the gunmen and knocked on the door. ‘Moira! Moira, it’s me. Are you all right?’ He put his ear to the door. Inside, he heard the cistern filling with water. A hand shoved him aside. Kev, the angry gunman, began to bang his shoulder against the door. The noise alarmed the fat one who said, ‘Shsh! You’ll wake the whole street up. Wait.’ The fat one took a wallet from the back pocket of his jeans, pulled out a plastic credit card and carefully inserted it in the door-jamb below the lock. Wiggling it up and down, he turned the door handle. The door opened. As it did, Dillon, heartsick, heard the sound of something falling on to the roof below. The bathroom light was on. There was no one in there. The bathroom window was open. It was a small window, three feet high by three feet wide. The gunman ran towards it. Kev reached it first, peered out, then hoisted himself up on the windows, stuck his revolver in his belt, swung his legs out and jumped into the night. They heard him crash on the roof of the shed below. Dillon ran to the window with the other guard, peering out. On the slanting roof of the shed, Moira was crawling down towards the gutter, preparing for the second drop to the garden path below. But Kev had scrambled up and now slithered recklessly towards her. As he did she turned, saw him, and screamed, ‘Help! Help!’ But, as her voice cried out, high and loud in the darkness, Kev was on top of her, his hand covering her face.’ [[8]](#footnote-8)*

In the first quote you can read about the eating disorder Moira is suffering from. Bulimia is a form of anorexia, and Moira is already suffering from it a long time. It is a life-controlling disease. In the second quote you can read about one of the reckless decisions Moira made during the story. During the hostage of the IRA Moira tried to jump out of the bathroom window. Luckily for her it ended quite well.

Short summary

Michael Dillon, an hotel manager from Belfast, is while he is married to his wife Moira Dillon in love with someone else, Andrea Baxter. The night Michael decides to tell Moira about his affair everything changes. Michael and Moira were held hostage by the IRA all night long. The next morning Michael is forced to drive to his hotel to place a bomb in the parking lot, but he decides to no cooperate and calls the police. When the police arrests someone of the IRA they ask Michael to testify because he has seen the face of one of the hostages. In the meantime Michael already moved to London for safety matters, so it’s a really tuff decision whether to testify or not. But when Michael finally decides he is already too late, in London he is silenced.

Opposites

For my Book Report I had to choose three pairs of opposites that are used in the book. The first opposite is hope / despair. In the beginning of the book during the hostage of the IRA there is a lot of despair, but when Michael stands up to the IRA by reporting the bomb he had hope because nothing bad happened to him or Moira.

The second opposite is happy / unhappy. Michael is happy because he found his true love, Andrea Baxter. After the incident with the IRA fear is ruling Michael’s life, and fear makes people very unhappy.

The last opposite is life / death. Michael saves so many innocent people by reporting the bomb attack to the police, unfortunately at the ending he has to pay the price with his own life.

Themes, message and moral

Theme: Difficult decisions.

Message: Do not doubt too long. If a decision feels right, stay with it.

Moral: Sadly not all the bad people get what they deserve.

Quote: *“Michael?’ ‘Mmm?’ ‘I won’t go word for Peg if you don’t want me to.’ ‘I’ve told you,’ he said. ‘I was wrong. It’s probably a good idea. Peg thinks you’ll enjoy it.’ ‘No, listen,’ she said. ‘If I’m not wanted any more, I don’t want to stay. I’ll pack up and walk out of here tomorrow. There’s lots of things I can do. I can go back to teaching. I mean, I’m not going to stay where I’m not wanted.’ Now was the time to say it. But if he did they would be up all night.* [[9]](#footnote-9)

This quote is about the moment Michael has to make the difficult decision whether to tell Moira about his affair or not. This is one of the many hard decisions Michael has to make during the story.

Writer’s style

Quote: *‘Once past the university he was able to speed up, driving back along the same route he had taken to come here this morning. He drove erratically. He saw Kev’s angry masked face, heard his high angry voice, saw the gloved hand pointing the revolver. Kev didn’t kill her. I killed her. I killed her when I picked up the phone, I killed her to save those French tourists, I killed her to save Pottinger and those bigets in the Emerald Room.’*

As you can see the writer is very good at building up the tension. He does this by describing things in detail but not too long-winded.

My opinion

The ending of the book is completely what I expected. In the last few chapters you get the feeling you’re building up to something because Michael is changing his mind the whole time. You are just waiting for something to go wrong. If the story did not ended like this it could go on and will become long winded.

“I wanted the book to read like a thriller but to be something more.”

I think Brian Moore succeeded in both. You definitely get the feeling of a thriller. The tension slowly builds up during the story and therefore you can sympathize with the main character. But because the story takes place in a short time frame, it does not become boring and predictable.

1. Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Page 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Page 163 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Page 136 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Page 65/66 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Page 133 and 136/137 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Page 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Page 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Page 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)