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Silence and Resistance in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*

“If we were all on trial for our thoughts, we would all be hanged”
(Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*)

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Abstract: Silence is a concept both praised and criticised when put to practice. The latest trends in society encourage individuals to be their true selves; simultaneously, some are reproached for presenting too much of themselves to the world. In this sense, discretion is arguably closely linked to a performative silence used as a rhetorical tool for self-protection. The question is whether silence and performativity are opposite or complementary terms. The main purpose of this article is to analyse this binary logic from an intersectional perspective. More specifically, to ascertain whether resistance to society's limitations can be performed through silence or necessarily through performative actions. The case study is Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* (1996) set in mid-nineteenth century, puritan Canada. Atwood's postmodern fictionalization of Grace Marks makes her a conflicted character with a duality that terrorises society. She is, in Hegelian terms, both the Master and the Slave. Grace's discretion later becomes performative, in the sense that it alters reality and brings something new into existence: her social resistance. This article has led to the conclusion that Grace makes a calculated use of her silence in an attempt to balance the lack of control that she seems to have over the press's representation of her identity.