



Sounds of Silence

Analysis by Bianca and Tanya



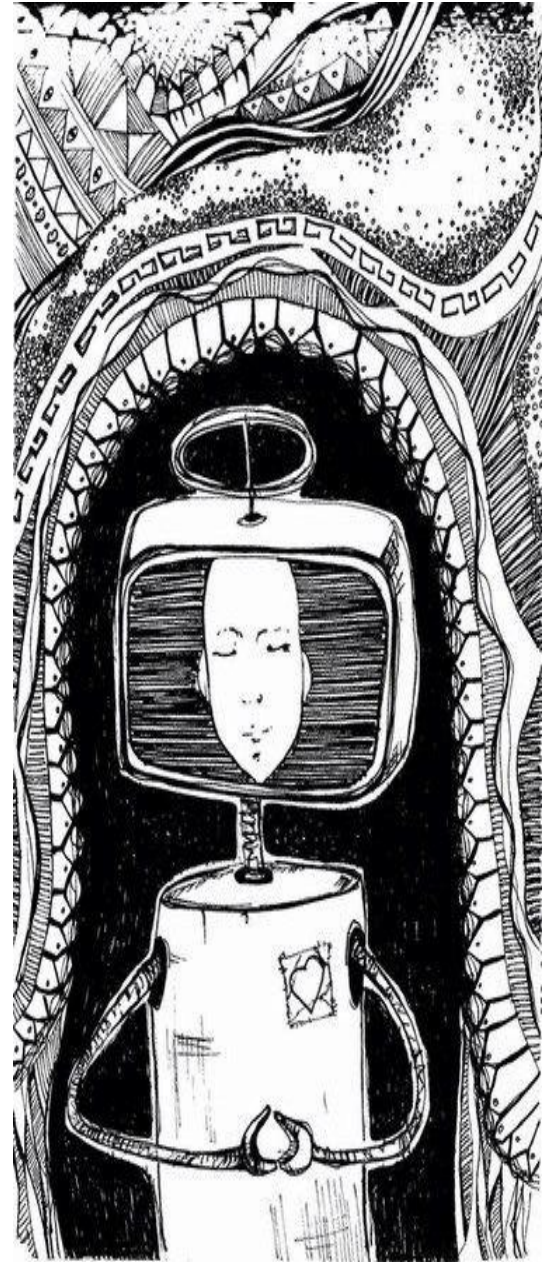
- Born on October 13, 1941 in Newark, New Jersey
- He is a singer-songwriter, as well as a musician
- **He has earned 12 Grammys for his solo and collaborative work, including the lifetime achievement award**
- His father, Louis, was a college professor, a bass player and a dance bandleader. Belle, his mother, was an elementary school teacher.
- **Paul's music career started when he was eleven- then he met Art Garfunkel. They both performed in a production of Alice in Wonderland(1953)and after that they begun singing together, performed at school dances and later created the duet "Simon and Garfunkel"**
- Simon majored in English at Queens College after graduating the Forest Hill High School-he earned a degree in English Literature. Also, Paul briefly attended Brooklyn Law School after graduation.
- **Between 1957 and 1964, Simon wrote, recorded and released more than 30 songs. In 2001, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.**

The theme

The Sound of Silence was written in 1964 and it is traditionally associated with the death of John F. Kennedy.

However, it also clearly represents two problems of the society which existed at that time and became even worse in ours- people, who are not able to listen to each other or just to reach out to someone else in general- they are trapped in the sounds of their own silence and they don't need anything or anyone else. The poem is addressed to people, who forget how to communicate with others.

Despite the major key that was used in the original song, the message is quite depressing. The sibilance, which is present in every line, creates the atmosphere of melancholy.



Meter and Scansion

- *There are 5 stanzas and all of them contain some sort of rhyme.*
- *The rhythm scheme is complex*

Héllö dárknëss, mý öld fríënd,
Í've cómě tó tǎlk wíth yóú ágáin,
Bëcáüsé ä vísíön söftly créëpíng,
Léft íts séëds whílë Í wǎs sléëpíng,
Änd thé vísíön thát wǎs plántëd ín mý bráin
Stíll rëmäíns
Wíthín thë sóund óf sílëncë.

Trochaic Tetrameter

Iambic Heptameter

Iambic Hexameter

Trochaic Hexameter

Iambic Heptameter

Trochaic Dimeter

Iambic Pentameter

Hello darkness, my old friend,
I've come to talk with you again,
Because a vision softly creeping,
Left its seeds while I was sleeping,
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence.

- **Personification**- was used to represent how alienated the author is and how comfortable he feels in darkness and silence. The underlined word shows that he “talks” to it regularly.
- **Synesthesia**- a combination of two devices (in this case metaphor and personification), to mix the reader’s senses, illustrates the idea that will be explained later and creates imagery.
- This **paradox** is not only the title, but also is **repeated** in every stanza, to emphasize the theme.

In **restless dreams** I walked alone
Narrow streets of cobblestone,
'Neath the **halo** of a street lamp,
I turned my collar to the cold and damp
When my eyes were **stabbed** by the flash of
a **neon light**
That **split** the night
And **touched** the sound of silence.

- **The paradox** indicates the negative feelings that make the vision that was mentioned in the first stanza an unpleasant experience. The imagery that follows in the next three lines gives the impression of author's solitude, claustrophobia and, as a result, complete loneliness.
- **The metaphor** tells about the divine nature of the light that allows him to see the streets of cobblestone- old ones, from the time when the communication still existed in author's opinion.
- **The hyperbole and personification** are showing the hostility which author feels toward the **next metaphor**. This is an example of epiphany, which bothers Paul Simon- mass media is now more important to people than interacting with others.
- **The illusion** that was created represents the damage to the precious silence and darkness.

And in the **naked** light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more.

☞ People talking without speaking,

☞ People hearing without listening,

☞ People writing songs that voices never share

And no one dared
Disturb the **sound of silence**.

- This particular **personification** represents the perfect clearness of author's view of the people in the society; he realized the truth, understood the problem, which the **hyperbole** only emphasizes.
- ☞ Those three lines are **paradoxes** that were used to draw attention to the truth- people talk, but it's all gibberish; they do not really listen anyone except for themselves; they all are extremely alienated from each other. This misery and isolation is untouchable, no one dares to break it, because without it the full weight of loneliness might kill them.

"Fools" said I, "You do not know
Silence **like a cancer** grows.

- Hear my words that I might teach you,
 - Take my arms that I might reach you."
- But my words like silent raindrops fell,
And echoed
In the wells of silence.

- The **simile** is referring to a horrible disease
- □ The parallel structure emphasizes the syntax
- Next **simile** is creating an image of the tear drops that were caused by the "**disease**"
- This is the only **variation** from the main **paradox** of the song and it can be interpreted as the leftovers of hope that author has.



Why do you think Paul chose specifically cancer for this simile?

→And the people bowed and prayed
→ To the neon god they made.
And the sign flashed out its warning,
→ In the words that it was forming.
And the signs said, The words of the prophets
are written on the subway walls
And tenement halls.
And whispered in the sounds of silence

- The irony that is used is an example of illusion that people created- the false god (media), which they are listening to.
- The imagery in those two lines is also ironic, because the problem it self is showing people a way to solve it, but they are too ignorant to see or do something about it.
- The last three sentences explain the idea which was “prepared” for the reader in the first stanza- there is a way to break the silence and the prophets, which are artists, who always tell the truth in their works, and the poor, who are not engaged in the media or affected by the neon light. Those people know the truth and know how to solve the problem, but no one listens to them- just like the train, life passes too fast and people are not able to see what is on the subway walls. However, the word “whispered” is the second thing that can be interpreted as the remaining of hope, because the whispering not only indicates that people know, but also that with time they might be able to say it out loud.

Is the topic of
self-isolation and
media-worshiping
still relevant today? Is
it possible for a song
that was written fifty
years ago to depict
problems in our
society?