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**“THE SILENCE”, “THE BELLS”, AND “THE TELL-TALE HEART”:
(ABSENCE OF) SOUND AND (PRESENCE OF) SILENCE IN EDGAR
ALLAN POE**

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ABSTRACT

This final paper aims to analyze how sound and silence are portrayed in the narrative poem *The Silence* (1838), the poem *The Bells* (1849), and the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843), all written by Edgar Allan Poe. Under the light of intermedial studies, I depart my investigation from the volume *Sinister Resonance* (2010) written by the musician David Toop, intending to explore whether the sonorous abundance (TOOP, 2010) may trigger disturbance or stillness. On top of that, the musicality represented in different means within the stories interweaves the works complementing each other. Poe leads to critically perceive musicality as a compass of the passage of time as well as if the absence of sound and the presence of silence manifest themselves as dangerous or peaceful measures.

Keywords: sound, silence, musicality, Edgar Allan Poe, literature, intermediality

RESUMO

Este trabalho de conclusão de curso tem como objetivo analisar como o som e o silêncio são revelados no poema narrativo *O Silêncio* (1838), no poema *Os Sinos* (1849) e no conto *O Coração Delator* (1843) todos de Edgard Alan Poe. À luz dos estudos sobre intermedialidade, partimos a investigação do livro *Sinister Resonance* (2010) escrito pelo músico David Toop, de modo a explorar se a abundância sonora (TOOP, 2010) pode ser perturbadora ou aquietadora. Além disso, a musicalidade apresentada em diferentes meios nas obras escolhidas se entrelaça de modo que uma complementa a outra. Poe conduz à percepção crítica da musicalidade como um compasso de passagem do tempo, bem como se a ausência de som e a presença de silêncio se manifestam como medidas perigosas ou pacíficas.

Palavras-chave: Som; Silêncio; Musicalidade; Edgar Allan Poe; Literatura; Intermedialidade.

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1. INTRODUCTION

When was the last time that you actually heard the presence of silence? What types of emotion this presence or absence might cause? Imagine yourself living in a world completely soundless. You are not able to hear the sound of a good laugh, the voice of someone you cherished, you cannot listen to your favorite song. The world around you is inaudible. This premise will guide this study in order to comprehend how sound and silence motifs are depicted in Literature.

Literature and music can share many similarities and provide great possibilities for expression. As they represent notable means of communication, both can play artistic to political roles. The mysterious and macabre atmosphere created by Edgar Allan Poe greatly influenced the musical universe. The relevance of the author beyond Literature went further in music, going from classical to symphonic metal. Fascinated by his work, Claude Debussy (1917) wrote an arrangement for an unfinished opera inspired by *The Fall of House of Usher*. Renowned singers and bands also produced melodies inspired by Poe's works. These melodies appear in songs such as *Nevermore* (1974) (by *Queen*); the *The Poet and the Pendulum* (2007) (by the Finnish band *Nightwish* and inspired by the short story *The Pit and the Pendulum*) inspired by the short story *The Pit and the Pendulum*; *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1981) (by the heavy metal band *Iron Maiden* and named after the work *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*), over several others artists. There is even a Spotify playlist called *The raven and the song: the influence of Edgar Allan Poe in music* (2019) with more than thirty songs influenced by the author.

Music also plays a significant role in Literature, in the construction of setting and character, since it can predict the tone and theme, and also because musical features can support the story development. Among so many examples of books that served as insight for songs, we highlight the following: *The sound of silence* (1964) (by Simon & Garfunkel based on *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), by Ray Bradbury) and *Hurricane* (1976) (by Bob Dylan, inspired by *The Sixteenth Round* (1974), by Rubin "Hurricane" Carter). The dialogue between these media results in wide production of art intercrossing words and tones, stanzas and harmony, and creativeness that together result in extensive artistic work. The sensations that music is capable of causing in the listener can be transferred to literature helping in the construction of tone

aimed by the author. According to the comparatist Walter Bernhart (2017, p. 295) “Dylan himself, in his banquet acceptance speech, made it clear: what interests him most – like Shakespeare before him, as he says – is the performance situation, the conditions under which the delivery of his songs can take place [...]” Thus, music and literature are art expressions intimately connected, so much that in 2016 the songwriter Bob Dylan won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Therefore, this final paper is the result of a genuine affection for Literary studies and for Professor Miriam Vieira’s research field, which relates to music, poems, paintings, and architecture, all types of art that would be suitable for my interests. With this in mind, the selected literary objects are going to provide some of the necessary elements to enable the investigation to move forward to this future aim.

Some of the discussions undertaken during Literature classes played an important role in choosing Poe’s oeuvre as the object of analysis. The literary features involving horror, supernatural, mystery, suspense, melancholy, subjectivity, and uncanny themes, were instigated to further explore his intriguing life and his remarkable works. Considered one of the most relevant authors of all time, Poe managed to stand out as a horror writer, as his attention to form and style in his writing composed a feature of notable in short stories until nowadays. The length of the short stories and the choice of strategic words built the necessary form arrangement capable of keeping the reader’s attention and interest while provoking the feeling of expectation in the suspense.

Departing from David Toop’s discussions on music, sound, and silence in different forms of art expressions, this work seeks the absence of sound and the presence of silence in three works by Edgar Allan Poe: a narrative poem, a poem, and a short story. The three pieces chosen to be investigated are defined as the narrative poem “The Silence” (1838), the poem “The Bells” (1849), and the short story “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843). Amidst the range of Poe’s works, we chose the ones cited due to the diversity of genres and literary features, so that we could achieve contrasting analyzes from different perspectives and according to the differences of each genre and content of the literary object. That being said, the main objective of this final paper is to comparatively study the relations between sound and silence in Edgar Allan Poe’s work, under the lens of intermedial studies. Aiming to investigate the theories that surround the concepts of sound and silence in Poe’s work and also different types of arts including music, books, paintings, theater, and plays we will rely on the discussion by David Toop in the volume

Sinister Resonance (2010). While exploring how the influence of sound and silence in literature occurs, we will count on Flávio Barbeitas (2017), Walter Bernhart (2017), and Walter Bernhart; Steven Paul Scher; Werner Wolf (1999). But first, we will briefly present the author's selected works.

The next section will elicit theoretical relations on how the borders between music, literature, as well as painting, may be crossed in order to ground our comparative case study on the (absence of) sound and the (presence of) silence in Poe's selected works.

2. SOUND, WORD, AND IMAGE THEORETICAL ARRANGEMENTS

David Toop is an English musician, writer, and English teacher, most known for works such as *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound, and Imaginary Worlds, Inflamed Invisible* (2001), and *Sinister Resonance* (2010). As illustrated in his most notorious work, *Ocean of Sound* (2001), he relates his writing with music content. More precisely, music plays the role of an auditory partner of the book, which means that, for each part of the book, there is a suitable song from distinct artists and music genres created to be listened to while reading the book, which provides the reader/listener a multisensory experience¹.

Sinister Resonance (2010) provided an applicable basis for this study. Due to its content based on the exploration of silence and sound present in contrasting forms of art, Toop constructs an artistic atmosphere that goes through Edgar Allan Poe, Andy Warhol, Fernando Pessoa, Henri Matisse to Virginia Woolf, and Rembrandt. Divided into a prelude entitled *Distant Music*, and four chapters named *Part I: Aerial – Notes Toward a History of Listening; Part II: Vessels and Volumes; Part III: Spectral and Part IV: Interior Resonance*, this creative atmosphere results from the discussion of the impressions concerning to the presence of sound and silence in different types of artistic works.

For instance, Toop approaches several works of Virginia Woolf in which each of them points out his reflection surrounding sound and silence aspects present in her works. In *Part I: Aerial – Notes Toward a History of Listening*, subtitle *Dark Senses* he brings up the representation of silence written by her in the novel *Between the acts* (1941)²:

¹ Playlist available at: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1jmdHQeVoBxLOQ5wC1FKky>.

² WOOLF, Virginia. *Between the acts*. Gutenberg, 2003. Available at: <<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0301171h.html>>. Access: 05 September 2021.

Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence. (WOOLF, 1941. apud TOOP, 2010, p. 42)

In the arch that Toop traces around forms that approach sound, the practice of conversation is included as a discussion topic. In *Part II: Vessels and Volumes*, the subtitle *A conversation piece*³ contains an analysis of *A Conversation* (Figure 01) painted between 1913 and 1916, by Vanessa Bell, Virginia Woolf's sister. Toop believes that behind the static silent painting there is much to infer. The way that the three women are placed, leaning on to hear the whisper makes the outsider viewer behave as an eavesdropper desiring to also listen to the conversation. Although the painting is silent, it can provoke the viewer's thoughts about the sound that was made in it. About this silence portrayed in the painting, Toop (2010, p. 118) states that "at the heart of such exclusivity is the whisper, a quiet sibilance at the edge of silence through which the richness of the spoken voice is reduced to its highest frequencies." (TOOP, 2010, p. 118).

Figure 1- Conversation



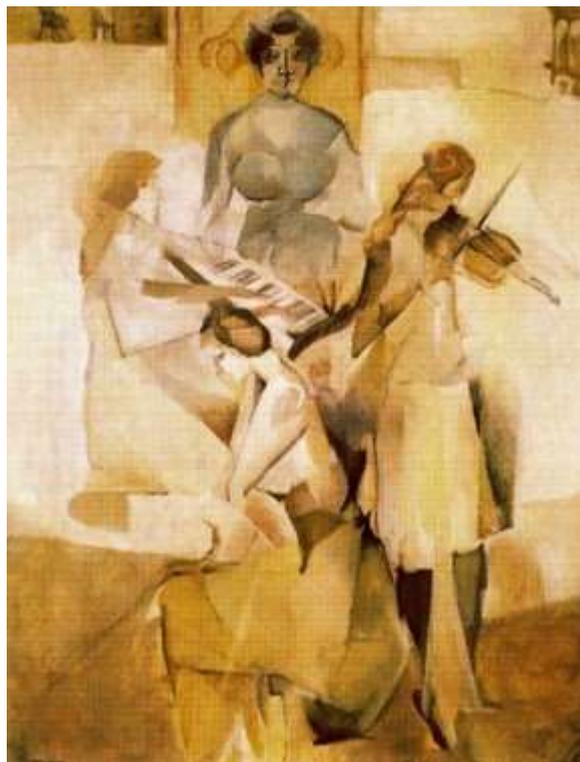
BELL, Vanessa. **Conversation**, 1913. Oil on canvas, 86,6 cm x 81 cm. Available at: <<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/conversation-207043>>.

³ This is the name given to a type of group portraiture. Works of this sort are usually small in scale and depict, relatively informally, a group of family members or friends. They are sometimes, but not necessarily, engaged in conversation. The setting can be either domestic or rural.

Considering the different types of works from both sisters, as a viewer and reader, it is possible to imply that they manage to portray sound expressed silently.

In *Part II: Vessels and Volumes*, subtitle *Act of silence*, Toop leads to a close observation of the details portrayed in Marcel Duchamp's *Sonata* (1911) (Figure 02), the disposition of the women painted, how they were placed, the use of pale colors and blurred lines, "like sounds, their bodies lack defined edges" (TOOP, 2010, p. 68), the woman centralized firmly and distantly from the others. This painting pictures Duchamp's family, his sisters Yvonne, Magdeleine, Suzanne playing the instruments, and his mother Lucie Nicholle. Until the resolution of the implications that were induced from the painting, Toop introduces facts from the artist's life to reveal that his mother suffered from a progressive hearing disorder, leaving her almost completely deaf by the time he was born. This condition led to isolating herself in a soundless world, keeping apart from her family as expressed in the painting.

Figure 2 – Sonata



DUCHAMP, Marcel. *Sonata*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 145.1 x 113.3 cm. Available at: <
<https://obrasearteblog.wordpress.com/2016/06/05/la-sonate-sonata/>>.

In *Part III: Spectral*, *The Listener* is dedicated to writers of supernatural fiction and enthusiasts of esoteric philosophies. Toop dives into the notion of sound being closer to

thoughts and emotions than to tangible objects and assurances of the world. For him, “sound slips into the territory of the mind to settle at unknown depths [...]” (TOOP, 2010, p. 170). Toop approaches the English writer, Algernon Blackwood, for his works known to focus on ghosts, and supernatural themes. The author’s reflection on Blackwood’s legacy elicits that “whatever plot device explains to the reader the cause of a haunting, Blackwood leaves an underlying impression that civilization’s toxins are the real source of malign psychic phenomena.” (TOOP, 2010, p. 170). Moreover, after discussing some of Blackwood’s works, Toop classifies *The Listener* (1907) as the most fitting story of what he describes as “excessive sensitivities of sensory perception and a vivid imagination.” (TOOP, 2010, p. 171). The plot of the story consists in

Following the form of the narrator’s diary, the story records his physical and mental decline, caused largely by inexplicable sounds. They originate in darkness, from the wind and its tricks: ‘Down this funnel the wind dropped, and puffed and shouted. Such noises I never heard before.’ Not only troubled by unfamiliar sounds, the narrator is irritated by noises of more mundane origin. (TOOP, 2010, p. 171)

This scenery portrays sound as a complex sense leading to madness from disturbing unheard noise. Toop continues to put into words the unsettling sounds until the man experiences a lunatic state

He begins to suffer what we might call paranoid delusions: he experiences violent thoughts, ‘as if the words were not my own, but had been spoken into my ear’; in the night he wakes in the darkness ‘with the impression that someone was standing outside my bedroom door listening.’ (TOOP, 2010, p. 171)

In this chapter, Toop explores works from different authors within the dark, morbid themes. Some subtitles that illustrate that are *Darkness Gathers*, *The voice of ghosts talking*, *Instrument of death*, *Sound as apparition*, and *A phonographic ghost*, among others. In this section, he also approaches some works of Poe as “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), “The Bells” (1849), “The Oblong Box” (1844), and “The Silence” (1838), and their implications concerning how sound is employed in each of them. Departing from the three pieces settled to be explored in this paper, “The Silence” (1838), “The Bells” (1849), and “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), the statements presented by Toop will assist the arguments present in this further study.

Finally, in *Part IV: Interior Resonance*, Toop investigates silence. To define a possible path to reach this silence, he cites *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932) written by John Cowper Powys. For Toop, Powys illustrates “fugitive sounds barely perceptible to human senses” (TOOP, 2010, p. 181) The words fainting left an ambient silence almost inaudible, “they were like the creakings of chairs after people have left a room for hours. They were like the open and

shutting of a door in an empty house [...]” (TOOP, 2010, p. 181). Toop continues his reflections upon the many species of silence, affirming that “all silences are uncanny, because we have become estranged from absences of sound.” (TOOP, 2010, p. 182). With this in mind, it is reasonable to relate human discomfort when hearing silence. The sonorous stimulus submerges people in a sense that it feels unnatural to remain silent.

Regarding the crossing between music and literature, in *Is There Still this “Flower? Contrasting Representations of Music in Two Literary Works* (2017) Flávio Barbeitas, in his turn, approaches the intimate relation of a pianist and his music. Contrasting the romance *Presto con fuoco* (1995) by Roberto Cotroneo and the memoir book *Mozart in the jungle: sex, drugs and classical music* (2015) by Blair Tindall, he analyzes the musical representation according to each work. On top of that, he defends that music expresses wide possibilities to narrate impossible things, such as a music score, and concerning its relations to Literature:

It is clear: perhaps literature finds itself attracted to music precisely because of the challenge of telling it, of approaching an art that is at the same time so close and so distinct, as well as emotionally so impactful.⁴ (BARBEITAS, 2017, p. 138)

Both works share the complexity to live with music. The pianist suffers alone with his own exigency to play perfectly, even though he recognizes that the audience does not perceive if he fails in some musical note because they are not aware of the technical rules. Concerning that lack of perception of the audience, the pianist’s words to better elucidate that:

and then, in the first two bars, I felt that there was something strange, that I was doing something wrong. I felt, of course, no one in the audience could imagine that that opening in C major brought with it a sense of loss; or rather, of inadequacy (...) It is disconcerting to spend a lifetime studying details that no one can catch⁵. (COTRONEO, 1995, p. 14 *apud* BARBEITAS, 2017, p. 130.)

The music approached here revealed two perceptions possibly unknown to the reader and to the enthusiastic public of classical music. First, there is the view of the audience watching delightfully the musical performance. Then, there is a view inside the pianist’s mind taken by the consequent agony of wondering why are they not playing better than that. The music played brings contentment, and we take the risk to say comfort as well, while the pianist feels alone in

⁴ Original: “É claro: talvez a literatura se veja atraída pela música justamente pelo desafio de a contar, de se aproximar de uma arte que é a um só tempo tão próxima e tão distinta, como também, emocionalmente tão impactante.” Unless specified, all the translations in this final paper are of our responsibility.

⁵ Original: “E então, já nos primeiros dois compassos, sentia que havia algo estranho, que eu estava errando alguma coisa. Eu sentia, é claro, ninguém do público poderia imaginar que aquele início em dó maior trazia consigo uma sensação de perda; ou melhor, de inadequação (...) É desconcertante passar uma vida estudando detalhes que ninguém pode captar.”

his incomprehension. That is why Cotroneo states that “the absolute perfection, the obsession with the smallest detail leads to loneliness⁶” (COTRONEO, 1995, p. 38 *apud* BARBEITAS, 2017, p. 132).

In *Musicalized Fiction and Intermediality: Theoretical Aspects of Word and Music Studies* (1999), the authors Walter Bernhart, Steven Paul Scher and Werner Wolf share their findings about word and music studies, proposing to discuss the following topics:

1. The integration of ‘word and music studies’ (including the research on musicalized fiction) into the wider context of the study of ‘intermediality’;
2. A typological distinction between two fundamental forms of intermediality and the place of musicalized fiction in it;
3. A more detailed typology of forms of musical presence in literature than has hitherto been developed;
4. The problem of recognizing musicalized literature/fiction. (BERNHART; SCHER; WOLF, 1999, p. 38)

According to the authors, the study of words and music is characterized as Intermedial, thereby “‘Intermedial’ is thus a flexible adjective that can be applied, in a broad sense, to any phenomenon involving more than one medium.” (BERNHART; SCHER; WOLF, 1999, p. 41). In a few words, Intermediality promotes integration between at least two genres or media of expression. This concept applied to Literature reveals that “[...] what can be observed in musicalized literature, be it fiction, drama or poetry, is an example of intermediality in this sense, since it involves music in the signification of a work of verbal art. It remains to be asked in what way this ‘involvement’ takes place.” (BERNHART; SCHER; WOLF, 1999, p. 42).

Intermediality may be presented into two categories, direct or ‘overt’ and indirect or ‘covert’. The first is characterized as

I conceive direct or overt intermediality as the way in which, at least in one instance, more than one media is present in the artefact, so that each media appears with its typical or conventional signifiers, remains distinct and, in principle, separately [...] the “intermedial” quality of the artefact is immediately discernible on the surface (hence “direct” or “manifest” intermediality). (BERNHART; SCHER; WOLF, 1999, p. 42)

The second is determined as

[...] indirect or ‘covert’ intermediality can be defined as the involvement of (at least) two conventionally distinct media in the signification of an artefact in which, however, only one (dominant) medium appears directly with its typical or conventional signifiers, the other one (the non-dominant medium) being only indirectly present ‘within’ the first medium as a signified (in some cases also as a referent). It is, as it were, ‘covered’ by the dominant medium [...] and hence the two

⁶ Original: “A perfeição absoluta, a obsessão do ínfimo detalhe levam à solidão.”

media cannot be separated from each other, as in the case of overt/direct intermediality. (BERNHART; SCHER; WOLF, 1999, p. 44)

Considering the works chosen to be studied in this paper, the distinction of these two types of intermediality defended by the authors, dictates the work's features. Thus, Bernhart, Scher, and Werner (1999, p. 45) affirm that "Musicalized fiction is essentially an example of covert/indirect intermediality since it involves music in the signification of a verbal text which yet remains literature." This indirect presence of music in literature may occur in form of "music of words, whose purpose is a poetic imitation of musical sound, creating musical analogies by bringing to the foreground the sound qualities of language." (BERNHART; SCHER; WOLF, 1999, p. 46). In this sense, the interaction of media allowed by Intermediality enables the interaction in multiple literary arrangements.

Meanwhile, *From Orpheus to Bob Dylan: the Story of "Words and Music"* (2017) written by Walter Bernhart, traces a parallel between the manifestations related to words and music based on intermedial concepts. Starting in ancient Greece, he chooses the figure of the poet and musician Orpheus, judged by the ancient Greek people as being the inventor of song and music, to analyze one of the earlier encounters of media. Bernhart introduces the term *mousiké* which encloses music, dance, lyrics, and performance of poetry, a conception that represented the interconnection of distinct media at that time, and which is possible to relate to intermediality nowadays. *Mousiké* represented an important role in social life at that time, therefore influencing people's lives. In that sense, even the lyre given by Apollo to Orpheus was intentionally thought to indicate order and discipline.

Thus, *mousiké* was more than only music, it also comprised words as an important means of enhancing ethical effects, and dance was a further part of *mousiké* as a disciplining factor in the act of performance. Similarly, the old term *melos* referred not only to "melody" or "music", but to "a composition of words, tune, and rhythm", and the *melopoioi*, the "makers of songs", were composers and lyricists at the same time who performed their compositions in public. (BERNHART, 2017, p. 280)

The myth of Orpheus has had an effect in several works until today, including operas, literary works, paintings, movies, and even a play called *Orfeu da Conceição* (1956) by Vinícius de Moraes that later was performed as a musical in Brazil and Broadway, USA.

In order to investigate the correlation between words and sound, whether it was associative, conjunctive, dissociative, or disjunctive phases, Bernhart goes through European Musical Theatre analyzing the construction of operas that were combined by drama and music and were based on the Orpheus myth. Followed by European Art Song, where he discusses the

earliest non-dramatic singing, initially interpreted in the Middle Ages by Gregorian chants. According to the author, this form of choral is a true presentation of association and fusion among text and music.

[...] Forms of theatre combining various media and performance techniques, which interestingly were called *intermedi*. Many of them, incidentally, “featured the idea of music’s power as an important element of the plot”, which also reflects the Orpheus myth. (BERNHART, 2017, p. 283).

Then, the author considers two patterns within the association between words and music, and they are named “interpretative” and “non-interpretative” songs.

In the one case, the music enters into a dialogue with the text on the level of the signified and thus “interprets” it, concerns itself with the meaning of the text; this is the hermeneutic approach of text-setting; in the other case, the music shows no intention of interpreting what the text is saying and restricts itself to re-enforcing and strengthening the material basis of the text by affirmative identification with it; this can be called the enhancement approach of text-setting. (BERNHART, 2017, p. 290).

Thereby, Bernhart finally discusses the personification of Orpheus at this time, the awarded Nobel Prize, Bob Dylan. The author approaches his most known song called *The Times They Are A-Changin* in which Dylan integrates poetry and music, and even though it is considered a “non-interpretative” song, it carries the influence of a cultural message.

All things considered, it is revealed that the relationship between literature and music can be depicted in distinguished paths, after all. The theoretical scope provides different perspectives that enable this analysis to take dissimilar interpretations. The following comparative case study may have contrasting points of view on the presence of sound or its absence represented in literature, that is, whether differences relate them or not, and how the absence of sound or the presence of silence dictates the course of Poe’s selected works.

3. THE STUDY OF SONOROUS ASPECTS IN THREE PIECES BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Born on January 19th, 1809, Edgar Allan Poe was an American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic most known for his works based on themes of horror, supernatural and macabre. After his mother’s death, he lived with Francis and John Allan in Richmond. He attended the University of Virginia but did not complete the course and also joined the army for some time.

In between these episodes, he wrote some known works and first worked as a literary critic in the Southern Literary Messenger, in Richmond. His writing themes included horror, supernatural, mystery, and dark atmosphere. His innovative writing features, such as the choice of words, the tone and impression, and the length of the story, this one related to the creation of the short story, make him a canonical author. In sum, these are some of the characteristics that Poe himself describes that were created in the theoretical piece *The Philosophy of Composition* (1846).

3.1 About “The Silence”, “The Bells”, and “The Tell-Tale Heart”

“The Silence” was published in 1837 and begins with an unknown man revealing a story that a Demon was telling him. With a hand in his head, the Demon started to narrate his story, which occurred in a region in Libya, by the river Zaire “and there is no quiet there, nor silence” (POE, 1837, n.p.). Then he describes, somehow in a pleasant tone the melancholy of that place:

“The waters of the river have a saffron and sickly hue; and they flow not onwards to the sea, but palpitate forever and forever beneath the red eye of the sun with a tumultuous and convulsive motion. For many miles on either side of the river’s oozy bed is a pale desert of gigantic water-lilies. They sigh one unto the other in that solitude, and stretch towards the heaven their long and ghastly necks, and nod to and fro their everlasting heads. And there is an indistinct murmur which cometh out from among them like the rushing of subterrene water. And they sigh one unto the other.” (POE, 1837, p. 1)

The Demon continues to portray the uncomfortable place, emphasizing how there was no wind nor any silence all around. After this, the narrator, who in most parts of the narrative poem is the Demon, is able to see a rock with the moonlight shining on it, and there was written the word desolation. Upwards the rock, there was a man with his head down in his hands. The Demon hides behind the water-lilies to observe the man’s actions, but the man keeps sitting on the rock, with his hands on his head, watching around the noisy scenery representing desolation. After that, the demon starts to send curses to the man changing the scenery and sending a frightful tempest, loud and fearfully roars from animals, torment, and tumult, even so, the man stays on the rock, in his solitude. The Demon then decides to curse the man with silence. Meanwhile, the word written on the rock changed to “**SILENCE**” (emphasis the by author). Shockingly the man expresses a reaction, he raises his head and finally runs trembling

with fear until the demon cannot see him anymore; meanwhile, the demon starts to laugh at him.

“The Bells” was written in the final years of Poe’s life, being published in 1849, and is one of his most acclaimed poems. The poem has a strong presence of rhymes, with anaphora causing a sense of musicality that symbolizes the flow of passage of time, compared to the moments that the poem narrates. With no plot nor linearity, the poem is divided into four parts, each one revealing a different occasion. The first is represented by silver bells and how their melody brings merriment and delight while they tinkle in the night. The second is golden bells from a wedding and the melody of the bells depicts joy and happiness. The third moment turns to alarming brazen bells performing the agony of a fire, clanging despair. The last are robust/strong iron bells bringing disturbance, turning people afraid. The Ghouls that are responsible for ringing the bells seem to be pleased with the misery their melody reaches.

The short story “The Tell-Tale Heart” was first published in 1843 and it is equally disturbing. It starts with a man trying to justify himself, affirming that he is not mad even though his acts reveal the contrary “true! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily — how calmly I can tell you the whole story.” In the first paragraph, the sense of hearing is already presented as an important aspect, almost as a foreshadowing “above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.” During the narrative, the man keeps trying to convince the reader that his motives to murder the man that lived with him were accurate: “object there was none. [...] I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. [...] I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees — very gradually — I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.” (POE, 1843).

Sound is an intriguing character. While the man was watching the old man sleep during the night, it is possible to feel the silence as the major component of the scene causing a tense environment. This tension is passed from the assassin to the reader through the curiosity of thinking if the old man would wake or not. Throughout these glances at the old man between the doors, he felt powerful for controlling the situation, so the silence was suffocated by the feeling of grandiosity of the man “never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers — of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was,

opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts.” (POE, 1843). The desire to kill the old man emerged from the sight, it was the eye of the old man that disturbed him. But when the man executed the murder, it was the sound that invaded his soul terrifying him. After he cut the old man in pieces, he kept hearing his heart beating. The impact of this sound was traumatizing to him, so he confessed the crime “villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed! — tear up the planks! — here, here! — it is the beating of his hideous heart!” (POE, 1843).

3.1.1 The absence of sound and the presence of silence

In “The Silence” (1838), the imagery described in the reading provokes feelings of despair, and confusion, the desolation of that place with “sonorous abundance” (TOOP, 2010, p. 163) may be pictured, as suggested by Toop. One may wonder: why did the man keep sitting on the rock expressing no reaction to all that stimulus? Why did he assume a position like he was used to all that noise and frightening provocations? Considering this narrative poem as a kind of dark, horror allegory, there is much implicit in the story that it is possible to infer. The perception that he was hopeless with the world may be grounded. The repetition of sentences helps to emphasize the absence of sound “and there is no quiet there, nor silence” (POE, 1832, p. 1) and to focus on how the man was not disturbed by that “and the man trembled in the solitude; —but the night waned and he sat upon the rock.” (POE, 1832, p. 2). We can perceive that, even though he trembled, he stood in solitude. He was alone but all that noise that was going on worked almost as another character in the story making him company. In this sense, Toop (2010, p. 182) points out “all silences are uncanny, because we have become estranged from absences of sound.” This reading might lead to some other different probable conclusions, but one certain thought is that the man could not stand to be in silence with his own mind. Therefore, it is implied that silence may be more deafening than being around a place surrounded by the absence of it.

Benjamin Fisher (2014, n.p) affirms in *The Power of Words in Poe’s “Silence”* that the narrative poem is dedicated to demonstrating the horror of silence, as he says: “the curse of tumult is represented as happiness to the curse of silence”. In his point of view, the loud curses were received as something that caused great pleasure. He also defends the exhaustion of life

that the man seems to be suffering and how the sonorous aspects contributed to the composition of desolation:

He, the narrator, has become nothing; that is, he has been so lured from normal, everyday reality that he now exists in a mental-spiritual void, comparable to the desolation pictured by the Demon. The auditory effect in the tale is hypnotic if it is read aloud, as Poe thought poetry should be, and as much fiction also was at the time. (FISHER, 2014, n.p)

It is worth noting from Fisher's quotation the emphasis on reading the short story aloud. It makes a difference in reading out loud the killer's affliction after his crime, the heart pulsating compassionately, and the hopeless confession of the men in distress. By reading and listening to the sounds caused, the impact of the work will achieve the impression, or effect, to be conveyed as defended by Poe (1846).

Concerning the sonorous abundance (TOOP, 2010, p. 163), the sound in the poem took a presence that fulfilled the man's mind while he was sitting on the summit of the rock. All that consequent noise from the curses, which would be extremely disturbing for most people, caused in him stillness. In a certain way, it also brought peace; however, it's a distressing peace, considering that he was not necessarily in the heaven that we are used to picturing. The sound is comforting, avoiding him to hear the silence, which he is unable to deal with. For this man, the absence of sound is a cause of fear. According to Toop (2010, p. 163), "The sound of life may be excessive, Poe seems to be saying, yet its absence is intolerable." In the short story, the sound of life was presented in the form of resounding curses; however, this turbulent environment does not unsettle his apathy. In other words, the excessiveness of life sounds may not be as disturbing as the absence of them. The presence of silence confronts people's internal void.

The deafening silence characterized in "The Silence" (1838) is similar to the sound created in "The Bells" (1849) in the third and fourth stanzas, when Poe presents the brazen and iron bells. The brazen bells bring a loud alarum sound, with terror, screaming their affright "what a tale their terror tells of despair! How they clang, and clash, and roar! What a horror they outpour on the bosom of the palpitating air!" (POE, 1849) while the iron bells suggest a world of melancholy in which the Ghouls that played it were the only that felt glory with that moaning sound. Albeit, in both works, the presence of sound represents desolation, despair, and a setting of horror, it can be read and heard by the reader in different ways. In "The Silence" (1838) the curses sent by the Demon were personified in distinct elements, so the sound was

transmitted by a roar of an animal, tempest, the turbulent waves from the river, and different types of noises.

By contrast, in “The Bells” (1849), the presence of sound is produced only by one instrument, a repetitive and excessive ringing of the bells. There is a musicality as a base for the scenery constructed, so the tolls of the bells are there to perform the terror, but effectively orchestrate to develop that. Besides that, the clang of the bells also demarks time, in each stanza the musicality is thought to express feelings of merriment, the happiness of a marriage, terror, and affright, in this sense the sound works differently according to the setting approached. For every emotion, an adaptable ringing. Relating to Intermedial aspects, as Bernhart, Scher, and Wolf (1999, p. 48) declare

So that verifiable or at least convincingly identifiable ‘iconic’ similarities or analogies to (a work of) music or to effects produced by it emerge in (parts of) the text. As a result, the reader gets the impression that music is involved in the signification of the narrative [...] and that the presence of music can indirectly be experienced while reading.

For this reason, the selection of musical elements, the repetition of words emphasizing the sounds, and the structure of the poem, resulting in a construction that enables the reader to also become a listener of the melody produced.

In *A forma e a voz da melancolia: A construção literária do efeito em Edgar Allan Poe*, Marluce Melo e Souza (2017) analyzes how the form and phonology within the structure and the choice of words impacts the construction of meaning in “The Bells” (1849). She runs through each stanza of the poem searching the relations between sound and meaning by inspecting the functioning of the vowels and consonants, vocalic arrangements, rhymes, and rhythm. As a result, she concludes that:

The movement of the bells, regardless of the story it tells and the particular intensity never ceases. The antithetical quality that seems to separate the poem into two opposing segments, I-II and III-IV, does not transform them into a dissociated reality, but into complementary opposites that share the same essence. In a poem that investigates human conflicts and reproduces them in poetic form, joy does not exist without melancholy and chaos comes from order⁷. (MELO E SOUZA, 2017, p. 527)

⁷ Original: “O movimento dos sinos, independente da história que conte e da intensidade particular, nunca cessa. A qualidade antitética que parece separar o poema em dois segmentos opostos, I-II e III-IV, não os transforma numa realidade dissociada, mas em opostos complementares que partilham a mesma essência. Num poema que investiga os conflitos humanos e os reproduz em forma poética, a alegria não existe sem a melancolia e o caos provém da ordem.”

Even though each stanza expresses different moments, from merriment feelings to dramatic anguish, as the author proves, they complement each other. The resounding bells work as a clock indicating the time passing. That is when they relate, through the bell's melodies performing melancholic to joyful narratives of daily life.

At each feeling, a resilient tinkle to combine with. The brazen and iron bells could easily be some curse within "The Silence" (1838), thinking of its sound representing horror, and despair, despite that the man probably would stay static sitting on the rock. Similarly, in "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), the absence of silence could be interpreted as a torture curse on the killer

And the sound, too, became louder. It was a quick, low, soft sound, like the sound of a clock heard through a wall, a sound I knew well. Louder it became, and louder. (...) I was suffering more than I could bear, from their smiles, and from that sound. Louder, louder, louder! (POE, 1843)

The ambient presence of silence is filled with the old man's heartbeat. This silence is so unsettling for the killer that from it emerged the sound. As in "The Silence" (1838), the sound is a synonym of desolation, but in a way of giving console to the hopeless man, since he is still with his hands on his head, sitting in silence. Whereas in the short story the sound takes the killer to the limit of hallucination. He searches for the presence of silence in order to get rid of the sound, he then confesses his crime but the sound does not abandon him.

"The Silence's" curse had a disturbing effect on the man as a result of putting him in contact with his own mind. While in "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) this role was played by the sound, the beating of the old man's heart put the killer's face to his horrendous act, within his own mind. For that matter, sound and silence represented a similar role, but in contrary situations. Meanwhile, the sound as the main character in the poem "The Bells" (1849) is what enables to visualize the portrayed scenery. The disquieting repetition of words by means of alliteration promotes the melody and movement that leads to each part of the poem. In brief, the three works have musical elements represented by nature's tumultuous noises, an inner sound produced by a dead body, through a heart achieving a men's ears, and the tinkle of the bells resounding distinct harmonies. As mentioned before, this auditory construction makes "the reader gets the impression that music is involved in the signification of the narrative [...] and that the presence of music can indirectly be experienced while reading." (BERNHART, SCHER, WOLF, 1999, p. 48). On top of that, the authors state that:

As can be deduced from this, Scher's categories 'word music' and 'structural analogies to music' are technical subforms of an 'iconic' imitation of music in literature [...]: word music is the suggestion of a musical presence conveyed by a foregrounding of the acoustic dimension of the verbal signifiers (which, however, remain verbal signifiers and thus do not become, but only imitate, music), whereas structural analogies consist in creating the impression of a musical presence through the non-musical signifieds and (optionally) the signifiers of the text, so that some musical form thereby emerges as a signified. (BERNHART, SCHER, WOLF, 1999, p. 48)

In summary, in relation to music and literature in the works studied, it is possible to infer that music is non-dominant media, even though its symbolism has an effect on the fluidity of the stories.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In brief, the relationship between literature and music promotes a vast arrangement of works. In this work, we intended to investigate how the absence or presence of silence was approached in the narrative poem "The Silence" (1838), the poem "The Bells" (1849), and the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), all created by Edgar Allan Poe. In each piece, the sound, or the lack of it, assumed a contrasting role that ordered the tone of the narrative. It was possible to assume that the sonorous aspects illustrated in the construction of these stories collaborated with the impression proposed by the author, as well as the length of the works.

To achieve these results, we based our study on Toop's observations of the functioning of silence in different works from several artists and authors. His accurate reflections about how sound and silence behavior support the development of the work, either a painting or a poem, helped to guide our glance into Poe's writing. Moreover, the intermedial studies presented by Wolf, Scher, and Bernhart made possible the understanding of technical subjects involving literature and music. From this reading, the comprehension of the structure and analyses of work including more than one media became clear. In addition, Barbeita's studies provided the source of how music meets literature. This reading enabled to perceive the musicality within the poem "The Bells" (1849), and also to identify musical elements in the narrative poem "The Silence" (1838), demonstrated in the noisy curses, and in the short story, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), evidence for the beating heart and the loud sounds within the men's mind. The divergences between the musical elements presented in each piece are what also bring them together somehow. Taking this thought into consideration, we are used to

hearing, either musical, ambient, or uncanny sounds. Thus, imagining living in a complete state of stillness could be a challenge, still, there is something quite recomforting in silence.

Last, but not least, we should say that this paper is the inception for deeper studies concerning intermedial subjects and the symbolism of musicality in literature in future investigations.

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