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Lyric Poetry and Existential Music: The Possibility of Expressing Existentialism Thoughts Through Music

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ABSTRACT

The paper is based on a detailed analysis of the basic traits of literature, Existentialism and music. Through the discussion of the relationship among these three components, the paper established the possibility of an intermingled relationship within. Moreover, through the example of successful Existentialist musician Sting, the paper confirms the Lyric Poetry, as a special literature genre, is important part towards a specific type of music: Existential Music, from Philosophical perspective.

Keywords: Literature, Lyric Poetry, Existential Music

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression, with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in the more exact sense of the word. It introduces man to new worlds of experience. Man learns from books and literature; he enjoys the comedies and the tragedies of poems, stories, and plays; and even grows and evolves through his literary journey with books. Man can fully discover meaning in literature by looking at what the author says and how he/she says it. He may interpret the author's message through the use of literary theory, using a mythological, sociological, psychological, historical, or other approach. Literature is important to man because it speaks to him, it is universal, and it affects life of his no matter if he perceives a specific work as beautiful or not.

Literature Classification

Literature can be basically divided into three basic types, the classic genres of Ancient Greece, namely novel, drama and poetry. A novel, the most common type of fiction, is a long imaginary story in prose. A fictitious narrative, representing human beings and their actions, adventures and passions and displaying varieties of human characters in relation to life. Drama, on the other hand, is a serious play, the form of writing which is intended to be performed in a theater

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by actors before an audience. It is a story told completely in the words of the characters of the play. A play is different from a novel because in a play the characters speak their own words, in fact, all explanations of place, time and action must either appear in the dialogues of the actors and actresses, or as stage directions. While the story in a novel is told by the writer as if/he/she had been present and seen it; or the whole thing is told in the first person by one of the characters. There are various kinds of plays, tragedy is a very serious play, ending with either the death, intense suffering or failure of a important character or several characters; and comedies which are pleasant plays whose purpose is to amuse, ending with the success or achievement of the main character. The last genre is poetry which is an expression in musical words, of thoughts designed to stimulate high and noble emotions, or their opposites. ‘Musical words’ mean the arrangement of words in formal meters, or in a rhythm marked by some unity, in contrast to variety of prose. Therefore, poetry is often referred to as music-drama. The special value of poetry is its condensation of man’s thought on important themes, in words usually easier to remember than prose.³The enjoyment of poetry lies not only in what is said but also how it is said. A type of poetry that truly expresses what the individual feels is lyric poetry. This is a type of poetry that can be put into music, it is a brief subjective poem, strongly marked by imagination, melody and emotion and creating a single unified impression, a genre that does not tell a story. Rather than depicting characters and actions, it portrays the poet’s own feelings, states of mind, and perceptions. Though lyric poetry has long celebrated love, many poets also wrote lyric poems about war and peace, nature and nostalgia. Its content is that within man, the ideal world, the contemplative or emotional life of soul, which instead of following up actions, remains at home with itself in its own ideal realm, and, consequently, is able to accept self-expression as its unique and indeed final end.

II. THE TRAITS OF LYRIC POETRY

Lyric poetry is more individualistic. The poet’s individual self-expression sets the tone for all literature. The individual soul withdraws within itself from an objective world of institutions, and from the dramatic confrontation of social life. It unburdens itself of inner feelings, and the poets turn ‘within’ to explore subjective responses to the world. Lyric poetry is created to discharge an emotion which is both released and represented in words, that is why the individual can relate to it in every way possible. It is an avenue for contemplation. It can help man dominate his blind passion for others, or bring him the awareness of his lack of it. He can either agree or resent it, but the statement remains, that being a subjective individual; he can

³ Pen-shui Liao & Shu-fang Liang. (2009). *An overview of Literature*. Taipei: Bookman.

grasp the feelings expressed by the poet. More so, the emotions are presented without restraint, hence, one can see the actual truth and reality of the individual's experience in it. It can be a means to realize what he has to nourish or what he needs to take hold of (Jefferson, 2001).

III. EXISTENTIALISM AND LITERATURE

Existentialism's basic concern is man's existence, about his uniqueness compared with other beings. For the existentialist, man is more than what he is, he chooses what he'll be and how he'll relate to the world; it speaks of his freedom to be in a world that he has no full control of. The human situation is best analyzed in terms of answering existential questions.

Existentialism is a literature in which the author attempts to explore the possibilities for creative responses to situations, sometimes extreme situations. Much literature that is regarded as Existential in orientation has at its center the struggle of the self, and the various ways in which this is manifested has led into an interesting array of narratives. Absurd writers portray humans as alienated and divorced from life. In this situation human actions become senseless and futile. They ignore structural conventions, reject realistic settings and logical reasoning, and often contain no consistently evolving plot. There is no question that today's individual is striving for self-consciousness of the self. The continual round of wars, the succession of group in the fields of economics and politics, and the bloody intermittent racial conflicts, together with other group struggles, have driven the individual to desperate straits. He will deny all certitude outside himself on the grounds that he can do no worse for himself than is done by society, or he will adopt a view of life that will accept agony, despair, alienation, and isolation that will come from creating a position that can yield only a consciousness of the single existing individual. The existentialist asserts that to be free is to choose one's own living and dying. This is reality and a portrayal of man in his true element. Solving the absurdity of life is a perpetual process, just like literature never ceases to explore the mystery of man's existence. An eternal bond now exists between existentialism and literature as one continues to exist because of the other (Webber, 2009).

Certain events in an individual's life transpire to form subjective ideas, and these conceptions of freedom and value arise from the view of the individual. The Existentialist philosophers give emphasis on the individual and how one relates to the world. They are interested in the subjective and intersubjective experience of being human. Subjectivity is found in the depths of the human experience, and is formed outside objectivity and reason. It is deeply reflected in emotions that have challenged man's power of reasoning and comprehension, like Faith and Death. These experiences give man a deeper perspective of life, makes him reflect the meaning

of his existence. It gives him Maturation through the valuable lessons that he gets from his experience (Reynolds, 2006).

Man is what he wills to be. His existence is characterized by freedom. And since man acts constitutes his existence, he is therefore responsible for it. Man is a free and rational being and this enables him to determine his own essence through the choices he makes. He has freedom, but with it comes the responsibility for his actions and choices; he has the commitment to uplift the dignity of man through these choices and actions. It is choosing that confers upon actions and it is impossible to choose the worse because these choices are not only a commitment to oneself but for others as well (Gravil, 2002).

Life is lived in a world of Absurdity, where nothing is concrete, planned or pre-determined. Man is said to have no definite understanding of what the world is and he continues to provide his own explanation on why things occur beyond his control and understanding. Man faces uncertainty of the future because of the absurd nature of the world and this makes him experience dread and anxiety. It is a reference point for the individual's confrontation with the impossibility of finding meaning in a meaningless universe and of finding rational justification for subjective choices about irrational issues. However, dread pushes man to search for projects to alleviate temporarily the intolerable feeling that it brings. He plays a role that will define his aspirations, or what he wants to do in order to define his essence. This is a continuous process and every step, every project, equates to transcendence of being. In his journey, the individual is expected to be a man for himself and a man for others. This poses a hurdle in establishing his unique vocation in life because living in a society brings in the possibility alienation from society and the self. Man is a part of a society but the society is not his own system. He can still be an independent, free-willed individual even if he is a part of a whole. Alienation speaks of losing one's identity by giving in to the pressure of what society dictates. And once alienated, he loses his authenticity and therefore becomes a minute part of the society. Being objectified by others forces one to live an inauthentic life and therefore deprives man his right to transcend and establish his true essence (Tanzer, 2008).

Jean Paul Sartre, a pioneer of Existentialism, emphasized in his works, the moral and political dimensions of individual freedom and responsibility. He became preoccupied with the responsibility of the writer to effect social change by moving the reader to reflect on society and to assert his freedom. He claimed that the existentialist writer must not portray the individual as determined by a character rooted in hereditary or the environment because such approaches exhibit little respect for human freedom.

Music as an Expressing Tool

The Music Industry has produced geniuses who express themselves in accordance with how they feel and how they perceive themselves in relation to the world. For example, the great British singer Sting is among those musicians who transcend boundaries in creating his music and refuse to give in to the pressures, trends and politics that thrives in the business.

IV. CONCLUSION

Music, in all cases, is a creative or poetic power which relieves man from apprehensive fears. Musical experience is a cry; an aesthetic rebellion against the threat that one is meaningless. Music always ultimately confronts man with the meaning of human existence that cannot be expressed in ordinary words, but sung, also through words, albeit full words that 'revive' man from profound vital afflictions. Nothing could be more foreign to the traditional temporality of music than an aesthetic that attaches chief importance to the present moment, favors discontinuity, and denies the teleological view of music, thereby severing the moment perception from both its past and its future.

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