

Music

Language, the means by which thoughts are expressed, tells us of the intimate connection between music and thought. In linguistic expression and musical expression many common characteristics can be found, which demonstrate the fact that our train of mental expression, and that of musical expression are deeply akin. A piece of music well played is thought of as lyrical, or well phrased, and a soloist who has the very highest command of his instrument is said to "be able to make it talk." A philosopher is not best able to sway opinion or express a nuanced and subtle point by virtue of logic alone, although indeed, those who have tried have made much philosophy, most of which is so dull it is unreadable. I would contest that the better course is the one taken by Friedrich Nietzsche, a superb philosopher and pianist. His was a more musical course, where rhythm and melody work alongside reason to sway or inflame both the mind and the aesthetic sense. A truthful man before himself and a devout admirer of the Jewish people, Nietzsche's writing in works such as *The Genealogy of Morals*, is so fluid and rhythmic, so well developed and layered that the point hardly matters! Amazing!

This trick of *persuasion* is at the heart of philosophical seduction, not the dialectic, the other trick where the better mind, the better *wrestler* wins, but this expressive seduction of reason by the passions, by the musical sense, which has also been available for others to use. Adolph Hitler was an orator who could use *rhythm*, the slow building and retreat of rhythm in his speeches, crescendos building ever so slowly, until each brutal slap of sound fell upon the next to hypnotize the crowd to belief in its own hatred. Persuasion is not truth! However, music does demonstrate a form both deeply connected to thought and feeling, a lattice of proportion in *logical thought*, and the color of *emotional expression* as well. The Suzuki Method of child education with its emphasis on music along with learning and language demonstrates the former, and in a negative example, the frenzy of punk rock the latter. (Of course the sublime magic and ethereal transcendence which the finest in music has to offer the emotions is another. In this case Johnny Rotten is not required.)

Poetry combines the two aspects and it should not surprise us that the responses offered from the ancient Greek Oracle of Delphi expressed Apollo's wisdom and prophecy in verse, as did the mythical mantic head of Orpheus which is said to have offered his wisdom in song long after his death! So persuasive is poetry, so close is the metered musical form to the intellectual, that music, poetry, was once thought to be demonstration of truth itself! Many ancient Greek religious rituals of cure and their attendant rites, used music to work their wonders. The fact that musical forms positively effect the mental processes is an old one indeed!

Lastly, in music we find a rare place where all of Man's passions might find guiltless expression. Here all of our nature, both dark and bright can be used. All of our "selves" can find free expression here! What we thought was undesirable about ourselves and our instincts, here, is not just permitted, it is even—needed!

When I checked the email a few months ago, I had a message from someone who appreciated my writing. How nice! A compliment about my use of imagery and a cogent question about the same. Upon investigating the web page of the author of the email, I not surprisingly discovered that she had also written several books, but much to my astonishment I discovered she was eleven years old! She went by the name of Tiny Dragon. I typed her a short essay on allegorical literary construction, and later, promised to give her next work a college level review with all due attention to the specifics of imagery and story form. Before sending her on her way, I asked if she had music as part of her life. Surely music, this nexus between the balance and proportion of the intellectual, and the expressive color, form and tone of feeling has struck bright root here in this example, where the forms of feeling and thought are so clearly developed. Her answer: "I play piano, flute, guitar, and working into the violin! I love the musical language very much..."

Here is how I represented this precious mystery in my novel, *Time Saw a Fly* © Rich Norman, 2011:

Jeanette took the infant into her music room which was prepared with a crib and bedding. She lay the child on the soft fabric and sat at her piano. Although her surroundings were humble, and her lifestyle spartan, her instrument was as her talent—the very finest in the world. The tone of the upper register was delicate and pure, clear and bright as an icicle filled with sunlight, if the hands fell lightly upon the keys, gently teasing out, coaxing each bashful shade of nuance to glow and sparkle, or those same notes could become the broken teeth of pain, a blood blade to press into the skin and soul, to cut with viscous abandon and purge the tender heart. The lower register was a laughing thing, warm and bountiful, complex and symmetrical, the breath of a summer afternoon, or an evening of faded mellow twilight, and those same keys might be struck with hate and roar as a hungry animal, a beast of desperate evil, joyous in its lust to devour and swallow, and so may find its place and measure as well, to fill and to purge the tender heart.

She began to play and spread a melody out with gentle arms, smooth and clear as a mirror aglow with flecks of sky, its surface shimmered with ripples of forgotten starlight and lost worlds reflecting off the unthinking waters, flowing silver and bright, blue and gold, clouds and sun spark amongst the rocks covered in clear liquid glaze, water, moving, knowing, caressing the azure lens of clouds and flecks of forgotten sun.

Now each tone is clear and naked, cold and frozen, each a prism, each alone, blue ice, white ice, cold yellow sun's blood, all colors frozen in the air, one at a time, and then a huge chord built from low to high, high to low, into out and over itself twice again until the sheet of ice is cast up into the air before the pale frozen sun, moving slowly, dancing, melting through the pure glass ice—almost captured, as a tear of glass suspended in ice, and now she whips her hands down and smashes the disk, each splinter falling playfully upon the frozen lake bed, clinking and chiming, pure and laughing in a swirling game of music and beauty, light and evil, love and tragedy, hope and laughter. He would know.

Here is an extract from the the essay I sent Dragon to introduce her to the idea of allegory, and provide a taste of a certain literary style. If you have a gifted child who is ready to traverse these exciting avenues, this may be helpful:

Hey Dragon!

"... At your age and remarkable stage of development you have the raw material, a supreme creativity, horsepower galore, but other than what truth you can see at your age, however much hypocrisy, joy and truth

there is for you to see already, depth is going to be tough to come by. So why wait for life to ruin or enlighten you so you can have more depth to your writing? Use allegory! Two layers of depth are created! I was 13 when I was taught this in school. You are younger, but ready and a half!

In allegory, and you need not use it if you do not wish, but if you do, a meaning is found first *before* you begin writing so the form of what you write reflects the meaning. In allegory the story form and the meaning meet, the story symbolizes in its form, the meaning. This way a second layer, a meaning beneath the one on the surface is symbolized, represented in the form of the piece. In brief: An allegory symbolizes a deeper meaning. This sounds complex but it is not. Again, you do well now and need change nothing, but here is another trick for you, another possibility: Allegory! You should get Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the example of allegory par excellence! A super education in style too. A short, gloomy but amazing book, so gloomy and perfect in the mood, oh the mood of it! Capture that alone and find something my friend! Some examples will make this clear:

So what is allegory? *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow takes a steamboat into the unexplored dark continent, Africa, where he hopes to find Kurtz, the finest specimen of humanity there is. But Kurtz is lost, a wayward soul... what has happened to this most potent civilized and accomplished man? So into the African dark Marlow goes, and encounters savages, wild and strange but familiar. He finds Kurtz at last after much penetrating through dark evil places. Kurtz, now degenerated into a sick festering den of appetites, lurid, a disgraced thing, a hungry ghost, only his voice remains, hollowed out and terrible, magnificent and filled with decay and truth. He is mad. He was also, once, a magnificent man. On route back to civilization he dies and says, knowing too much, "The horror...the horror." To know it all... then dies. His words are falsely represented to his widow who can never know this truth.

Heart of Darkness is built around an allegory **between traveling into the human mind**, into the "unconscious" if you will, to see the hidden savage drives and appetites concealed there, **and a journey into the African continent**. That is the allegory.

Allegory uses story form as symbol to elucidate meaning. To be even more clear: The story is a symbol of the meaning. Piercing the dark African continent = entry into "the unconscious," the true heart of darkness in man. We see his savage roots: The Dark Continent, our unconscious, our true dark heart. So do we see the true Kurtz inside of the civilized Kurtz. In this we see ourselves. An allegory **between a river journey and an inner journey**. The allegory. (Read *Lord of the Flies* for more of this theme, the veil of civilization lifted to view our hidden dark heart.)

One could have taken another route to the same message, an adventure into war where the hidden unconscious drives are released and the veil of civilization lifted, so the allegory would be between going to war, and traveling into the unconscious heart of the human soul. Going to war = entry into the forbidden soul, the unconscious. One could go to space and send the character into an allegorical journey where the stress of space travel revealed madness and the same: penetration into space = penetration into the mind, or taken a time travel adventure into man's past to see his personality before it was civilized etc. Travel back in time= travel into the hidden mind. Or choose another topic. Perhaps the theme is to represent the perfect human life in a journey across country. Ideal Life span = Road journey, is the allegory. Perhaps the life of a butterfly might represent the coming of age and death of a human, childhood as caterpillar, puberty as pupa, adulthood and fruition as the butterfly which then perishes and is also continued in the next generation. Any topic of merit can be used. Most readers will miss the allegory and enjoy the story, but for those willing to look, another layer deeper than that, the point, will be there to see. Simply choose the meaning first and make the story to fit, connect the dots. Structure first, then freewheel! Plan the points to hit first, the topics along the way which the allegory needs, then use the horsepower you have, release and pour it out without thinking and never censoring a thing— just fly, connect the dots with action! Try it! Ahhhh. Another hidden world makes every book worth reading twice!

Here is a bit from *Time Saw a Fly* which captures the mood of *Heart of Darkness*, the dread and gloom of it, and in micro, is a small allegory, a symbol of the character's situation . . . *Time Saw a Fly* has adult content so I will advise you do not buy it and offer this fragment to make the point. The mood is captured in this bit of dream:

Time Saw a Fly

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As the amber rays of dawn reached their tangled fingers through the blinds the next morning, Dr. Abrams knew he had to get up, but he also knew it was his day off, and he could forget for a moment. This double life had taken a toll on him and he deserved to forget. As he surrendered to a welcome tide of dream and dissolution, a grey-green foreboding, a lime and slate colored mist held his dreams in thick mute breath, heavy and dripping

with doubt, yellow and brown with doubt was the dull glowing undertow, a grey-green sigh, sick and closed, brooding and wretched, an ache. A brittle canvas boat slid silently down the sullen river of black and green, an undertow, always the same, the same fear which inhaled itself again and again, now a little thinner, a little sicker and tighter, the same shore slipped past and again all was silent, enshrouded in a grey-green pall, a stifled oily cloud of smudged green mist, wrapped in doubt's damp black chill.

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