

Pink Floyd and the Representation of Human Emotions: The Way of *Coming Back to Life*

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Abstract: The paper discusses about the exploration of human emotions by band, Pink Floyd. The famous song titled, *Coming Back to Life*, has been taken as a microcosmic example for deciphering the manner in which the human emotions are represented with effectiveness. The use of figurative language for the purpose of representation of the state of human mind is explored in the course of the writing. The paper elucidates the manner in which the lyrics of the song explore the stages of grief. Thus, an in-depth analysis of the literary prowess of the iconic band has been presented through the scrutiny of the contextual rendition.

Index Terms – Pink Floyd, figurative language, stages of grief, popular culture.

I. Introduction

While Pink Floyd is arguably the most significant band in the history of modern music across the world, many of their songs reflect the psyche and emotions of the human mind. For instance, one can take into reckoning the famous song titled, *Coming Back to Life* that has attained the status of being timeless in its appeal and relevance. A close scrutiny of the lyrics and the rendition can make one comprehend how the band has done its very best in delving into the process of self-recovery from a mental scar. The song attains paramount importance due to its universal appeal. David Jon Gilmour can surely be credited for penning one of the most significant songs composed by the band that has come to define the genre of rock music in the world today. This song was a part of the album titled, *The Division Bell* that was released in the year 1994. The psychedelic and progressive music hogs the attention of the audience right from the very inception of the rendition. However, the philosophical lyrics can surely be described as the key aspect of this song which has come to be one of the iconic compositions of popular music.

II. Figurative language and the state of mind

The song writer makes the use of effective figurative language in the course of this song for the purpose of accentuating the emotional impact of the lyrics. It would not be an exaggeration to opine that the use of figurative language enhances the quintessence and panache that characterize the song in context. The song uses the first person narrative to explore the state of mind of the speaker. It is an apostrophe that is aimed at the companion of the speaker of this song. As such, the lyrics attain universality as the audience can relate to the first person narrative of the song. The vulnerability of the speaker is portrayed through portraying him as “burned” and “broken” at the very beginning of this song. The helplessness and depression of the speaker gets further substantiated as the song expresses how “days slipped by” during that phase of his life. The song creates appealing visual imagery in the very first couple of lines making the pain of the speaker conspicuous indeed. After this, the speaker directly proclaims that he was “hurt and helpless.”

The state of mind becomes all the more clear when it is expressed that the things done by the other person encompass the speaker. The emotional turmoil of the speaker’s heart can be defined as the thematic content of this entire song. The song writer further weaves visual imagery as it is said how the speaker was staring into the shining sun. This image is representative of his perturbed state of mind being left in a state of desolation and loneliness. It is intriguing to note how the song writer expresses the condition of mind directly in the very next line saying that the speaker was “lost in thought” as well as “lost in time.” Thus, one can understand that the song shows the intertwined relationship between the state of mind and the various actions or images portrayed in the course of the narrative. As such, the song endeavors to create a mood of desolation and pain toward the beginning of the rendition.

The use of pathetic fallacy can be noted in the line where the narrator speaks of the rain falling “dark and slow” outside. One can relate the state of mind of the speaker and the rain outside being taken as a signifier of the pain of his heart. Here, one finds the attribution of human emotions or feelings to an inanimate object. This figure of speech is a popular one in the domain of art and aesthetics. The song writer is instrumental in meshing effective techniques to bring out the true impact of the lyrics and the musical composition that is characterized by the apt use of guitar and drums. The speaker engages in describing the passage of time as “dangerous but irresistible.” Thus, one can comprehend that the speaker aims to show how depression and sadness can make one spend a lot of time on his or her own sans any sense of the outer world or occurrences of life. It is comprehensible that

the speaker is supposed to be taken as an archetypal character whose emotions are simply representative of the feelings of human nature in general.

III. Exploring the stages of sadness

One needs to take into account that there are as many as five stages of grief as per psychology. When a person feels sad, he or she has to traverse through these stages mentally. The stages in context have been mentioned below in chronological order:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

In this particular song, one finds the exploration and expression of the last two phases of sadness, i.e. depression and acceptance. It should be reckoned that there are two kinds of depression that are linked with mourning. The first kind of depression is a reaction to the various practical implications that are related to the perceived loss. In this state, regret and sadness encompass the human mind. The person affected by the condition can be helped by reassurance and simple clarification. The other kind of depression is much more subtle in nature, and is also more private. It can be comprehended that the speaker of the song in context is affected by the second type of depression. This phase can be described to be the quiet preparation of the individual to separate himself or herself from the other person.

While the song writer delves into the expression of the depressed state of mind of the narrator through the apt use of figurative language in the first part of the song, the next part portrays the last stage of sadness with effectiveness. Reaching the stage of acceptance is not seen in every person. When a person is able to reach this stage, he or she is characterized by calm and withdrawal. The transition from the state of depression to acceptance is portrayed with prowess by the song writer as he describes about the “heavenly ride through” the silence existent between the two people in context, the speaker and the person the song is aimed at. The speaker proclaims that he “knew the moment had arrived” for get over the past and come back to life. Again, the image of the “shining sun” is utilized by the song writer. However, this time, the image signifies the hope of the days to come. The speaker expresses about his knowledge of the wait that had begun. As such, the entire song goes on to document the transition of emotional states of mind of any human during the time of grief. It is only after accepting the status quo that the person is able to find himself in a position to move on and wait for a better tomorrow.

IV. Conclusion

It is really intriguing to note how a song of popular culture has come to explore the intricacies of human emotions and phases of sadness with such effectiveness. The philosophical lyrics and soulful rendition have come to catapult the position of this song to immense popularity and critical acclaim. Pink Floyd is seen as a symbol of inspiration for musicians of popular cultural domain of the world today. The intricate nature of the contextual song can be seen as a microcosmic example of the skillfulness of the band’s compositions and creative endeavors. More than being a love song or one of sadness or hope, the song can be taken to be an apt exploration of human psyche and perspective toward the world around. The first person narrative, the imagery, and the music come together to create a surreal impact on the minds of the audience who are simply left captivated by the rendition. The contextual song stirs the audience to the core of their hearts, and has effectively attained an iconic status.

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