

Ever issue” (willner  
1989, 289). while  
composing



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Ever since the phenomenon of rap's popularity came to public prominence, the actual significance of this musical genre has been discussed from a variety of different socio-political, cultural and aesthetic perspectives. For example, according to Bohlman (1993), rap allows representatives of racial minorities to channel their frustration with their underprivileged social status: " Black music (rap) had become a simulacrum for the contestation of public space by groups forced to compete for the limited resources they offered" (412). Sullivan (2003), on the other hand, suggests that rap is being regarded by its fans as the tool of undermining euro-centric cultural oppression: " Rap music and the styles of dance associated with it serve as forms of resistance to the dominant culture" (611).

Nevertheless, even though earlier mentioned conceptualizations of rap do provide us with a partial insight onto rap's socio-political implications, they nevertheless remain quite ignorant of rap's music-related discursive connotations. In this paper, we will aim to show that, even though, as of today, rap cannot be considered a fully legitimate musical genre, such situation will not last for much longer. Moreover, we will also strive to prove that there are good reasons to think of rap in terms of a ' breeding ground', out of which qualitatively new musical conventions will eventually emerge. The brief analysis of what used to traditionally account for musical pieces' ability to end up being referred to as masterpieces, will reveal an undeniable correlation between such pieces' perceptual greatness and the sheer intensity of an aesthetic message, conveyed by them. In Bach's toccatas, for example, the extent of such intensity is being reflective of particulars of these works' technical composition: "(In Bach's toccatas) The dissipation of

counter-stress through tonal and durational enlargement on a hypermetric scale is a major compositional issue" (Willner 1989, 289). While composing his toccatas, Bach would often go as far as violating a variety of early 18th century's musical conventions, which in its turn, can be explained by his unwavering possession of a strong will-power (ego). As the result, Bach was able to go down in the history of music as genius.

The same can be said about another major European composer, which is now being often referred to as musical genius - Ludwig van Beethoven. Even though, at the end of his life, Beethoven started to become increasingly deaf, it never prevented him from continuing to compose music. And, it namely the fact that Beethoven's latest works, composed while he was already half-deaf, appear to be particularly emotionally-charged (intense), which prompts today's critics to think of these works as being the most valuable, in artistic context of this word: " Beethoven's late works were in fact his greatest and that his loss of hearing was beneficial, even vital, to the creative process" (Knittel 1998, 51). In other words, just as we had mentioned earlier, one of the major keys to musical piece's high aesthetic value, is the extent of its emotional intensity, which in its turn, derives out of composer's endowment with existential vitality. It is namely due to the fact that the workings of their creative genius have not been obstructed by any form of ideological oppression, concerned with imposing perceptual feminization upon men (in form of ' political correctness', for example), that such composers as Bach and Beethoven were able to gain a world-wide fame.

In the light of what has been said earlier, the popularity of rap in Western countries appears perfectly explainable. Apparently, while being emotionally intense and semiotically aggressive, rap music emanates particularly high extent of existential vitality, on the part of its creators. What is existential vitality? This notion can be vaguely defined as person's ability to observe objective laws of nature, while facing life's challenges. And, given the fact that most of these laws are being closely associated with the concept of survival of the fittest, it comes as not a particular surprise that, it is specifically due to rappers' ability to emanate raw power - hence, exposing the artificialness of politically correct notions, which makes this music especially attractive to those men, in which masculine drives had not been completely atrophied. In its turn, this partially explains rap's clearly misogynistic overtones: " In this genre of rap music, women are reduced to mere objects—objects that are only good for sex and abuse and are ultimately a burden to men" (Adams & Fuller 2006, 940). Yet, it is important to understand that rap singers are being the least concerned with exposing women in derogative light as ' thing in itself'. Rap's misogynistic motives are simply reflective of rappers' emotional attunement with objectively existing laws of biology, to which people are being subjected in the same manner as plants and animals. After all, within the specie of Homo Sapiens, males represent a dominant gender - pure and simple, as it is being the case within just about every specie of primates.

Therefore, even though rapping about ' bitches' may not sound particularly pleasing to one's sensitive ears, it nevertheless does not undermine such rapping's conceptual objectivity. After all, Bach, Beethoven and Wagner have

also been known for their misogynistic attitudes. This, however, does not make them less of musical geniuses. Therefore, it is quite inappropriate to refer to rap as specifically Black musical genre.

After all, as time goes on, rap continues to gain fans out of just about every ethno-cultural group in America. In the article, from which we have already quoted, Sullivan states: " Rap's popularity has increased significantly since 1992, and the White audience for rap has increased" (611). The reason why many White males nevertheless continue to regard rap as ' criminal music' is that, unlike Black males, their existential mode has been overly feminized.

After all, it is not a secret that, as of today, many White yuppies do not think that there is anything wrong with them to be concerned with polishing nails, as one of their foremost priorities. While never ceasing to profess their belief in ' multicultural tolerance', they nevertheless prefer to reside in secluded White suburbia, while being terrified of a prospect of venturing out of their houses to take a leisurely stroll in the ' hood', especially after it gets dark. Yet, even among Whites, there are still many people capable of appreciating music as not solely decorative element of a surrounding reality, but as the instrument of revealing such reality's very essence – the phenomenon of Eminem's popularity, substantiates the validity of an earlier suggestion. It is because in his rap lyrics, Eminem was able to reveal the qualitative subtleties of a relationship between men and women with perfect clarity, without paying attention to the dogmas of political correctness, which allowed him to become a celebrity. Therefore, we cannot agree with Stephens (2005), who discusses the phenomenon of Eminem from perspective of a self-appointed guardian of conformist morality, which has

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nothing to do with how world actually works: " It is unclear if he (Eminem) is a sophisticated satirist and/or a shameless exploiter reveling in misogyny and homophobia for commercial gain" (21). Apparently, it never occurred to the author that the key to Eminem's popularity is the sheer power of his lyrics, which in its turn, derives out of artist's ability not to simply state the truth, while rapping, but to relate to this truth on emotional level.

Just as it used to be the case with Bach, Beethoven and Wagner, in their times, Eminem does not simply compose music - he ' lives' his music. When being assessed within the context of earlier provided line of argumentation, the suggestion that rap music may be thought of as the new form of minstrelsy, does not appear thoroughly appropriate. After all, it was namely the prospect of receiving a material reward from feudals, which motivated minstrels to indulge in composing music more than anything else did.

Today's rappers, on the other hand, think of rap as primarily the tool of emphasizing their individuality. This is the reason why; whereas, minstrels' chances to succeed professionally correlated with the strength of their determination to conform to musical conventions of the time, rappers' chances to attain fame reflect the strength of their determination to do something opposite - to defy contemporary conventions of music. What it means is that rap should be discussed as nothing less than revolution in music - just as it was the case with European greatest composers, most rappers are being overfilled with energy, which is exactly the reason why their rap-lyrics radiate raw power, as these lyrics' foremost characteristic.

This also explains why, just as was the case with Beethoven and Wagner, for example, rappers do not seem to be simply preoccupied with indulging in

purely artistic activities, but also with trying to expose the hypocritical aspects of today's living: " Rather than ignoring the social inequities that persisted in their neighborhoods, rappers became the ultimate capitalists by creating and owning a music form designed to expose inequities and social contradiction" (Richardson & Scott 2002, 184). Apparently, rappers are being fully aware of the fact that, in order for music to represent a high artistic value, it must emotionally correspond to the very essence of people's socio-political anxieties. This is exactly the reason why, unlike today's avant-garde musical forms, such as ' visual music', for example, rap continues to grow ever-more appealing to the broader audiences.

Nowadays, rap music can be heard on the streets, in people's cars, in student campuses, etc. Thus, it appears to be only the matter of very short time, before rap will attain the status of fully legitimate musical genre, even in the eyes of its pretentiously sophisticate critics. The reason for this is simple - rap is essentially an artistic actualization of physically and mentally adequate people's existential energy, which is why its emergence was dialectically predetermined. Allegorically speaking, rap is small but highly competitive mammal, which is about to take on dinosaurs of conventional music. We believe that such our conclusion is being fully consistent with paper's initial hypothesis that rap should not only be regarded as one of many musical genres, but also as discursive matrix, out of which new musical conventions may eventually arise.

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