

Rhetorical criticism of bob marleys song war media essay



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Rhetorical criticism began as rhetorical studies of single speeches or speakers. It is the description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of persuasive uses of communication. The communication critic usually seeks to create a statement that interprets or evaluates the message that comes forth when an individual or the society is exposed from their immediate environment. All criticism bears some similarities. These similarities are; the description of the object being judged. Secondly is a full explanation of an argument to enable critical observations to be employed effectively. And thirdly, is the availability of judgment that can be made regarding the given standard. Rhetoric is viewed as an attempt to influence others through symbols and these has lead to development of various studies that are taken on various artifacts that are not public speeches (Benoit and Dean, par. 1).

It is an approach to criticism that was developed many centuries ago by a Greek philosopher, mathematician, and a writer of philosophical dialogues called Plato. He was also a founder of an institution in Athens that was the first institution of higher learning in the whole world. This person was a

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student of Socrates and he was highly driven by his ambition to overcome the execution that he faced noting that it was not fair. Plato, during his studies analyzed the speech made by Lysias to come up with the results showing whether this statement was meaningful. He emerged to be the best writer and his writings as been used in teaching various subjects like mathematics, philosophy, logic and rhetoric even up to date.

The goal of rhetorical criticism is to advance the knowledge about human communication that is supposed to reach out to the audience with a clear message. The rhetorical critics are required to explain and defend the following three things. First is the necessity of a given research, its analysis and criticism. Secondly is the means or method involved in the given analysis and lastly is in telling the accuracy of a given discovery in the analysis that was carried out. Rhetorical criticism is usually used to analyze the symbolic artifact that includes words, phrases, images, gestures, performances, texts, films, and any serious discussion made on a subject (Kuypers, par. 1). This is usually done in order to know how they work and to what extent. It also analyses this symbolic artifacts to discover their mode of instructing, informing, entertaining, movement, performance and the way it can arouse the audience and convince them. This is normally done so that the performer knows the ways they can use to persuade their audience on how they can improve the perception of their audience in their work. In general, rhetoric criticism usually seeks to understand how symbols are used to act on people. Through criticism, there is development of understanding whereby the knowledge of human communication is build and it helps people to build up a better relationship with others.

A wide range of ideas that are connected to words and phrases have been developed to assist in the process of rhetorical criticism that explores everything considering the effects of the choice of words that an individual uses in their writings. These have helped in directing the given ideas that are meant to shape a pattern of a cultural expression. The major approaches that are being used include the narrative, metaphoric, genre, pentad, cluster and ideological criticism.

Uses of Rhetorical Criticism

As rhetorical theory widened its limits, so too did the rhetorical criticism widened its area of specialization and adopted a more liberal view of the nature of rhetoric (Kuypers, par. 2). Studies that have been carried out to develop innovations on rhetorical criticism have helped in providing insights that could have been difficult to obtain with traditional approaches. The aim of criticism is to provide insights into the work which will deepen the readers understanding and appreciation. In understanding the processes of rhetorical criticism, that involves the systematic investigation and explanation of symbolic acts and artifacts, one is able to create an exciting opportunity for an effective communication. If one is able to realize that there are various options that they can use in constructing a sentence and knows to use these options well, they will be able to question critically the message on artifacts rather than responding to it uncritically (Sonja, par1).

The complex rhetorical concepts and processes can be synthesized well into a clear statement that can be well explained. Many people think that

rhetorical criticism is only confined to rhetorical or media criticism courses

(Kuypers, par. 1). But in real sense, it involves our everyday activities and it <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-criticism-of-bob-marleys-song-war-media-essay/>

should be used to understand the responses to symbols of every kind and helps us to create our own symbols in order to obtain the responses we desire. Rhetoric has helped in the use of imaginative language to communicate in an effective way while passing out a persuasive idea. This usually leads to creation of arguments among the audience and is a guide in training the public speakers and writers.

It used to play a major role in western education during the nineteenth century. Many scholars have been in the process of trying to discover the importance of rhetoric since the ancient times. It was first limited to its use in political environment since public participation in political subjects was highly valued, but recent scholars have rejected the opinion and concluded that it generally includes every aspect of a culture. It is known that any successful rhetorician can speak very well on any topic regardless the experience they have in the field. Rhetoric's is usually used in the courts to persuade ignorant person. According to Kuypers (par. 4), he wrote a statement that was made by Pluto that " rhetorical is merely a form of flattery and functions similarly to cookery, which makes the undesirability of unhealthy food by making it taste good".

People studying rhetoric over the past century have emphasized the use of rhetoric to resolve conflicts by identifying shared characteristics and interests in symbols. Scientists also would use rhetoric to persuade their audience to accept their findings by sufficiently convincing that their study or experiment was conducted with reliability and the results obtained are true to support their conclusion. Rhetoric has played a major role in civic part of life in every society and is considered to be necessary in the foundation of all <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-criticism-of-bob-marleys-song-war-media-essay/>

aspects of the society. It was concluded that rhetoric can shape the character of any person. In the other hand, criticism has helped in clarification and definition of the theoretical statements that are meant to be used in addressing the public. It also helps in setting up a standard of excellence in interpreting the functions of verbal communication in the society. Criticism has been used as an indicator of the limits of the modern knowledge during the public address.

Rhetorical Criticism of an Artifact

Rhetoric criticism has been known to be the most effective way that can be used in coming to an understanding about the communication process of an artifact under study (Kuypers, par. 3). These artifact that is also referred to as the text is something that the critic has developed an interest on it and would like to learn about. The artifacts are something created by humans especially for historical or cultural interests and it includes speeches, songs, sermons, films, or any work of art.

Scholars have so far developed criticism on literary works and other artifacts that were not considered in the past as rhetorical. There has been an ongoing movement towards the changes on “ communication criticism” and the later development of “ rhetorical criticism” in the recent years (Benoit and Dean, par. 2). The studies that are being carried out are to justify and encourage such efforts that need to be done and also to find ways that can be used to as guidelines in developing the theoretical framework.

Due to the ambiguity involved in the phrase “ rhetorical criticism”, the phrase changes the meaning of the adjective “ criticism” therefore leading to

establishment of various types of criticism. These are; rhetorical criticism of rhetorical artifacts, rhetorical criticism of non-rhetorical artifacts, non-rhetorical criticism of rhetorical artifacts and finally the non-rhetorical criticism of non-rhetorical artifacts (Benoit and Dean, par. 3). Creating a clear distinction between rhetoric and literature is a guideline in differentiating between the rhetorical and literary artifacts. The difference that lies between the poetic and rhetorical utterances is that, the poetic words refers directly to states of reality while the rhetoric words refers to things that stands by symbols for states of reality. There are also similarities between the two as stated by Benoit and Dean that “ poetry is for the sake of expression... rhetoric is for the sake of impression” (par. 11).

The critic of music develops three view points as their central core value; one is towards the composer, secondly is towards the reader and lastly is towards the writer him or herself. The primary concern of a musician is to develop a musical score and this should therefore form the central value of their responsibility. In our modern society there is a great failure for people to develop an art of criticism due to increased objectives in scientific world. Many people do not consider the art of music as meaningful and therefore they cannot develop a positive attitude in it that can direct them on any critics made. The stylistic characteristic of a musical work determines its outward structure, and it is this structure that has been the focus of criticism. It is of a disadvantage that the musician cannot expose all the objective data even in a style criticism unlike the literary or art critics.

According to Kuypers, (2009), music since it is a time-art is not related to or is not based on ideas, and she stated that one has to “ retain of it only the

continuation of that which proceeds in that which follows" (par. 2). The musical texture is in a continuous flow and therefore one is only able to draw a critic from a tensioned point or an idiomatic phrase. The audience usually analyzes the music from the outside in, while the composer would relate it to the identical themes from the inside out. The composer would therefore concern themselves with the opinions from the audience that describes the finished achievements of their music. The composer can get several critics from the outside but what matters to them after all are their personal styles that are evident in other work they have done under scrutiny. The rhetorical analysis of cultural and organizational artifacts that includes the institutional work brings about many suggestions that helps to guide practices effectively and in a proper way.

Rhetorical Criticism of Bob Marley Song

The extreme damages that were brought up by the impacts of poverty and racism in Jamaica did not end upon the youth movement in the country. All these lead to discovery of reggae music by Bob Marley that it addressed several issues and thus creating an impact on young generation during that time. He composed several songs that were viewed as redemption songs that addressed different views on discovery and use of nuclear weapons and slavery. The political rights that supported the war criticized his protest songs that were more successful and they did not support him on his stand.

There was establishment of the Rastafarian movement since three decades ago in Jamaica and it has grown to a point that it has become a major cultural and political movement. Because of the existence of this movement, the attempts of the neo-colonialist society of Jamaica of discriminating the <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-criticism-of-bob-marleys-song-war-media-essay/>

blacks have been challenged. The controversial ideas from various correspondents have termed this movement as full of hostility and curiosity (Rastafarian Movement, par. 1). The Rastafarians have received a critical view since they believe that their god is Haille Selassie and they use marijuana as their sacrament.

Alternatively there is a positive perception of these people regarding their resistance to oppression, racism and the exploitation of the poor and underprivileged. The spread of this Rastafarian movement around the globe has been largely attributed to the emergence of the reggae music that is known to be a derivative of American rhythm and blues including also the Jamaican ska. The Bob Marley's songs that is largely in reggae focuses on the issues of liberation and redemption and is said to have " the power to transform the world of injustices and wars into one of peace and love" (Rastafarian movement, par. 3). Bob Marley is said to have played a significant role in the increase and spread of these movement. There are several documentaries that have been written focusing on Marley's music and they provide explanations of the success of his music. It also gives a larger insight into the persuasive power of music, and in depth the music that calls for significant changes in the society.

In his songs, Marley uses a number of powerful metaphors that assisted him to express and popularize the Rastafarian ideas. He incorporated the religious and social metaphors which gives a clear view of the good and evil in the society. These strategies used offered the solution on people's problems making them to take actions and develop a positive concept that guides them. The ambiguity and high levels of identification of the <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-criticism-of-bob-marleys-song-war-media-essay/>

metaphors that is clearly revealed in the Marley's songs has made the audience to suggest the effectiveness of these songs as protest songs. The reggae music can be effectively use in areas where there is low levels of literacy since it sends a clear message and offers an opportunity to the poor to voice their opinions so that the government shall hear them (Rastafarian movement, par. 6).

The classical writer describes the use of metaphors as a deviation from the ordinary language, while the recent theorists describes it has it is part of an ordinary language. Modern writers have suggested that a metaphor affects the thoughts of people and their experience of reality. Marley has used several metaphors like God and devil, oppression and freedom, war, peace, poverty and unity. The use of the metaphor " war" gives a direct view of the riots, demonstrations, killings, struggle, revolution, battles, courage, raging, looting, burning, ambush, fallen fighters, freedom fighters, and the shot down. He uses this metaphor to suggest the fact that human rights cannot be achieved unless through protest, dissent and conflicts. This suggested that even if people adore God in a perfect manner, the third world problems cannot be resolved.

War is being equated with human rights when the song comments the struggle for human rights for people of Jamaica. In his songs, Marley focuses on the fight for equality in a society dominated by poverty in the slums. In his song he clearly describes the action of human rights in relation to political violence that arise during the elections that were held in Jamaica a decade ago. The song that is titled " war" clearly shows the most direct urge to fight for human rights in Africa.

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In this song Marley stated that “ And until the ignoble and unhappy regime that now holds our brothers in Angola...have been destroyed, the Africans will not know peace, we will fight until we win , we are confident in the victory of good over evil” (Rastafarian movement, par. 11). Marley in these songs addresses the issue of human rights from an individual level. The use of both religious and social condition metaphors in Marley’s songs created a positive perception and optimism as it urges audience to remain committed to the cause and be assured of ultimate victory.

In his song titled “ war” Marley was determined to come up with an idea to show all Africans that whatever somebody wants they should go for it and if they can’t get it they have to fight for it. It criticizes the fact that Africans now lives in peace but still do bad things such as killings but when people were fighting they got their rights and remained as united Africans.

Analysis of the Song “ War”

A sense of freedom is developed when one listens to Bob Marley’s music and this freedom is emphasized and powered by the phrase he uses in his song writing. Marley’s music has been a product of his culture, beliefs, and his experiences in life. These songs are inspiring as it relates to the social injustices during the early years when the whites dominated the world. In these songs the imaginative features of a human character are revealed. Marley reveals himself as an artist fighting alone for freedom using the power of music as his weapon. The use of black and white colors in a picture portrait reveals inspiring information that he sends out to the audience. He uses several colorful records that matches his dreadlocks and it represents the lyrics and motivates the listeners everywhere (Regguy, par. 1). He uses <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-criticism-of-bob-marleys-song-war-media-essay/>

dreadlocks that are a symbol of Rastafarian lifestyle to emphasize the need of freedom and it represents the lion of Judah.

The lyrics on Marley's songs represent the Rastafarian culture that values what is godlike and holy, around justice, compassion and resistance. There is a well defended opinion against the political activist that were involved in human slavery where by the blacks were taken to fight for the Americans. In order to persuade his audience, Marley uses simple and relaxing words in his lyrics. This word emphasizes the important and very intense political and social issues. By use of informative lyrical persuasive phrases, Marley is able to capture an audience who may not be particularly interested in or is aware of political or social issues in their society. Marley was once quoted saying that " My music fights against the system that teaches to live and die" (Regguy, par. 5). The composition of this song includes the Rastafarian religion and includes the political themes. He was seen by many as a representative voice of the Jamaican lower class and Rastafarian religion and culture.

During Marley's life he made explicit connections with politics, for example when he used his stage during performances to unite the political leaders. Also in his song " war' which is known to be acquired from the speech made by a politician reveals his involvement on political issues. The composing of this song came from collections of statements that were made by the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie a decade ago during a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The words from the statement that Haile Selasie made are:

“ Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned...until there are no longer first class and second class citizens of any nation...until the color of a man’s skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes ... until that day, the dream of lasting peace... will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained” (ThisDayinQuotes, par. 3).

Due to the conflict that arises between the political and religion, he could not write much of the political songs. But on the other hand, Marley was definitely involved in political activities that was signified on his song “ war” that sends a political message about the African unity and peace that can only be achieved through freedom from bondage.

Conclusion

Rhetorical criticism focuses on discovering and appreciating how speakers adapt their ideas to particular audiences. The meaning of rhetoric changes as time goes by revealing the ever-changing socio, political, religious and cultural context in which it operates, therefore people have never come to an agreement of its meaning. In general, rhetoric often concerns persuasion and attempts to alter or strengthen the beliefs, values and attitudes of the audience. As a way of knowing, rhetorical criticism provides scholars with a unique methodological tool for understanding communication. It has helped many people to discover the communicative options available when communicating with other people in cultural, professional, personal and political contexts. In general rhetoric is viewed to concern the persuasion, and attempts to alter or strengthen the beliefs, values, and attitudes of the

audience. The poetic work is said to be imaginative, symbolic and enduring. The rhetorical criticism of literary work is said to be justifiable.

Some artists who are not traditionally right-learning have questioned the validity of the recent anti-war protest songs. Several governments usually ignore these protest songs that are believed to be in response to military aggression terming them as not effective. There is power in protest music and therefore a very urgent need for future research in order to improve its quality. Marley's song was effective in gaining support to the movement because the nature of this song appealed to the listeners experience and social settings. The use of the metaphor " war" in Marley's song indicates that he issues threats and advocates for violent acts to end oppression in the world. Marley struggled in preaching justice for all.