

THE VOICE INSIDE

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Tanja Cvetković

Faculty of Philosophy, Niš, Yugoslavia

Abstract. *This paper deals with man's necessity to face truth and to remain faithful to his own authentic self, or, in D. H. Lawrence's words, to the deepest self. One way to convey metaphysical truth and the essence of things, hidden beyond the world of appearance, is music. The problem of music and its relation to man's authentic self is briefly related to Jane Campion's film The Piano, August Wilson's play Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Ntozake Shange's play for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf, Sam Shepard's play The Tooth of Crime, as well as to Nietzsche's work The Birth of Tragedy.*

The power of the ancient Greeks lay in their courage to face the complexity of life. They viewed life as a dynamic interplay of two powerful drives: the Apollinian and the Dionysian. Apollo, the god of order, clear consciousness, knowledge, temperance, restraint, embodied the rational, while Dionysus, the god of intuition, intoxication, frenzy, wild joy, represented the irrational aspects of life. The Greeks worshipped both.

Meditating on the Apollinian-Dionysian duality in his work *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche sees it as a distinction between the divided many and primogenial one. For him Apollo is the god of individuation, just boundaries and mere appearance, while Dionysus represents the "mysterious Primordial unity", "the thing-in-itself of every phenomenon". The opposition between these two principles corresponds to the conflict within man between the desire to sustain his separate identity and the impulse to affirm his oneness with the world. The Greeks had no fear of the Dionysian mystery of dissolution and rebirth of individual things. On the contrary, they glorified and worshipped the Dionysian drive for identification and oneness with the world. They intuited its value and insisted on its recognition.

In a similar way, the Greek tragedy reflected the spirit of its time. If the theater is the place where one sees truth about his life and time, then it is inevitable that the Greek tragedy should be seen in the light of the Apollinian and Dionysian duality. The Apollinian element of Greek tragedy are the dialogues, but the music of the chorus is, in

its essence, Dionysian. Nietzsche relates the union of the opposites in the Attic tragedy to the opposition, conflict and procreative union of the sexes:

"The continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollinian and Dionysian duality: just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations. These two different tendencies, at least, by a metaphysical miracle of Hellenic will appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling eventually generate the art product, equally Dionysian and Apollinian, of Attic tragedy."¹

The power of the Apollinian-Dionysian synthesis is such that the writer who creates a tragedy and, later on, the actors and the audience lose their identities through the process of "a dissolution of the individual and his unification with primordial experience".² At the heart of the mystery of reintegration is the Dionysian intoxication, in which man is reunited into a "higher community", not only with other men, but also with his own self.

It is with the appearance of Euripides, or more specifically with the appearance of Socrates, Nietzsche says, that the Greek tragedy was reduced to the Apollinian principle only. The Dionysian was suppressed in favor of the Apollinian, the conscious creation. As a logician, Socrates could not stand anything that could not be rationally explained and controlled. Socrates expelled the Dionysian intoxication and mystery from Greek tragedy, thus bringing about the death of tragedy and giving rise to the age of optimism.

"Optimistic dialectic drives music out of tragedy with the scourge of its syllogisms; that is, it destroys the essence of tragedy, which can be interpreted only as a manifestation and projection into images of Dionysian states, as the visible symbolizing of music, as the dream-world of a Dionysian intoxication."³

The Dionysian music ceased to be part of tragedy, nor is it part of life. From Socrates on, life has been presented as the embodiment of just one principle, the Apollinian. By discovering the Logos, the law by which things are logically related, man has increased his knowledge about the world. Every part of life is explained and put in terms of reason; almost no place is left for the intuitive understanding of the world. The Dionysian irrationality, frenzy, mystery are suppressed because they could not be manipulated and controlled by reason. Like Apollo, who in tragedy interprets to the chorus its Dionysian state, man began to learn how to express natural phenomena and mysteries through formulas and words, to translate what is originally untranslatable. The wholeness and completeness of man's life is maimed in that way, and what we call the soul becomes the main victim. Being itself indefinite, mysterious and intangible, the soul becomes a threat for the prevailing age of reason and as such is pushed into the background.

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The suppression of Music by Logos (the Dionysian by the Apollinian) and the painful consequences of the process Nietzsche registers continue to be the subject of artistic concern. The case in point, for instance, is Jane Campion's film "The Piano". The heroine, a young woman Ada, born into the masculine world of the Logos, rebels against her immediate surrounding by refusing to talk, devoting herself instead to music and having an illegitimate child. Ada is married off to a man in New Zealand whom she has

never seen before, but she is not tamed - she continues to be dissatisfied with her life there. Her marriage to Stewart is not only a conventional one, but also completely sterile, without emotions and passion. Stewart never touches her, never tries to learn how to love her body and soul. He is her legal husband and is the embodiment of the world of the Logos which controls but also maims and destroys the world of the senses. What he does to punish Ada for her infidelity is to cut off her finger. In that way he symbolically cuts her off from her music and from the sensuous pleasures she has had with her lover. Stewart's practical, materialistic, rational character has no understanding for the intuitive, imaginative world to which Ada and her lover George belong.

George is able to understand Ada's longing for music the moment he sees her playing the piano on the beach. Through music she expresses her essential self and, later on, she learns from George how to express her essence through bodily emotions. Listening to her playing the piano George falls in love with both her body and soul. He makes her learn how to assert the wholeness of her personality in the world they live. George is the one who completes her being, who heals her wounds by his love, so that by choosing him in the end she makes a right choice. But before that she has to plunge deeply into the water, into her subconscious self, to be reborn into life instead of the death-in-life she has experienced. The piano is needed no more, for love becomes the most complete bond with the world.

Before her love affair with George, Ada used music to establish her relationship with the world and to feel the reality of things. She rejects language which is interpolated between herself and reality. In a similar way she rejects her legitimate husband Stewart and chooses the illiterate George who can not read letters but who understands other modes of communication - the language of the natives, the body, the senses and Ada's music. Music comes spontaneously straight from the soul, while words are reductive distortions of the living moment of experience. For William Blake, "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason".⁴ Language is the product of the human reason which separates and divides the thinking subject from the object of thought, unlike the body which is the seat of wholeness, undivided reality of things. The feelings and sensations that come from the body are deep and real and are indicators that we are properly related to the "Other", D.H. Lawrence argues.

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan developed a theory about the Oedipus complex and its relationship to the appearance of language. In the pre-Oedipal stage, he claims, the child lives a *symbiotic* relation with its mother's body which represents external reality for the child. Thus the child is directly connected to the external world. This bond with the mother Julia Kristeva calls *semiotic* and describes it as a flow of pulsations or drives which are unorganized but represent a form of communication. No gap has yet opened up between the subject and the world, or to put it in linguistic terms, between the signifier and the signified. For the child, who lacks any center of the self, identifies with its mother's body and sees his mother as the image of his own self.

This harmonious relationship is disrupted when the father enters upon the scene. The child abandons its mother's body and looks for substitutes. At approximately the same time language appears which "stands in" for objects: "all language is in a way "metaphorical" in that it substitutes itself for some direct, wordless possession of the object itself."⁵ The child has been banished from the "full" imaginary possession of reality into the "empty" world of language. For "to enter language is to be severed from

what Lacan calls the "real", that inaccessible realm which is always beyond the reach of signification, always outside the symbolic order."⁶

In a similar way music is attached to the essence of things as a little child is to its mother in the pre-Oedipal phase. Music expresses man's experience of the depth and essence of phenomena, while language attempts only to imitate them. Unlike language which implies concepts which stand for objects, music represents the flow of impulses which spring from *the deepest self*.

"... music stands in symbolic relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the primal unity, and therefore symbolizes a sphere which is beyond and prior to all phenomena. Rather all phenomena, compared with it, are merely symbols: hence language, as the organ and symbol of phenomena, can never by any means disclose the innermost heart of music; language in its attempt to imitate it, can only be in superficial contact with music."⁷

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Like Ada in the *Piano*, black people in America have also chosen to communicate through music because it manifests their soul and truth that always lies there. All the other ways of communication are corrupted and do not convey the reality of things. Blues and jazz, the music that the blacks have invented, go counter the traditions of the status quo, traditions which linguistic conventions help perpetuate. The two kinds of music are in a way rebellious and are against the conscious exploitative white society.

August Wilson in his play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* explores the lives of the blacks in America. Moreover, the play can be read as the presentation of life in general within the world where money is the only thing that matters. The majority of the characters within the play are black people who have to be entertainers in order to survive. As long as they dance their dance which is called "black bottom" and entertain the whites they can be paid attention to. Otherwise, they are invisible, marginalized. In other words, as soon as they are not the source of profit, they are non-existent for the whites.

Ma Rainey and her band which is made up of Toledo, Levee, Cutler and Slow Drag earn their living as musicians. They play blues, the music of the black experience. Blues is the music that expresses the black man's sadness and dissatisfaction with the world that he finds himself in. It is the music that breathes and touches, that connects. That is in itself a way of being, separate and distinct from any other. Instead of rebellion and action against the way they are treated by the whites, the black men have chosen passivity, resignation and withdrawal into blues.

For many black writers, including August Wilson, blues is the expression of one's own self. Blues is something that is not the characteristic of the white world because the whites' concern is only with the rhythm of a song. For a black singer, a song is "life's way of talking".⁸ Ma Rainey says: "You do not sing to feel better. You sing 'cause that's a way of understanding life." (p. 491) Blues is something that springs from the African culture and has nothing to do with rhythm, excitement and money. Thus Mr. Sturdyvant, the white owner of the company, has neither respect for nor understanding of Ma Rainey's music. Indeed, he is already looking for a more popular sound, for something with a "lot of rhythm".

Black songs are the vehicle by which the blacks can say out loud who they are and what they feel. The blacks are ignorant of themselves simply because as Toledo says: "We done sold ourselves to the white man in order to be like him. Look at the way you dressed. That ain't African. That's the white man. We trying to be just like him. We done sold who we are in order to become someone else. We's the imitation white man." (p. 503)

For "as long as the color man look to white folks to put the crown on what they say, as long as he looks to white folks for approval then he ain't never gonna find who he is and what he is about. He's just gonna be about what white folks want him to be about." (p. 448)

For Le Roi Jones, another African-American playwright, who changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka in 1968, "the point seems to be to get to your actual feelings, as, say, these musicians want always to get to theirs. If you can find out who you are (you are no thing) then we can find out what you feel. Because we are our feelings, or our lack of them".⁹ Blues is exactly that kind of music which Amiri Baraka describes. It is the unique expression of their own soul tortured by slavery and racism. What they are actually forced to do is to look for the devil (the white man) to sell him their souls, as Levee says. After slavery, the only option, higher than hauling wood, available to black man in American society has been the chance to entertain the whites with his dance and song. That is the bone they are thrown and which they are expected to be satisfied with. Blues, jazz and any kind of black music are just one way of expressing the state of being, and that music is used to replace real rebellion against the whites.

One of the problems of Wilson's play is racial relations, i.e. the tension between blacks and whites as well as between blacks themselves. Although the blacks are formally equal with whites, they are still, in fact, exploited and depreciated people. That is what August Wilson explores in his play. The social injustice done to black people is what August Wilson felt as a young boy.

Thus, in Wilson's play *Ma Rainey* is one of the first characters to realize that it is her voice, which can be sold for money, that matters. In other words, as long as she has her voice to sell and entertain Americans she has a place within society and is shown respect. She uses that opportunity to satisfy all her whims and sometimes overreacts in her relationship to her white bosses, Mr. Sturdyvant and Irvin. Her insistence on having her car fixed or getting a coke before starting recording a song might be ridiculous, but are adequate responses against Sturdyvant's and Irvin's behavior. Since she knows the price of her talent, she uses every opportunity to show that she is the real boss because the whole enterprise depends on her voice.

Ma Rainey's voice and her other qualities as a singer make it possible for her to be very original and true to herself. She says:

I'm gonna tell you something, Irvin and you go on up there and tell Sturdyvant. What you all say don't count with me. You understand? Ma listens to her heart. Ma listens to *the voice inside* her. That's what counts with Ma. (p. 473)

[Italics mine. T.C.]

She resists any idea if it is not in accord with what her *deepest self* feels. She is the only one who refuses to be shaped by white man's ideology. That's why she represents

the very essence and spirit of blues an is called the mother of blues. Whenever she is threatened, she reacts with a threat to leave Sturdyvant and Irvin, and , lousy as they are, they always satisfy her demands. Although a woman, she is the only one who is brave enough to behave like that. The other characters, although they know the truth about their status in American society, usually cling to compromise.

Ma Rainey follows her own impulse which, according to D.H.Lawrence, is dictated by *the deepest self* or *it*. *It* is something which originates from the ground of our being and which one should be faithful to. It is the only truth that exists in the world and everyone following *it* achieves the wholeness of his being. Thus, by being faithful to her own self, i.e. her need to be the mother of the blues, Ma Rainey manages to overcome the injustices of the society she lives in. She rises above the problems of everyday life and becomes superior even to the whites who in their lustful wish to dominate everything remain partial and superficial without any understanding of the blues.

The source of the blues is *the deepest self*. For the whites who do not live in harmony with *the deepest self* and do not follow the creative impulse springing from it, it can mean only entertainment. On the other hand, for the blacks it is the only available channel they have to express themselves, to articulate their inner life.

All the characters in the play can express themselves freely only as musicians. Slow Drag's, Cutler's, Toledo's and Levee's abilities as musicians are extensions of their personality. Cutler, the leader of the group, is sensible and his playing is "solid and almost totally unembellished". (p. 431) His understanding of his music is limited to the chord he is playing. Slow Drag is bored by life but is "deceptively intelligent" and plays "with an ease that is at times startling". (p. 431) Toledo, the piano player, understands that the limitations of his instrument are "extensions of himself". (p. 431) The final member of the band is Levee, flamboyant, rakish and "somewhat of a buffoon". (p. 434) His trumpet playing is totally dependent on his manipulation of breath. He plays wrong notes frequently and "often gets his skill and talent confused with each other". (p. 434) He is very creative and is always ready to improvise on the same theme. Levee neglects his *deepest self*, and, although he hates the whites he lets them change his music - he is becomes white by turning to compromise.

Levee is the chief troublemaker in the group. He is very ambitious and always on edge. One of the sources of his anger is his conviction that his chances to succeed are constantly frustrated by Irvin and Sturdyvant. Feeling betrayed by their refusal to record his songs, he turns against them. Unable to strike out at the white man, he kills Toledo. Levee's question at the end of the play, when his trumpet blows pain and warning, is: "How can I live in a society that refuses to recognize my worth, that refuses to allow me to contribute to its welfare - how can I live this life and remain a whole and complete person."¹⁰

The position of the blacks in American society is also dramatized by the set design of the play itself: the two white men, Irvin and Sturdyvant, are in a control booth from which they literally control the black musicians on the studio floor. The action takes place partly in a recording studio and partly in a basement band room to which the black musicians are relegated. In that way the stage symbolically represents the structure of racial relations in America.

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While August Wilson talks about music in his play, Ntozake Shange's words in her play *for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf* flow like music. The play is not about music but its form is musical. The whole play consists of lyrical poems which express the agonies of black women. Ntozake Shange writes a kind of textual blues. Conveying through seven different voices the pain and bitterness of her own soul, she releases spontaneously what is most authentic and most individual in herself.

The unconventionality of form is followed by the unconventionality of characters. The characters are all women distinguished as: woman in red, woman in blue, woman in brown, woman in purple, woman in green, woman in yellow, woman in orange. They are nameless and are defined not by words but by the fullness of their lives. They are portrayed as victims in the play: they are, as Ntozake Shange says, ignored, raped, beaten, prostituted and never loved.

All the poems are sad lamentations over black women's destinies. They are maltreated and victimized as lovers. No man has ever tried to find the way to their soul, to accept these women the way they really are. Their men approach sex without emotions so that they appear as rapists. In the eyes of

the lady in red
we cd even have em over for dinner
& get raped in our own houses
by invitation
a friend.[11]

The women are treated as objects and not as human beings. The lady in red tells the story about Crystal who is constantly beaten by her boyfriend, Willie Brown. Willie prostitutes Crystal's love and does not want to acknowledge their children.

The lady in purple and the lady in blue express their separate attempt to be loved. The lady in purple wants to be loved the way she is. She offers everything she has: her poems, her love..., for little attention and tenderness. In a similar way, the lady in blue realizes that it is difficult to be loved especially if one is colored and full of emotions. It is easier to be white, to abstract everything from emotions:

we deal with emotion too much
so why dont we go on ahead & be white then/
& make everything dry abstract with no rhythm & no
reelin for sheer sensual pleasure/yes let's
go on & be
white/... (p. 261)

Actually, what is suggested is that racial whiteness is synonymous with emotional dryness, while black is the color of fullness, of feelings and sensuality and is always fertile. The black women in the play are ready to love although their love presupposes suffering. They do not shy away from feelings and pain the way the whites do. Above all they want to be human beings with all their imperfections and colorfulness.

the repressed. Music, which pervades most of his plays, is just one way of making the invisible strata of the self appear.

In his play *The Tooth of Crime* Sam Shepard makes human psyche visible. The play contrasts two worlds: the world of appearance embodied by Hoss, and the world of reality suggested through Crow's words. Unfortunately, although knowing the truth of what real life should be, Crow is unable to live by such values. Crow and Hoss are devoted to false values.

Hoss is a musician who lives off his image. His music is mere imitation and fabrication of images and as such is empty and not original. This sort of quasi -music fits perfectly Hoss because he does not have the courage to face his real self, to bring out frustrations and talk about them like Ntozake Shange does. Hoss becomes alienated from his real self which results in the lack of self-knowledge. The process that goes on in his soul is unknown to him and it arouses uncertainty and the lack of self-confidence in him. Crow, his rival, realizes what the matter is with Hoss:

Crow: We gotta break yer patterns down, Leathers. Too many bad habits. Re-program the tapes. Now just relax. Start breathing deep and slow. Empty your head. Shift your attention to immediate sounds. The floor. The space around you. The sound of your heart. Keep away from fantasy. Shake off the image. No pictures just pure focus. How does it feel?¹²

For it is much easier to cultivate the image of one's self than to question it, to draw knowledge from it, to shape and re-shape it. The process of examining one's self, sometimes even the awareness of one's self, is very painful. To escape suffering and agonies, to live in the world of empty images, is far more attractive.

Hoss's personality is assimilated within the dominant culture. He has lost touch with his private self - his inner life is erased by outward pressures so that for him "the outside" becomes "the inside". At the moment of crisis he has no inner strength to rely on, so he turns to killing and aggression. Hoss speaks of the need to have a self to support oneself:

Hoss: Ya' know, you'd be OK, Becky, if you had a self. So would I. Something to fall back on in a moment of doubt or terror or even surprise. Nothing surprises me no more. I'm ready to take it all on. The whole shot. Look at me. The trained slave. (p.223)

Hoss has substituted codes, names and images, empty categories from which strength can not be drawn, for his real authentic self. Unable to face the complexities of life, he turns to imitations and abstractions and becomes a weakling. For the aggression in which he abounds is always a sign of the weakness of character.

Modern music, Hoss's music, is not a rendering but a mere imitation of a phenomenon, and therefore infinitely poorer than the phenomenon itself. Unlike Dionysian music, modern music is deprived of any mythic power: for myth is experienced as a unique manifestation of universality and truth. Modern music, on the other hand, no longer reaches through the unique particulars of private experience, the truth and the essence of things. Moreover, its superficial reduction of phenomena arrests and deadens our consciousness and our imagination. Nietzsche gives as an example a musically imitated battle which exhausts itself in marches, signal sounds, etc., without expressing the essence of what a battle or conflict is. Unlike Dionysian music, this sort of

music does not enrich and expand the individual phenomenon to its mythic origins. On the contrary, it reduces it. Nietzsche describes the new sort of music which began to be developed with Socrates as: "... the music of which no longer expressed the inner essence, the will itself, but only rendered the phenomenon inadequately, in an imitation by means of concepts. From this intrinsically degenerate music the genuinely musical natures turned away with the same repugnance that they felt for the art destroying tendency of Socrates." (pp. 106,107)

What modern age needs is music practicing Socrates, Nietzsche proposes. Life is not to be viewed as the Apollinian superficiality but as the interplay of the Apollinian and the Dionysian. The depth of Dionysian knowledge revealed in Apollinian images is what makes life more meaningful and fruitful. The return to the Dionysian is a symbolical return to the unconscious, to the mysticism of music, the soul and the self.

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GLAS IZNUTRA

Tanja Cvetković

Predmet proučavanja ovog rada je čovekova večita potreba da se suoči sa istinom i da ostane veran svom autentičnom biću ili svom najdubljem ja kako kaže D. H. Lorens. Do osnovne ideje ovog rada dolazi se analizom drama savremenih američkih dramskih pisaca Augusta Vilsona (Ma Rainey's Black Bottom), Nzake Šange (for colored girls ...) i Sema Šeparda (The Tooth of Crime), koja pokazuje da su istina i suština stvari sakrivene duboko ispod sveta privida. Analizom pomenutih drama dolazi se do zaključka da se jaz između sveta privida i sveta autentičnosti može premostiti muzikom kao načinom izražavanja metafizičke istine. S tim u vezi, autor se kratko osvrće na film Džejn Kempion Klavir, a svoj zaključak potkrepljuje Ničeovim idejama iz dela Rodjenje tragedije. Suprotstavljeni princip Logosa i princip muzike u radu se obrazlaže psihoanalitičkom teorijom Žaka Lakana, odnosno semiotičkom teorijom Julije Kristeve.