

## Healer to Destroyer; A Study on the Hybrid Aesthetic Approach to Music and Language through Anna Smaill's *The Chimes*

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### Abstract

*Music is an intangible cure to all the maladies of human race. It constructs, protects and heals. Even the darkest caves of human soul can be showered light with hopeful rays of music. But what may happen if music turns into something disastrous and over powering? A world without language and a totalitarian regime suppressing its people by music can only be imagined but the debut novel of Anna Smaill, a writer from New Zealand portrays the horrors of music as the ultimate destroyer. It is acceptable that our forefathers sought help of music and sounds to communicate. As we moved into civilization, language became the most mandatory element of existence. Without words, the formulation and conceptualization of ideas become difficult. Music may be of help but only up to certain extend. The influence of emotions over music should also be taken into consideration. Thus this paper focuses on bringing out the supremacy of language over music in achieving life skills.*

**Key words:** Music, Language, Memory Cleansing, Humanity

The cosmos is filled with infinite auras of positivity and negativity. There is a proportion which sustains the balance of both the energies. The laws of universe are already been written and it's natural to live according to nature's laws without making any human modifications. Any commotion in this order may invite terrible results which can be of greater harm to the human race. So it is wise not to disturb the order of nature and consciously invite the possible catastrophe. Anna Smaill's *The Chimes* is an extraordinary dystopian fiction dealing with the harmful interventions of a particular human class which tangles the entire order and creates something monstrous. The novelty of Anna Smaill lies in her choice of a powerful medium. An apocalyptic London controlled by a totalitarian regime that uses music as a weapon to control and rule the populace. A world without language and writing is entertained and a gigantic music instrument called 'Carillion' cleanses the memories of people at the end of

every day. The conflict of language and music takes over the centrality of novel. Aftermaths of memory cleansing and the inter relatedness of language and memory recovery are being discussed as its subplots.

Communication is a two way process. It is obligatory to have at least two individuals with equal independency to participate and share their ideas. The freedom of speech and action are inevitable to enjoy the supremacy of “self”. When an individual is deprived of his rights to put forth his ideas, he is actually losing his self that is way much connected to his self identity. The transformation of ideas into words is exquisite and it makes a man complete in every sense possible. Thus it is evident that the role of language in human lives is unquestionable and the mere survival of human race depends upon its reliability on language. This research paper concentrates on the below stated queries.

- Can music be a substitute for language?
- Music; Emotionally stimulated pattern of sound
- Question of reliability on emotionally triggered actions
- Language being the sensible pattern of ideas
- Interrelatedness of language and memory
- Memory cleansing and its aftermaths

Society is embodied with signs and codes. The meaning making process lies within deciphering the hidden codes arranged in a particular series. It is not necessary to have words to form a communication; even music can produce meaningful exchanges as it is a profound form of communication. A mere humming can invoke emotion and build up a schema in our minds. When letters speak to logical part of the brain, music even penetrates in to deeper segments of human mind and soul. It bridges cultures, genders and generations and grows as we become old. Music helps to define our lives, bring us together and thus become a form of prayer.

But is it always possible to establish a society purely based on musical communication? The importance of language and words lies in understanding the role of past in perceiving what is present. A society cannot be formed without a past. People cannot build relations in the absence of past. There should be reason or explanation for something in function of its end. It is absurd to suppose that “ends” are not in present because we do not see it. Existential values of life are strongly based upon the fact that we live through our past. Involuntary memory triggered by sensory experiences forms basis for recollecting the past, says Marcel Proust in the “Madeline episode” of his novel *In Search of Time*. “This new sensation having had on me the effect which loves has of filling me with a precious essence was not me; it was me”. Every individual will have an instinct for recollecting his past as it the ultimate truth of human identity. Art or literature triumph over the destructive power of time.

*The Chimes* narrates the story of a totalitarian regime inflicting communal amnesia through music and an alternative London where written words and memory are banned and replaced by music. The entire city is dictated over by a musical elite group and the populace is controlled by an immense musical instrument named “carillion”. The brainwashing effect of Carrilion has several stages over the course of twenty four hours. It starts with the Matins, which relays “OneStory”-the official version of the “Allbreaking”, the so called “dischord” that smashed the past and created the present. “Chimes” takes place at Vespers. This final outpouring of the day is set at an unbearable pitch, causing not only a memory dislocation but

a physical collapse too. The novel finds its position unique in the incorporation of music for inflicting communal amnesia.

The power of music is unquestionable but the extent to which one can rely upon music is a matter of question, because music appeals to emotion. The logicity and reasoning capacity of music is minimal compared to words. It is the emotion that gets affected by music and not the reasoning. When words create sense, music creates emotion. It is important to understand that emotions cannot be trusted all the time. Result of actions committed by the emotional stimuli can turn out to be disastrous which means emotions cannot be trusted entirely as they are results of a particularly performed situation or circumstance.

Thus words possess more power compared to music because they apply to practicality. Words are not just elements of speech and writing. When spoken out loud, words transform into vibrations that can be used to direct energy. Words can both heal and hurt because they carry vibration and energy. The right vibration and energy can easily penetrate our bodies, harming or healing at the deepest level of our being. When words are spoken out, an individual is casting his own thoughts and vibration into Earth's magnetic field is the energy field that creates the reality of Earth. Meaning can be conveyed only when there is proper articulation of words and not voices.

The whole city is talking music.

We move through the crowded streets. I turn to side as if I could hear it all, but the melodies move presto and the meanings slip past. At home those four notes strung together mean one thing, but here the tune's words play a kind of trick on the meaning, pull against the notes so it says something else altogether.

The entire London circulates music. People talk through music, their emotions are conveyed in the form of musical waves. There are no words and eventually, the existence of reading and writing is nil. The only way of communicating with each other is through musical notes. But there is no life. The monotonous notes have destroyed the liveliness of people. The notes change and move swiftly. Past is destroyed and lost. There is no connection between the sung musical notes and the one yet to come. People automatically forget the value of past and they have no idea of what is happening in their society. The wonder land is completely behind the screens. People are mechanised and they act according to the instructions given by their musical ruling class and bound to live under the spell.

Memory is music and music is a broken memory for the people. The only weapon to destroy music is music itself because they were given only music to live, to communicate and to remember. The protagonist Simon searches a way through music. Music is their source of solace and also the source of agony. He realises that the only way to restore language and memories is to destroy the musical instrument "Carillion" and finally he demolishes the reign of music and restores the world of music.

The crust of the novel *The Chimes* is a man's struggle to retrieve memories and the crucial role played by words to keep the memories alive. The governing class is super intellects with high brains but no heart. They are suitably ridiculous and inhuman. Memories of the people got crushed and erased within their musical instrument. Only words could keep the memories fresh and alive but the words were also demolished from the society. Music, instead of healing the wounds, increases the pain.

## **Findings**

- i. Music appeals to emotion but words establish the real meaning.
- ii. Music cannot be trusted as it is the result of aroused human feelings
- iii. Words speak out truth; they make connections
- iv. Words keep memories alive
- v. A society loses its cultural identity when it does not have a past
- vi. Past is derives from the experiences and thus is rich in its value

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