

DEMONSTRATING MUSICAL VALUE: AN EXPRESSIVE APPROACH TO WALLER'S *SLOW WALTZ IN CEDAR BEND*

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Abstract

In the socio-cultural context, music is considered as a form of self-actualization that holds an important function as a feature to communicate values. In line with this nature relationship, the discussions of musical value which are proposed by relevant experts result in the determination of values as an entity of value which also exists in society's life. Seen from the anthropological perspective, musical value refers to those extents of values which are expressively communicated by an artist through the combination of sounds and words. However, introducing or demonstrating musical value itself can be through any creations and works of art other than music. Therefore, in this respect, the novel is viewed as a medium for expressing the author's intention to demonstrate musical value as the entity of value influencing his life. By employing expressive approach, this thesis explicitly elaborates and figures out the extents of musical value which exist in Waller's *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend* (1993). Having the very beginning process emphasized on the resemblance of the author and the main character's life in the novel's story line, this thesis applies a descriptive qualitative analysis in the way the author demonstrates musical value through the main character in the form of words written within the story line.

Key words: Expressive Approach, Main Character, Musical Value.

INTRODUCTION

Along the history of human civilization, value functions as the extent to which people are directed to create better and ideal life in their both social and individual environment. Values define and differentiate good from bad, worth and unworthy, or expected and unexpected (Pamungkas et al., 2020). However, value itself is relative; therefore a certain social group (e.g. group based on culture, race or region) might have different ideas on the weight of value from other groups (Wantoro & Priandika, n.d.), (Husna & Novita, 2020), (Darwis & Pamungkas, 2021). Cultural aspect is the most influential aspect forming the content of values (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020), (Ayu, 2020), (Oktaviani & Mandasari, 2020). Other important influential aspects preceding cultural aspect are religion, historical background, race and other anthropological factors. Therefore, in society's life, there could be found various values living and surrounding them. Values could be actualized and expressed in various forms in the daily life activities (Ayu, 2019), (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2019), (Sari, n.d.), (Zenissa et al., 2020), (Apriyanti & Ayu, 2020). Those values are not

only actualized and released in the form of concrete things, but also in the form of abstract things. Certain social groups could express, introduce and communicate (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020) their values through the works and creations, such as literature (Suryono et al., 2020), (Ferdiana, 2020), (Rido, Kuswoyo, & Ayu, 2020), (Amelia, 2016), (Rido, Kuswoyo, & Nuansa, 2020), book (Sucipto et al., 2021) or even music. In music, for example, there is a song that contains a religious, social, or even cultural value. Seen from the anthropological perspective (Amelia, 2021), (Rido, 2018), (Wahyudin, 2018), (Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020), (Oktaviani & Desiarti, 2019), in every culture, music has really important role in the terms of introducing and demonstrating values to member of society or to others.

The existence of music is also inseparable from human's life and has being an influential thing as a one creation of cultural forms along the history of civilization. The presence of music has already been recognized in the society's life since the ancient Egypt. Although, according to the archeological analysis, actually the music has already existed in the primitive life at many times ago before human were literate. Meanwhile, the functions of music itself are wide and crucial in the cultural context of society's life. In the present society's life, the music is used in many cultural events, in the formal and non formal occasions, other performances, and also functions as entertainment and self actualization media. As a self actualization media (Siwi & Puspaningtyas, 2020), (Hana et al., 2019), (Riskiono et al., n.d.), (Ahdan et al., 2020), (Putri & Dewi, 2020), music could contain more implicit meaning than the only beautiful arrangement of the sounds from the musical instruments of the music itself.

This is not aimed to describe only the resemblance of the main character's life and the author's life. But, it is more likely that this is a simple portrayal of how the author tries to actualize himself through the novel. Known as also a musician, the author might probably present and express what defined as musical value as a significant belief influencing his life in his writings. Hence, this is conducted by employing an expressive approach as the instrument to solve the problem. Finally, it is imperative that musical value, which most probably exist inside the novel *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend*, be important and worth discourse to be discussed in this .

LITERATURE REVIEW

Waller's Works

Known as a professional researcher, Waller has written many books, essays and novels. He has been a researcher since he was a student at University of Northern Iowa and is really a productive researcher who wrote many writings from his young age until present. From 1988 to 2006, Waller wrote twelve novels and most of them successfully grabbed the reader's attention, enthusiasm and interest. Each of his novels has been a New York Times bestsellers, notably *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend*, *The Bridges of Madison County* and *Border Music*. The novels written by Waller during the period of 1988 to 2006 are: *Just Beyond the Firelight* (1988), *One Good Road is Enough* (1990), *Iowa: Perspectives on Today and Tomorrow* (1991), *The Bridges of Madison County* (1992), *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend* (1993), *Old Songs in a New Café* (1994), *Images* (1994), *Puerto Vallarta Squeeze* (1995), *Border Music* (1996), *A Thousand Country Roads: An Epilogue to The Bridges of Madison County* (2001), *High Plains Tango* (2005), *The Long Night of Winchell Dear* (2006).

Robert James Waller is also noticed as a typical of individual who has an excessive fondness in art. Therefore, it makes sense that Waller also worked for over twenty years as a musician (guitarist, flute player, singer and songresearcher) who until recently played the banjo in the neighborhood bar, playing nightclubs and concerts. Waller and music cannot ever be divorced. He puts music in the special place in his life. For him, music is himself whenever he can communicate anything through it. He wrote songs and played them with his band. Waller himself emphasized that the works of music he created are not merely for material purposes, but they are much more idealistic than that. Each of works he dedicated to everyone is a representation of himself where and when he can communicate or even demonstrate his values, beliefs, dreams, imaginations, ideas and even paradigm.

Musical Value

Terminologically, the term musical value is derived from the two words: *music* and *value*. Therefore, it is important that the er first begin this from the definition of the two words to discuss more about the term musical value. Music is an ordered arrangement of sounds and silences whose meaning is presentative rather than denotative. This definition puts an emphasis on that music constitutes a more abstract composition rather than a real one. However, as a product of man's creativity, the music could be used as a media to represent or communicate ideas, facts, or anything in the universe. Therefore, it can be said that music is also a means of communication.

Femininity or Masculinity

Masculinity or femininity refers to the value placed on traditionally male or female values (as understood in most Western cultures). Masculine cultures value competitiveness, assertiveness, ambition, and the accumulation of wealth and material possessions, whereas feminine cultures place more value on relationships, peace and quality of life. In the society's life, there are a lot of songs which also confirm the values derived from the dimension of masculinity or femininity. For example, Sheila On 7's *Pemenang*, is a song which is really about to provoke a high value ambition or being ambitious. This song emphasizes the importance of having ambition to reach the dream to be a winner. Other example Iwan Fals' song entitled *Bento*, is a song that shows up the greatness of having material wealth possessions. Those values are derived from the dimension of masculinity. Meanwhile, Scorpions' *Under the Same Sun* confirms the high value on relationship and peace for a better quality of life.

Individualism or Collectivism

Individualism is contrasted with collectivism, and refers to the extent to which people are expected to stand up for themselves and to choose their own affiliations, or alternatively act predominantly as a member of a life-long group or organization. Most of national songs are about collectivism. For example the Indonesian national song "Indonesia Raya" is about burning spirit for togetherness and collectivism. Michael Jackson's *Heal the World* is also an example of songs that emphasizes the importance of being together to make a better life. Meanwhile, in individualistic cultures, there are a lot of songs which reflect the value of individualism. Avril Lavigne's *What the Hell* confirms the value of individualism. As an American, Waller is also an individual who highly values the freedom and liberty (individualism). However, in his social life. in his neighborhood, Waller really loves togetherness and is really respect others.

METHOD

Considering the kind of data which are in the form of words, this is designed to be a descriptive qualitative . According to (Ayu & Zuraida, 2020) Descriptive means describing the data and analysis in words, meanwhile qualitative is the analysis which is not using the statistic method. It implies an emphasis on process and meaning that are not rigorously examined, or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. By using descriptive qualitative method in which the theories are presented above, the researcher

will be able to elaborate the data without putting it into form of statistic. The data are collected and analyzed as well as the conclusion is drawn without making generalization.

Therefore, to answer the problem previously stated, the researcher gathers the data required relating to the conducted. Then, the collected data are processed by analyzing and interpreting, further, related them to the main issues discussed in this thesis. There should be a correlation between the data gathered and the main issues discussed. The main data are the narrations and dialogues relevant to the problem in this taken from the novel *Slow Waltz In Cedar Bend* written by Robert James Waller as the main data source. Other than that, the biographical sketch of the author is also used as supporting data to be the object of analysis in this . Meanwhile, the biographical sketch of Robert James Waller presented in the previous chapter is taken from websites in the form of articles (mostly written by the Waller's novels publisher and reviewers).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Masculinity

Masculinity is one of the four dimensions of musical values as elaborated in the second chapter. This dimension confirms a number of certain values explicitly competitiveness, assertiveness, accumulation of material wealth and possessions. Through deep contemplation and interpretive reading toward the novel, the er recognizes those values in the novel. In this part, the er tends to exclusively provide a brief explanation and present each of those values in the following details.

Competitiveness

Competition is the act or state of trying hard to win or gain something wanted by others; rivalry, competing. The implication in all competition is that everyone who wants the thing desired cannot have it and there are rules to define how fair competition must proceed for the prize to be won. This is true whether it be sports, business, job selection etc. In social life, competitiveness is highly valued in some cultures. The author, as an American, is recognized as a competitive individual. In his novel reviews done by many people from different places, it is found that Robert James Waller is described as a strong person who likes to compete with others to achieve his goals. In accordance, many reviewers also highlighted that the characterization of the hero or the main character in the novel is

representing and reflecting the author himself in some ways. The following quotation confirms the strong relevance of the author and the main character in his novel and serves considerable representative of views on the author's belief of competitiveness at the same time.

“He calls his book a way of thinking about achieving balance between the near-term and long-term, which applies to everything from traffic jams to retirement savings to debt to obesity. The 220-page book is an abridged version of a larger more mathematical tome he's already devoted four years and 8,000 pages to, and hopes to eventually complete — for the eight to 10 people he expects will read it. He doubts he will write fiction again.” (Basu, 2012)

In the novel *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend*, competitiveness is demonstrated as one of the extents to which the main character Michael Tillman tends to direct his life. According to the following quotation, it can be understood that Michael Tillman is a competitive person. The author illustrates the main character's competitiveness by mentioning his achievement in certain period of time. Michael Tillman is a typical of person who really values competitiveness as one of those values he always holds in his hands.

Uncertainty Avoidance (Emphasis on Religious values)

In the second chapter, it is elaborated that uncertainty avoidance is one of dimensions of musical values from where some values are derived. Uncertainty avoidance generates some values which confirm that a person might lie on these whenever any uncertainty occurs in life. Practically, religion becomes one of fundamental basis to avoid uncertainty for certain culture and society.

“He's not concerned about what his legacy will be, saying, “Immortality is a futile search. We come, we do, we go. We all leave a trail. One hopes that the trail is not too damaging.” That's not quite the same as the much-quoted Bridges line, “In a universe of ambiguity, this kind of certainty comes only once, and never again, no matter how many lifetimes you live.” But equally relevant and real, for its time and context.” (Basu, 2012)

In his real life, the author is recognized as a religious person who would lay the state of uncertainty upon religion. The preceding quotation confirms this belief in his life. The way he stated that “immortality is a futile search” confirms a great meaning of life and uncertainty which needs to be made up. Certainly, it means that none can live everlastingly. That is a meaningful statement which implicitly confirms a great deal in theological perspective.

Long Term Orientation

Differences of cultural and anthropological background could produce and create different values and beliefs within human life all over the world. In the context of society's time horizon, or Geert Hofstede named it ‘time orientation’, a certain culture can be categorized as long term or short term oriented for which each of them generates and defines some values to the culture dweller. In accordance, the er would like to present each of those values which exist in the novel and divides them into the following details;

Persistence (Perseverance)

Persistence as one of those extents of values in society's life puts an emphasis on being consistent to maintain what is expected. In long term oriented culture, persistence is highly valued as one the most important beliefs that direct the people into an ideal life. From the discussions of musical values, as elaborated in Motti's *The Issue of Musical Value*, people could learn that persistence is also viewed as one extent of values that can be found in the actual society's life which could be very complex and complicated to describe for each. By employing an expressive approach, the novel *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend* is viewed as a representation of the author's intention to demonstrate what defined as musical values in this . Therefore, the following quotations are taken from the novel as the primary data and secondary data both of which would strongly support this analysis.

The author himself is known as a persistent person who finally graduated from his doctorate degree majoring in economy and accepts his full professorship in economy. In the term of writing novel, Waller is also known as one of the best originally American researcher whose novels were best seller. Despite his success as a researcher, it was almost likely that actually the author faced such offensive attack from many people who were mostly literary critics. His novels were rarely viewed as a good example of artistic novel which embodies the concepts of literature. However, Waller's persistence and strong willingness has raised him up to the highest achievement of a best seller.

“Waller’s overnight success as a novelist was every researcher’s dream, just as the plot of *Bridges* was every repressed farm wife’s fantasy. But his celebrity also made him envied and disparaged, even by people he considered friends. “It was almost as if a business school guy wasn’t allowed to write a book like that and have a best seller (when) many serious researchers have lots of rejection slips,” he said.” (Basu:2012)

The main character Michael Tillman in this novel is characterized as a persistent person resembling the author’s personality. From the following quotation, it can be taken conclusion that the main character is persistent, industrious and consistent, especially at work, in doing his job. He is regarded as a qualified lecturer who accepts a high salary line at the university mainly since the accumulation of time that is approximately fifteen years. Spending such a long period of time at work or anything else could be much more boring for those who have lower level of persistence. But, for Michael Tillman, it does not matter at all since he is really a consistent person who never views obstacle and problem as the right reason for him to quit, but it is more likely viewed as a challenge that always motivates him and finally leads him striving to the best.

CONCLUSION

By employing expressive approach which is used as the basis of conducting this , the er is intended to expose some findings from Waller’s *Slow Waltz in Cedar Bend* related to the context of musical values. Based on the analysis which is comprehensively discussed in the fourth chapter, there are some values which include in the scope of musical values demonstrated by the author through the main character. As most of the main character’s life is set to resemble the author’s life in some ways, it can be generated that most values demonstrated by the author in the novel are all about his own beliefs. The author tries to communicate those extents of musical values since he himself is a person who holds those values as he is known as an artistic musician who has released some works of music.

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