

## Musical Interpretation

Garrett Hines

**Course:** English 101

**Instructor:** Dr. Jayetta Slawson

**Essay Type:** Descriptive

*"Strangers passing in the street, by chance two separate glances meet, and I am you and what I see is me. And do I take you by the hand, and lead you through the land, and help me understand the best I can."*

*- Roger Waters  
From the song "Echoes" by Pink Floyd*

The ostrich feather sounds of an accordion and the jubilant melodies of an elf's piccolo are heard humming lightly in the beginning of the song. The resonance is soft, making my ears decree sympathy for the lack of valor. All is well in Bethlehem until a boom from nowhere is heard that moves up, up, then down into a big scratch of bass, drums, organ, and guitar. The guitar then moves into a blues lick so dirty it brings with it the desire to take a shower and wash my hair...twice. More booms are heard as the organ is steadily on the same (almost merged) note. The orchestra continues in the same up, up pattern until it once again kamikazes back into another dirty guitar riff that is so dirty my mind bursts open, and its dim, yet bright, light hazily illuminates the ear drum and pays the hussy her well-deserved \$75 bucks. Then, once again, a similar build up is registered, only this time the instruments stay axis and steadily rise with a fluctuating, militant-like drum roll, burying the hatchet as the organ calculates new sounds. Higher build-up, lightning is the tempo change striking down into a slower rock cream of shifting organ, pounding drums, and wave like guitar melodies: chaos is in full swing. The main riff has been heard and is still blaring, signified by the goosebumps under my skin. Then, the

drums slowly faint while the other instruments stay at pace until the sound of an almost angelic and computerized choir is heard cascading in the background scenery. Knocking on my ears and opening doors: this is how I interpret Pink Floyd's "In the Flesh?"

We hear music everyday-be it the symphony of the outside world scrambling to get somewhere only to sit impatiently or the opera of muddled bass noise expelling from wire frame speakers and over used sub-woofers in random, jolting vehicles (causing the automobiles' interiors and exteriors to shiver plastics instead of bones). We hear music, or at least noise, everyday. Still, it is the ears, minds, and (sometimes) hearts of the listeners that decide what is music and what is noise. To examine sounds is to examine our minds, our interpretations of the decibels, the arpeggios, the vocal peaks, and the lyrical poetry (which can either be meaningful prose or reek like the most potent of dog shit). To describe music that others have described as "sonic alchemy" or, as I describe it, "beautiful chaos," is to bring up to par one's own preceding meaningful thoughts of the word "music."

My "In the Flesh?" interpretation is probably a great deal nothing like anyone else's in the world. Ideas and interpretation are in the head. Humans are the gods of musical dictionaries: each complete with omnipotent reservoirs of independent feelings, volumes of styrofoam heart registries, and bottomless silos foaming with self-enlightening vocabulary. In my dictionary, music by Pink Floyd and a variety of other artists can grant me the same type of energy while creating a different (or sometimes shared) emotion. But with everyone, the science of emotions is as complicated and as ultimately un-arguable as faith. So, to classify the science of music interpretation into a theory: *all* is alchemy that, somewhere in between (where science and art fuse), transmutes *y(our)* dreams into gold.

Chaos goes into limbo as a barber-shop quartet of electronic angels are heard in the background with a bass drum hitting like a heartbeat as Roger Waters takes downstage center with almost comical vocals: "So you thought you might like to go to the show"; the angels flutter downward like a warm larynx xylophone. "To feel the warm thrill of confusion, that space cadet glow," the digital choir goes up to build resonance, chiming in sync with a blossoming, light-hearted (yet full-bodied) organ. "Tell me is something eluding you, sunshine? Is this not what you expected to see?" Roger Waters sings in a crisp-almost obnoxious-tone as the angels stay respirated on electronic lungs with the organ monitoring their stability. My mind can hear the guitar and bass rustling papers, getting antsy while becoming like numb teeth waiting for the drill. Waters continues at a higher pitch while building volume: "If you wanna find out what's behind these cold eyes," (the angels rejoice louder in the background) "you'll just have to blow your way through this disguise!" Waters exclaims as the drums pummel in like a buffalo stampede: beautiful chaos is repaired then injected into my mind.

Guitars, bass, drums, organs: the symphony goes back to the main melody as the shivers and goosebumps once again remind me of what has been forgotten. The melody is a crescendo: up...down, down, down, up, down. Seconds tick by and the band known as Pink Floyd begins to build "The Wall". The organ sputters into full voice as a maniacal Waters pierces the canvas of sound with a scream: "LIGHTS!" The organ continues with the band raging on in their prime glory. Waters is heard more aggravated: "WHERE ARE THE SOUND EFFECTS?" The band continues as a plane is heard speeding into the production, bringing with it a gasoline-fueled logic and adding to the tempo and to the exotic deluge of magnificent chaos. A porcelain howl from a fanatical Waters is heard: "ACTION!", as the drums hammer out three watershed snare beats, symbolizing descent of the final bomb. Then, a boom of all instruments exploding is

heard, cueing screeching airplanes to unleash havoc across sonic skies while under them a war zone of mortar shell organ, blitzkrieg drums, and napalm guitar/bass distortion beautifully devastate the brain waves. War can still be heard but patiently fades in the distance, yet the incongruous machine-gun snare drum stays hostile at the front...until silenced abruptly by the piercing wail of an infant, providing the stone for beginning the next anthem.

Picture at the end of any song, ears as a trampoline with the brain bouncing, gaining height and getting ready to perform. One's interpretation of the song will, in turn, determine the brain's acrobatics-either sharply plummeting to the ground face first, performing marvelous high-arched aerials, or simply stopping and standing on the mesh looking mentally raped. Whether a person's mind finds the song distasteful, tasteful, or (cataleptic) in between, the person is still interpreting what they have just heard. If compelled to write another person's interpretation of "In the Flesh?", my pen couldn't quite capture said person's stunts. Interpretations and tricks, obviously, differ and writing a critique about another person's feeling would be tedious, considering *my* written description of the song is just *my* hand trying to make sense of *my* brain, which is a difficult and almost aggravating task for my joints. (When writing, there is a strong desire to label myself lazy, wait...I mean an artist, and put nothing but the title "In the Flesh?" at the top of the page to manifest "speechlessness.") Yet, in the end, my mind finds an ultimately satisfying sense of revelation that it can describe how it feels...well, with words. Nevertheless, considering that my discoveries represent my own limited vocabulary, I am left to muse about what it must be like to receive information with another person's vernacular, and what it must feel like to witness the beauty of music in another skin and psyche.

*Garrett Hines' major is Undeclared.*

**Dr. Slawson's Comments:** *Garrett Hines, 19, writes poetry and fiction. In this descriptive essay composed for English 101 class, he enlists language as a medium for exploring the "auralities" of music.*