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Final Assignment: Reflection Paper

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For this final video assignment, I wanted to choose this piece of media because Childish Gambino’s style of music and artistry is one that really stands out to me. His videos always seem to have a specific hidden message for the audience to see. Most recently, in his video ‘This is America”, there were many innuendos of certain events that have occured in our society. The way Gambino uses his platform requires us to think about what we are watching and why. In addition to the hidden meanings, his videos open for interpretation as everyone will not have the same perspective; that can be based on ones ideologies, and how they view media, culture, and identity.

The analysis process was an interesting one. When I first watched the video, I did not know that it was an environmental argument about global warming. I took a closer look at the lyrics and I was able to understand where the argument was going. Next, I had to look deeper into the visuals for the video. During the analysis, I discovered the reason behind the use of the celebrity cameos, as they were used for specific scenes. The use of the cameos were used to represent things that are or have happened in the world of entertainment. For example: Will Smith is seen wiping down a car. This could be in reference to his hit song, “Summertime”, in which he raps: “You just finished wiping your car down”. The following celebrity cameo shows Azealia Banks, pictured sitting up in a tree. It’s possibly a metaphor for Banks’ increasingly isolated position in the music industry. (Britton) As she seems to think that she is above everyone else. Next, Nicki Minaj plays with building blocks, which Travis Scott then topples over. Clearly a reference to their recent beef, sparked when Nicki accused Travis of “using” his girlfriend Kylie Jenner to increase his album sales, beating Minaj’s own ‘Queen’ to US number one in the process. (Britton) It’s telling how Glover has depicted the feud as a very childlike affair. (Britton) The cameos all have a common factor that is used to support Gambino’s argument.

With this video, Gambino had a message that he wanted to convey. The content of the lyrics and the cameos are a use of metaphor, that serve as a representation of his argument. Gambino is trying to mirror how we are distracted by the drama and media that circulates around the entertainment world. While watching the video, the audience can be easily distracted by the celebrities in the video as well as what they are doing. We can be so distracted by the public eye, that we forget about the real important issues that are happening in the environment. If you pay close attention to the lyrics, you will hear that Gambino is referring to the problems about global warming and the harm that it can cause.

The first keyword that I wanted to choose was ideology. Ideology is defined as “a system of meaning that helps define and explain the world that makes value judgements about the world”. (Croteau and Hoynes) Ideology describes how individuals organize and make sense of what’s going on in the world. Gambino has a certain ideology that he wants to be portrayed in his video, as he does this with the use of his content. Therefore, the second keyword that I chose to use was content. Content refers to the message that the piece of media is trying to convey, and can defined as “creators of media using entertainment media to comment on the real social world” (Keywords 189). It is message that is communicated to a society that bases its ideology on the identities created through culture. Media content perpetuates ideology, often promoting basic social arrangements rather than challenging mainstream perspectives.

The content that is included in Gambino's video is used in a clever way to support his argument. As previously stated before, the use of the cameos were used to distract us in the moment, not being able to listen to the lyrics as closely as we should. The third keyword that I chose was representation. The definition of representation is “standing for something, a portrayal or the result of processes of selection that invariably mean that certain aspects of reality are highlighted and others neglected.” (Keywords 172). The content of the cameos and the lryics served as a representation of the problem that Gambino wants to address. The wanted to show us that we can be easily influenced and deviate our attention to things and aren't as important, issues such as global warming. Personally as a viewer, I became an example of Gambino's argument, as got distracted watching the video, awaiting the next celebrity appearance, rather than connecting to the lyrics.

Two additional keywords that I could have included would be public and power, the definition of public: “...suggests the judging and debating social collective.” (Keywords 153) and the definition of power is the “capacity to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others and indeed to create events, by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms.” (Keywords 146) To name something as public means power. Gambino's argument shows us how much influence the public has over us as well as the power the public possess.

With all of the distractions, the gossip and influence of the public sphere, it can really have an effect on how it shapes the media, culture, as well as one's identity. The media is a platform that is ever changing, what we import into the media can have a different outcome when it is collected from the public sphere. When it is retrieved from the public sphere, everyone takes a certain message from the piece of media, a message that can change and shapes one’s culture entirely. When someone's culture has been shifted, altered, or added to, it can have a significant impact on one's identity. Media has a way of influencing the way that we see the world, and how we see ourselves in it.

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