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Bittersweet Fame

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Professor Church

Media Texts

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Bittersweet Fame

Whenever entering a new season in life, a person is bound to undergo a whirlpool of conflicting emotions. Approaching change can often be difficult for people, as straying from what is familiar is to also abandon comfort. Confronting change not only introduces new structures in lifestyles, but brings about a character in a person he or she had not previously known. One of the most intimidating transitions is the adjustment to stardom and fame, which is a burden to celebrities. Becoming a public figure or a well known artist requires one to abandon privacy, and in many cases, abandon parts of their identities. While the lives of celebrities are presented as fruitful and abundant, the genuine emotion and mental stability of celebrities are rarely shared. One artist, Travis Scott, acknowledges the issue which impacts so many, showcasing his interpretation of this complex struggle in the music video for his song, "90210". The music video for the song, "90210", performed by Travis Scott and directed by Hype Williams, illustrates the ideology that fame strips one of his or her identity, destroying the life he or she once lead.

At the start of the video, the protagonist Travis Scott is introduced to the luxuries and lust that fame bring. The video, being completely filmed using stop motion, introduces an action figure version of rapper, Travis Scott, wandering through the streets of Beverly Hills at night. Eventually, he comes across a prostitute whose face is blurred out, and the two proceed to her

apartment (Travis Scott). The decision to present Travis Scott as a plastic action figure is a signifier for Travis as an artist, the signified implication being the artificiality which has taken over his identity. Entering the spotlight quickly alters a person, often bringing a wave of materialism which overtakes the celebrity. In this video, the unforgiving impacts of fame do not exclude Travis Scott. Entering the city, Travis appears lost and vulnerable, unsure of himself, reflecting the same emotional stages of people being exposed to fame for the first time. When he comes across the prostitute, Travis is given a brief sense of relief and clarity. The prostitute, while being a signifier as a temporary partner, is signified as both a source of temptation and prize earned through fame. When she is introduced to Travis, she captivates him through her sexuality and carefree demeanor. In the moment, Travis finds himself starstruck by the mystery woman, and is brought a brief sensation of excitement and wonder through their sexual interaction. However, the fulfillment he feels is not long lived. While his desires have been fulfilled, the weight of Travis' past refuses to fade.

Though his newfound lavish lifestyle seems to consume his life, there is an inner force within Travis Scott which attempts to reject the materialistic. When Travis and the prostitute are in bed asleep, a larger, more monstrous version of Travis Scott is brought into the video, tearing apart the streets of the city (Travis Scott). The enlarged, Godzilla esque version of Travis maintains a signifier as a monster, while the character is signified as the destruction of artificiality and the deep consciousness of the actual Travis Scott. While Travis attempts to completely submerge himself in the indulgences with which he is presented, he is unable to fully lose his sense of self. The Godzilla version of Travis is the frustrations which still linger within Travis, reminding him of his true identity, values and past. Travis and Godzilla Travis soon have

an encounter outside of the apartment, the two are shown having a passionate discussion in front of a tree, which sprouts and grows whilst they speak. The tree, literally being a signifier as a mere plant is signified as the steady progression of ego, wealth and fame. Travis, like a tree, is rooted within his original upbringings and beliefs, yet still flourishes and evolves an artist. As Travis speaks to Godzilla Travis, he realizes the significance of balancing the lifestyle of fame and maintaining individuality. This balance is not easily achieved, and must be fought to grasp. The conflict between fame and happiness is not a battle which merely occurs in this video, but an issue which impacts anyone in the limelight.

The internal struggle between integrity and stardom is a battle which daunts even the strongest of celebrities. Balancing the weight of expectations while also maintaining a sense of individuality is one of the most challenging endeavors, celebrities often being profoundly impacted by such a task. As a result, many celebrities enter difficult and destructive phases of depression and addiction. In many cases, celebrities enter into mental illnesses such as depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety, or they experiment with highly addictive substances (Tahir). The extent at which these disorders affects a celebrity's life is broad, some being able to live peacefully with minor struggles, and others going so far as to take their own life. Recent examples of these extreme instances include the suicide of Robin Williams in 2014 and the death of Whitney Houston in 2012 (Tahir). The fast paced, strenuous and widely scrutinized lifestyle people of high acclaim must endure is not easily adaptable. Being in the public eye guarantees struggle, and celebrities are often unsure of how to approach such a task. To release art and pursue dreams requires sacrifice, and too often celebrities are forced to sacrifice their identities. In his music video, Travis Scott represents these myriads of emotions and sensations so many

artists undergo when adapting to fame, often uncertain and conflicted. However, despite the difficulty which stardom brings, many fight through it for the passion and drive they have for their work.

To give the world personal art and work is to also lose pieces of one's identity to the world. Sacrifice is often inevitable and integral in the life of a celebrity, often having to sacrifice privacy and integrity to earn success and acclaim. Many accept these changes for the sake of their passions and work. Those in the public eye become willing to take the necessary measures to ensure their music, films, and other forms of arts are shared. While the internal war between identity and fame is disheartening, it can also strengthen a person. Remaining persistent and focused on one's values and passions only solidifies his or her identity. As is reflected by Travis Scott and Hype Williams, the fight is not easy to pursue, but important to overcome. By bringing together music and art, Travis Scott shed light on an often undiscussed conflict.

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