Chau Minh Nguyen

Coms 100B

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Ideology Criticism

Mark Powers

“I think being a woman is like being Irish... Everyone says you're important and nice, but you take second place all the time” (Iris Murdoch). This quote pin points the position and role women play in society since the day mankind existed. It is common to see men viewed as superior, dominant, and important. It is also common to view women as inferior, suppressed, and unimportant. The number one summer hit in 2013, “Blurred Lines” by Robin Thicke is suggests those ideology and is offensive, as well as, reaffirms what common role women are supposed to play in society. Women’s suffrage has always been around, but it was not until the 1800’s that women began fighting for their rights to be treated equally to men. Finally in 1919, the 19th Amendment was passed and women gain their rights to vote. This was the beginning of women’s equal opportunity. Unfortunately, women are still the suppressed group two hundred years later.

In the music video founded on Youtube, “Blurred Lines” by Robin Thicke, we can see there is more than one way to view this video, but in this paper we will focus the video from a Feminist view. It is clear women are the oppressed group in this patriarchy. Women in this video are hardly covered up, while the men in this video are wearing suits. This video make women appear as second class citizens and treated as if they are “animals” and have no thoughts or opinions that are valued. The reason the director chose these women to play their role in the video is to occupy the lyrics. In such lines, Robin Thicke sings, “…tried to domesticate you, but you’re an animal. Baby, it’s in your nature. Just let me liberate you…”. This verse implies that men who have tried to treat women as equal human beings having been treating women the wrong way. Thicke is implying that women are animals and there is no way you can change an animal into a human. Both animals and humans need to be treated differently, because they are different forms of beings. Thicke, as a popular, tall, white man can never understand what it would be like to be a woman for a day. His lyrics are demeaning to women and make him appear shallow.

Women go through different experiences than men do. Naturally, it is normal for the men to “chase” after women, to provide stability, as well as, security, and also be the protector. So, it is considered uncommon to see women work to create financial stability and security for her or even more uncommon for her to be the one who provides and protects a man. In the music video, we see Robin Thicke, T.I., and Pharrell look at these women as sexual objects and nothing more. The way these women walk around as if they enjoy the “chase” and they like how they are treated. They are in no way objecting to the way they are being treated. We used our natural ability to act on what needs to be done and men do so the best. Women have been known to talk about their feelings and men act on their feelings. Talking about something and doing something is a clear distinction that dictates the roles on men and women where they are. In today’s time though, things have changed. Our world is being run by educators and innovators. Since the day women have had the chance to become educated they have the chance to do something other than what they are good at naturally, which is to stand quietly and look pretty. They are now given the chance to act on what they feel. This means that our culture has given women the same opportunity to be equal to men.

In the music video, there are clips where Robin Thicke is treated like he has power over the women. Examples are when one of the girls lit up his cigarette, opened his bottle Remy Martin, and cradles the goat in her arms like a mother would. Even after the video girl lit up Thicke’s cigarette, he disrespectfully blew smoke in her face to make her cough. Thicke has no respect for women. He has them around for entertainment and to show off for his male friends. For some men, having money and beautiful things in life puts him in the higher hierarchy and in results, power. Having women who are servitude also gives him power and reinforce those women to stay in the roles they are assigned. Since women have natural instinct ability to be motherly, it is common to see women as nurturing people. In this music video, the director has one of the video girls hold a goat topless. Many things can be interpreted here. A mother breast feeds her children milk through her bosom. So, we can see the metaphor of having a topless woman cradling a goat who can be milked. While all this is happening, the men are prancing around singing and telling her she wants what he has. This clip can be viewed as degrading to women or as a symbol to remind people to embrace the natural abilities of being a woman. It really depends on the time in which one lives and one’s values and beliefs. Considering it is 2013, the video is definitely degrading to women.

The lyrics itself is degrading to women. Robin Thicke confidently sings, “…I know you want it, but you’re a good girl. The way you grab me. Must want to get nasty. Go ahead. Get at me.” Thicke says he knows the good girl wants to get nasty with him and he welcomes it. It is portrayed so in the video, but we do not know for sure if that is really his lifestyle off camera. We can assume it is, because he approves with the message being portrayed about him via the music video. As a man, for Thicke, to be viewed as the one everyone woman wants is ok. He enjoys the fame and success he receives from his audience. His audience is also ok with him portraying himself as powerful too, because they also approve of the message he is sending through his lyrics and music video. It is what society views as part of its norms. The man sings and dances in suits, while women prance around half naked. Educated women are probably going to be less fond of this context, but sadly, because the idea of women being treated as second class has been around for so long it is harder for people to instantly take notice in the women who are being treated disrespectfully.

The lines in the second verse, Robin Thicke sings, “…What do they make dreams for? When you got them jeans on. What do we need steam for? You the hottest bitch in this place. I feel so lucky. Hey, hey, hey. You want to hug me. Hey, hey, hey. What rhymes with hug me?” When he sings, “…What do they make dreams for? When you got them jeans on…” If he is talking about dreaming and jeans, why were both not present in his music video? There are only girls dancing around in plastic nude bottoms. Then he goes on calling women the “hottest bitch”, which is appropriate according to his lyrics. When indeed a “bitch” is a female version dog and he did mention too that women are animals, but now we know he considers them to be dogs. The worst part about this entire verse is his last line. He says, “…what rhymes with hug me?” This shows the seriousness of the words that were chosen for this particular song. It was as if the reason this song was number one on the summer hits for 2013 is for Pharrell’s catchy beats to this song and having T.I. rap in it a little with very straight forward messages much like Thicke’s. Otherwise, Robin Thicke would not have a number one hit.

For two hundred documented years, women have fought for their rights to be treated equally men. As humans, whether we are men or women are have desires to learn about the unknown in life and desire to have a voice that can be valued. If there were no civilization that allowed for people to gain access in having improvements in their life then the world will be missing out on some extraordinary people. On a women’s history timeline website it showed that during World War II when men were gone at war, the women had to stay and work. In total 20 million women were at work when men were at war. In 1955, Rosa Parks stay seated in the front of the bus to fight for the rights she was taken just for being a black woman. She did not feel that the color of her skin should define where she is allowed to seat on the bus. Then in 1964, when Title VII of the Civil Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was passed it gave the rights for women to be treated equally to men in the job line regardless their race or gender. And the list continues to grow. So, why is it that in 2013, women are still being treated as if everything they fought for meant nothing? The appreciation for all the women who suffered has decreased over the years, now that women have the right to vote and do not have to worry about having smaller pay for the same job that a man does. There is nothing to fight for anymore. It comes down to a competitive world of capitalism in the United States.

Sex is the main selling points for many businesses, from cars, to clothes, to perfume, and music videos. Everyone is willing to do anything to live the lavish life style that is portrayed on television. We see women dancing half naked on television and we accept it for how it is, because we expect that off television as well. Depending on who the viewer is some may accept it for the way things are and some may be completely against the idea of any woman dressed half naked on the streets. Men and women both have their natural instincts that they act on naturally without thinking, but to live up to society’s expectation they need to be aware of the things they do, what they decide to wear, the way they talk, and what car they decide to drive. To be accepted and to keep peace in their culture one must conform to it or else there will be conflict. Women who fought for their rights went through many obstacles and struggled deeply to change the way men and women are wired.

It was shocking to read that Robin Thicke had the number hit for the summer of 2013. The beat is catchy, but the lyrics reinforce the idea that women will never be equal to men. It is the unfortunate truth. There are high demands and expectations from men that need to work extra hard to afford suits and ties. Also for women to be the prettiest she can be or else she will never be the “hottest bitch” in a room. The stress society puts on themselves is their own doing. It is the ability to be aware of the culture in which we live and decide what is right and what is wrong. Most music these days have stray away from its innocence and in the direction of power and money for men. And for the ladies, it is about being that sexual icon with all the finest and expensive shoes and purses. Every day when a new music video comes out it is a reminder that the music is horrible, the beat is catchy, the men look good, and the women look even better.

The reason this paper is considered rhetoric is because it explains the ideology of the

role both men and women play in society. For a song to be placed number one in the summer of 2013 that degrades women and rewards men for doing so sets the beliefs we have had since the early signs of human existence. I hope that my analysis of this paper can give light to those who enjoys the song to understand the hidden messages that are portrayed and that their love and support for this song is purely popular and sold on Pharrell’s musical talent. Rhetoric is indeed the art of using words to express an emotion or thought and here, my analysis of this product is considered rhetoric for explaining the underlying messages to the song and music video.

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