

An Academic Perspective on Max White Investigates...

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Max White Investigates... intends to be a satirical piece that aims to expose double standards that exist within the media in an attempt to serve a global cultural hegemony. It seeks to expose the values that exist within the media that vilify people who do not subscribe to the norms and morals of this hegemonic standard.

It attempts to do this by overtly announcing its own values and standards and creating an overt witch-hunt by implicitly marginalizing and mocking a particular subgenre or clique. 'Emo' are chosen as the subsection to be marginalized as they represent a much persecuted section of society. These people are constantly mocked and put down due to their appearance and values and their rejection of mainstream society and its norms. They were stereotyped as being weak and miserable first and foremost, and then when the trend gained popularity on MTV, they were mocked for being sell-outs and trend-whores.

Another important facet of 'emo' is that it is made of traditionally middle-class white youths who have no apparent reason to constantly lament on how miserable they are. This is another feature of the 'whiteness' that exists in the media, in that these people are mocked for being upset with the status quo that exists in their apparent culture, or as they commonly lament, the lack of their own culture. It thus follows that they seek to remove themselves and alienate themselves from the mainstream that react by stereotyping and mocking them. It was seen in A.C. Fick's course on 'Race, Representation and Ethics' that the cultural hegemony is able to operate by removing the individuality of a person by classifying them and labelling them. This loss of individuality means that individuals can be categorized and judged by those that remain unnamed and thus unjudged. This is the basis of the power of 'whiteness', in that it is unlabelled and is effectively able to act as a moral touch-point.

This is the stance taken by Max White in his 'investigation' of 'emo'. He is free to clearly mock and ridicule and present what seems to be a very one-sided

argument against these individuals. Despite hearing of positive examples and one defence of these 'others' he remains unaffected and continues to believe in these differences that would exist between them and him. He is clearly looking for these problems and differences despite the fact that they do not exist. Whilst claiming to be a journalist, considered moral and objective, he is clearly on a very biased witch-hunt in his treatment of these subjects and his own values and biases are inherent in the piece he produces. This is the metaphor of the blinkered TV producer that I aimed to expose in *Max White*. Even though his biases are over-the-top and ridiculous, they are still a representation of the biases and values that exists in much news-media.

The hysteria he invokes in his treatment of this group as a threat to society can be seen in the sensationalism that dominates the much news-media seen on television, such as CNN or the BBC. Many stories on these channels seek to warn society of apparent dangers that face them at every corner and serve to create a culture of moral outrage at any perceived threats. Many groups could be seen to be given different treatment in the media throughout history. From early stories rationalising slavery as a means of bringing Christianity to a 'savage third world' to more modern cases of Islam being perceived as a threat to world stability without adequate rationalisation, it can be seen that much of the world's media protects the vested interests that are inherent in 'whiteness'. Thus, Max White's biases operate to create a similar 'threat' and perceived differences that can be seen to simply not exist or be worth reporting on. That there is no adequate 'how-and-why' rationalisation given to the concept of 'emo' on a more theoretical level and it is not looked at rationally, it is simply sensationalised.

The figure of Max being a 'cop' is another satirical aspect of the piece. As a cop, he is a protector of society and is an undoubted moral authority figure. Journalists hold a similar position of authority and respect and are important features of any society. Many rightfully claim that any flourishing democracy should rely on a free press to give every person a voice to speak its mind. Thus when the media is biased, it denies many figures their voices which limits its ability to serve the people of a country in their attempts to set up a free Republic.

The satire is very over-the-top and this is an attempt to ensure that it is not taken seriously on any level. Max is seen indulging in many activities that are

‘macho’ and commonly male, however, he simply looks ridiculous and he is surely a figure that no-one could aspire to emulate. Yet, he is fulfilling an ideal that many people could be seen to aspire to. Thus, hopefully people could take a look at their own values and begin to judge them against this comical figure. Then they begin to wonder why ‘emo’ is being so harshly dealt with, when in fact, it is the reporter himself that is ridiculous.

Hopefully this can be a departure point for society to look more closely at the values inherent in their own media portals and whether the concept of an unbiased media can really be thought to exist. I hope that the satire in Max White can be seen as a thought-provoking piece that challenges its viewers to take a closer look at the media they consume and whether those minority groups are being fairly represented by powerful media disseminators.