Yeezus is Jesuz

Examining the Socio-Hermeneutical Transmediated Images of Jesus Employed by Kanye West

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Context & Setting


• *Between God & Kanye: Youth Ministry in a Post Civil Rights Era* (Inter Varsity Press Academic, 2016)
Working Definition of Hip Hop

• Hip Hop is an urban sub-culture that seeks to express a life-style, attitude, and/or urban individuality. Hip Hop at its core—not the commercialization and commodity it has become in certain respects—rejects dominant forms of culture and society and seeks to increase a social consciousness along with a racial/ethnic pride. Thus, Hip Hop uses rap music, dance, music production, MCing, and allegory as vehicles to send and fund its message of social, cultural, and political resistance to dominate structures of norms.
Working Definition of Rap

• Rap is the main medium of the Hip-Hop culture that brings definition, value, understanding and appreciation to the social isolation, economic hardship, political demoralization and cultural exploitation endured by most ghetto poor communities.

• Thus, rap is the musical expression that compliments the oral communication of its culture. Rap also captures and esteems the ghetto poor existence as valid and real to all people of color & poor Whites. Rap brings the revenue, which fuels the culture and its message.
• Kanye’s Body of work
  – Late Registration (2005)
  – Late Orchestration: Live at Abbey Road Studios (2006)
  – Graduation (2007)
  – 808’s & Heartbreak (2008)
  – My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (2010)
  – Watch The Throne (2011)
  – Yeezus (2013)
Theomusicology & Hip Hop

Ghetto Life
Disenfranchisement
Post Soul/ Post Modern Era
Political & Social Action

Shift in Religious Thought (1991-present)
The Mystery of God Ambiguity
Conscious Thought

A “voice” for the Hip Hop Generation
A Hip Hop Theological Mantra
A “Real Time” Connection with Skeptics & The “nones”
Conceptual Framework

• Theomusicology

• Nitty-Gritty Hermeneutic
  – Antony Pinn (1995)
Kanye...
Jesuz Imagery
Jesuz Imagery
Jesuz Imagery

@99point1percent

@99point1percent

hiphopheisenberg.com
Tropes...

• “Shit, Kanye is this generations Pac. He’s making them connections to religion and Jesus. He’s trying to make Heaven accessible...feel me? Sure he’s cocky. But, shit, so was Jesus! [laughs] Wasn’t he the one who was always talking shit to the religious officials and saying he was God? [Smirks] Shoot, Jesus was a controversial cat.”

  — Karl, 2009
Jesuz Imagery
Jesuz Imagery
Jesuz Imagery
Socio-cultural Tropes...

• “Yeah Kanye a fool for trying to get at Jesus! But...there’s a but...he’s a pastor and a reverend for the kids. He’s coming from the street perspective and wanting to make you think about these things. That’s deep. He can reach way more people than even like a T.D. Jakes.”

— Tanisha, 2011
Jesuz Imagery
Yeezus & Hip Hop’s Central Theological Typologies

1) Creating of God within the context of suffering
2) Post Soul questioning of authority from social structures
3) Hip Hop community & suffering
4) Hip Hoppers problem solve within rap music
5) Distrust of hegemonic systems & networks
Intersecting with Hip Hop & Jesuz

The search & connection to deity in common spaces outside of the totemic norms
Toward an Ecclesiology of Sensationalized Jesuz

- The contextual Jesuz
- Attempt to access deity from the margins
- Sensationalized Jesuz needed
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