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### Politics in Entertainment

“I would have liked it more if it weren’t so political” and “Keep politics out my video games and movies.” Any small amount of time spent online, and an individual is bound to come across such comments. These are commonplace online. Every piece of entertainment now has some woke message. It would appear as though the left has fully taken ahold of entertainment and are against the right. Politics are all around us everywhere we go, following our every move and dictating how we act. They are the core ideals of people, and they shape how we live and how to approach certain issues. Those who carry these ideas will claim that in entertainment we do not need to see politics, and that entertainment should be an escape from the real world and its issues. They may also claim that “wokeness” is driving entertainment. To a certain extent I would have to agree, entertainment like video games and movies should allow us to escape the real world and have some relief from the struggles of daily living. Despite this belief, the greatest works of fiction and entertainment are those that take inspiration from reality and their conflicts. Political ideals do not just disappear; after all the minds behind these works are human beings with their own ideas and beliefs. You cannot have entertainment that doesn’t carry some political message in it. Political ideas in entertainment media are important as it allows people to view ideas they would not normally attempt to understand. Besides this, political messages in fiction allow for good and interesting stories that stay grounded.

The internet is home to discussions that get aggressive and illogical very quickly, it is fueled by outrage and hyperbolic feelings. An idea tends to be seen as political when something

the viewer is against is shown, leading to angry comments and the “you made it political” sentence mentioned earlier. While browsing Twitter a couple of years back there was controversy about the new “Falcon and the Winter Soldier” Disney plus show. The comments would state things such as, “Why is Marvel being political?” “I like my superheroes without a political agenda” and lastly “They don’t have to shove their ideology down our throats.” I had yet to watch the show, so I had no understanding as to what the source of such passionate comments was. To get a good understanding of where this was all coming from, I went ahead and started the show and followed it until its finale. The more I watched the show, the more I understood what was “political.” “Falcon and the Winter Soldier” dealt with Sam Wilson, a black man, taking on the responsibility and mantle of Captain America. The show describes the difficulty of the Black American man; this is what was political to these people. An idea like race that makes certain people uncomfortable is what is seen as “political.” To the opposing side’s credit yes there was some political commentary shown, however, those messages did not seem to be the ones being combated. It was the mentioning of injustice against Black Americans in the United States that made this political.

After encountering so many comments like these concerning entertainment, I was able to conclude as to when something becomes political. The common term thrown in with this rhetoric is “woke” and “leftist agenda.” Whenever something goes against the right leaning ideological views it becomes political and woke, however it is not only ideologies that are “woke,” but just the inclusion of something minor like diversity that elicits this same reaction. Anytime a cast contains a few ethnic minorities or women it is sure to gain that “woke” label. Going back to “Falcon and the Winter Soldier”, what made the show “woke” was its message of injustice and racism. When people are faced with ideas they do not normally agree with, it immediately becomes “woke.” So, going back to the “don’t shove it down our throats” comment, what is the

issue and why is Sam not “the real Captain America”? It seems to me that when minorities are given more screen time and are given important roles there will always be push back. So how can people view such important ideas without immediately rejecting the content they are shown in? Entertainment can allow people to view such ideas when it is slightly removed from our reality. The X-Men franchise or comics and films does a fantastic job of accomplishing the task. They deal with the ideas of discrimination and racism by showing it in a different lens, instead of ethnic minorities being treated unjustly, it is the mutants that fill in the role. One does not see very many comments about X-Men being “woke” when these same ideas are presented. In fact, more show sympathy and support towards the mutants and their struggle for civil rights. A similar example can be found in the “Fallout” series of games. In the Fallout universe the world has been destroyed by nuclear war. A result of the radiation from the nuclear exchanges is the creation of ghouls. Ghouls are human beings who were exposed to too much radiation and as a result have had melting skin and other facial deformities. The games go on to show how the ghouls are seen as second-class citizens, being thrown out of settlements, being ridiculed, and called slurs, and even being killed. Again, this is a clear connection to the real world’s struggle with racial tolerance, yet the ghouls are given sympathy and understanding by the players of these games. When slightly removed from reality these ideas are easily digested and acknowledged and not overtly political even though the message is the same.

As human beings we change. As we live our views and opinions change. What was once thought to be the wrong way of thinking can become the right way. Unlike what many people on the internet claim, this is a good and important attribute. To change an idea when presented with something new shows maturity, logic, and rational thinking. I have not always held the belief that I have been arguing for in this paper. I was once under the same idea of not making things political and keeping things out of politics. This would have been when I was in my early high

school years, around sixteen- and seventeen-years old. Around 2020 I began to undergo a very drastic shift in my thinking and beliefs. When I once would have considered myself to be a conservative, I became a leftist overnight. Every idea was now challenged, why did I think like that? Coming to terms with me being wrong about a variety of topics was not easy. One such topic is the idea of politics in entertainment. The “Fallout” games played a role in this change of mind. While spending countless hours in these virtual worlds I recognized, the best works of literature deal with political themes. They are always there and, in the background, right in front of my face the entire time. The funniest part of this realization is that my personal favorite fiction is Star Wars. The political themes in Star Wars are so apparent and yet I never had any problem with them, they drove the story forward and made it rich. The Rebellion fighting of the fascist Galactic Empire to bring democracy back to the galaxy. The idea of personal liberties being slowly snatched from the populace, and even genocide of a religious group. It was all there right in front of me. The idea of blindly following religion in the Halo games, propaganda and brainwashing due to capitalism in the Fallout series, and so many more examples. These ideas cannot just be thrown away; they are crucial to the human struggle. One would be hard pressed to find any entertainment media that does not draw parallels from our world and their messages. The creators of the media we enjoy are human beings with their own ideas and beliefs.

All in All, the idea of political messages in entertainment is not a negative and should not be seen as such. These messages allow for marvelous storytelling and a glimpse into ideas we normally might not consider. These ideas and ideals cannot be ignored during the creative process when writing for the stories that are enjoyed. By slightly removing the story from our reality a writer can show struggles and ideas to an audience that may never even attempt to listen. Real change can be made when people can see flaws in their thinking and have the humility to admit when being wrong, like I did. The next time anyone watches, reads, or plays

anything, take a closer look at the motivations of the characters. Take a deeper dive into the world in which the story is being told. What parallels to our world can be found? Is the idea presented more reasonable now? Political ideas cannot and will not go away. After all entertainment is just a fresh look into our own world and its ideas, whether it's in a galaxy far far away or right back here on Earth, so enjoy it and don't be opposed to different ideas.