

Chapter 4: The Sonic Collage Assignment: Aesthetics, Affect, and Critique in Audio Sampling

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2. “Sonic Collage” by Anthony

The background of Anthony’s “Sonic Collage” is Gary Jules and Michael Andrews’s soft and melancholy song “Mad World,” and the foreground is a series of quotes responding to the increasing influence of evangelical Christianity within United States law and policy. Each of the speakers advocates for secular governance grounded in data-based science, implying that decisions based on biblical teachings are not only misinformed but also cruel in that they lead to policies that are homophobic, misogynistic, oppressive, regressive, and reactionary. The highly emotional music and logical quotations work well together, with the former adding affect to the latter by highlighting the emotion in each speaker’s embodied voice and the latter providing a sense of justification for the ennuï of the former. This track invited important classroom discussion about both inclusivity (because the composition critiqued masculine power but failed to include women’s voices) and audience interpretation (because several conservative students thought the composition was a lamentation on how liberal values in education were leading to the creation of ungodly governance in the United States rather than a critique of religion in government).

Transcript

[*school bell ringing and sounds of children*]

John Kennedy: I believe in an America where the separation between church and state is absolute.

[*Gary Jules and Michael Andrews’s “Mad World,” a soft piano, plays*]

Male Voice: Like it or not, the teachings of Jesus Christ are not established laws in America.

[*Lyrics from “Mad World” begin and continue to play in the background: “All around me are familiar faces. Worn out places, worn out faces bright and early for their daily races.”*]

Barack Obama: I am pro-choice, not-not-not [*repeated for effect*] pro-abortion. I am pro-choice not-not-not pro-abortion.

[*“Mad World” continues*]

Barack Obama: If you believe life begins at conception, then—then I can’t argue with you.

Bill Nye: It’s just a reflection of a deep scientific lack of understanding.

[*“Mad World” continues*]

Barack Obama: This ruling will strengthen all of our communities by offering to all loving same sex couples the dignity of marriage across this great land.

[*“Mad World” continues*]

Bill Nye: Evolution is the fundamental idea in all of life—[*repeat*] fundamental idea—fundamental idea—idea in all of life.

[*“Mad World” continues*]

Bill Nye: You have a lot of men of European descent passing these laws based on your interpretation of a book written 5,000 years ago. That's wrong.

[*"Mad World" continues*]

Barack Obama: If we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well.

[*"Mad World" continues*]

Bill Nye: We encourage you to not to tell women what to do and not to pursue these laws that really are in nobody's best interests.

[*"Mad World" fades out*]

Works Cited

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