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A Critical Analysis of *Parasite*

Introduction

The 2019 Bong Joon-ho film *Parasite* is regarded as a landmark piece in world cinema because of its astute and insightful critique of socioeconomic inequality and its extraordinary victory at the Academy Awards. The picture is a cultural icon that broke past language and geographic boundaries to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes and become the first foreign language film to win the Academy Award for Best Picture. At its core, *Parasite* is a darkly comedic thriller that explores the symbiotic and parasitic relationships between the wealthy Park family and the impoverished Kim family. The film critiques the capitalist system that upholds socioeconomic disparities through its creative use of genre, meticulous attention to visual detail, and complex character dynamics. This analysis examines *Parasite*'s elements, such as its narrative, mise-en-scène, video and sound editing, and deeper meaning in social and economic contexts.

Narrative

Parasite's narrative structure is a masterful stroke of storytelling that defies conventional genre categorization, making it one of the film's most intriguing aspects. The Kim family, consisting of father Ki-taek, mother Chung-sook, daughter Ki-jung, and son Ki-woo, manipulates their way into the lives of the wealthy Park family. The film's first act unfolds as a dark comedy, with scenes filled with humor and sarcasm as the Kims methodically infiltrate the Park home and secure jobs as housekeepers, drivers, and tutors. Bong Joon-ho cleverly uses this seemingly light-hearted setting to lull the audience into a false sense of security before the film

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abruptly and violently shifts into a thriller and horror space, a testament to the film's genre-defying nature.

The abrupt and deliberate shift in tone captures the unpredictable and vulnerable condition of the Kims' lives. Thanks to this genre-bending strategy, Bong can explore the dark sides of human nature, such as greed, deception, and desperation. The narrative structure's unpredictable twists and turns reflect the socioeconomic ladder's uncertainty, where a single mistake can have disastrous results.

Mise-en-scène

Bong Joon-ho skillfully uses mise-en-scène to highlight the underlying themes of socioeconomic inequality and class conflict. The film's impressive attention to detail in color, settings, props, costumes, hair and makeup, and lighting dramatically enhances the storytelling experience, turning it into a visual experience that helps audiences understand the characters and their environment.

Color is purposefully used to highlight the disparities between the wealthy Park family and the poor Kim family's lifestyles. The Park family's environment is characterized by cool, muted colors, especially pale beige, grey, and white hues that convey a feeling of cold, distant elegance. Their sleek, contemporary home is clean with little clutter, signifying their control over their surroundings and, more figuratively, their societal position. On the other hand, the warm, muted hues of the Kim family's basement apartment include yellows, browns, and dusky greens,

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reflecting their suffocating situation. Using color in these different settings draws attention to the social divides that divide the two families.

The socioeconomic status and objectives of the characters in *Parasite* are also represented through their costumes. The Park family frequently wears elegant yet subtle designer clothing, reflecting their upper-class background. They always wear well-fitting, spotless clothing in muted colors that complement their simple interior decor. In contrast, the Kim family wears more worn-out and practical clothes that indicate their lower working-class background. Their clothing frequently ill-fits and is worn down, signifying their battle to keep up appearances in a culture where people evaluate them based only on how they appear. The Kims' clothing gradually changes to fit their new duties as they infiltrate the Park's home. However, it is still clearly different in quality and style from what the Parks are wearing, signifying a gap that imitation cannot fill.

Video and Sound Editing

The film's precise video and sound editing is mainly responsible for its success, which earned it an Academy Award for Best Film Editing; these elements are vital for establishing suspense, directing the plot, and enhancing the depth of the film. *Parasite* explores the underlying class tensions through the skillful use of shot duration, different types of cuts, time effects, transitions, and a subtle sound design.

Parasite's video editing is notable for its precision and control of the movie's pace. For instance, during the initial scenes where the Kim family devises their plan to infiltrate the Park

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household, the editing pace is quick, with shorter shot lengths and rapid cuts. As a result, a sense of urgency and movement draws the audience in and highlights the Kim family's ingenuity and cunning. As the story progresses, the editing shifts to longer takes, particularly in scenes where tension and suspense build. For example, it is evident in the scene when Moon-gwang, the former housekeeper, returns to the Park house in the middle of a storm. Here, the longer shots let the audience sense the uneasiness and building anxiety as situations grow out of control. This contrast in shot duration mirrors the narrative's shifts and heightens the emotional impact on the viewer. Another excellent Parasite technique is graphic matches and match cuts, which visually link scenes and ideas and strengthen the film's ideas.

Bong uses time effects in motion and speed. The deliberate use of slow motion draws attention to important details and lets the audience reflect on the seriousness of particular scenes. One dramatic example of slow motion is during the climax when the Park family's party descends into pandemonium. The startling contrast between the cheerful party atmosphere and the slowed-down scenes of violence highlights the craziness and misery of the scene. However, some sequences' use of real-time effects gives the movie a feeling of realism, which makes the more stylized sections stand out even more. In addition to emphasizing essential events, playing with time affects the audience's perception, enhancing the impact of abrupt mood and tone changes.

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As complex as the visual editing in *Parasite*, the sound design has been meticulously developed to fit the narrative and thematic elements of the film. Diegetic and non-diegetic sound interact very interestingly, with each aspect enhancing the suspense and mood of the film.

Diegetic sounds, or sounds that come from the film's world, support the social commentary in the film and help keep the story grounded in reality. The noises of the Kim family's semi-basement apartment, from the pouring water during the flood to the hum of the street outside, inspire a sensation of helplessness and confinement. These sounds contrast sharply with the Park household's calm, controlled environment, where even the sounds of everyday existence are minimized. Dialogue is also an essential component of *Parasite*'s diegetic sounds. The interactions between characters are filled with subtext, and the careful delivery of lines, particularly in scenes of deception or tension, adds to the film's underlying sense of unease. The fast-paced interactions between the Kims throughout their narrative contrast with the slower-paced, gentler exchanges within the Park family, further emphasizing the socioeconomic gap.

Non-diegetic sound, such as the film's score, enhances the emotional impact of certain situations. *Parasite*'s soundtrack often accompanies the most dramatic scenes in the film. One of the most memorable uses of non-diegetic sound is during the reveal of the hidden bunker beneath the Park house. The eerie, almost otherworldly music emphasizes the discovery, elevating the moment from a plot twist to fear. *Parasite*'s soundtrack establishes the tone and helps the

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audience comprehend the film's themes. However, it also implies spreading lies hiding under a flawless exterior.

Social and Economic Commentary

The relationship between the two families is at the core of Parasite's societal critique. The Parks are presented as ignorant, detached from reality, and dependent on the labor of others despite their wealth and status. They are oblivious to the struggles of the working class, treating the Kims as mere service providers rather than as fellow human beings. Mr. Park, who constantly remarks on the Kims' "smell," is a minor but significant indication of the different social statuses. A recurrent theme in the film is that smell is a differentiator between the rich and the poor, signifying the deeply rooted biases underlying class inequalities.

However, despite their early friendship, the Kims are eventually motivated by survival and desperation, which drives them to take advantage of others in their pursuit of a better life. The film depicts how systematic inequality can corrupt people and set them against one another in a losing battle for survival rather than romanticizing the Kims' struggle. The realization that the Kims and the Parks, despite their differences, are bound in a system that reduces and devalues human connections is the ultimate lesson of Parasite.

Conclusion

Parasite is a masterpiece of film that skillfully blends elements of different genres with insightful social commentary. The film effectively questions the socioeconomic disparities troubling modern society with its symbolism, mise-en-scène, video and sound editing, genre-bending story, and complex character dynamics. In addition to challenging the norms of

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filmmaking, Bong Joon-ho's work encourages the audience to reflect on the social and economic factors that influence our lives. Parasite is a mirror to society that makes us face the unsettling realities of our society.

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