

Essay One

Critical Methods

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Everyone, at some point in their lives, have been away from a loved one. During that time, there is a feeling of emptiness while waiting to see them again. No matter what, life is missing a piece when that person is gone. This is especially seen in today's mobile and globalized society. The song "I'm Already There" by Lonestar embodies the feeling of missing a loved one while they are away and offers an alternate reality through the use of metaphors. In this essay, I argue that the rhetor uses metaphors to create the presence of one when not physically there.

Description of Artifact The song "I'm Already There" by Lonestar was written by the lead singer Richie McDonald along with bandmembers Gary Baker and Frank Meyers. "I'm Already There" released in March of 2001 as the lead-off single to their fourth studio album. This song is from the point of view of McDonald, a husband and a father who also is the lead singer of Lonestar but can be applied elsewhere as many people are away from loved ones at some point in their lives. The song is set with McDonald on tour in "A lonely hotel room" while he is calling home to talk to his wife and kids. The song itself is about being there with someone you care about and love for in spirit when you are unable to physically be with them. In this song, metaphors are used to create the reality that he is home with his wife and kids, when he is actually hundreds of miles away on tour. Life is experienced through language and in this case, the language being used is expressing that no matter where he is in the country, he will always be with his wife and children through metaphoric comparisons. There are multiple metaphors involved in the song and they all can be classified to a specific pattern or placed in a group. The metaphoric method of criticism can be easily used for the song "I'm Already There" and will

describe how the rhetor uses metaphors to construct a viewpoint of being there in spirit when not physically present.

Description of method Metaphors are defined as “nonliteral comparisons in which a word or phrase from one domain of experience is applied to a different domain” (Foss, 2018, p. 285). In the historical sense, Aristotle believed that metaphors were simply decoration and not necessary; although, the contemporary understanding of metaphors claims that we experience life through language, and that metaphors are not ornamentation but constitute. Metaphors are an extremely powerful form of language since they can be used to create a reality that was once not there. In my analysis, the metaphors used by Lonestar were so powerful that they were able to create the presence of an individual while they are away. Grouping the metaphors, according to either vehicle or tenor, allows for more understanding of the metaphor. The tenor is described as the “subject or topic being explained, or the target domain”, while the vehicle is described as the “mechanism or lens through which the topic is viewed, or the source domain” (Foss, 2018, p. 291). Lastly, the metaphors that were isolated and put into groups will be analyzed to create an explanation for “I’m Already There” by Lonestar.

Report of Findings There are six metaphors in “I’m Already There” by Lonestar that are evident, have a clear a tenure and vehicle, and can be grouped. I placed the six metaphors into three groups: inevitability, consistency, and certainty.

Inevitability The first metaphor is “I’m the sunshine in your hair”. While one cannot physically hold sunshine, it is vibrant and covers everything during the day. In this metaphor, the tenor, or the subject is “I’m”, while the vehicle, or topic is “sunshine in your hair”. The second metaphor is “I’m the moonlight shining down”. In this metaphor, the tenor is once again “I’m” and the vehicle is “the moonlight shining down”. Similar to sunshine, moonlight touches all during the

night. "I'm the sunshine in your hair" and "I'm the moonlight shining down" are similar. While one uses sunlight, which is present during the day, the other uses moonlight, which is present at night. McDonald is portraying that he is with his wife and children in spirit during the day as he is the sunlight and with them at night as he is the moonlight. Sunlight and moonlight are both inevitable in that the sun will rise in the morning and set at night, and the moon will be present in the sky at night. Through the use of these metaphors, Lonestar and McDonald are comparing themselves to inevitable things because they are constant, and they will happen without a doubt. This comparison was made so that when McDonald's wife and children see the sun shining during the day or the moonlight at night it will be as if their husband and father is there with them. Overall, this metaphor pattern shows McDonalds being there in spirit in inevitable. When the sun rises in the morning and the moon shines at night, he will be there with his loved ones. The rhetors wife and children do not have the privilege of knowing that their husband and father will always be with them when they wake up in the morning and go to sleep at night. That is why the comparison of himself to sunlight and moonlight is so important. While McDonald's wife and children may know he will not be physically present in the morning and at night, they will know he is there as its inevitable that the sun will rise in the morning, and the moon is will shine at night. The third metaphor in this group is "I'm the whisper in the wind". The tenor, or the subject is once again "I'm", while the vehicle, or topic is "whisper in the wind". This metaphor also holds an aspect of inevitability. While the wind does not always blow, there is always a sound associated with it. McDonald compared himself to the whisper in the wind for the same reason he compared himself to sunshine and moonlight, because they are all inevitable. The main focus is to place him with his wife and children wherever he could, and he did this by comparing himself

to the whisper in the wind; therefore, when his wife and children feel the wind and hear the inevitable sound that it makes, they will know McDonald is there in spirit.

Consistency The third and fourth metaphors being compared are “I’m the shadow on the ground”, and “I’m your imaginary friend”. In the first metaphor, the tenor, or the subject is “I’m”, while the vehicle, or topic is “shadow on the ground”. The shadow is typically associated with doom and gloom. However, in this situation it is about how shadows are always present or consistently with an individual even if they are not paying attention to it. In the second metaphor, the tenor, or the subject is also “I’m”, while the vehicle, or topic is “imaginary friend”.

Imaginary friends are similar to shadows in that they follow children around, even if they are not paying attention. There is no need to look for a shadow or imaginary friend because they will consistently be right there behind you. The comparison is making McDonald’s wife’s shadow because he wants his wife to be able to look behind her, see her shadow and know that he is consistently there with her. The comparison to an imaginary friend is for his children, in that whenever his children’s imaginations run wild, they are with their imaginary friend, and then they will think of him. Consistency is something the rhetors wife and children do not have with their husband and father due to constant traveling with his band. The creation of this reality where he is consistently there as if he is not in a famous band shows the amazing power that is metaphors.

Certainty Lastly, “I’m the beat in your heart” is a different metaphor from the group, although it still holds similar ties to the other five. In this metaphor, the tenor, or the subject is “I’m”, while the vehicle, or topic is “beat in your heart”. The heartbeat symbolizes life and its constant beat keeping individuals alive. The heart is a part of one's body that can be held physically and a beat can be felt when pressed against one's chest. That is why this is an outlier in the group. The other

five metaphors created a reality where McDonald was compared to sunlight, moonlight, wind, a shadow and an imaginary friend; all which cannot be physically held or felt like the heartbeat.

He is linking himself to the heartbeat because he wants his wife and children to have some sort of physical feeling of him while he is away. When McDonald compares himself to the beat in his wife and children's hearts, he is offering that the beat they feel is him, even though he is away.

The beating heart refers to his heart too, while he's the beat of his children and wife's hearts, they are the beat in his heart. This metaphor holds the most significance, while all other metaphors create a presence of McDonald. This is the only one where his presence can be physically felt.

Rhetorical Contribution Being without a loved one while they are away is a scenario most people have dealt with at some point in their lives. Whether they are gone due to work, in the military, or have passed away, a loved one will always be missed. This scenario may seem to hold only sadness and sorrow; however, the metaphors used in "I'm Already There" by Lonestar offer a different perspective to the issue. Metaphors hold an extraordinary value and, in this case, created an alternate reality in which the rhetors wife and children could be with him while he is away. The use of this form of language opened a door that was once not there. Without the use of metaphors in the song "I'm Already There", there would be no connection or creation of this alternate reality where the rhetor was with his wife and children. My study teaches that metaphors and language is extremely powerful. Metaphors were able to place the rhetor with his wife and children when he was hundreds of miles away on tour with his band, Lonestar. The use of sunshine and moonlight created an inevitability of the rhetors presence in his family's life. The rhetor pertained to both his wife and children with the comparison of himself to a shadow and an imaginary friend, creating a consistent presence. When comparing himself to the beat in his wife

and children's heart, the rhetor placed himself inside of them, creating a physical certainty that he will always be there.

Conclusion In conclusion, the rhetor uses metaphors to create the presence of one when not physically there. Everyone at some point in their lives has been away from a loved one. In the duration of that time, there is a feeling of emptiness while waiting to see them again. No matter what, life is missing a piece when that person is gone. This is especially seen in today's mobile and globalized society. Mcdonald, in the band Lonestar, created a reality for his wife and children that he was different entities that were always present. There was comparisons of the father and husband to sunlight, moonlight, shadows, imaginary friends, a heartbeat and the whisper that is in the wind. This reality was created for his wife and children to make being away for long periods of time not as difficult. This song is not only applicable to bands on tour, but this song can be applied to anyone who misses a loved one that is away. Overall, the power of metaphors created a presence of someone who was not physically there, creating a new reality for Mcdonalds wife and children.

Reference

Foss, S. K. (2018). *Rhetorical criticism* {5th ed.} Long Grove, IL: Waveland press.

Lonestar, (2001). *I'm already there* Nashville, TN: BNA records

Artifact

He called her on the road
From a lonely, cold hotel room
Just to hear her say I love you one more time
But when he heard the sound
Of the kids laughing in the background
He had to wipe away a tear from his eye
A little voice came on the phone
Said, "Daddy when you coming home?"
He said the first thing that came to his mind

I'm already there
Take a look around
I'm the sunshine in your hair
I'm the shadow on the ground
I'm the whisper in the wind
I'm your imaginary friend
And I know I'm in your prayers
Oh, I'm already there

She got back on the phone
Said I really miss you, darling
Don't worry about the kids--they'll be all right
Wish I was in your arms
Lying right there beside you
But I know that I'll be in your dreams tonight
And I'll gently kiss your lips
Touch you with my fingertips
So turn out the light and close your eyes

I'm already there
Don't make a sound
I'm the beat in your heart
I'm the moonlight shining down
I'm the whisper in the wind
And I'll be there until the end
Can you feel the love that we share?
Oh, I'm already there

We may be a thousand miles apart
But I'll be with you wherever you are

I'm already there
Take a look around
I'm the sunshine in your hair
I'm the shadow on the ground
I'm the whisper in the wind

And I'll be there until the end
Can you feel the love that we share?
Oh, I'm already there
Oh, I'm already there