

“Dark Days”: How Parkway Drive Attempts to Enlighten and Persuade its Audience with Music

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ENG 400

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Music makes the world go round; “Dark Days” is trying to keep the world spinning, but not in the way people think. “Dark Days” is a song written by Parkway Drive and debuted on their album *Atlas* in 2012. Coinciding the album’s release was a music video also released the same year that illustrates the songs lyrical content visually. “Dark Days” is a song written to make people feel like the world is slowly coming to an end. Parkway Drive, through their song “Dark Days” and its respective music video have attempted to draw attention to certain issues found within society. In this case, Parkway Drive purposefully focused on the greed of governments and the destruction caused by the wars waged by them. “Dark Days” appears to be intended as a catalyst for change amongst Parkway Drive’s audience which is comprised mostly of millennials. Due to the composition of their audience, Parkway Drive uses their music to have a political influence.

“Dark Days” takes a controversial stance against governments and their avarice. Through lyrics such as “behold the pale horse” and “this is the funeral of the Earth”, Parkway Drive paints an image in the heads of listeners (McCall, 2012). The music video for “Dark Days” was directed by Aaron Hymes and depicts the entire band as well as vivid imagery related to the song. Overall, the video primarily depicts imagery pertaining to war, climate change, corruption, and the band itself. For example, the video contains scenes of picturesque landscapes around the world followed by multiple scenes of mass environmental destruction both through war and other means. The members of Parkway Drive are very vocal about their political beliefs through their music as well as through the imagery in the music video. These beliefs when compounded with certain other factors discussed later in this rhetorical analysis will attempt to explain how Parkway Drive attempts to draw in and influence impressionable watchers/listeners with both

music and visual information. Ideally, Parkway Drive seems to want to invoke change by informing their audience of these factors.

To persuade their audience, Parkway Drive must establish credibility and be influential. This analysis of the rhetoric of Parkway Drive, will attempt to prove that they succeed in both aspects. I will be implementing concepts from Jay Heinrichs book *Thank You for Arguing* to analyze the rhetoric of “Dark Days” and its accompanying music video. This analysis will be conducted through an Aristotelian lens in which I examine Parkway Drive’s use of ethos, logos, and pathos. With the combined use of these methods I will examine and attempt to prove how effective Parkway Drive’s ethos (primarily in the music video), logos (within the song itself), pathos (represented in both the song and music video), hyperbole, metaphor, and metonymy are at persuading the audience.

Tools of Persuasion

An Aristotelian lens will be used in order to analyze “Dark Days” both lyrically and visually through its music video. Typically, when using an Aristotelian approach to analyze rhetoric the concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos are implemented. Coupled with this approach will be Jay Heinrichs book *Thank You for Arguing* which will allow further analysis of Parkway Drive’s rhetoric in “Dark Days”. This methods section will present explanations of **ethos, pathos, logos, hyperbole, metaphor, and metonymy** using information covered by Heinrichs in *Thank You for Arguing* as they are the main tools chosen for this rhetorical analysis of “Dark Days”.

According to Heinrichs (2017), “Ethos, or argument by character, employs the persuader’s personality, reputation, and ability to look trustworthy” (p. 40). Ethos is an Aristotelian tool of persuasion in which the persuader attempts to establish themselves with their

character. Examples of ethos can include things such as the how a person physically presents themselves or how others see them. Pathos is another one of Aristotle's tools of persuasion and basically attempts to appeal to an audience's emotions. Pathos according to Heinrichs (2017) is an "argument by emotion" and "a successful persuader must learn how to read the audience's emotions" (p. 40). A simple example of pathos would be an emotional testimony from someone whose home has been destroyed by flooding caused by a hurricane. This example is further compounded by the beliefs of the person giving testimony believing global warming is the cause. An emotional appeal such as this will attempt to push an audience towards the persuaders way of thinking. Logos is the third of Aristotle's tools of persuasion and attempts to appeal to an audience's logic. This appeal typically occurs when a persuader uses information considered to be factual in order to persuade an audience. Logos according to Heinrichs (2017) is an "argument by logic" and is "a set of techniques that use what the audience is thinking" (p. 40). An example of the use of logic applicable to this analysis would be someone stating that the Earth's temperatures are rising. This example works because it does not state that climate change is caused by man, but instead argues that regardless temperatures are rising.

Ethos, pathos, and logos are powerful tools to implement while analyzing a rhetorical artifact; however, there are other tools that are similarly effective such as metonymy, hyperbole, and metaphor. Metonymy as defined by Heinrichs (2017) is "the first "belonging trope." It takes a characteristic, container, action, sign, material, or quality and makes it stand for the whole deal" (p. 249). Basically, metonymy takes a word or idea and implements it instead of another word. This essentially leads to a word hidden behind another word scenario. Hyperbole as defined by Heinrichs (2017) "has the superhero ability to shrink and expand anything you want" (p. 249). Hyperbole essentially boils down to the use of exaggeration. Typically, it is used to

make something seem bigger or smaller than it is. Metaphor as defined by Heinrichs (2017) the “pretend trope” (p. 236). Basically, metaphor can be considered an implied comparison.

Metaphors tend to be implemented to compare two things that may not be applicable.

“Dark Days”: An Analysis

Rhetorical artifacts can be difficult to analyze without any sort of structure. Due to this reality, the analytic tools and methods mentioned in the Tools of Persuasion section will be implemented to analyze the rhetorical artifact “Dark Days”. Ethos, when analyzing “Dark Days” lies primarily within the music video. Unfortunately, use of ethos is difficult to find in the song itself. The music video features the primary members of the band who already have an established ethos amongst their intended audience. The video portrays the band as a young group of individuals who look and behave like the average millennial which then helps to assist with persuading their audience (Epitaph Records, 2012). The band is typically seen in average street attire which helps to establish their character. Parkway Drive pulls no punches with each new song and music video because each discusses a prevalent world issue. They are on a mission to influence global change which helps to establish credibility and character within the music video for “Dark Days”. Since their songs are atypical compared to other more popular music, this helps to establish their goals and boosts their credibility to prove to their audience that they care about more than just money or fame.

Parkway Drive establishes the use of pathos in both the song and music video for “Dark Days” through heavy use of emotion. Within the music video pathos is implemented in the way Parkway Drive displays their emotional connection to the topic of the song. They display this connection with the emotion and tone of their vocals within the song. They display some physical anger and emotion within the music video as well with members of the band having

angry expressions, hitting walls, stomping, and flailing arms (Epitaph Records, 2012). They also attempt to illicit emotions using pathos through the imagery used in the video. Most of this imagery depicted environmental destruction and war (Epitaph Records, 2012). However, the use of pathos does not end with the music video. The song itself attempts to illicit an emotional response through pathos. A lyrical example attempting to appeal to emotions is “What will you tell your children?” (McCall, 2012). This line packs an emotional punch because it asks you how you will justify bringing children into the world you helped destroy. Another emotional example is “The death of beauty, the death of hope” (McCall, 2012). In this case the hopes and dreams that the listener holds dear will become impossible as the world deteriorates. One final example of pathos in the song is “How will you justify ... justify watching the world die?” (McCall, 2012). This line asks the listener how they could be okay with letting the world die which could have been prevented.

Logos or the appeal to logic is found primarily within the song lyrics themselves. While the song “Dark Days” primarily relies on emotional appeals it does exhibit instances of logical appeals as well. One line within the song reads “With narrow minds we decimate our one true home” (McCall, 2012). It is evident that narrow trains of thought typically focused only individuals share some blame for the slow but sure degradation of the planet. Another example of logos presented within the song is “There will be no future, if we can’t learn from our mistakes” (McCall, 2012). This line calls forth the reasoning that if we don’t learn from the negative issues occurring already, then our future will cease to exist. The line stating “A forced extinction closes out the age of apathy” demonstrates another use of logos (McCall, 2012). This line in the song is an example of logos because it states that something drastic will have to happen before humanity will worry about something other than itself.

Although ethos, pathos, and logos are important tools of persuasion when looking at an rhetorical artifact there are a few other figures of interest as well. Of these figures there are a few that are prevalent when analyzing “Dark Days”. They are hyperbole, metaphor, and metonymy. Hyperbole is used in “Dark Days” in the line “I can’t watch it burn” which is repeated multiple times (McCall, 2012). This line is an example of hyperbole because it is unlikely that the world will be on fire in its final hours. An example of a metaphor in the song is “The blind eye can no longer be cast” (McCall, 2012). In this case a blind eye is not being cast; instead, this line means we cannot keep ignoring our problems. The line “Behold the pale horse” demonstrates the use of metonymy (McCall, 2012). The pale horse represents death and the line makes it feel as though the listener could be witnessing the end of the Earth.

Conclusion

Parkway Drive through their music has established influence and credibility amongst their audience. Through the analysis of “Dark Days” I believe that Parkway Drive has been effective at not only establishing this bond with its audience but changing its emotions as well. When browsing the internet to find Parkway Drive’s music it is evident that their message is being heard. An enlightening example of this is in the comment section of “Dark Days” music video on YouTube. This comment section is filled with people discussing the issues presented by the song and is clearly getting them thinking. If nothing else, getting people thinking is Parkway Drive’s greatest achievement as many renowned figures throughout our society cannot achieve this. Parkway Drive creates a **commonplace** for its audience to come together and share their emotions regarding the wellbeing of our planet and the future prosperity of humanity. Parkway Drive is effective at making their opinions known and appear like the better alternative for their audience. Parkway Drive has a clear goal in mind; to put a stop to environmental destruction,

speaking out against war, and drawing eyes towards government avarice. To the band, music can be the catalyst for change and the solution to the world issues they hold dear could simply be continuing what they are already doing.

References

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