

John DeGrey

ENG 1010

Fillmore

October 23, 2018

Rhetorical Song Analysis

### A Relationship That's Literally a Bridge Over Troubled Water

We all know that celebrity marriages never last, and the same seems to be for bands as well. What seems to be the cause of all this? While we won't look into why Pete and Ariana are made for each other but simply won't stay together, we will discuss why a single song wrecked terror on one of the most iconic duos of all time.

Paul Simon first became friends with Art Garfunkel at their elementary school in Queens, New York during a talent show (A&E Networks Television). During which they both learned of each other's talents and ended up forming a band together in High School (A&E Networks Television). Simon and Garfunkel went on to create numerous hits, some of which include: *Sound of Silence*, *Homeward Bound*, *Mrs. Robinson*, and of course: *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (Wikipedia). This song has been noted as Simon and Garfunkel's greatest achievement (ShieldSquare Block), but it was also the song that brought the duo to its demise.

*Bridge Over Troubled Water*, like most of Simon and Garfunkel's music, is a Folk/Rock song for people who are looking for solace and/or comfort. It was produced in 1969 by Columbia Records during a time when Bobby Kennedy and MLK Jr. were assassinated (Classic Rock Magazine). These racial tensions erupted the US into a political war and Simon and Garfunkel's music help soothe and strengthen those seeking peace and asylum (Classic Rock Magazine).

*Bridge Over Troubled Water* conveys that bad times aren't so hard when we have friends helping us through these dark times. The lyrics deliver this message by stating that when we're down or having troubles, there will be someone there. Each verse is structured in a way that first defines what a person listening might be feeling such as sadness or hardship; and then gives hope that there are people around us that want to help. The effect of this can be defined as pathos which helps soothe a person by saying that everything is going to be alright. This illusion conveys that when we're down, we'll eventually gain strength and overcome our weaknesses.

When using words to define our current state of sadness, Paul Simon's rhetoric includes a more detailed, imaginative and creative way of expressing hardship. This kind of poetry expresses a deeper thinking in how we imagine our state of need. He then goes on to explain that everything will be alright and that you have a friend to help carry the load. The voice used in this song is very soothing and comforting as noted by the lyrics: "I will comfort you" and "I'll take your part." This may relax some and/or empower others to overcome their challenges. This is very effective because no matter how much we have to carry, we can all use some sort of help by someone carrying the extra weight.

This song is also very empowering by how the music is played as well. The song starts off slow and gentle with instrumental only and then gradually becomes more and more powerful as Art's tone becomes more and more passionate. As the song progresses, more instruments are introduced which resets the mood from feeling weak and hopeless to strong and courageous.

By conveying a sense of sadness and hope, this appeal of pathos becomes very effective because we all get sad occasionally and need someone to help us through dark times. This allows a person to connect with these lyrics on a more emotional level. In addition, the song's first and second person narration speaks to someone in need and refers to one's self when saying "I will

lay me down.” The effect of this is as if the song is speaking directly to the listener and is giving direction.

This song (like most songs) uses metaphors and similes to either directly or indirectly compare two like things. The main simile being: “Like a bridge over troubled water,” translates to a friend helping someone over dark times. This creates a vivid image of crossing a bridge over raving and ominous waters. “When you’re weary, feeling small” is a powerful/metaphorical line that competes with the intense imagery of “When tears are in your eyes.” With additional lines such as the personification or likeness to human attributes of “All your dreams are on their way,” and the hyperbole or exaggeration of “When evening falls so hard;” it is hard to not wonder what Paul was going through when he wrote this song that ended the duo’s partnership.

As Paul mentioned in an interview with Goldmine Magazine, *Bridge Over Troubled Water* was his baby and giving it to Art to sing while he sat on the sidelines broke his heart (Goldmine Magazine). Art however, remembers it in a different way. He states that Paul asked him to sing it because he had a better voice (Classic Rock Magazine). Paul stated that watching Art sing the song he wrote over and over again almost made him think he didn’t even write it to begin with (Goldmine Magazine). With a majestic and beautifully written song, how could you not be a little upset if you had to abandoned it as well.

With *Bridge Over Troubled Water* being a song that encourages and comforts us through dark times. A song that’s beautifully written with incredible music, it’s difficult to think that this duo would ever call it quits. While most bands eventually part ways and while most of us wish they haven’t. Simon and Garfunkel’s music will forever live on to be an inspiration to us all.

### Works Cited

“20 Greatest Hits (Simon & Garfunkel Album).” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 5 Apr.

2018, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/20\\_Greatest\\_Hits\\_\(Simon\\_&\\_Garfunkel\\_album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/20_Greatest_Hits_(Simon_&_Garfunkel_album)).

“Bridge Over Troubled Water.” ShieldSquare Block, [www.songfacts.com/facts/simon-garfunkel/bridge-over-troubled-water](http://www.songfacts.com/facts/simon-garfunkel/bridge-over-troubled-water).

“Bridge Over Troubled Water.” The Paul Simon Official Site,

[www.paulsimon.com/track/bridge-over-troubled-water/](http://www.paulsimon.com/track/bridge-over-troubled-water/).

Demain, William. “Story Behind The Song: Bridge Over Troubled Water by Simon &

Garfunkel.” Classic Rock Magazine, Louder The Home Of High Voltage Rock'N'Roll,

5 Nov. 2016, [www.loudersound.com/features/story-behind-the-song-bridge-over-troubled-water-by-simon-garfunkel](http://www.loudersound.com/features/story-behind-the-song-bridge-over-troubled-water-by-simon-garfunkel).

“Paul Simon.” Biography.com, A&E Networks Television, 28 Apr. 2017,

[www.biography.com/people/paul-simon-9484431](http://www.biography.com/people/paul-simon-9484431).

“Paul Simon Explains ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water.’” Goldmine Magazine, 13 Oct. 2015,

[www.goldminemag.com/articles/paul-simon-story-bridge-troubled-water](http://www.goldminemag.com/articles/paul-simon-story-bridge-troubled-water).

Bridge Over Troubled Water

By Simon and Garfunkel

[Simon and Garfunkel – Bridge Over Troubled Water – YouTube – Link](#)

When you're weary, feeling small,

When tears are in your eyes

I will dry them all

I'm on your side

When times get rough

And friends just can't be found

Like a bridge over troubled water

I will lay me down

Like a bridge over troubled water

I will lay me down

When you're down and out

When you're on the street

When evening falls so hard

I will comfort you

I'll take your part

When darkness comes

And pain is all around

Like a bridge over troubled water

I will lay me down

Like a bridge over troubled water

I will lay me down

Sail on, silvergirl

Sail on by

Your time has come to shine

All your dreams are on their way

See how they shine

If you need a friend

I'm sailing right behind

Like a bridge over troubled water

I will ease your mind

Like a bridge over troubled water

I will ease your mind

(The Paul Simon Official Site)