

Running head: GOOD MONSTERS CRITICISM

Monsters, Of Whom I am Chief:

A Metaphoric and Generic Criticism of Jars of Clay's Concept Video, Good Monsters

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## Abstract

Images of Frankenstein and the boogeyman no doubt come to mind when one thinks of monsters. Can a monster be “good”? What does it mean to be something typically personified as bad and yet apply such a contradictory adjective? What do men dancing in brightly colored costumes have to do with people dying every day in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world? These are just some of the questions inspired by a curious and unforgettable artifact.

This study is a rhetorical analysis of the Jars of Clay song and concept video, *Good Monsters*. Within the professional and social context of the video’s release are many clues as to the intention of the creators of the text. How can a greater meaning be understood? The first methodology used in this study is metaphoric criticism, which is applied to the lyrics, visual images, and musical movements of the artifact. Through this, representations and allusions are explained. Secondly, this study uses generic criticism to place the artifact within the genres of satire and social movement rhetoric. These aspects are what make the artifact stand out in a viewer’s mind and spur them to take action. Through this venture into the deeper meaning of a text, a greater understanding of rhetorical message and audience response is achieved.

### Monsters, Of Whom I am Chief:

#### A Metaphoric and Generic Criticism of Jars of Clay's Concept Video, *Good Monsters*

The Bible states: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (King James Version, James 4.17). Many people feel that Christians have missed the point in the way we live our lives, and that our primary focus has shifted from doing the right thing to simply “not being bad.” This “clean hands” mentality has the potential to keep us from doing the work of Jesus in the world around us. Perhaps this is the rhetorical message of Jars of Clay in their song “Good Monsters” and its concept music video. This paper will examine the artifact itself within its professional and social contexts. After that, a review of literature will provide a conceptual background for study. Metaphoric and generic criticisms will then be applied. The metaphoric criticism will give a more detailed explanation of what the song and concept video actually mean. The generic criticism will focus first on the genre of satire and second on the genre of social movement rhetoric, with the aim to determine the artifact’s participation in either or both genres. Through this endeavor, an important message for Christians and other members of western culture will be revealed.

#### Good Monsters – The Artifact

“Good Monsters” is a song that appears on the full-length Jars of Clay album of the same name. (Throughout the thesis, references will be made to the lyrics of the song. These can be found in the Appendix for consultation.) Its genre is considered Christian rock and it has a playful tone and quick beat. The lyrics paint a picture of monsters performing various actions and add the twist of referring to the monsters as “good” (versus the “bad” which are briefly mentioned). The concept video provides a visual

image of this description, with the Jars of Clay members dressed as furry, colorful monsters and waging battle with cardboard robots.

### *Professional Context*

Jars of Clay (commonly known simply as “Jars”) are a Christian rock band made up of the following members: Dan Haseltine, Charlie Lowell, Stephen Mason, and Matt Odmark. They derive their name from 2 Corinthians 4.7, “But we have this treasure in *jars of clay* to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (New International Version). Since their debut on a major record label in 1995, Jars of Clay have made a name for themselves with their musical talent and thought-provoking lyrics. They have released ten full-length albums and participated in many compilation projects with various artists.

The song “Good Monsters” appears on their ninth full-length album of the same name, which was released in 2006. Other songs on the album include themes such as crying to God for the injustice of the world (“Oh My God”), attempting to keep oneself constantly striving when things get rough (“Work”), and western attempts to help other lands (“Light Gives Heat”). “Good Monsters” comes sequentially after “There is a River” (a song about cleansing through blood and tears) and before “Oh My God.” The concept video was released in 2006 and is distributed by Essential Records. It is one of several concept videos that have been made based on Jars of Clay’s music.

### *Greater Social Context*

Jars of Clay came at a time when Christian rock had reached a level of approval never experienced before. “Contemporary music” is becoming more accepted in the church as a means of worship (Romanowski 39) and the church has “softened” their

harsh stance against anything related to the entertainment world (44-45). This is not to say that evangelicals with their thinking caps on would disregard the immorality that comes from much of the entertainment industry, as Romanowski would assert. In addition, Christian music has been more accepted by the “secular world” (Dueck 132), and this is evidenced specifically by Jars of Clay’s crossover popularity. It has been said that “Jars of Clay walks that tricky tightrope between the mainstream and Christian rock worlds more carefully and competently than most” (Carlozo 39). In addition to critical acclaim in Christian music, Jars has also received three Grammy awards (The Recording Academy).

However, the most important social context that this artifact can be attributed to is the current state of the world. There is one particular issue that the members of Jars of Clay seem to have a special passion for: the situation of poverty and disease in Africa. This is exhibited through their involvement in the Blood:Water Mission, an organization dedicated to help effect change in parts of the world beneath the typical radar of the west. The members of Jars of Clay founded the Blood:Water Mission in 2002 and they work with the goal of preventing the spread of disease in Africa through contaminated water. Building wells and increasing the opportunity for healthy water (and therefore blood) is one part of what many would consider “Christianity in action.” In the words of the Blood:Water Mission website, “we are all responsible for being good stewards of our time, our resources and our compassion in a broken world” (Blood:Water Mission).

According to recent statistics, an estimated 24.5 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are HIV positive (UNAIDS), and that is only one of the problems facing Africa and the rest of the Third World. This is a historical time for our nation and world, and

various spokesmen have sought to bring awareness to this tragedy. Many are familiar with the activism of U2 front man Bono and his bold, if brash, statement of Christian faith. In 2003, Dan Haseltine (of Jars of Clay) remarked on Bono's influence on Christian activism: "It started with Bono making a statement about the Christian community needing to step up to the plate and do something about Africa" (Mansfield 1).

There are many who believe that westerners need to be more active in this situation and yet are unmotivated to do so, as evidenced by Bono and the social activism of Jars of Clay and other "celebrities." Whether this is the message the band attempts to convey will be examined by default in the following criticism. But first, a theoretical background must be built.

### Literature Review

#### *Metaphoric Criticism*

According to Sonja K. Foss, metaphors are "nonliteral comparisons in which a word or phrase from one domain of experience is applied to another domain" (Foss 299). Her description goes further to reflect I.A. Richards' definition of the topic being explained as the "tenor" and the representation as the "vehicle." She also claims that metaphor has gone beyond a literary device to become a way of interpreting reality through symbols, much like our simple use of words (300). Because of this organization of reality, "our selected metaphors also prescribe how to act" (301).

There has been much work done in the study of metaphors. Often this work takes on a primarily literary perspective, but an application to rhetorical criticism is promising as well. There are two primary views of metaphors: that metaphors are a detachable element of speech or that language is metaphorical because it is necessary to construct a

reality (Bryan 255). It is from the latter perspective that Giambattista Vico came with his theory on metaphor, evidenced in *The New Science*. In his treatise, Vico claimed that poetic language as a whole is necessary to all peoples in the world for understanding and explaining everyday occurrences (259). Vico boldly claims that the development of much of language is rooted in metaphor and that some words themselves have come from previous metaphorical relations of parts to wholes (261). From this we can infer that metaphor is extremely important to the human race.

Metaphors may be thought of to be one thing representing another, but some would assert that there is actually only one meaning assigned to the phrase (or object in question). It is not a division of the literal versus the figurative; rather, the figurative is the only definition derivable (Soslke 84-86). This is because a metaphor cannot be separated from the context in which it has appeared. If we were to accept the literal definition of a metaphor, then we would be accepting absurdity, a goal the speaker cannot have in mind except in extremely limited cases (85).

Metaphor is often used to explain difficult concepts, especially those of a religious nature. Miller applies what he refers to as “interactional perspectivism” to a rhetorical analysis of the metaphors used to describe Jesus Christ. According to Miller, such a perspective draws on previous metaphor theories and includes six elements (Miller 223-224). First, a metaphorical connection exists between the tenor and the vehicle; second is that as these two elements relate, they attribute characteristics to each other (making them more than their sum but a separate power). These tensions and characteristics, according to the third element, are then interpreted by human analysts. The results of these interpretations become the fourth element, differing perspectives of

the same entity. These perspectives, according to the fifth element are “destabilizing, transfiguring, and emancipatory” and are, as the sixth element states, debatable. Because of this, we end up with a new perspective on a real thing, whether we have understood anything more about the tenor and vehicle interaction or not (226-228). This, in turn, adds to our understanding. When applied to Jesus, this view of metaphor lends itself to the paradoxical, as a result of the differing perspectives.

Words are not the only type of symbol that may be used metaphorically. Visual metaphor exists in much the same way as literary metaphor. Kennedy states that “[v]isual art can be metaphoric” (Kennedy 181). Visual images must be subjected to a particular brand of analysis, which may be incorporated into metaphoric criticism.

In *Rhetoric and Popular Culture*, Brummett has much to say about visual images. First, images, like metaphors, appear within specific contexts. The context in which an image occurs bears much weight on the interpretation of the image. It is when people place an image within a certain context that we are able to understand its meaning and possible metaphor (Brummett 161-162). The second thing to remember is that images are often purposeful; they are structured for specific rhetorical strategies (162).

What is vital to an understanding of the use of images to employ rhetorical strategies is that within the context, they carry more power. Brummett offers the example of images of poverty in Third World countries circulated in the United States following the 2004 tsunami. These images were not extremely different from the pictures circulated previously, but they now carried greater rhetorical significance as Americans’ attention was turned to that part of the world. This caused greater meaning to be attributed and therefore, greater action as a result (162-162).

Another medium that can be seen as metaphorical is that of music. Ferguson asserts that “music largely resembles metaphor” (Ferguson 181). Through the use of inflection, tension, and motion, music and metaphor both represent something else, something greater than themselves (184-185). Both music and metaphor speak to the listener within their own experiences and within the context of the rhetorical situation (181-182).

Johnson and Larson further this explanation of music as metaphor by positively stating that, “[m]usic moves”(Johnson 63). It resonates with our experiences and causes something within us to move as well. He proposes that we can only understand musical movement by utilizing metaphors that relate to bodily movement.

### *Generic Criticism*

*Definitions and concepts of genre.* The concept of rhetorical genre is a result of the idea that there are categories of situations that may be responded to using similar methods and rhetorical strategies (Foss 193). Genres are made up of three different elements: situational requirements, characteristics of the rhetoric, and organizing principles. According to Foss, Edwin Black was the first to use the term *generic criticism*. Black stated that there are three tenets to the generic criticism framework: there are only so many situations for the rhetorician, there are only so many ways to respond, and the past similar situations provide information (194). One goal for generic criticism is to determine a genre within a body of works and define its characteristics (197).

Benoit combines Burke’s concept of the pentadic ratios with common theories on genre to form the theory of the genesis of rhetorical action. According to Benoit,

traditional genre studies focus on one of four things: purpose, situation, rhetor, or means. However, in the theory set forth, he proclaims that one must actually look at all four factors at work: purpose-act, scene-act, agent-act, and agency act (Benoit 181-182).

There are many advantages to using generic criticism to study rhetoric. Through a brief review of literature, Gustainis outlines three such advantages. First, in generic criticism the critic will be forced to focus on more than one aspect of the rhetoric, not forgetting style, substance, or situation. Second, it increases a critic's knowledge through classification. Finally, generic criticism aids in the descriptive agency of rhetorical theory (Gustainis 255). It is, therefore, an acceptable form of analysis.

*Definitions and concepts of satire.* One particular genre that the absurdity of the *Good Monsters* may fit into is that of satire. The word "satire" has undergone many changes in definition since its initial usage. What was once a very specific and narrow definition has become much broader and more widely applied (Worcester 3). One view of satire states that a work can be classified as such by its "motive and spirit alone" (4).

The invention of satire requires two elements: a criticism of human behavior and a method for readers to understand and remember this criticism (13). This can be done through specific rhetorical devices which are utilized to criticize the subject and still keep a friendly rapport with the audience (14). Expression of such criticism is the form of satire known as invective. Invective can be mere criticism, and thus outside of the realm of satire. Sometimes, however, it can also include some measure of goodwill towards the audience and can be perceived as sincere. This is when invective falls into the realm of satire (20). This perceived sincerity of the author can lure the audience into comfortable laughter; indeed, "Satire begins where laughter enters" (34).

Another form of satire is the use of irony. Irony, according to Worcester, has the power to add a third dimension to literature. It is like a lightning bolt to our understanding of a piece; it can create the beautiful necessity of rereading a text multiple times in order to get its full meaning (73-74). This not only makes a message more apparent and a piece more memorable, but it involves the audience in the satirical process. Irony is closely related to sarcasm and can often be perceived as such (78).

Highet quotes Horace in stating that the goal of satire is to “tell the truth, laughing” (qtd. in Highet 234). There are three major groups that satire falls into: monologues, parodies, and narratives (Highet 14-15). Narratives, the group that the *Good Monsters* music video most closely fits under, are described as satires that tell some form of story. But this is a limiting view of satirical texts. This artifact, like all forms of satire, cannot be placed perfectly in just one group of satires: it borders on the monologue and parody functions as well (14).

According to Highet, there are two special methods that are keys to utilization of satire. First, satire describes a peculiarly foolish or painful situation in such a way as to paint the picture extremely vividly. The purpose of such a method is to open the eyes of the audience to ridiculousness they may have previously missed. The second method is to use very clear and blunt language. Not only does this make a strong statement, but it drives the observer to feel a need to make a statement as well (18-20).

One of the most well-known examples of satire is the work of Jonathan Swift. Bullitt uses an analysis of Swift’s work to explain the technique of satire. According to Bullitt, satire is “a mediator between two perceptions – the unillusioned perception of man as he actually is, and the ideal perception, or vision, of man as he ought to be”

(Bullitt 1). Bullitt refers to satire as exposure of this discrepancy through ridicule. The satirist, as is true of Jonathan Swift, may begin to see the world itself as a comic tragedy; what we might think of in terms of the old saying, “you have to laugh to keep from crying” (5-6). But it must also be noted that such works of satire were also intended to move the audience to action; there were moral goals in mind, not merely entertainment (5-6, 29-30).

Satire does indeed have its limitations. Gring-Premble and Watson propose through an analysis of James Finn Garner’s *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* that the use of irony and satire for rhetorical ends is predictable at best. One cited reason is that these methods rely on the audience to interpret and understand the rhetorical message; however, presenting the way things are in a comical light can lead to introduction of alternatives (Gring-Premble 146).

*Definitions and concepts of social movement rhetoric.* Closely related to the work of satire, social movement rhetoric is utilized to bring about some form of social change. Flacks defines social movements as “collective efforts, of some duration and organization, using noninstitutionalized methods to bring about social change” (Flacks 5). These movements may include a political dimension as well. Another characteristic of a social movement is the life of an activist. Despite the influence of postmodernity, such outstanding examples of lifetimes spent in activism exist. The beliefs of a social movement are not just widespread, but ultimately personal as well (13).

Another vital component to a social movement is going beyond inner conviction to action. It is not enough to know that an existing condition is wrong; there must be an effort to correct it. While voicing reasons for “radical academics” to join forces with

activists, Peters grants the following perspective: “probably the single most important thing... is to blur the line between thinking and acting” (Peters 53). A true activist goes beyond putting forth ideas into actually effecting change.

Within the paradigm of rhetorical criticism, Gustainis quotes Malcolm Sillars’ definition of a social movement: “A movement is some combination of events occurring over time which can be linked in such a way that the critic can make the case for treating them as a single unit” (Gustainis 257). Generic criticism is especially useful when analyzing a social movement. Gustainis goes further to assert that the same tests similarly applied to rhetorical genre can also be used to determine if a movement is present. He cites generic tests set forth by Carolyn Miller: there must be significant similarities between artifacts, there must be a recognizable common situation, and there must be a practical context for the genre – or movement (257).

This brief background in metaphoric criticism, visual and musical metaphor, generic criticism, satire, and social movement rhetoric aids an approach to metaphoric and generic analysis of the artifact.

### Methodology

In search of the deeper meaning of the *Good Monsters* concept music video, this study uses two types of rhetorical criticism. The first of these is metaphoric criticism. In communication, metaphors are used to make many rhetorical messages come alive for the audience. Metaphoric criticism is used to discover and analyze possible meanings of the metaphors inherent in the lyrics, imagery, and even in the music of the *Good Monsters* concept video. These metaphors were identified through a coding and sorting exercise repeated through extensive views of the video.

Together with the metaphors, the meaning is determined through the venues the message is reaching. Because of this, the second type of criticism utilized is generic criticism. There are many uses for generic criticism, but not all may be employed in such a short paper. For this study, the purpose of generic criticism is to determine whether the artifact in question fits into the two specific genres outlined, satire and social movement rhetoric. The definitions of each genre are compared with distinguishable characteristics of the piece and this comparison reveals not only its participation, but more of the possible rhetoric goals of the band as well.

### Results – Metaphoric and Generic Criticism

#### *Metaphoric Criticism*

The metaphors in the concept video are numerous and this will not be an exhaustive study. The following major categories of metaphorical representation were found in the lyrics, music, and images: hypocrisy or ignorance of true self, an ignorance of and need for change, and internal good revealing itself to be evil despite triumph or comparison over “real” evil.

*Metaphors indicating hypocrisy.* Within the concept of a good monster is an allusion to pretending, or of perhaps not even understanding what one truly is. The lyrics question over and over, “do you know what you are?” The lyrics also refer to giants “rattl[ing] their chains” and making a lot of “empty noise,” suggesting that the work the monsters are doing is meaningless and not quite what they themselves believe it to be.

Visually, the video has a happy-go-lucky tone to it. During the first half in particular, the members of Jars of Clay spend much time on camera dressed as furry, colorful monsters and dancing around in what can be presumed to be gleeful ignorance.

They are happy with themselves and pleased with the fun they are having. This concept of hypocrisy is also alluded to in the lyric “we are so in love with ourselves.”

The imagery of opening one’s eyes is referred to in the first line of the song, as well as visual rhetoric throughout. This metaphor is borne out through initial disguise as well as discovery of one’s true self. During many of the band shots in the music video, the lead singer (Haseltine) is wearing eyes painted on his eyelids. They look much like real eyes despite the fact that his personal eyes are closed and therefore his true self is disguised. The first time that he repeats the lyric “do you know what you are?” the eyes remain closed. On the second refrain, he opens his eyes the second time he says it, surprising the viewer who may not have originally noted the artificiality of his features. Later in the song he sings “good won’t show its ugly face,” alluding to a beautiful disguise being used by those who think they are doing well.

There is also a reference to all the good monsters waking from sleep. This is metaphorical of someone “waking up” to what they truly are. In addition to being referenced in the lyrics, the little boy who leads the good monsters wakes in a grassy world, unlike his bedroom that he started out in. The bedroom could represent the safety of hypocrisy, an illusion of fortress (the lyrics refer to a “safety’s keep”) while the outside world is unfamiliar and intimidating, but representative of how things truly are.

*Metaphors indicating necessary change.* As alluded to in much of the “hypocrisy” metaphor, the video also depicts individuals ignorant of the intense need for a change in their world. The statement is made in a climax of the music that “nothing ever changes by itself.” This alone can be seen as a cry for action, but there are visual metaphors that represent this sentiment as well.

After the child wakes up in the grassy world separated from his “safe” bedroom, the viewer also notes that the members of Jars of Clay have entered this world as well, wearing their furry monster costumes. There is a presence of another force, however. There are cardboard robots that appear to represent evil in this new world. The little boy then leads the furry monsters into a battle scene with the robotic monsters, climaxing with the song (at the same time as they collide, the band is singing “nothing ever changes by itself”). It is unclear exactly what the little boy represents, but in the end of the battle he is triumphant as all the monsters lie defeated. This takes him back to his safe world, where he begins to play with a “good” (furry) monster as opposed to the “bad” robot he was toying with before. Perhaps he has chosen a different way, but there is still something to be desired as he sits in the comfortable complacency of his bedroom.

This is also where a large part of music as metaphor comes into play. The music is as happy-go-lucky as the video appears to be, but there is a deeper tone. The opening strains have a low bass line and set the stage for a sinister and paradoxical scene. While the tempo is upbeat and cheery, there is an element that may be missed. This is not unlike the great evil in the world that is in need of the change that the higher notes (or those individuals with the capability to do so) can offer.

*Metaphors indicating a good vs. evil struggle.* Perhaps the strongest metaphor in this video is that of good truly being evil. This is not necessarily because of inherent evil of the good monster, but rather because of a lack of motivation to be the best that it actually can. This is much like individuals that were mentioned at the beginning of the essay, which focus on keeping themselves clean rather than addressing the true evil in their world.

This ties in closely with the notion of hypocrisy. The “empty noise” being created by the good monsters is nothing but their being pleased with themselves for how good they believe they are being, while ignoring what’s outside them. The good face is referred to as “ugly” and the following line sarcastically asks, “evil won’t you take your place,” suggesting that by doing nothing, the good monsters are assisting evil. This is represented in visual metaphor as well.

First, the elements of disguise that we mentioned previously represent this scene. With something to hide behind the fake eyes, the viewer feels as though this good represented is really bad. Even more striking, however, is a long shot of the band in the studio portion. While “good” is typically represented by lighter colors, the band is placed in black suits against a stark white contrasted background. This suggests that a darkness exists within these individuals who are, in other shots, the good monsters. It must also be noted that verbally, all of the individuals referred to are deemed “monsters.” This carries a negative connotation, and the viewer is led to believe that no monster is better than any other.

A fascinating aspect of the visual metaphor is the use of violence. As the little boy leads the monsters into battle, the viewer notices that both sides (good and bad) are taunting each other and both collide equally. While this could represent good actually doing something about the evil in the world, it seems to speak even more intently to the futility of the attempts made so far. Good has resorted to the same method as evil, and all have lost. Once the battle is over and everything is done, all the monsters are dead and the boy goes back to his bedroom (safety). Nothing has truly changed, despite the good monsters’ best efforts.

So, what does this look like in the greater social context of the video and its possible messages?

*The Message in the Metaphors*

Through this interpretation we see that the good monsters could very easily represent western Christians, so entirely caught up in themselves and avoiding evil that they miss the opportunity to be Jesus to the world. The hypocrisy of many Christians is represented in the disguise that the good monster wears and in the “empty noise” that he utters, making a lot of huff about himself with little results. Also, the people in the west often live in the blissful ignorance of how wonderful their world is and miss the trials of the world “out there.”

Jars of Clay, through their Blood:Water Mission and general stance of activism, is crying for a need to change. There is a battle necessary to get back the lives of individuals in distress, and many in the west are completely ignorant of this need. In view of the metaphor, there is a grassy world outside America’s bedroom that is crying to be fought for.

Through inaction, selfishness, and refusal to acknowledge hypocrisy and the need, all the monsters who call themselves good are truly evil, as represented in this piece. Christians who do not care enough to do something about the need are painted as actually assisting the side of evil. In the end, no one triumphs because they do not see themselves for what they truly are and they do not see the need for change. All of these elements work together to show that at our root, we really are all of the same sinful nature and our “doing it not,” as referred to in James 4.17, is working just as much evil as what is being done (King James Version).

It is interesting to note that the members of Jars of Clay use themselves to represent the good monsters in this piece. They are the ones wearing black and they are the ones in the furry costumes. Although it is unknown, they may be the ones in the robot costumes as well. It is possible that this represents a finger pointing back at the artist (or rhetorician). While Jars of Clay desires to motivate the listener/viewer to action and to show them what they truly are, they are reminding the viewer and themselves that they come from the same mold. It is not unlike Paul's reference to himself as the chief of sinners (King James Version, 1 Timothy 1.15). No matter how much good we try to do, we will all still be monsters.

So if that's the message, how is it made memorable and why is it so important? Further criticism reveals that the *Good Monsters* video has greater generic participation than recognized at first glance.

#### *Generic Criticism*

*Good Monsters, a satire?* The *Good Monsters* music video exhibits four major characteristics of satire that have been discussed. First, the rhetorical intention of Jars of Clay exhibits the motive of effecting change through poking fun at the existing state of society. Second, the colorful visual images and curious nature of the music video make for a memorable satirical message. Third, Jars of Clay maintains an amiable connection to the audience. Finally, the song and video utilize irony to make the point desired.

It has already been pointed out that Jars of Clay collectively share a desire to effect change to their social world. This desire is exhibited through the Blood:Water Mission and statements made by the band. Referencing the organization's website again, Jars of Clay conveys the idea that their message is to the church and those who can

actually do something about the poverty and disease in Africa. According to the “Why We’re Here” page, “We need you and they need you” (Blood:Water Mission).

More evidence of their desire to satirize Christian society is the context of the song on the album it came from. Remember from above that the song in question comes before “Oh My God,” suggesting that the former prepares the listener for the latter. A brief look at the lyrics reveals a blatant message of the world’s ills:

If the world was how it should be, maybe I could get some sleep.  
 While I lay, I'd dream we're better, scales were gone and faces lighter...  
 Babies underneath their beds, in hospitals that cannot treat them.  
 All the wounds that money causes, all the comforts of cathedrals,  
 All the cries of thirsty children, this is our inheritance,  
 All the rage of watching mothers, this is our greatest offense  
 Oh my God, Oh my God, Oh my God. (Jars of Clay)

Satire often is used to make the audience laugh just before sticking them with the truth. It is not improbable that such strong language is the heart’s cry of the rhetorician in question. It is in songs like this that the passion of the members of Jars of Clay is revealed, simultaneously revealing possible satirical intent.

Beyond the intentions of the rhetoricians in question, *Good Monsters* is evidenced to be satirical in its outstanding attributes as well. There’s something undeniably memorable about seeing familiar faces (those of Jars of Clay) disguised in colorful costumes and prancing around a fantasy land. Also, shock value is utilized in such instances as painted-on, realistic looking eyes that “open” to reveal the true eyes of Dan

Haseltine. Shock value is inherently memorable to an audience and thus serves Jars of Clay's satirical purpose of causing the audience to remember their invective.

Thirdly, Jars of Clay exhibits the amiable quality necessary to determine a satire. This is accomplished through various means. First, the music of the song carries a fun, lighthearted melody. This establishes a comfortable, fairy-tale atmosphere for the audience and sets them up to be entertained. The music lends itself to dancing and this is visually expressed through the actual dancing of the good monsters (members of Jars of Clay).

Another method that Jars of Clay use to maintain amiability is the participation of the child in the music video. The main character is a young boy around the age of nine, making the setup much less threatening than a brusque-looking adult would be (even if realistic). Additionally, the monsters themselves are less threatening than one might expect. This makes the audience more likely to see representations of themselves in the music video and gives them a friendly impulse towards the message.

Finally, the use of a specific type of satire leads the critic to place *Good Monsters* into the genre. Irony is evidenced in the title of the work itself: *Good Monsters*. Monsters are generally thought of as evil creatures, or at the very least intimidating. Instead, Jars of Clay call the monsters "good," causing a bit of confusion for the observer. The very curious nature of this statement warrants a second or third listen, which is one of the beauties of true irony. The use of irony is also exhibited in specific lyrics less prominent in the song. "If good won't show its ugly face," begins the bridge, which causes the listener to stop and question, "why are they calling good ugly?" This is just the kind of curiosity irony is meant to incite.

Through the evidence of intentions, memorable images, amiable qualities, and irony, *Good Monsters* seems to fit the genre of satire given recent analyses more broad definition. But what about social movement rhetoric?

*Good Monsters, part of a social movement?* Remember from the literature review that a social movement uses “collective efforts [and]...noninstitutionalized methods to bring about social change” (Flacks 5). It is an admittedly loose interpretation of “social movement” that allows for the lack of organization in the campaign for Jars of Clay’s chosen cause. However, there are two major qualities that place Jars of Clay within the social movement rhetoric genre. The first is a reference to and following of previous leaders in such a social movement and the second is the activism of Jars of Clay themselves.

Social leaders such as Bono and Oprah Winfrey have a lot to say about poverty and disease, specifically in Africa. Recall from the social context the activism of U2 front man Bono. Dan Haseltine directly credited Bono with beginning the latest movement towards helping these nations (Mansfield 1). The credit given to Bono suggests that Jars of Clay are following in U2’s footsteps, using their platform as part of a greater movement. This also implies that some of the same rhetorical methods may be employed for a similar message.

The greatest evidence that *Good Monsters* is a piece of social movement is the activist quality of its creators. Once again, the Blood:Water Mission exhibits that Jars of Clay are not just setting out to raise awareness but to actually do something about the problem. Somewhat like “walking the talk,” the mission to provide safe drinking water

to Africa is confirmation of being part of a greater social movement. The passion of these men is exhibited in their personal testimony:

When Dan Haseltine, Jars of Clay's lead singer, visited Africa in 2002, he had to struggle to accept what he saw. Poverty and physical and social suffering in Africa shook him, challenged him, and changed him...

This, then, is the Blood:Water Mission, committed to clean blood and clean water to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic, to build clean wells in Africa, to support medical facilities caring for the sick, to make a lasting impact in the fight against poverty, injustice and oppression in Africa through the linking of needs, talents and continents, of people and resources. (Blood:Water Mission, "Why We're Here")

Jars of Clay desire to see actual change in their world and are unafraid to be the agents of this change. This activist quality, combined with the camaraderie with others with similar goals, is why their work may be placed within the genre of social movement rhetoric.

This analysis of the *Good Monsters* music video barely scratches the surface of possibilities for deepening the understanding of either the video itself or the message it conveys. There are many areas of research that have been spurred on by this beginning study.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Artifacts with a strong rhetorical message expressed in such a curious way will always leave room for future analysis and criticism. There are many aspects of research that are inspired by this very beginning study of the *Good Monsters* music video, both

within and without the artifact itself. These are just some of the possibilities for future research opened up by this study.

The video alone calls for further analysis. The metaphors could be further played out and evaluated. For instance, the presence of the young boy in the music video is a curious factor all in its own and one which this study has not fully approached. It would be interesting to focus more specifically on his role or part in the action taking place and to pan out some more possible metaphors.

Jars of Clay could be further analyzed for a better understanding of their goals and work. Such artists are curious to even a casual listener and their work has impacted many individuals. A great undertaking would be to compare different pieces of their work expressed through different media and further bond them together for a possible overarching meaning.

Further generic criticism of this video could be utilized to determine its placement in the world of concept videos or Christian music. Questions could be asked such as: Is this a typical concept video? Does it follow the same patterns as a typical Christian message? What venues (secular or Christian) could such a video be appropriate for?

A possible rhetorical genre may be deduced through extensive study of this and other artifacts like it. One way this could be done is through an analysis of rhetorical messages used specifically for organizations instituted and run by “celebrities.” Further, this could also be specifically applied to the Africa crisis and the social rhetoric associated with it.

Finally, a comparison could be done of the rhetorical messages of Christian versus nonreligious musical rhetoricians. For example, a comparison of Jars of Clay, a

Christian band, and U2, a mainstream or more popular band, looking for differences and similarities could reveal fascinating differences in methodology.

### Conclusion

Christians often do not fathom the extent of their inaction nor note their “sins of omission.” Jars of Clay, as representatives of the Christian music world and Christian activists in raising awareness for Africa, are well aware of that fact. Through context, metaphoric criticism, and generic criticism, deeper meaning for one of their more recent songs and videos, *Good Monsters*, is now more evident. This song and music video are undoubtedly a call to action: to reevaluate our motives and inner beings, to recognize the need for change in the world, and to attempt to truly be “good” rather than “evil.”

Through the use of memorable metaphors, satirical humor, and personal activism, Jars of Clay have certainly gotten their message across.

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Appendix – Lyrics

“Good Monsters”

By Dan Haseltine, Charlie Lowell, Stephen Mason, and Matt Odmark

All the good monsters open their eyes,  
To see the wasteland where the home fires rise,  
And the people shouting “why, why, why?”

Do you know what you are?

Do you know what you are?

All the giants wake from their sleep,  
And roll outside of safety's keep,  
And the pain makes them feel so alive

Do you know what you are?

Do you know what you are?

We are bored of all the things we know

Do you know what you are?

Do you know what you are?

Not all monsters are bad,

But the ones who are good  
Never do what they could, never do what they could

All the good monsters rattle their chains,  
And dance around the open flames,  
And they make a lot of empty noise.  
While all of the bright eyes turn away,  
As if there wasn't anything to say,  
About the justice and the mystery.

Do you know what you are?  
Do you know what you are?

We are bored of all the things we know  
And we are forms of everything we love, we love.

If good won't show its ugly face,  
Evil, won't you take your place?  
Nothing ever changes, nothing ever changes  
By itself.

We are bored of all the things that we know

Do you know what you are?

'Cause we are, we are so in love with ourselves

We are forms of all the things we love.