



**EMOTIONAL JOURNEY: A SCENE-BY-SCENE
EXPLORATION OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN
NF'S *HOW COULD YOU LEAVE US* (2016) MUSIC
VIDEO**

A THESIS

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Thesis Project on American Cultural Studies in the English
Department
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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer believes that this thesis, entitled “Emotional Journey: A Scene-by-scene Exploration of Figurative Language in NF's *How Could You Leave Us* (2016) Music Video”, was independently authored and does not incorporate findings from other scholars' S-1, S-2, S-3, and diploma programs of any university. The writer further declares that he only used the listed references and did not quote any content from other publications.

Semarang, May 21st 2025

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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“There is no ex-Marine; we might quit, but we never lose the attitude.”

— **Jake Sully, Avatar**

APPROVAL

**EMOTIONAL JOURNEY: A SCENE-BY-SCENE EXPLORATION OF
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN NF'S *HOW COULD YOU LEAVE US* (2016)
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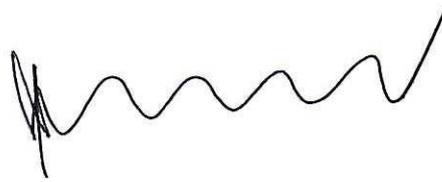
VALIDATION

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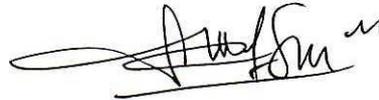
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TABLE OF CONTENT

Contents	
PRONOUNCEMENT	ii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION	iii
APPROVAL	iv
VALIDATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENT	viii
ABSTRACT	xi
CHAPTER I	2
INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Background of the Study	2
1.2 Research Problems	4
1.3 Objectives of the Study	4
1.4 Previous Studies	5
1.5 Scope of the Study	7
1.6 Writing Organization	7
CHAPTER II	7
THEORY AND METHOD	7
2.1 Theoretical Framework	7
2.1.1 Intrinsic Elements	7
2.1.1.1 Imagery	8
2.1.1.1.1 Visual Imagery	8
2.1.1.1.2 Mental Imagery	9
2.1.1.2 Figurative Language	9
2.1.1.2.1 Metaphor	10
2.1.1.2.2 Hyperbole	10
2.1.1.2.3 Repetition	11
2.1.1.2.4 Symbol	11
2.1.1.3 Cinematography	12
2.1.1.3.1 Extreme Long Shot (ELS)	12
2.1.1.3.2 Long Shot (LS)	13

2.1.1.3.3 Medium Long Shot (MS)	13
2.1.1.3.4 Medium Close-Up (MCU)	14
2.1.1.3.5 Close-Up (CU)	15
2.1.1.3.6 Extreme Close-Up (ECU)	15
2.1.2 Extrinsic Elements	16
2.1.2.1 New Criticism	16
2.1.2.2 Emotional Development	17
2.2 Methods.....	18
2.2.1 Type of Research.....	18
2.2.2 Data, Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique.....	18
2.2.3 Method of Collecting Data	19
2.2.4 Method of Analyzing Data	19
CHAPTER III	20
DATA ANALYSIS	20
3.1 NF’s Music Career	20
3.2 Analysis of Intrinsic Elements in <i>How Could You Leave Us</i> Music Video	21
3.2.1 Scene One.....	21
3.2.2 Scene Two	22
3.2.3 Scene Three.....	24
3.2.4 Scene Four	26
3.2.5 Scene Five	27
3.2.6 Scene Six	28
3.2.7 Scene Seven.....	29
3.2.8 Scene Eight	30
3.2.9 Scene Nine.....	31
3.3 Analysis of Extrinsic Elements in <i>How Could You Leave Us</i> Music Video	32
3.3.1 New Criticism	32
3.3.2 Analyzing NF’s Emotional Journey	34
3.3.2.1 Scene 1: The Initial Presentation of NF (00:20-00:22).....	34
3.3.2.2 Scene 2: The Revelation of Addiction (00:28 and 00:42).....	34
3.3.2.3 Scene 3: The Impact of Addiction on NF (00:42).....	35
3.3.2.4 Scene 4: The Emotional Breakdown (01:52)	35
3.3.2.5 Scene 5: External Intervention (01:12 and 01:10).....	35

3.3.2.6 Scene 6: The Graduation Ceremony (02:02 and 02:07).....	35
3.3.2.7 Scene 7: The Mother’s Struggles (02:40 and 02:49).....	35
3.3.2.8 Scene 8: The Mother’s Passing (03:06 and 03:15).....	36
3.3.2.9 Scene 9: The Aftermath (04:58, 05:00, and 05:11).....	36
3.3.3 Tracking NF’s Progression through Intrinsic and Extrinsic Element.....	36
CHAPTER IV	37
CONCLUSION	37
REFERENCES	38

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates NF's complex emotional journey as depicted in the music video for *How Could You Leave Us*. Using a qualitative research methodology, this study closely examines the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the video, including visual imagery, figurative language, and cinematography aspects. Through sequential analysis, this thesis traces NF's transformative journey from a vulnerable child to a resilient and mature adult. The findings of this research reveal the profound impact of addiction and loss on NF's life, highlighting the complexity of human emotion and experience. The music video effectively conveys the devastating consequences of addiction, the unbearable pain of loss, and the resilience of the human spirit. Through a close examination of the intrinsic and extrinsic elements, this thesis offers a comprehensive understanding of the themes explored in the music video and the lasting impact it has on viewers. By uncovering the layers of NF's emotional journey, this study provides valuable insights into the psychological impact of addiction and the power of resilience in overcoming adversity. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to a deeper appreciation of the artistry and emotional depth of the *How Could You Leave Us* music video.

Keywords: emotional journey, intrinsic element, extrinsic element, NF, *How Could You Leave Us*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literary work is the result of human work, usually created in written form. However, the form of literary works can now be found in other forms over time. Literary work is described as a creation of humans that can be influenced by background or other factors outside the literary work's entity. Abrams confirmed this statement. He said that factors that come from outside the literary work itself (external factors) have a significant role in the literary work (Abrams, 1958:52). Moreover, Abrams stated that literature is a tool that researchers can use to see patterns related to relationships in the social environment, fundamental things about nature, and so on (Abrams, 1958:75). In other words, literary works can be used or considered as a reflection of the phenomena that occur around us, especially where the author of the literary work lives. The types of literary creations include poetry, prose, novels, drama, and music. Music can also be considered literary work (Abrams, 1958:77).

Music began to be categorized or incorporated into a single literary work in the 18th century. Researchers realized that music has a dominant role, especially in developing music in the West (Abrams, 1958).

Edward T. Cohen, an American scholar, suggests that music, like language, can convey meaning and ideas. He argues that while music may not have a literal meaning, it still carries a certain context and humanistic content. This means that

music can express emotions, tell stories, and evoke cultural significance. Cohen's work encourages us to consider the “voice” behind the music and to explore the various ways in which music communicates with its audience. By analyzing the narrative elements within music, both verbal and non-verbal, we can gain a deeper understanding of the composer's intentions and the cultural context in which the music was created (T. Cone, 2011). Among the existed music genres, hip-hop is one of the genres that will be further discussed in this discussion.

Hip-Hop is a rich cultural movement that extends beyond music to encompass various forms of artistic expression and social commentary. Its roots in African American culture have fostered a unique genre that continues to evolve while addressing critical issues relevant to society today (Ralph, 2009). This music emerged in America around the early 70s in New York. Famous musicians belonging to the hip-hop genre include Public Enemy, Snoop Dogg, Notorious B.I.G, and many more. Although people often identify hip-hop music as black music that is thick with criticism of society and government, the writer sees that one of the songs entitled *How Could You Leave Us* (2016) by a musician named NF has a different message.

How Could You Leave Us is a song from the album *Therapy Session*. This album was released in 2016 by the musician with the nickname NF. Nathan John Feuerstein, better known by his stage nickname NF, is an American rapper born in 1991. According to one of the American music journals—U92—NF is described as a rapper with musical nuances full of emotions, energy, and anger that is full of questions. Not a few also feel that the music from NF can help their fans deal with

life's problems. Regarding explaining the relationship between literary works and music, music is strongly influenced by factors that come from outside the work (Rentfrow et al., 2011). For example, in this case, the writer sees that the song *How Could You Leave Us*, tells about NF's life path.

Still related to the description the writer wrote in the previous paragraphs, in this discussion, the author will try to prove that NF's *How Could You Leave Us* music contains Feuerstein's experience when his biological mother left him. In analyzing the object of this study, the writer focuses its discussion on examining both intrinsic and extrinsic elements of music. The inherent elements are focused on lyrics, while a biographical approach is applied to the extrinsic aspects.

1.2 Research Problems

Related to the paragraphs that the writer has written, the writer comes up with the problems of this research. The writer has formulated several questions related to the topic of the discussion that can be seen as follows:

1. What are intrinsic elements observed in *How Could You Leave Us* (2016) music video?
2. How has NF changed from vulnerable child to a resilient and mature adult?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify and closely analyze the specific figurative language present in each of the nine different scenes in NF's music video "*How Could You Leave Us*" (2016). Furthermore, this study will employ a New Critical approach to the music video, focusing primarily on the intrinsic elements of figurative language as manifested in each scene. This analysis will not rely solely on internal textual

evidence; it will also incorporate relevant cultural and social contexts to provide a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the music video's meaning and impact.

1.4 Previous Studies

Several studies have explored the use of figurative language and its impact on meaning in various artistic mediums, including music. This thesis draws upon a range of these studies to inform its analysis of NF's "*How Could You Leave Us*" music video.

Several researchers have examined figurative language in song lyrics. Nurdiana (2015) analyzed figurative language in Katy Perry's song, focusing on how these devices create imagery and convey emotion (Nurdiana, 2015). Next, Gavelin (2016) explored the evolution of love metaphors in Mariah Carey's music, demonstrating the connection between lyrical themes and figurative language choices (Gavelin, 2015). The third, Risdianto used discourse analysis to examine the powerful message of Palestinian resilience in Micheal Heart's song "We Will Not Go Down," highlighting the impact of first-person plural pronouns and repetitive lyrics. The analysis also highlights the song's relevance in the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflicts (Risdianto, 2016). The fourth is from Abdullah and Rahmawati (2018) that analyzed figurative language in Avril Lavigne's song, finding simile to be the most prevalent figurative language, followed by metaphor, allusion, and onomatopoeia, which are used less frequently. The analysis reveals the richness and complexity of Avril Lavigne's songwriting, as she effectively utilizes figurative language to convey deeper meanings and

emotions in her lyrics (Abdullah & Rahmawati, 2018). Setiawati and Maryani (2018) examined Taylor Swift's lyrics, identifying hyperbole, simile, and metaphor as dominant features that contribute to the deeper meanings expressed in the songs, conveying themes of conflict, heartbreak, and treacherousness (Setiawati, 2018). Dewi, Hidayat, and Alek (2020) analyzed Selena Gomez's "Lose You to Love Me," finding hyperbole to be the most frequent device and exploring themes of unhealthy relationships and self-love (Nur Fatahhela Dewi & Nuruddin Hidayat, 2020).

Other studies have focused on the visual and multimodal aspects of music videos. Izumba and Keya (2019) explored the representation of women in Tanzanian Bongo Flava music videos and lyrics, revealing negative stereotypes and limited agency. The research underscores the need for a more critical examination of gender representation in Bongo Flava music and the broader socio-cultural context in which it is produced and consumed (Izumba & Keya, 2019). Mac and Utomo (2021) used a semiotic approach to analyze Taylor Swift's "You Need to Calm Down" music video, interpreting visual meanings and discourses that address hate speech, LGBTQ issues, and media toxicity. Ultimately, the video aims to promote LGBTQ acceptance among American youth. By analyzing the denotation and connotation of visual elements, the music video reveals societal views on LGBTQ issues and gender roles (Mac & Utomo, 2021). Asfar and Suriyanti (2022) examined the interplay of text, images, and music in Billie Eilish's "Bad Guy" music video, focusing on its message of empowerment for minority groups (Nur Afrita Asfar & Apriliana Suriyanti, 2022).

Finally, research has also explored the factors influencing song popularity. Benjamin et al. (2024) investigated the impact of intrinsic, extrinsic, and crowdsourced features on song performance, finding that extrinsic and crowdsourced features, as well as the valence (the positivity or negativity of a song) of a song, play significant roles (Benjamin et al., 2024).

For this study, the writer tries to analyze NF's music video, *How Could You Leave Us* (2016), by examining its intrinsic elements, which focus on lyrics and figurative language. The writer then identifies the music video using new criticism theory to provide a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the music video's meaning and impact.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The writer has determined the scope of this study to limit its discussion. The writer focuses its debate on the intrinsic elements by analyzing the song's lyrics. As for the extrinsic aspects, the writer applies new criticism theory combined with an expressive approach to depict the NF's emotional journey in the *How Could You Leave Us* (2016) music video.

1.6 Writing Organization

The writer divides this discussion into four chapters that can be seen as follows:

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the study, research problems, objectives, previous studies, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter contains the theories used for the study.

In this chapter, the methods of the study are also included.

CHAPTER III : DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter explains the related topic of the study.

In this chapter, the writer combines the used theories with the related study.

CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the summary of the study's final results according to the writer's analysis.