

Vanessa Villa

English 450

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22 June 2012

The Power of Peace

Society has continuously dealt with death with various emotions such as grief and anger. As a result, society has built a norm of automatically assuming one is in mourning when a person dies. It is no wonder that society has a fascination with different emotions associated with death when it is not part of the norm. These feelings are explored in many non-fictional and fictional works alike such as Tim O'Brien's novel *The Things They Carried* which leaves readers to interpret the many levels of emotions he writes about in the short chapter entitled "Style". These interpretations that readers have concluded can be read in many essays and seen in artistic drawings. "Serenity", an artistic sketch, by Vanessa Villa depicts the ability of a person to find peace amongst the brutality of death.

In the front and center of the drawing "Serenity" a young Vietnamese girl stands wearing a bright yellow colored dress to depict the inner conscious of tranquility within one. It is her dress that is a reflection of her breaking away from the sorrow. For example, Villa has the young Vietnamese girl stand in her flame like colored dress which is cracking away from her porcelain white skin. By having the young girl stand in the center of the drawing surrounded by a chaotic scene that involves a burning village, nature dried of its life, and blood, yet her dress is perfectly clean without any sign that she is part of that scene. Death is filled with filthiness and grief yet the yellow on the young girl's dress is neatly shining bright full of life. The illumination of her dress is a reflection of the young girl's skin detaching itself from the brutality she has just witnessed. She is able to shed the sorrow within her and pull out the little innermost peace that

she stored within her. By pulling out that inner emotion she is able to move on from that horrific scene. Ultimately, the peeling of her dress signifies that she can find nirvana within herself.

Besides the dress used in the sketch, blue is also found which symbolizes the hope that chaos leaves behind. For instance, the burning village filled with heavy almost fog like smoke along with intense fiery flames stands behind the left side of the young Vietnamese girl at a glance it depicts the horrors violence has caused that enemies have brought upon her and the village. However, as the heavy gray smoke descends to the air it fades into a new lively blue color. The blue-ness evokes a cracking of the fiery flames caused by violence and coming together with the sky to create an image that the violence has finally come together with the ever brightening sky that sustains life itself. Eventually violence fades away and leaves behind a world with scars but it also completely takes away the despair that violence brings. As a result, it makes the world of pain and hope come together to form a new optimistic world. Thus, with that hope left behind the young Vietnamese girl can find tranquility after the brutality of death fades away.

Furthermore, the young Vietnamese girl's body language drawn by Vanessa Villa clearly reflects herself breaking away from reality to find serenity. In the center of the sketch the young girl is found dancing ever so gracefully while nature as well as everyone she knows is slowly and painfully burning away into ashes right behind her. The dancing shows her mind escaping to an alternate reality where the more she dances her mind is able to forget the trauma and detach her mind from the horrific reality surrounding her. In this case, the more she disengages from reality the more she is able to shelter a more peaceful mindset. Moreover, as she continues to detach her mind from reality her physical state also seeks to disconnect itself. Her once mourning face transforms into a weak smile. That detached mindset that she develops consumes her physical

state and manifests into a smile. That weak and passive smile signifies her truly descending to a world where she can forget her horrors. Therefore, to the young Vietnamese girl living in a fantasy world at that moment is what brings her calmness in a time where she is surrounded by a lifeless reality.

Lastly, in “Serenity”, Villa displays a healthy, untainted dove which represents the unity one needs to overcome the distress of death. As the young Vietnamese girl is calming dancing her pain away a clean dove stands to the right hand side of her watching every step she gracefully takes. In fact, the young Vietnamese girl is trapped in a world filled with “bloodbaths” from the war and a now lifeless filled world. She gained her freedom from the daily shackles of violence she was subjected to but she now has to live with those traumatic memories. That dove is a manifestation of a mindset that has to unionize both her past and present. Consequently, for her to overcome the loss she is faced with she devours that mindset of unity to achieve peace that the dove represents.

Ultimately, “Serenity” is an artistic expression of emotions that one has to go through in order to find peace one desires and can achieve when one is faced by the trauma of death. “Serenity” draws influence from “*The Things They Carried*” by Tim O’Brien to explore a different emotion that is not the norm within society to go through after being subjected by the brutality of violence. Villa uses various elements to show that the young Vietnamese girl can draw out peace after being oppressed by the shackles of death that weight heavily on her. Although, society is fascinated by finding peace after such a massive amount of sorrow because of the rarity of the nature to most if not all of society. However, for the young Vietnamese girl in the drawing it is her reality that she can overpower the distress of death by drawing out nirvana.

