

# Symbolism in the new generation by jan toorop essay sample



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The New Generation was created by Jan Toorop in 1892. It falls within his familiar territory of mixing realism and various cultures. This painting is thus full of symbolism, a characteristic that has become synonymous with Toorop's paintings. In this portrait, a baby girl seated on a chair is at the focal point of the drawing. She is surrounded by what looks like a mysterious garden with unconcealed gnarled roots and falling branches. Behind her is a house that is overridden by the trees and foliage.

The door of the house is slightly opened revealing a woman that seems to be holding a dead flower. On the right, coiling on a tree is a green dragon, while directly in front of the baby is the statute of Buddha that is slightly concealed by trees. There is also a railway track and a telegraph pole on the foreground of the painting. There is therefore wide usage of symbolism in this artwork that brings out the clash between past and present or old civilization and modernity and its effects on spirituality.

The first symbols used are a railway track and a telegraph pole, which represent aspects of modernity. You have to understand that during the creation of this portrait, the world was at its infancy in terms of better modes of communication, transportation and was far behind technologically.

Railway transport and telegraphic communication were therefore in their initial formation when Toorop made this portrait and were regarded as features of the modern world. Another symbol used is the baby. She represents future generations. She is at the middle of it all- the clash between old civilization and modernity. Although she approaches the new world with innocence and seems elated about it, she is not aware of the horrors that surround her.

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The future is represented by the mysterious garden. It looks virgin, unconquered and full of confusion. It represents the past mistakes that the young generation have to live with. The old house represents the past or old civilization. It is overrun by the future and seems helpless by its power. It highlights the fact that nothing can prevent change- change is inevitable. The woman represents the old generation. They are trapped in their old ways (house) and have been rendered helpless by the new world. She is saddened by a dead flower she holds in her hand. The flower can symbolically mean a special thing that made her past special like love that is now gone.

Just like a flower makes a house beautiful, so does love and good memories that keep us looking back at the past with nostalgia. Another symbol is the figure of Buddha, which represent spirituality. The child is obviously looking at the statute and extending her hand. This means that with the challenges that the young generation will be facing, they will seek a spiritual path.

However, just as the child is immobile and unable to reach Buddha, they will be frustrated by the challenges they will have to overcome to get spiritual nourishment.

The inclusion of a dragon in this painting has spiritual meaning. In china, the dragon is regarded as a protector. It protects the innocent from harm. The baby is innocent and naïve and surrounded by evil. The dragon tries to protect the baby, although it is being overwhelmed by a tree- in this case evil. While we expect the dragon to be flying high and mighty, it has its head trapped by the tree and is completely helpless. This means that we are surrounded by invisible protectors that strive to keep us safe. But,

sometimes evil becomes too great even for these protectors that we have to undergo some period of suffering before good can triumph evil.

With this piece, Toorop is very pessimistic about what the future holds for the young generation. He views the future as complete wilderness in comparison to his past civilized world. He intentionally creates a dark painting derived of light to show the uncertainty that the future beckons to his daughter. Although he knows that he will not be there to guide her in the turbulent world, she will always find her way through Buddha's guidance. In despair and pain is where she will find the truth and the righteous path.

**References:**

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- Prince & The New Power Generation - Love Symbol
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