

# The emulation of art ; life

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In all walks of everyday life, lessons and experiences are collected in hopes to use them in future scenarios. Many writers throughout history have said they have used these occurrences in their work. At various point in life situations arise in which decisions must be made and once the choice is being carried out, there comes a point when one cannot go back and change course. This inability to revert one's path is called the " Point of No Return. " In other instances the use of geography may not only be viewed literally but also serve as a metaphor. There are also periods when isolation has an effect on the behavior of an individual.

Point of no return, use of geographic surroundings and isolation are concepts used in all of the following works: Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (Now), William Faulkner's " A Rose for Emily" (A Rose), and Tim O'Brien's " The Things They Carried" (Things). In these three pieces one shall see not only the ideas of " Point of No Return" (PNR), geographic surroundings, and isolation, but the notion of art imitating life. Foremost, PNR comes in a variety of ways for each of the many characters we encounter in these adventures. In *Now*, we see Willard's PNR towards the end of the film after he has arrived at Kurtz's compound. As he sits in the darkness, Chef's decapitated head is thrust into his lap. Without Chef to aid him, Willard realizes he is truly on his own. In order to escape Kurtz's world intact, he must complete his mission alone.

In the case of Emily's manservant in " A Rose," the PNR is depicted after the death of Emily. " The negro met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, sibilant voices and their quick, curious glances, and then he disappeared. He walked right through the house and

out the back and was not seen again. " (Faulkner, pg. 7) The manservant is aware of the truth of Emily's dark life which shall soon be exposed to all and does not want to be in the vicinity when it happens. For Lt. Cross in "Things", the PNR occurs following Ted Lavender being shot and killed.

" It wouldn't help Lavender, he knew that, but from this point on he would comport himself as a soldier. " (O'Brien, 13) After this tragic event, a transformation in the Lt. 's attitude towards the remaining men occurs. On the morning after Ted Lavender died, First Lieutenant Jimmy Cross crouched at the bottom of his foxhole and burned Martha's letters. " (O'Brien, 12) His feelings of love for Martha have also been replaced by an emotion resembling anger. Given these examples, PNR is present in each one of these accounts. The use of geography can be interpreted in numerous ways.

As the men in Now make their way into the depths of the jungle, the Nyung River gradually becomes narrow. Slowly the soldiers are picked off one by one. The group begins to diminish, as does the width of the waterway.

Another use of geographic surroundings is found in Faulkner's work. His description of Emily's home and its location demonstrate the similarity in her temperament. " But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps- -an eyesore among eyesores. " (Faulkner, pg.

1) Although modern technology is progressing all around her traditional neighborhood, and the South for that matter, she stubbornly refuses to adapt. The geography is split into both literal and metaphoric ways in "

Things. ” “ They carried the land itself. Vietnam, the place, the sod- a powdery orange-red dust that covered their boots and fatigues and faces. They carried the sky. The whole atmosphere, they carried it, the humidity, the monsoons, the stink of fungus and decay, all of it, they carried gravity. ” (O’Brien, pg.

7) Not only did the soldiers carry the soil of Vietnam on their boots but they carried the experiences of Vietnam in their minds. All of the tangible and idealistic aspects of being in a war-torn country are what these souls carried. Geography used by these storytellers create a world which not only can be seen but be felt deep within. Lastly, the third concept found in each of these works is isolation. A wise man once said, “ The true character of a person is revealed once they think no one is watching. ” (A. Mancha) This becomes evident in NOW when the three remaining men have reached Kurtz’s dwelling.

In front of the natives, Kurtz is God-like in his demeanor. However, inside the temple and away from his worshipers, Willard sees what lies beneath Kurtz, a man. A man who poetically writes the horrors of what he has seen, done and become. Willard becomes conscious of Kurtz’s desire and anticipation of his own death. “ Everybody wanted me to do it, him most of all. I felt like he was up there, waiting for me to take the pain away. He just wanted to go out like a soldier, standing up, not like some poor, wasted, rag-assed renegade.

Even the jungle wanted him dead, and that's who he really took his orders from anyway. ” Kurtz is aware of Willard’s mission and welcomes it. In “ A Rose,” the segregation of Emily from society, enforced by her father “

clutching a horsewhip" (Faulkner, pg3), played a major role in Emily's lack of emotional and mental development. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father. "(Faulkner, pg. 2) Although Emily is of adult age she still remains much like a child as she uses crayons to create her father's portrait. The isolation seen in " Things" comes in form of the deployment of the soldiers.

These men are stripped from everything they know, from the families they love to the climates they are familiar with. " The things they carried were largely determined by necessity. " (O'Brien, pg. ) The men have replaced these elements with items each soldier deems essential for survival. This is not limited to weapons and food but also pictures, books and other mementos from home. As one can see, Coppola, Faulkner, and O'Brien's works reflect abstract and concrete notions of art imitating life. By using PNR, geography and isolation, these men were able to illustrate their points on a deep and abysmal level.

The impact these works have had on society are invaluable and because of their timeless nature will continue to influence artists throughout the years.