**Temptation and Death**

My first artifact is Three Ages of Man, a painting by Tiziano Veccellio. Tiziano was known as Titian by the English. Three Ages of Man was painted around 1515 in Italy (Bertman, 2001). My second artifact is the painting The Ages of Woman and Death by Hans Baldung Grien. It was painted between 1541 and 1544 in Strasbourg, France (Museo Nacional del Prado, 2019).

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| A person sitting on a rock  Description automatically generated  *Three Ages of Man (Bertman, 2001).* | A group of people posing for the camera  Description automatically generated  *The Ages of Woman and Death (Museo Nacional del Prado, 2019).* |

In Titian's Three Ages of Man and Hans Baldung Grien's The Ages of Woman and Death there is a commonality that temptation has a long-term cost. The struggle between man and temptation is a trend as old as time and its affects are inevitable. My theme is temptation and the inevitability of death. This theme is seen in both works in different forms. Three Ages of Man depicts a young, passionate, couple. The woman seems to be tempting the man with a pair of flutes. To the right of them is a trio of children who resemble cupids, perhaps the product of their love. Adjacent to the children is a man holding a pair of skulls. This could be the same man as shown on the left or one of the children grown up holding the skulls of his siblings. The crisis of the old man is an earthly one. He has lost those who he loved and is close to death himself. This is a reflection on the true cost of love. Behind him stands a church which could be represented of how he lived his life and will be united with his family in death.

The Ages of Woman and Death depicts a ghastly demon whose arm is locked with an old woman. The old woman is pulling at the clothing of younger woman who is clearly upset. A tear rolls down her cheek as the old woman is tempting her to join them. The demon is holding an hourglass and a spear. At the end of the spear is a child which rests on the ground. Youth and old age are represented in this painting and temptation in the form of sin unites them. In the background is Jesus on a cross flying toward the sun. This is a sign that there is hope for the young woman to change her fate if she can resist temptation.

The idea that our actions in life determine the quality of our afterlife is something that I do not believe in; however, I do believe in making good decisions to better the earthly lives of myself and those around me. In these works by Titian and Grien life is summarized by a few significant snapshots: childhood, adulthood, and old age. In my experience, the religious symbolism in these pieces can simply represent having morals. It is important to have strong, clearly defined, morals and to do the right thing no matter how hard it is. Regardless of age, we are taught to consider the consequences of our actions and navigate a world that may have blurred lines between right and wrong.

This message could be useful to a social worker. Social workers help people who are at a low point in their lives. Some of this strife is caused by chance and a series of unfortunate events but it is my observation that most of the cause of low points in peoples' lives is due to poor decision-making skills. History repeats itself and people are often stuck in loops that they cannot escape due to bad habits. It would be useful to have a working knowledge of the humanities to draw comparisons from the past to compare to the occurrences in the lives of struggling adults and children.

From my own experiences I understand the struggle of escaping from something that seems like an ill-fated situation. I grew up in Sugar Land, Texas. I always chose to hang out with the wrong crowd over lifelong friends and often wondered why I was in horrible situation *x*. As time passed on my trend of bad decision making continued. During my first stint in college I hung out with thugs and drug addicts. When I dropped out, I found myself in one toxic relationship after another. One thing that self-pitying humans do not realize is that order to break from this loop you have to want change. Appreciation of the humanities, such as the cultural melting pot of *Star Trek* and even my own artistic outbursts lead me to a deeper understanding of myself. Eventually, having grown tired of my reciprocating downward trajectory, I found a way out through a family friend. She helped me get a job with the potential of expanding to a career. Two years later and with absolution I can say that I related deeply to the message that my artifacts convey.

My first source is The National Gallery, London's website. The National Gallery, London is an accredited gallery of art who, according to their website, support academic research (2020). I am citing this source because of their short biography of Titian. This will help with defining the context Three Ages of Man was painted in. My second source is the Museo Nacional del Prado's website. It provides details on The Age of Woman and Death including the author, date, and location of the painting. There is also a short description of the contents of the painting which I will use to provide supporting details for my thesis. Another source I plan to use is titian.org because they have an image of Three Ages of Man which is hard to find on museum websites due to copyright. The NYU Langone Medical Center is another source that I plan to cite in my research. It contains a page that supports the details of my theme and will help drive it home.

Chronologically, my artifacts were made about 30 years apart. Not much changed in terms of day-to-day living between these times. The world was wrought with disease, famine, and war. Both works were created "in an age when people died so young" (Bertman, 2001). These were also times where Christian beliefs were the defining feature of most Italian and French paintings. There are similarities between the paintings in the religious symbolism. In Titian's painting there is a church in the background as well as an angelic child. In Grien's painting there are demons in the distance. There is also a small image of Jesus on a cross pointing toward the sun. Both creators used painting as a medium. The painting style is similar and resemble renaissance realism. The use of literal figures is present in both paintings. There are wings in Titian's work and devils in Grien's.

In Titian's Three Ages of Man and Hans Baldung Grien's The Ages of Woman and Death there is a commonality that temptation has a long-term cost. As stated above, I believe that professionals working in mental health or individuals overcoming addictions would be interested in my theme and thesis. There are commonalities between the themes of the paintings and the lifestyle choices of these demographics. I will be able to convey my message by linking my thesis, theme, and life experience together in relevant comparisons. This way the audience can relate their own lives and experiences with the underlying message of my research. Ideally this will make them question the significance of the message and in turn create a lasting positive effect on their lives. I plan to address these messages directly, rather than dancing around it with words. I appreciate logical, blunt, literature and that is what I plan to deliver.

References

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