

STUDENT 5

Introduction to Lit., Kikendall

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Little Red Cap; a creative mid-term process

The entirety of this creative project began in the first week of the semester. I had overlooked the syllabus of our readings and the project itself knowing I would need to take one of them and eventually form a creative project out of it. First and foremost what stuck out about ‘Little Red Cap’ by Carol Ann Duffy was the unfamiliarity that I had with the piece. Most of the other stories I saw listed in our readings were very classical pieces, or pieces I had read in prior classes. When in the first week of class we read this piece I knew I had found the target and object of my project, if only for the way it struck me personally.

In an Interview with *Stylist* magazine, Duffy was asked how a poem should be delivered.

Her answer was;

“Reading it aloud – poetry is, after all, just written down speech – allow the poem to have a moment to exist. The reader has to put as much care into the reading of the poem as the poet has into writing it. In the relationship between poet, poem and reader, every element has to pull its weight.”

As the reader of this work I felt that I had to ‘pull my weight’ in the analysis that I took with each individual line. Obviously this poem was personal to Duffy, and I needed to put myself in those shoes in order to feel the depth of meaning as best as possible.

Going into the project I felt that it was necessary to have as raw of emotions as I could in order to capture the essence of the poem. For a long time I had no idea how this would manifest, and I did truly believe this was going to be a research paper at one point because of my own lack of ideas. Eventually, as time went on and personal conferences with the professor drew closer I knew I needed to buckle down. I eventually settled on the idea of a painting after acquiring a

nice array of acrylics from a swap-and-shop deal on Facebook (score!). I had a general idea in my head I wanted to run with, but it quickly became something entirely different.

I went to Hobby Lobby in the last few weeks of February knowing the project date was approaching. I purchased a canvas, a swatch of short faux fur, and some Modge Podge. I had three solid ideas in my head: One, make a basic landscape painting featuring a girl and a wolf skin. Two, make a piece including the fur that would add a three dimensional element to an otherwise flat painting. Three, make my own personal version of the poem using elements from the original with some artistic twists. It ended up being a combination of those three ideas.

I began the process on a Friday in February when I had finished working with my father. I cleared a space on our extremely cluttered kitchen table that had not seen a meal in months, and I began to envision my work. I took a reference photo from DeviantArt (Reference) that I found to be a good position for what I saw as 'Red', the woman from the poem that I could visualize. I sketched her general posture into a position on the canvas that aligned with the rule of thirds, so slightly to the right and below the horizontal axis of the canvas. I saw a landscape around her, and began to plant acrylic tree trunks around her, the character herself perched on a stump. I was very much enjoying where the piece was going...until I remembered that I'm not an artist.

I felt very overwhelmed by what I set out to do. I began to try and create foliage around what began as a trail, but it began to look like toddler scribbles to me. I gave up for a few days and gave myself time to recollect my thoughts and decide where I wanted to go from that point. I remembered the faux fur I had, and very much wanted to implement it into the piece, but I could not visualize the use of it past a forced addition to her wolf pelt that was painted already. I held the swatch in one hand and looked at what I felt was a ruined canvas...and my compulsion kicked into high gear.

I took my reference photo as a pallet and put 16 different earthy shades onto various places across the photo. I took the fur, laid it in the blobs of paint, and began to dab that across the canvas. I covered the canvas entirely, just able to see in the background the trunks of the trees that lay beneath. I liked it. It felt like my thought process, while still maintaining the girl and the earthy tones I loved...but now what? I had this sea of greens and browns that I had no idea what to do with! It was then that I remembered a previous idea I had for the piece, which was to remake the poem in my own style. At this point I did feel rushed in getting the project completed because I knew how busy my schedule was about to become with other midterms, The Stylus, and work. So I knew I couldn't create an original work, but I could twist her words into an artistic rendition.

I took three books from my collection to be sacrifices in this journey. Two books about a television series called *Supernatural*, and *The Amityville Horror*. It felt appropriate, and I knew they weren't getting much love with me. I tore the books apart and found words that matched between them and Duffy's piece. This was so much harder than I can explain, because my eyes would stray from the words I needed and find new bits that I had no need for. This took a solid day of digging to get to a point where I felt that enough pieces had been found. I then printed the poem out in 7 different fonts so I could fill the gaps of words I could not find. I laid out the words in a pattern on the left side of the canvas I liked; four stanzas closer to the left border, and three closer to the right. It was visually appealing and fit the margins well. After lots of tiny scissor escapades and Modge Podge on my carpet, I could say that the piece was at a place I was happy with.

For the actual intellectual reasoning behind the piece I will break it down into a few sections. First, I chose a painting due to my passion for illustrations with poetic works. I find

illustrations to be a wonderful hand-holding guide in a poem that would otherwise seem daunting or foreign to a reader. It gives a visual to those who need it, and just adds flare for those who don't. In an introductory level class I imagine poetry can seem like a battle for so many people, so I felt that my own personal illustration on the piece would provide insight to Duffy's piece that maybe another student did not see.

I chose the girl in the crouching position as the main artistic portion for a few reasons. I loved the pose, as it felt very primal and instinctual, which is something I viewed Red as throughout the piece. She was originally going to be nude to stick with that primal theme, however I discovered that nipples are impossible to paint (to me). I gave her a wolf's pelt to wear, to show the conquering of the beast she had undergone and the way she wore it with pride. I involved blood in the piece just to show how much of a battle this really was... it was not a bloodless fight, and both Red's 'innocence' and the wolf's life were taken within the piece. I used earthy tones to show the power of nature throughout the piece, how she used trees and forests to convey a type of foreign environment that she found herself in.

For the lettering I used a variety of fonts, sections, and lines. My thought process here being was that we see Red mature and progress as a woman throughout the length of the poem. The first stanza on my canvas is hectic and changes constantly, from size to style and placement. Gradually, as the poem goes on, the changes of fonts lessens, and less interruptions occur. By the last stanza you see a uniform, basic font size and style being used to convey her passage through this journey and process of hunting that she has gone through. Honestly...this part makes more sense in my head. It feels like there is a type of growth and calming that is occurring by the font becoming steadier, at least to me.

I believe that by making this project into a creative work rather than a paper that I was able to show more of my personal take on the story rather than an academic one. I can go on all day about how this poem reflects feminist culture in a literary setting, but by doing this project I found a much more visceral meaning that could be applied to anyone. It was also much more fun than a paper, as well as challenging. In my four years of college I do not feel that a project stretch my abilities to adapt to the situation quite as much as this one.

Discussion Question:

I made this painting as an illustration to accompany Duffy's piece. What do you feel that an illustration can provide for poetry that just the text cannot describe? Do you feel this helps or hinders readers, or biases their view of the poetry as just text?

Works Cited

Duffy, Carol A. "Little Red Cap." Genius. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Mar. 2017.

Grier, Amy. "Interview: Carol Ann Duffy." Stylist. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Mar. 2017.

Reference - Crouch 3. 2013. DeviantArt. DeviantArt. Web. 01 Mar. 2017.