

***Desert Town (casey)**

I felt that the main character of "Desert Town", the sage was an indian medicine man. Medicine men of many desert tribes including Hopi, Navajo, Apache, and many others often used long spiritual trips in the desert called spirit quests. These crucial spiritual experiences played a central role to a medicine man's powers and status in community. Medicine men also played the role of doctor for his tribe calling on his scientific and magical knowledge to heal people. There are several stories about extremely powerful medicine men having the ability to revive the dead through their magic. The connection between the medicine man's spirit, the land, and his responsibility to his people is inseparable.

The first line "Desert Town", "When the sage came back in." sets an entire scope of expectations for the poem. There is a sense of mystery drawn from the sentences ambiguous but pointed nature. It tells the reader who, when, and where, but still we don't really know when, who, or where at all. In the poem Carson emphasizes movement and direction, lending to the quest-like narrative of the poem. The poem contrasts meanings connotations and even tone to bring the reader in closer. "He propped up the disciples again like sparrows. On a clothesline." I like the contrast of disciples being propped like sparrows again, and by the way Carson breaks the line and punctuation but lets the meanings run through allows for various readings and interpretations.

I liked the contemplative voice of the poem that mused somewhat at those incapable of his vantage point. "To the cutting away ways." and "Inside him his bones by now liquid and he saw." Away ways, has the sound meaning and mental imagery to add to the poem. In examples such as these the poem speaks of the sage's powers.

Amendments

Desert Town (tiffany)

I feel, like Casey, that the main character in this poem is some kind of medicinal, spiritual healer. There's a feeling throughout the poem that this individual has a purpose and is greatly needed, but there's also a loneliness, a sense of isolation evoked when the sage is spoken of - "In the desert. / Where he baked his heart. / Were no shadows no up and down to remind him. / How they depended upon him". Even in the beginning, when he "propped up the disciples", it feels like he's dealing with material things, not life, which is strange since dealing with life is his main purpose. There seems to be something bubbling up inside of the sage, as if he's unsatisfied with his way of life - "He began to conform. / To the cutting away ways. / Of this world a fire was roaring up. / Inside him his bones by now liquid and he saw. / Ahead of him. / Waiting nothing else. / Waiting itself." This makes me think that the sage is simply dulled by the practice of waiting. He has no worth unless something goes wrong. Then, he is able to mend it. But then the waiting begins again. And it's this mundane cycle that reminds the sage of his inner turmoil with his position and practice.

Desert Town (monte)

I do not know much about what you are talking about, so I take your word on it. It does make sense as you described it.

Desert Town. (mike)

This poem could be alluding to the essential nature of religion in certain communities. When the sage was gone, the town “had fallen into despair.” The town needed his religious guidance, and even if the religion is false, or even unbelievable, that doesn’t really matter. The most important thing for people sometimes, is the ability to put their hope in something that they think is greater than themselves. Also, this sage appears to be a Jesus figure. In the first half of the poem, the sage comes back from the desert (like Jesus did after he was tempted by Satan) and finds his disciples (also like Jesus did after he came from the desert).

Desert Town Amendment: (matt)

I think that the poem could also be making use of Christian imagery. When I read the word disciples, I immediately think of the Apostles. And spending time out in the desert to have a spiritual experience is not a uniquely Native American tradition, it is also common Judeo-Christian ritual. Both Christ and Mohammed did it. So, I think you might also want to include that in your analysis; Carson likes to pull in as many terms as she can (and she likes playing with Christian images in particular) so I don’t think this excludes your ideas—it just goes a bit further.

Desert Town (martin)

The poem is told in some sort of narrative if read straight through. This kind of suggests a proverbial tale a Native American may tell, which goes along with the allusion. Another aspect of the poem lies in the construction, the difference in line length from one to the next. This goes up and down like a constant flow. There isn’t a meter, but there is an order to it all. This hovering order to everything can be placed in the view of a desert. When one thinks a town and desert, one may think deserted town, or abandoned town. There is a sense of abandonment which comes in at the end of the poem where nothing else is waiting, but itself is waiting. This says something is waiting and nothing is waiting, more tension to the poem’s credit.

Desert Town (marina)

For some strange reason I randomly got Jesus out of this (maybe I’ve gone completely insane by this point). I think that the “sage” could actually be Jesus and the whole Palestine region being somewhat of a desert, the name kind of goes with that interpretation too... There are a few instances of burning/baking/fire in the poem, as

well as a whole coming back, meaning perhaps, resurrection, going with the whole Jesus thing. In addition there is also a contrast between the solid and the liquid, as in the metamorphical qualities of life or maybe death or maybe just matter.

Desert Town (craig)

The idea of a desert brings to mind isolation, alienation. A vast expanse of emptiness, void of life giving elements and other comfortable amenities. Because of this, I get the sense that the people of some town relied on this sage, but when a boy died in his arms, he felt as if he should exile himself if they did not do it first. It affects him so much internally as he seems to ponder life in the desert, that his physical being is affected "his bones by now liquid." This is why it is "very expensive to come back". It means a loss of respect and prestige and could even mean the opposite: to go from being reveled as great to seen shamefully.

Courtney (none)

Desert Town (Allison)

I agree that the sage is definitely a person in this piece, and more than likely some kind of doctor. I have no idea what kind of story this is alluding to, except that he is in a desert, patients keep lining up and it doesn't seem like he can help them at all. I like the analysis of this poem because it looks deeper into the language. There are really no stand out terms or anything that seems to be the key to this poem-- if anything, it definitely seems like a narrative. I guess I was still curious about the fire that was roaring up inside him and of this world, though I'm not sure what it means. The poem says he conformed to the "cutting away ways," which seems to have angered him a lot. I guess I'm just still not sure what the message on the whole of this poem is.

Desert Town (tom)

I agree with the reading of the sage being a medicine man or a healer of some sort. The title desert town and liens one and two which tell of the sage returning from a journey increase this feeling. I think the double meaning for sage which could be a wise person or a plant used in Native American ritual continues to solidify the interpretation that this poem is speaking of a Native American holy man. I get a sense that the medicine man here has failed at his attempt to bring healing to the little boy and all that is left is waiting, waiting to see what will happen, waiting perhaps for grief to run its course waiting for time to heal the pain, just waiting.

Desert Town

I agree that this is a very Native American Indian feeling poem (whatever is PC to say these days) and i think the speaker is either a medicine man or a tribal leader of some kind-- possibly about the time period where Settlers started to encroach upon the land, because we get some feelings of dispair running throughout the poem. Also the concept of "expensive" and the idea of conforming seem to be ideas brought in by the settlers and pushed upon the native Americans of whatever time period that was. The "cutting away ways" seems to reference the degradation of nature to some degree, as the settlers were thought to do, and also many NAtive Americans turned to those ways in order to survive.
