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English 153

Professor Young

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Literature Response #4: Let Evening Come & Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

Part 1: Initial Response

In “Let Evening Come”, the speaker is using nature and natural events in a way to calm us down. To show us that “God does not leave us comfortless, so let evening come” (lines 16-17). People know that what is going on around them is normal, the cricket chafing, the woman taking up her needles to sow something together, or the dew accumulating on the abandoned hoe. This message can be easily found due to the relaxing nature I got from the word choice, and by using nature specially. The reason why I think nature is calming is because when I think of the Montana or Oregon, I think of lush forests and civilization living peacefully with nature. People out there seem to be happy and oblivious of the outside world, as they are one with nature. Thus using nature as a good medium in this poem, brought everyone to that calm, cold night out in nature looking at the stars (line 8). Here is where we can see nature’s calm side, especially when the wind has died down (line 11).

Getting into the poem “Do Not Go Gentle in the Night”, has a tone more focused on warning us about the night, rather that calm us as we saw in “Let Evening Come”. This more cautious tone comes from the constant repetition of using the phrases, “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Rage, rage against the dying of the light”. These are not showcasing nature’s beauty at night, rather the horrors that also roam in the night. “Rage, rage”, is not a phrase that is meant to give comfort to those listening, but rather one that involves attacking and taking the night as if it is yours. This argument goes further when on lines 10, the speaker is talking about these wild

men of the day learn too late about the dangers of the night in an ominous way. Then at the end it shifts a little bit, instead of a cry to these men, the speaker then speaks to whom I can say is God. I think this by saying, “And you, my father, there on the sad height”, this is directly about God as he sits on a throne high above the Earth. Putting this tidbit in, gives the reader some comfort and hope after all of these warnings and cautions that were given.

Part 2: Reaction after Discussion

When I was told to read these two poems, I read them as separate and having no means for comparison. Then I got to class and realized, through discussion, that these poems had much to compare. Where “Let Evening Come” was a happy tone to death, and “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”, was one that showcased a struggle of dealing with death, and calling for action to keep fighting the good fight. I can also conclude that my initial response which was dealing more with the idea of night, and what this can mean to different people, was, well, off. These poems clearly are talking about death, just so happens both used night to help illuminate this idea across. Here I am going to reflect on the new knowledge that was passed to me through the median of class discussion to look back on what I missed the first time.

The more I read “Let Evening Come”, I say the language used in a calming manner, as I mentioned in my initial response, but wasn’t to the effect of showing how calming night can be. Instead this calming mood was used to ease any doubt the speaker had while facing their death bed. This poem is more about one’s recognition of they have a place in heaven waiting for them, and they are comfortable with the life that they have lived up to this point; they have accepted the idea that their fate is now sealed with death, and that their time here on Earth is going to end. This idea of truly accepting death and what is to come from it is hard to do, at least for those who are not dying themselves. “Let Evening Come” was the speaker’s

acknowledgment and acceptance, and also served as a comforter to those around them, who are dealing with it much worse.

“Let Evening Come” is a hope inspiring poem, which is to give joy and happiness for the speaker and those around her. Then we get to “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”. Which is quite the opposite. Here we see the speaker asking his father, to keep fighting and to “rage, rage against the dying of the light”. Where this poem is the son’s struggles with his father decay into death, and how he wants him to keep fighting. The language used shows me how the son may be taking this death harder than the father is.

The poem uses examples of how people commonly felt as they approached their death beds, and the different paths that got them there. He started with talking about wise and good men, who were just dying as age was getting to them and they knew there was nothing else they could do (lines 4-9). But then we get to the men who were adventurous and didn’t treat life with meaning, and are now regretting what they have done, while realizing it is too late (lines 10-15). With the use of these examples, we see the struggles we face when going to our death beds, either as the one dying or the son or friend watching them fade away.

“Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” is a vast contrast from “Let Evening Come” in the ways they treat and react to death. This is evident in the use of nature and calming word choice, found in “Let Evening Come”, and the anger found in “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”, in how the speakers view death. Death can only be viewed with hate or with acceptance, and these two poems showcase and confirm that idea.