Acquainted With The Night Essay, Research Paper

Gentlemen Of the Night

“Acquainted With the Night” and “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night” are two poems about the night which contain desires, and it is readily said that these two poets offer easily accessible emotion in their verse. For Frost, his emotion was an attainable one because he didn’t fill his life with what he considered to be mundane challenges. “The most pronounced instance where my life was influenced by this instinct was when I gave up my work at Harvard,” said Frost. It was during the course of attending school that Frost learned that structure, school or otherwise, made him feel restraint to the point of being unable to complete things because they had to be done. In his life as in his poetry, Frost relied on the natural flow of things to control him. One of the most remarkable features of the poetry of Frost, is the manner in which he combines relatively straightforward accounts of ordinary experiences with subtle complexities of thought which, in turn, raise central philosophical issues of universal relevance to the human condition. He gives, in Shakespeare’s phrase, a ‘local habitation and a name’ to these theoretical and even spiritual conceptions and dilemmas, at once making them accessible while never diminishing their significance.

Dylan Thomas’ emotion was at times erratic?He used to say, of his poems, that they could be read either softly or loudly, exercising both ends of the spectrum. Thomas’ poems were a very real part of his being, expressed throughout the verse. He said of his work, “I let, perhaps, an image be ‘made’ emotionally in me and then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess…”There is also conveyed what the poet himself described as his “individual struggle from darkness towards some measure of light.” This intensely personal quest is balanced, in his writing, by a dedication to the formalities and musicality of poetry unusual in twentieth-century verse.

Both poems possess intellectual, critical and emotional forces that have been harnessed to achieve a desired result, yet they are done in different ways. Frost’s is in a natural, flowing narrative voice reading softly, almost passively and Thomas’s dares to speak loudly of bold resistance. Interestingly enough, these two poems both draw on the power of the night to create opposite feelings, which eventually deliver that same effective, raw emotion.

The overall tone of “Acquainted…” is softly spoken. The narrator “walks in the rain-and back” then looks down the “saddest city lane.” There isn’t any indication of the slightest noise surrounding him in these endeavors save a cry, which occurs later. The mood is kept mellow and the softest point in the poem is when he “stood still and stopped the sound of feet.” At this point the verse almost reaches a standstill as the feel slows down dramatically, signifying some heavy contemplation and emotion going on for the narrator.

I have been one acquainted with the night.

I have walked out in rain–and back in rain.

I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet…

Because of the urgency and intensity of his vision, Thomas subjected his ideas and emotions to the restraints of such strict poetic patternings as the villanelle (as seen in “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”). The irony of this process, contradictory of modern, negative conceptions about formality in verse (which is alleged to produce only artificiality and suppress genuine emotion), is that the restraint of the forms Thomas chooses further intensifies what he has to say. “Rage, Rage,” cries Thomas’ narrator in “Do not go…” Right away this poem does not deliver a docile feeling nor does it speak quietly. Rage, or wild anger, is an inarticulate emotion that is impossible to express in quiet; so like his earlier indication about his poems this is one that is wild, and read loudly. There’s also a sense of struggle when asked to “not go gentle into that good night”. This poem is filled with activity as we see, “Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight.”

?Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Even though the night is a similar subject in these poems, the way it is approached is very different. ” I have been one acquainted with the night,” says Frost. His mood is calmed by this darkness as he walks to “the furthest city light.” The night has become his solitude and a veil to disguise him when he walks “by the watchman on his beat,” where he promptly drops his “eyes, unwilling to explain.”

I have been one acquainted with the night.

I have walked out in rain–and back in rain.

I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.

I have passed by the watchman on his beat

And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

The night is a vivid, dark, and comfortable atmosphere for Frost to discuss, yet for Thomas it is a time to “rage against the dying of the light,” even though “wise men at their end know dark is right”. Also, to hammer his thoughts home, and convince, the line “do not go gentle into that good night” is chanted throughout the poem. There is unwillingness, in opposition to Frost’s poem, to be part of the night. All indications point to the night as death or dying as we are presented with an image of old people near death, “who see with blinding sight,” or no sight at all. At nighttime, light has been snuffed out, and that is what Thomas does not wish to occur, for in being blotted out, you become part of the night, and die.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,

Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

While a similar subject, the night, in the poems is really different, what are alike is a couple things that match item for item, in the imagery. Standing still, Frost’s narrator, hears a “far away” cry that comes “over the houses from another street.” To hear that lone voice carrying so far, and for what? It marks a certain bleakness about the time period, but shows how normal it was for the narrator to hear such a cry.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet

When far away an interrupted cry

Came over houses from another street

Thomas’ imagery is just as stark, looking in the faces of the people the narrator sees, “blind eyes (that) blaze like meteors”. Wise men in this poem have no choice about the night because “their words had forked no lightning”. It’s the careful imagery in both poems that really helps convey emotion.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight

Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Rhythm in both poems exists heavily and the rhyming scheme in “Acquainted…” starts with the last word of the first and third lines. There’s a type of word play scheme in Thomas’ poem, which is leading to the narrator’s father, as he describes the type of person he is alluding to, at the end the poem. A Good man, a wild man and a grave man all must either rage against the light or not go gentle into the night; but the last man is his father who he asks to do both. The narrator in “Acquainted…” deals with many things, his situation and atmosphere, but also a desired point to be driven home. He too, like many people, has been “acquainted with the night.”

Two men talking about the night. One speaks about it as an acquaintance, the other loathes its association with death or at least its association with his father. A strong emotion can be felt in both, only one is soft emotion and the other loud emotion. It could be that these two poems mirror the poet a little as Thomas was an alcoholic and prone to loud tirades and Frost was a delightful personality, frank, straightforward, and honest. There’s no doubt though, that whatever the personality of these two poets, a force of thought was so strong that it was expressed in words whenever they touched pen to paper.