

Student Name

Professor Name

Course

Date

Maggie Smith's "Good Bones": A Call for Loving the World No Matter What

Many modern poets are quite different from the classical representatives of the genre. They have more freedom of speech and do not need to conform to an societal rules, they prefer not to restrict themselves by any rhythmical patterns, and frequently, they do not take much care to choose flourishing epithets or intricate stylistic devices. However, in spite of such comparative simplicity of their form, the meaning of contemporary poems is rather rich and gives food for thought. With rapid technology advancement, when information can be shared within seconds, the audiences get access to new pieces of literature just about as soon as the authors publish them. At the same speed, the public either accepts the poet's endeavors and praises them by sharing and leaving positive comments or expresses its disapproval, sending the poems into the abyss of neglect. Maggie Smith's "Good Bones" is a bright illustration of public success. The author wrote and published her poem in June 2016 (Flood), and it reached the peak of thousands of shares within just a few days.

Smith's poem is about how bad the world is. It is "at least fifty percent terrible" (Smith lines 5-6), and this is merely "a conservative / estimate" (6-7). The author remarks all the sad and pessimistic things about the world in which we live. "For every bird" (8) there is "a stone thrown" at it (8). The number of children who are loved and taken good care of is mirrored by a correspondent number of those who are "broken, bagged, / sunk in a lake" (9-10). The author draws the readers' attention

to the fact that the duration of life is frequently insufficient to fulfill everything that one desires: "life is short" (10). Then, Smith goes on describing the parallels between life events and features. There are kind people, but there are also the ones who can "break you" (12). Throughout the poem, the author mentions that she keeps all the negative things about life away from her children. She is trying to defend them from the bad issues and wants to present the world in the most positive light for them. Therefore, in the end, she says, "I am trying / to sell them the world" (13-14). Smith compares herself to a realtor who may bring the clients to "a real shithole" but will continue to "chirp[s] on / about good news" (15-16). The final lines of the poem belong both to the "realtor" and Smith herself: "This place could be beautiful, / right? You could make this place beautiful" (16-17). Actually, she is the realtor, selling the world to her children. She is doing her best to show them only the positive features and hide or mask the unpleasant ones.

"Good Bones" has managed to include many special features which, under thorough consideration, are enough to catch the best of it. Just as the life, which, as Smith describes it, "is short" (10), so is the poem. Despite the freedom of rhythm and rhyme, the poem is filled with stylistic devices that raise its literary value to a rather high level. The device that is most favored by the author is repetition, and it is represented in various ways. The clause "Life is short" is repeated at the beginning of the first two lines, which makes an anaphora. Another example of this type of repetition is the use of the phrase "For every" (8-9). This phrase is used twice to introduce the comparisons of the good and the bad of this world. The third time this phrase is used is in line 11, but here it is a simple repetition. Epiphora is traced in the final sentences: the word "beautiful" is used at the end of lines 16 and 17. By using this device, the author stresses on the desire to make the world a decent place for

her children and any other person living in it. An interesting kind of repetition is seen in lines 3 and 4: "delicious, ill-advised ways" and "deliciously ill-advised ways." By changing an adjective to an adverb and removing a comma, Smith gains the effect of making the phrase sound totally different in spite of employing almost the same words. Finally, there is the most prominent kind of repetition used in this poem that also makes the strongest emphasis: leitmotif.

The leitmotif of "Good Bones" is "keep this from my children". The author uses this phrase in present tense three times: "I keep" (1; 7; 13) and in future tense once: "I'll keep" (5). The leitmotif phrase determines the essence of the poem: Smith wants to protect her children from horrible experiences, unfortunate accidents, and bad people. If not that, then she, at least, wants to postpone the time when her children find out that the world is full of betrayals, uncertainties, and lies. By saying that she will keep all of these facts from her children, Smith also mentions the children of other people. She sends a message that no matter what dangers lurk around the corner, people should do everything possible to avert them and find something magnificent about the place where they live. Smith's poem is an appeal not only to notice beautiful things but also create them. By doing so, people will not need to pretend that the world is a beautiful place but actually make it such.

"Good Bones" has received the appraisal of millions of people. It was called the poem of the year (Kott) and was said to have captured the mood of the most prominent sad events of 2016 (Krug). As the author herself confesses, this is a poem of a worried mother who wants to choose the best way of bringing up children in this hectic and fierce world (Krug). No matter what, parents are responsible for creating a safe and cheerful environment for their children. All the same, people of the world

are supposed to give a good example and cover the negative actions performed by some individuals by positive disposition and amiable relationships.

Maggie Smith's "Good Bones" has become one of the symbols of the previous year even though the style of the poem may have been not exuberant enough. While being simple, the poem is rather expressive. The main idea of "Good Bones" is to love the world no matter what and do everything we can to make it a better place. Poets of the past might have had a more thorough approach to their poems' form, but the meaning of Smith's "Good Bones" beats any inconsistencies concerned with rhyme and style.

Works Cited

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