

***Town of Greta Garbo (matt)**

Well, I'm not exactly a film buff, but I take it that Greta Garbo was something of a star in the 20s and 30s. I can see her being called an "idol" and, depending on when this poem was written ("Plainwater" was published in 1995), it could be in response to Garbo's death in 1990. If that's the case it describes something of an overreaction to the news, with damage to both the speaker's body and the world around her (?). Yet Garbo's movies will live on, perhaps these are the "sounds" the speaker was "hearing still hear." I have difficulty tying in the Greta Garbo connection any further without a better knowledge of her filmography. And I can't really find any other specific references (the speaker's body, the sky, and sound are all too vague and generic for me to really consider). I wish I had more to say, especially considering the length of my previous "paragraph," but the reference here seems much more clear-cut and I feel is actually peripheral to much of the poem. Hey, let's talk about that! The only thing that appears to tie the title to the rest of the poem, in my mind, is the word "idol." Otherwise, I have tremendous difficulty seeing any connection between the poem and Greta Garbo (though that may be because I'm a big fan of the Garbster). But the poem is not about the "idol" (Greta Garbo), it is about the speaker's reaction to the idol's leaving. Without the word "idol," I would not have seen any reason to tie the last two lines to the title as well. It is that one word that drives the reference. An idol is something that is admired, but it is also often an object (a graven image). Being treated like an idol might actually be enough to drive one to leave. And certainly, an idol as an object can be lost, forgotten, or abandoned. In this way, Greta Garbo, the idol, is seen both positively, as a role model and negatively, as an object. Her leaving is also assigned a dual role, for it is the loss of a role model yet at the same time it shows that she is not merely an object to be idolized.

Amendments

Town of Greta Garbo (Allison)

I don't know much about Garbo either, but I can understand how she could be considered an idol. There really isn't much out there about Garbo, I agree. The only thing I could think of was maybe the last "hear" is really a "her" because the two look so similar. Like, there is somebody mourning her loss, but she still hears Garbo's voice or something... That's kind of out there. I did read that Garbo was intensely private, so I'm sure that makes it harder to analyze this poem. I think the direction the analysis took was well thought out. The only other word that could really be played with here is "idol," which can be an icon or a material object worshipped as a god. I don't know what that would have to do with Garbo though.

Town of Greta Garbo: (courtney)

Good job for looking at sounds living on, as in the movies, the death of Garbo and the reference of an idol as being a dual role. The breaking of body parts could also be a figurative reference. The speaker might've felt like it broke his/her back and legs when Garbo died. One saying is that the "sky falls" when something bad happens; the sky could break because it fell, because Garbo died.

Town of Greta Garbo (casey)

The continual reference to breaking, of my back, my legs, the clouds, the sky is central to the poem. I'm not sure if I really can grasp what this poem is driving at, I think that Matt was on the right track when he said that much of the poem's message was to be found in the peripheral. So... The clouds and sky broke; bodily pain is obviously present, what about labor? What if the idol was a mother or grandmother someone that would have been alive when Greta Garbo was a star? Water breaks right before pregnancy, sky breaks before death?

Town of Greta Garbo (mike)

The continual reference to breaking, of my back, my legs, the clouds, the sky is central to the poem. I'm not sure if I really can grasp what this poem is driving at, I think that Matt was on the right track when he said that much of the poem's message was to be found in the peripheral. So... The clouds and sky broke; bodily pain is obviously present, what about labor? What if the idol was a mother or grandmother someone that would have been alive when Greta Garbo was a star? Water breaks right before pregnancy, sky breaks before death?

Town of Greta Garbo (marina)

Alright so Greta Garbo was a great movie star. Yay. Obviously the "idol" being referenced in the first line is her. And obviously her being a movie star implies that she was not broke in the monetary sense (I am trying to go off on the two uses of the word "broke" in the lines 2 and 3 that is being repeated three times. So there's broke as in crushed, and broke as in no money, as well as broken as in broken life, and Great Garbo's life is kind of interesting, at least according to my dearly beloved father who informed me she quit her thriving movie career and became a hermit in some strange Dickinsonian way. Yeah, that's pretty much all I have to say here... I suppose Garbo broke a lot of hearts of people who thought of her as their idol.

Town of Greta Garbo (tiffany)

I think that Matt's right on with his interpretation of this one. The speaker of the poem is clearly devastated by the death of the "idol", Greta Garbo. After doing some research, I've learned that Garbo died on Easter Sunday in 1990 of pneumonia, which I don't think has anything to do with the poem, but interesting tidbit. Obviously, the "left" alludes to death. The speaker is probably not someone even acquainted with the starlet outside of idolizing her films. And yet he/she is thrown into this whirlwind mourning period because of Garbo's passing. This plays on Matt's explanation of the obsession evoked by idols and the fact that they become objects, possessions, instead of people. Basically, the speaker is saying that the death not only debilitated his/her, but also the world because it "Broke clouds in the sky broke. / Sounds". Expansion, affecting everything. The tie between "sounds" and Garbo's movies is really clever. I would imagine now that the sounds are remembrances of famous monologues from Garbo's films.

Town of Greta Garbo (abby)

I agree with Matt's ideas, but have a little more to add. Greta Garbo acted in many movies, and is now dead, but we can still hear her, thanks to all those movies. I think Carson is referencing this almost immortality of her "idol" because all the things people think were "great" about Greta Garbo are still alive. The fact that the death or absence of

the idol is such a momentous thing is also a mockery of today's Hollywood, I think, because everything celebrities do these days gets published... "Brad Pitt Forgot to Brush His Teeth This Morning" and shit like that. That's what I get- a dual respect/criticism of the BIG people—and Greta Garbo was certainly BIG (in an -obviously- nonobese way).

Town of Greta Garbo (craig)

I am not so sure that Greta Garbo is as important a reference as she would seem by being in the title, but I do have to assume that this poem is some kind of elegy. I would assume that Greta Garbo was simply the childhood idol of Anne Carson, and thus, could serve as a substitute for anyone else anytime that they lost an idol. When one loses a person they look up to, they realize that even the greatest of the great is not immortal, though they may appear to be so. This would serve to remind a person of their own mortality, causing pain to the person. In this poem, actually physical pain is not only implied, but blatantly repeated. But not only is the speaker injured, but the entire world around them begins to fall apart. The clouds in the sky are broken, along with sounds, which are unbreakable. This simply serves to show that everything can seem different with an event like this taking place. Also, it shows the resonance of the event with the speaker with "still hear" as if the loss of an idol echos through their thoughts until their own death.

Town of Greta Garbo (martin)

The first line describes an idol in third person, and Carson does like to allude to the people or ideas in her titles in third person as a separate speaker. All the breaking in the poem suggest not just a cliché broken heart but more than that – a broken everything. The tone is catastrophic, and after a catastrophe we picture desolation, but something is still there at the end of this poem, with the play on words "Sounds I was hearing still hear (here)". That something is everything mentioned broken in the poem. Every breaking can be linked to the next line up until the end of the poem, so why not connect the last part too? "...broke sounds I was hearing still hear." The sounds the speaker was feeling were broken, but they're still there to hear afterward. Just because something is broken doesn't mean it has to be gone forever. There can still be something left. I don't know much about Greta Garbo's history, but maybe her death was a blow to the speaker.

Town of Greta Garbo (monte)

I can go no deeper than seeing the reaction to the actor's death and how her films will live on.

Town of Greta Garbo (tom)

I also have no substantial knowledge of Great Garbo. With that being said and it being understood that any further allusions to Great Garbo will be utterly lost on me, I proceed. I get a sense that something tragic is happening to the speaker, perhaps the loss of this idol is likened to ones "world falling apart". That is what I make of the speaker talking about here leg and back breaking, legs and back both being foundational, I think of the cliché phrases which employed "backbone", or how about "a leg to stand upon". Perhaps this idol was a foundational inspiration and the loss thereof is like losing ones footing or foundation it's like the "sky falling" which is what I get from the speaker saying the sky broke. Hmm, it's as if this poem is using a lot of clichés without using clichés, smart very smart.

