

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking

(Krista)

Obviously this poem deals with a kind of hunting. The Twig Breaking is a common theme/image of revelation. If a hunter breaks a twig it alerts the animal to his or her presence. If an animal breaks the twig it alerts the hunter. The poem is comparing the people of the town to hunters with knives "Their faces I thought were knives." Working with that metaphor, the hunter in the last four sentences is listening to hard to the person who is under scrutiny it makes the person want to kill themselves. With the idea of prey, the death of the prey could be a gift, but the ominous word choices ("waited" "impales") imply that it is more a spell of some sort. The prey somehow falls into line with the view of the hunter, the person being watched somehow falls into line with the watcher, and takes on the "knife" of the watcher/hunter. The knife could be anything, but I think this poem is alluding to judgements and perceptions of people regarding an outsider, or perhaps an insider who doesn't align with the norm.

Amendments

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (craig)

I know that the metaphor of the poem involves being hunted, but I am not so sure that a predator-prey relationship is exactly what is going on here. Though the narrator may feel as if they are being hunted, they may simply feel awkward or be put in any uncomfortable situation, causing them to feel as if any false step could reflect poorly on himself. It sounds to me that this narrator is surrounded by a group of people that they want to impress, but because they want to impress these people. They may act fairly awkwardly, causing them to be scrutinized. In this way, a false step could be a joke that nobody laughs at or a comment that inappropriately applies to some other guest, causing them to be offended. This is how a "hunter...listens/so hard to his prey it...impales itself". A hunter looks for the person to slip up. However, as the poem is in the first person, we should assume that the narrator may have some biases. That is, maybe he is really acting like an idiot and we simply see that he feels alienated by his actions. To stab oneself is a personal action not taken on by the hunter, like the narrator should put his foot in his mouth as he is already so uncomfortable that he would rather die than continue on the present course. He seems to have already impaled himself. The sound of the breaking twig implies revelation, as you suggested, but I think it is important that it is a sound as opposed to a sight- this supports the notion of a conversational misstep as well as sudden embarrassment, as opposed to seeing a broken twig, which would involve more research than a first impression would allow.

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (abby)

Along with the prey "impaling itself" because the hunter listens so hard goes an image of extreme love and sacrifice. There is anticipation and fear in this poem, but also we have the idea that the hunter is SO good that his enemy or prey respects him onto a level of self-sacrifice.

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (tiffany)

My interpretation of this poem was completely different from Krista's because I stayed in the woods, didn't involve the town or the outside world at all. I don't see how the poem conveys an allusion to "they" being townspeople. There is a distinct tension, but I figured that tension was between man and beast or the hunter and hunted due to the "hunter" and "prey" references. Although, the word "pointed" does suggest accusation of some kind so I guess that ties together. I guess the "they" is never really completely defined, just alluded to so it's open to interpretation. Ah, the joys and ambiguity of poetry!

The first three lines of this poem establish a tension and a sense of stillness. The "I" in this poem seems to be cornered - "Their faces I thought were knives. / The way they pointed them at me. / And waited." I feel like it's the calm before the storm. There's something ominous about these lines. The speaker of the poem is interesting because it could easily be the hunter or the hunted. The hunter could be facing a pack of animals with big, sharp teeth who will put up a fight before being killed. Or the speaker could be the hunted, cornered by his/her predators, who wait to see who will make the first move toward a rumble. The final lines of the poem remind me very much of Carson's definitions of pilgrims in "Anthropology of Water". It's an external, definitive statement. It's not personal like the first part of the poem. And the definition I got from Carson's statement is that the hunter is not the aggressor in a hunting situation because the prey "pulls the weapon. / Out of his hand and impales. / Itself." "His" is the hunter. It's as if the prey is some sick and demented way wants to be impaled and that desire causes the prey to essentially kill itself. The hunter is merely a tool used by the hunted.

Town of the Sound of A Twig Breaking (tom)

I get the sense of someone being stared at and sort of backed into a corner as if being hunted. In this metaphor the person is desperately searching their thoughts for a way of escape. I also get a sense that the tide has somehow turned on this person that the speaker at one time though themselves to be the hunter but now the twig has broken, everything has changed and people are staring. Perhaps this also deals with the feelings of being introverted which makes one to feel like in every situation they are being hunted and backed into a corner, always looking for a way of escape.

Monte (none)

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (mike)

I think that Krista's read on the hunters with knives being a representation of the people who look and pour over one's flaws so maliciously and meticulously that the accused wish to kill them. The level of intensity in the poem, the listening drives the poem with power and mystery. Who is the hunter, the prey. The hunter is labeled as masculine but the prey remains as it. I'm not sure if this points the meaning in the direction of the relationship between men and women, but I'm not sure.

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking Amendment: (matt)

As for the hunting, it should be noted that certain mystical traditions, especially Taoism, believe that the greatest action is non-action. According to those traditions, the worlds most skilled hunters are so skilled that they take no action and instead let the prey hunt

and destroy itself. I like what you were getting at in the final lines of your analysis, I think that really might be getting at something. If you listen to someone too long or with too much intensity, they may nervously chatter on and end up impugning themselves. Especially if that person is trying to make a good impression on a group that is hostile (“their faces I thought were knives”) and ‘waiting’ for a chance to pin their “prey,” but instead they let the “prey” impale itself for them through its own actions.

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (martin)

Strange construction of the poem where the speaker begins on “them” and what “they’re” doing, but then progresses to a more general third person who gives a definition of a hunter and recites some kind of proverb. Within the proverb “his” turns into “itself” so can it be the same subject? No, because the weapon can be identified as “it” since it is an inanimate object within the line. So much attention on the weapon suggests a metaphor there. However, “it pulls the weapon” suggests an “it” is already established. The twig breaking gives a sense of panic from prey and gives some suspense to the poem. The pronouns really confuse, I can’t place one to another and all the different ways they could be taken hurt the poem more than help it in my opinion.

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (marina)

I definitely agree with Krista on a few points about this poem, the hunting reference is more or less made obvious by a few references to things like prey and twig breaking as well as weapon. However, what really interested me in this poem was actually the narrator being either within or outside the poem’s already somewhat ambiguous environment, because what I am thinking is that maybe the narrator may be the prey talking or it may be the hunter talking or it may be none of those things, but that just seemed kind of intriguing to me. I also definitely liked the caesura after listens, because it was once again a punctuation usage that went along with the meaning of the line.

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking: (courtney)

Good job noticing the poem deals with hunting. Another thing to look at would be the relationship of the hunter to the speaker—is the speaker the prey? Are the knives of the hunter held at face height, like mirrors? The sound of a twig breaking is loud in an otherwise quiet place. If a person is trying to be really quiet, concentrating on their prey, he/she might accidentally step on a twig. The loud sound from the twig breaking would alert the prey, forcing the hunter to take action—corresponding to the fourth through sixth lines. This could still relate to people who are outsiders, since hunters travel in groups and sometimes compete for the same animals.

Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (casey)

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Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking (Allison)

I like this analysis of the poem. I think the idea of a twig breaking and scaring away the animal when hunting is a good direction to go with this poem. I also like the comparison between hunting with a gun and hunting with a knife. I wanted to read something in this analysis though about who the "I" in the poem is. Is the "I" someone who is being hunted? I think so. In fact, I almost thought the "I" in this poem was an animal being hunted and the "I" gets so transfixed it just stops and stares and waits to be killed. I like the idea of a spell, like "deer in the headlight" syndrome. I also would have liked to see the idea that there are two (fairly) obvious thoughts going on this poem brought up a little more as well (the first three lines, then the last four lines.)