

Close Talking Episode #110

“Snake White, Owl White” by Tacey Atsitty

September 25, 2020

<https://soundcloud.com/close-talking/episode-110-snake-white-owl-white-tacey-atsitty>

(Close Talking theme music)

Connor 0:07

Hello and welcome to Close Talking, the world's most popular poetry analysis podcast from Cardboard Box Productions Incorporated. I am co-host Connor McNamara Stratton and with my good friend Jack Rossiter-Munley, we read a poem,

Jack 0:21

talk about the poem,

Connor 0:23

and read the poem again.

Jack 0:25

Before we get into today's selection, a quick note that if you like what we do here at Close Talking and you have a spare minute, it would mean the world to us if you would give the podcast a rating and review on Apple podcasts.

Connor 0:36

Those ratings and reviews help boost us up the algorithm and find new listeners.

Jack 0:41

And if you have suggestions for future episodes or comments on this one, you can send us an email at closetalkingpoetry@gmail.com.

Connor 0:50

You can also find us on social media; on Twitter, the show is @closetalking. I'm @connormstratton and Jack is @jackrossitermun.

Jack 1:00

On Instagram the show is @closetalking and on Facebook, it's facebook.com/closetalking.

Connor 1:08

And our website, where you can find all our past episodes is closetalking.com.

Jack 1:14

On with the show.

(Close Talking theme music)

Connor 1:20

Hello, and welcome to an all new episode of Close Talking. I am one of your co-hosts Connor McNamara Stratton.

Jack 1:28

And I am your other co host Jack Rossiter-Munley.

Connor 1:32

And as always, we have a marvelous poem for you today. This poem is called "Snake White, Owl White" and it's by the poet Tacey Atsitty, whose debut collection came out in 2018, which has, along with Saeed Jones, "Prelude to Bruise", one of my favorite names for a collection, "Rain Scald", which I love.

Jack 2:04

That's really good.

Connor 2:05

Yeah, and Atsitty is, just a bit of biography before we get into the poem, she is Diné or Navajo, and she's appeared in a lot of the big journals, Poetry Magazine, Kenyon Review, and is a really wonderful poet. Yeah, I'm excited to, to sort of jump in. This one's a little bit harder in some ways, I think, as a forewarning. Yeah, but I think it's like incredibly beautiful. And, and interesting, so let's hop to it.

"Snake White, Owl White" by Tacey Atsitty.

When I say that my cheek fell,
I mean the bone, the gliding

pell sunken. I mean how it hides
in rain, in a sky-lit cell, swelling.

This is me fallen together,
separated from *her*, that mistelling

of Female Warrior Who Split
in Two, who pulled from her gut-well

a lumpy snake, pale with a scaling tongue;
word-slit. I've heaved her pang, her yell

at the snap of his tail. They drop
like words at the end, a quell

to the flood-line of an uvula,
a face, a cheek pouch – high like shell

veins. Birds swim silver
in the sky. An owl drops to dwell

with me. Gapes. *It's death.*
I step back. I can't tell

how he rises and dives at me, then turns
flight just before my head. When I tell you

this is where bone rises to white,
I mean tomorrow, a minute later, dive well.

Jack 4:21

This is one of those poems that I'm always excited when you pick because it leaves me with so many questions. And I feel like I get a lot of benefit out of talking about it with you. I mean, I like I feel that way generally about all of the poems, but there are certain ones that I can point to and feel like, oh, wow, I did a lot of work on my own. But when we talked about it, that helped so much, like put all of my thoughts in order or give me a lot of new thoughts. So I'm really excited to dive into this.

Connor 4:52

Yeah, yeah, me too. I really feel the same way. And I also, this is one of those poems where I like read it, and I'm like, I'm like, holy shit. Basically, this is awesome. But I also don't quite like on the first couple of reads I'm still like, I don't quite know everything that's happening here. But I know that, like, I love it.

Jack 5:19

Yeah, first few readings, I get a few big signposts. And I then try to fill in around those with varying degrees of success. And like the big ones that I had, initially, at least, which are super broad, a lot of specific language about the natural world, like specifically named animals, especially, which creates a certain scene for me, which helps a little bit of just trying to place the speaker in space, because that isn't really done a lot explicitly in the poem. But you do get a strong sense of maybe being in a field or being in a very natural environment and setting. And then also a lot of strong female and birth language, which are the two main things that I tried to then fit in around, and, and work my way into, but that after the first couple of readings, that was what I decided to just sit with those two big things for a while and try and, and work with that.

Connor 6:28

Yeah, I love that. Yeah, it's one of those poems where, like, so you can kind of try to do a play by play, which in the kind of, I think failures to do so might be helpful in terms of like, revealing what's unclear.

Jack 6:45

Yeah, that right now and see how far we get. Oh, look it's the third line of the poem. No. Yeah, I mean, yeah, lets try it.

Connor 6:52

The word 'pell', p-e-l-l, I've looked it up. And I'm not,

Jack 6:59

And it's a type of grant that you can apply for if you're going to college.

Connor 7:04

I think so. Okay, with the word, one meaning is like a roll of parchment, which I don't think is what it's meaning. And another is, it's kind of like an archaic word for pelt, or something, which felt more in line with what was kind of being talked about. But you know, our first line, it's like, "When I say that my cheek fell". Okay, the cheek is falling. What do you know? And then there's the speaker's trying to describe something. "I mean the bone, the gliding pell sunken." And then, like, "I mean how it hides in rain, in a sky-lit cell, swelling." In a way, yeah, we're sort of talking about the cheek, the speaker's cheek, and describing it in various ways. And it but again, it's sort of difficult to like, exactly literally piece together, what's being described.

Jack 8:04

Because you get those contradictions, is it sunken or is it swelling? And

Connor 8:09

Right.

Jack 8:10

I was thinking, sort of like the death and decay process where you do get both of those happening over time, and especially with rain, it can cause like, corpse bloating over time, but even then, it's pretty unclear because they're almost in reverse order. First, it would swell, then it would sink, but here, it's a sunken pell, and then it hides in rain and sky-lit cell swelling, so I'm like, temporarily confused. I'm like, I'm way out there.

Connor 8:38

Yeah, yeah. And like sky-lit cell, it's almost like you're outside, but the whole outside is a cell like a prison cell, which is not quite a contradiction, but is sort of like to think of the outside as a constrictive place is, is like, counterintuitive I think.

Jack 8:59

If it's the cheekbone, then the sky-lit cell would be the swelling like flesh on it, I guess. That

Connor 9:07

Yeah, interesting.

Jack 9:07

That's where I went with it. Because I was also I'd like all of this was wrapped up in me trying to figure out how this related to death, because I know that owls that that was the other thing that I sort of latched on to so there's natural world, there's like a lot of female imagery, and then death imagery because owls are often related to death basically. They're they're in many different cultures they're considered either death omens, or their call as a harbinger of death. Like there's a lot of that in, in owls both in native tribes in the Americas and in like other cultures around the world.

Connor 9:45

And we see that specifically in this poem too where an owl toward the end "An owl drops to dwell with me. Gapes" and it's in italics, "*It's death.*"

Jack 9:55

Right it literally tells you.

Connor 9:57

Yeah.

Jack 9:59

But that was anyway, as I was going back over the poem, that was where I was trying to figure out, like, how did these pieces and not that it has to be like a puzzle piece, quote unquote solving the poem like we've talked about that quite a few times, but trying to you know, find different ways to unlock meaning is a different exercise than trying to puzzle piece together a specific reading.

Connor 10:23

Right.

Jack 10:23

And so, in terms of what I was doing as a you know, unmoored reader joyously, unmoored, obviously like I was enjoying that feeling. That was something else that I was trying to sort of bring back from the end of the poem into the beginning as I read it a couple more times.

Connor 10:42

Yeah, yeah, no, I love that. Joyously, unmoored reader. It's like, there's that quote in that movie "Waking Life" or something, where that guy's like,

Clip 10:51

I go salsa dancing with my confusion.

Jack 10:54

I'm like, a good time.

Connor 10:56

Yeah, it seemed fun when he said it anyway, at any rate, so we have that sort of the first four lines, the 'sky-lit cell, swelling,' then it's like "This is me fallen together, separated from *her*," which is in italics, "that mistelling of Female Warrior Who Split in Two," and like "Female Warrior who split in Two" is kind of like, every word is capitalized. So it sort of evokes a kind of like, kind of like archetypal name of something, someone or something like that. Then the poem sort of describes this female warrior, basically, who like pulls a snake out of her gut, or her gut-well, which is a great like, combo of words, that in your, in your gut, you have this this well. And in this particular gut-well, there's a lumpy snake. Yeah, but there's like this kind of interesting sort of unclear relationship between the speaker the I of the poem, and then this, the female warrior who split in two, in a way, it's like, there's that division. So it's like, kind of like, there's the I and the her, and like, the speaker is then heaving, like her paying. So it's like, okay, and then you have this snake, you know, that's kind of like coming alive and has this relationship to language that's, like interesting words slipped, and like, you know, "They drop like words at the end." And then we kind of return to the face, in this way, "They drop like words at the end, a quell to the flood-line of an uvula," which is a very difficult word for me to say, which is like, like a part of the throat. And if we sort of returned to the head, and you know, you view a face a cheek pouch, me get back to the cheek, then there's kind of like, "Birds swim silver in the sky. An owl drops to dwell with me." So we've had this kind of intense moment with this, like snake, and the speaker, and the speaker's body and face. And then we kind of move our camera back outward, and we get our birds which are swimming, and it's kind of like that rain sky-lit cell like, it's, you know, like, there's this weird inversion of like, it's the sky but they're swimming in the sky. And then this owl comes down who has a view you've like, sort of already articulated is like this omen of death. And then the owl kind of like surprises the speaker, speaker steps back. And then the owl makes this weird, kind of rises and then dives at the speaker and then turns basically just before hitting, so sort of like this figurative near-death experience, in a way right where the owl like is like, I could get you but I'm not going to.

Jack 14:23

And that is something that owls also do I mean, they will like dive at people sometimes hitting them, but oftentimes just to sort of spook larger beings out of their territory, they will kind of dive bomb. It happened. There was an owl that hung out outside of my dorm in college for a couple of weeks and everybody had to like wear bright hats and keep an eye out for the owl by how it

Connor 14:44

Oh my gosh interesting. The yeah, and then the poem ends like when I tell you kind of you know, in the in the more figurative abstract like this is where bone rises to white, I mean

tomorrow, a minute later, dive well. So going through that wasn't like, may not be particularly helpful in terms of like crafting a narrative, but kind of like what you were saying in terms of like the big things that you're grasping on to something we talk about sometimes is like, I feel like our default thing that people, readers and audience members like often look for is like the narrative continuity of something, right? And so, like, where's the story, which is often kind of like, why poetry has a difficult rap, because it's one of the forms that like, most often kind of evades easy stories, even though many poems have narrative elements as you know, central parts of them, but that it's like, okay, there's actually lots of different things happening in the poem, dimensions to the poem like features, formal features, like thematic features and logistic features, there's all these just kind of like things that are happening. And like, when I am a joyously, unmoored reader, and I can't like quite put my finger on the clear story, or like, something immediately, like, accessible, I'm like, okay, what are other like, patterns, or things that seem to be like recurring, or central to it in some way, and like, see, not as necessarily like, putting the pieces to the puzzle, but just like, the poem's still trying to anchor me and I, the reason why I love these kinds of poems is that when I read it, I do feel anchored like, I don't feel like the poem is trying to just like, you know, be like, haha, understand this? Bet you can't.

Jack 17:01

Hey, try this on for size. Yeah, no, that's, that's something that I think is a really important point. And I think you feel that even those first times you read this poem is that there is a real drive to it, it feels like it's getting at something, as you're reading it, even if you aren't sure all the time, what it is, you do get that strong sense that it's going somewhere, and that it's doing something, and yeah, I personally, as a reader really respond to that. And that, you know, not again, not quite in like a puzzle solving type way. But it does get me like analytically, attuned and interested in figuring out like, what, what are we getting at here? Even if I'm not searching for a definitive answer, I'm searching for where that drive is coming from in the poem. And I don't know if there's something similar to that, that you were sort of picking up on or something that you think it was driving at. I know, kind of where I landed with that.

Connor 17:54

Yeah, there were kind of a few things that sort of stuck out to me, one is kind of like the bodily part, like the body parts sort of coming up again, you know, the cheek, the bone in the beginning, then the like, the gut-well, and then how the kind of face and cheek pouch like returns in the middle of the poem. And then like, the end of the poem is like, "When I tell you this is where bone rises to white," I'm like, okay, I don't quite know what it means to rise to white, necessarily, but the bone is, there's something about bones that are very important in this poem. And that's like, come up again. And also just like the face and the the kind of like the almost the skull, in a sense, with the cheek. And then there's like this kind of, as you sort of noted that the animals are like really key. And there's like, and the title helps us out a little bit like "Snake White, Owl White", which also is like, okay, bone white, when the bone rises to white, and like the snake, when the snake gets pulled out, it's pale with a scaling tongue so it's like a white snake. And we could imagine that the owl is also maybe a white owl. Then we have like, there's like two other big things. One is like this idea of division, or like splitting. So the biggest thing is like the the female warrior who's split in two, so there's like this clear, like,

this archetypal bow character, like it's unclear if this female warrior comes from any like, particular story, or if it's just something that the speaker has sort of like, come up with, but the warrior has split in two and then we have like the snake, and like the word slit tongue, so there's the slit word. You know, and you think I was picturing that the kind of classic snake tongue that's like split kind of thing. It's like not necessarily like, for the whole thing, but somehow this division and like the dividing process feels important. And then the last part is like, where actually I realized my true anchor was in the poem. But it's also, which partly is like, speaks to who I am as a reader, but which is just like the sounds and the rhythm of the poem. Because this poem is like, killing it on the sounds.

Jack 20:41

Big time. And it with the rhythm, they drop like words at the end, quell. Like, there's some very percussive parts of the poem. I, it took me a couple of times through it to begin noticing that, but once I did, I was really struck by it.

Connor 20:58

Yeah. And there's this one, there's a lot of I mean, that the the poem is sort of doing a lot of things with its rhythm and its sound, but there's one sort of like, big formal feature that's happening in this whole poem, which is basically that like, so the poem is made up of couplets, which wouldn't necessarily know from just listening to it. But for the most part, at the end of the last line of every couplet, there's like an L sound. So except for the first one, which still has it in these different ways. So it's like "When I say that my cheek fell, I mean the bone, the gliding pell sunken." And pell comes in at the beginning of the second stanza, but we have fell and then we have pell, but then we have "I mean how it hides in rain, in a sky-lit cell, swelling." That's the end of one stanza. Then we have like, "separated from *her*, that mistelling" with the tell. Gut-well, her yell, ukwell high like shell, drops to dwell, I can't tell. When I tell you, dive well. And oftentimes, the they're enjambed very extremely. And so which I think is, is a good, because it's like the same kind of rhyme sound for the whole poem. Like, it hides the sort of form a little bit that, you know, it's like "An owl drops to dwell with me." You know, "I can't tell how he rises and dives at me," or like, "that mistelling a Female Warrior Who Split in Two," like these sort of, in the sentence, sort of part of it, they're not like, super-emphasized. So they have their rhymes are hidden in that kind of way. But then over time, it's like this, it's happening over and over again. In and there's like, also just, I don't know, there's a lot of other like, L's like, the L's just generally are kind of like everywhere, like sky-lit cell, this is me fallen together, female warrior who's split in two pulled from her gut-well, a lumpy snake, which is just who pulled from her gut-well, such a great line with the uh's and then the L and then pale with a scaling tongue, which is a similar kind of like the L sound to pale and scaling back similar kind of vowel, like a like pale with a scaling. And then, you know, like, "snap of his tail", "a quell to the flood line of the uvula". Like uvula is like some it's that moment and then the the word pell, because it's like, a word that dictionary.com doesn't have an entry for are like, moments where when I'm like, really like, getting into it. I'm like, okay, these are clearly like, the sounds are our driving force here even beyond like the sense where like, it's maybe not even like a word that anyone uses is pell but the gliding pell sunken. You know, "When I say that my cheek fell, I mean the bone, the gliding pell sunken", like, it sounds great.

Jack 24:46

It sounds incredible.

Connor 24:49

And then so that, like there's that whole, everything, which is like the whole poem, but the sounds of it and like, especially with that sort of pretty, almost strict, it's not like a rhyme scheme, but kind of is a bit of a scheme, where the end of the second stanza is like the same, like L sound. And this is like where I was like, when we started talking about it, like before, I was like, okay, I've got these sounds and I can, I could be like, it's so intentional, and it sounds so good. And then I could also be like, animals are important. There's like a lot of two's and splitting, that's really important. And there's like the face and the cheek, and that's really important, and death, and there's this kind of threat of violence. But then, like, how the two go together, which I think that they do, in some way, that's not, you know, and what's always tricky is like, it's not that like the sounds mean anything specifically, but they create something and they have a propulsive sort of effect, that there is a relationship between the kind of like, quote, unquote, content and the quote, unquote, form. And yeah, I'm like, still kind of thinking through that relationship.

Jack 26:19

Definitely. And I think that's a really good point that you can sort of, notice one of these big things. And at a certain point, check yourself and realize like, okay, so that's not really an insight that necessarily gets me any farther than noticing something in the poem, as you were saying about the sounds, but also definitely something that I started paying a lot of attention to is the like the splitting and the two, and then noticing all of the couplets are also two lines. And it makes it means that the poem itself is very split up. And like is duality important. But again, at a certain level, that's just kind of noticing something that's in the poem that's not leading to any, you know, I'm not finding more meaning in it necessarily, just because I noticed something like that. And so my next challenge, or the next move is like, okay, so like, what does it mean that there's all of these twos and dualities in the poem, and where I started going with it is first noticing all of them and then also I decided to put contradictions in as well. So as I mentioned, there's the very beginning "When I say that my cheek fell, I mean the bone, the gliding pell sunken. I mean how it hides and rain, in a sky-lit cell, swelling." Like there aren't just two views. And there aren't just splits. There's also these dualities. In fact, even the title "Snake White, Owl White" is two different whites. And in some ways, you could even see them as very opposed because a snake is pretty much as ground laden as you can get. And an owl is a creature of the air. And so trying to think through all of that, it led me to this general reading of the poem that's not narrative in any way, but is looking at the whole thing as this sort of examination of a natural life cycle of birth and death, and then through decomposition, eventual, like a form of rebirth. And part of what got me there is looking towards the end of the poem, because there's all this talk about cheeks and cheekbones and stuff. And then there's this very specific mention right before the owl is introduced. "a cheek pouch – high like shell veins. Birds swim silver in the sky." But the mention of a cheek pouch specifically put me in mind of certain prey animals, which do actually have cheek pouches, where they like store

seeds and nuts and things and would be the prey for exactly the owl that shows up. And so whether that's literal or not, it does inject not just the owl's kind of general death symbolism, but the very real interaction that happens between a small rodent and an owl. And so looking at this whole poem as different avenues into that kind of natural, I don't know, not necessarily system, but looking at the natural life and death, if the hunter doesn't eat, the hunter starves and the hunter shrinks. But if the hunter is successful, in it's kill, not only does it kill the prey animal, but that prey animal will then decay and shrink. And there are all of these, like elements of that process that end up embodying a lot of these contradictory or seemingly contradictory pieces within the poem. And that was like the next step that I tried to make from noticing some of those things in the poem that I think for me at least were feeling like realizations, and then at some point, I was like, wait a minute, all I did was notice something that's like all over the poem, sort of like, at the beginning of the poem, you're thinking like, yeah, okay, so owl's in the title, like death or whatever. And then you get to the end, it's like an owl drops to dwell with me, gapes. It's death, like, okay, I guess that wasn't as much of an insight as I thought it would be. That it is the death owl. And but I really liked that about this poem, because I feel like in some ways, it gave you a lot of like breadcrumb trails to follow. And then where do you go? Sort of, as you were saying, especially with the sounds, where does that take you? Where do you go with that? And like, I think what you said was spot on, the sounds are a lot of what give it the propulsion in the poem that's like the formal propulsion that you feel in it. And I think that that's such a valuable insight. But it's easy to stop and be like, oh, I've noticed that even though they're kind of hidden in there, the last word in each of these couplets rhymes, dwell, tell, shell. You know.

Connor 31:13

Yeah, yeah. No, I love all that. I think that's really right. And I think the contradictions aspect of it is really important. And like, also, my two other thoughts that hopefully will come together, another way to think about a poem is like an event or like an encounter itself. So rather than sort of like a puzzle document, which is how it's often talked about, which we've been talking about for, or like a kind of static thing, we could think of it as like a happening in itself, like, it's just a thing that occurs through time, then I'm like, okay, rather than it being like a thing, like a kind of monument or a statue, if it's like a happening, or an event, there's this speaker who's kind of before me, who's like having this experience. And there's this speaker who's kind of, and this is kind of like the other part that I've that I noticed, which is like sort of a kind of just a kind of repetition. But there's this other part where there's like the when I say which is how the poem starts "When I say that my cheek fell, I mean the bone". And so there's this kind of like when I say phrase, and then I mean, phrase that kind of recur in different times in the poem. So like, "When I say that my cheek fell, I mean the bone, the gliding pell sunken. I mean how it hides in rain," and "the sky-lit cell swelling", then it kind of drops off for a while. But then at the end, right after the speaker, like steps back from the death owl, "I can't tell how he rises and dives at me, then turns flight just before my head. When I tell you this is where bone rises to white, I mean tomorrow, a minute later, dive well." So there's this interesting kind of, I mean, kind of like, happens two times quickly in the beginning, and then it comes back way at the end. And then the 'when I say', happens once at the beginning, and then comes back quickly, twice at the end. But it changes the 'when I say' changes each time a little bit. So it

starts as 'when I say' then it goes to 'I can't tell'. And then it goes 'when I tell you'. Then when I was thinking about it as an encounter, and that also like an event, and then also there's all these contradictions, and especially like this moment, which is so in some ways, so direct, but like also, like the most sort of abstract, like "This is me fallen together, separated from *her*". And then it's like "that mistelling of Female Warrior Who Split in Two". Like the speaker is like, divided herself in this contradictory way, where it's like, there's this there's a snake self in an owl self or there's a there's one part of the female warrior and the other part, there's the eye and the her and like, at the same time, it's like, still one person, it's like this, this one person that contains two that are not happy with each other or something or not, not, happiness has nothing to do with it, but they're at odds with each other in this kind of way in this like, irreconcilable way. And like, in a way, that's sort of also like a similarly difficult, like, if that's how it feels like to be me, like, I can't tell you about it in a tidy way, you know, I can't tell you a straightforward narrative story, even a complicated one, you know, because it's just like, the very sense of self that would be needed to be like, the protagonist or whatever, is like not stable enough, or something like that. And so that I was like, that's why I feel like the saying and the meaning, and the like, telling comes up again, because it's also like, the difficulty of like, trying, it's like the speaker's like trying to say this thing over and over again, in a way, but is like, not able to do so. But then at the same time, they're like, the sounds are like, so uniformly, not uniform, but like, very sensual. And, like, together, you know, it's like, and rhythmic through the whole way like, and it's like a similar texture of sounds for the whole poem, which provides this kind of like cohesion amid this contradictory identity, I guess. I don't know, I just started thinking about it as like, okay, it's not like, I have to understand the poem, like what it means, but like, I have to encounter the, like, happening. It's like, I have to, like, witness the monologue, like experience an encounter like that in a full way, which has meaning but isn't meaning, and that's all I guess. My last kind of, I don't really understand the ending, but I like it, but it's time also sort of like happening in a weird way where, like, "When I tell you this is where bone rises to white," "I mean, tomorrow, a minute later, dive well." It's like time moves really fast in the last line were like, at the beginning of the line, it's like, whatever is gonna happen will happen tomorrow. But then tomorrow's like, happened basically by the second clause. And it's like, okay, it'll happen in a minute. And then like, by the end, it's like bon voyage, like, dive well, I guess. So it's like already, it's like, it's like a day is sort of passed in the last line alone, which is like, really jarring in an interesting way.

Jack 37:56

It also goes from being "When I tell you this is where bone rises to white," so there's a place and then the place turns into a time, which is then obliterated.

Connor 38:06

Yeah.

Jack 38:07

And also at the end, there's this directive going on when I tell you, which ends dive well. So am I as the reader being addressed? And if I'm being told to dive well, the only thing I've seen dive in this poem is the owl of death, am I death? What's that going to mean? For me and for this

poem? Like the poem's coming to an end, so in a way that's a certain kind of ending, which could be death like so my diving well in being a reader ending the poem in one sense, but also what does it mean that I'm being directed to dive well? Did we see this owl who almost strikes the speaker, did that owl dive well or unwell? Is that the good dive is the dive that misses just a little bit that gives you the taste of eternity and then slips away or like what what is what is happening with this dive and who am I now? Am I the owl of death or am I just reading this?

Connor 39:14

That is a very good question. Um, should we read it again?

Jack 39:20

I think we should do it again.

Connor 39:22

All right.

“Snake White, Owl White, by Tacey Atsitty”

When I say that my cheek fell,
I mean the bone, the gliding

pell sunken. I mean how it hides
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in Two, who pulled from her gut-well

a lumpy snake, pale with a scaling tongue;
word-slit. I've heaved her pang, her yell

at the snap of his tail. They drop
like words at the end, a quell

to the flood-line of an uvula,
a face, a cheek pouch – high like shell

veins. Birds swim silver
in the sky. An owl drops to dwell

with me. Gapes. *It's death.*
I step back. I can't tell

how he rises and dives at me, then turns
flight just before my head. When I tell you

this is where bone rises to white,
I mean tomorrow, a minute later, dive well.

(Close Talking theme music)

Jack 40:57

So we have been doing a quick end piece, where we talk about some of the different things, not just poems that we have been reading or watching or thinking about. And so I want to kick it off this week, Connor, what have you been up to?

Connor 41:12

Oh, man, Jack. Well, okay, first thing that I have been very into is a Twitter account that I just discovered, called Ruth Wilson Gilmore Girls.

Jack 41:27

So good.

Connor 41:29

It's the best. It's a classic, great Twitter account that features poignant moments from the hit drama Gilmore Girls. And then quotes from the legendary prison abolitionist, Ruth Wilson Gilmore. So there's some good ones, where Lorelai is looking very stern at some kind of man and then the quote that Lorelai is definitely saying herself is "At the core of the contemporary abolition movement is the combination of organized violence and organized abandonment that has produced so much vulnerability that we see in every single country where inequality is growing and is deepest. Mass incarceration is the most prevalent." And then there's another one where Rory is like, come on, that's like the face she's giving. And the quote is, "Identity is not in and of itself, consciousness." Boom.

Jack 42:34

Boom.

Connor 42:35

Amazing.

Jack 42:36

Get em' Rory.

Connor 42:37

Get em' Rory.

Jack 42:38

I believe that Lorelai is lecturing Rory's boyfriend, Jess, in the one that you mentioned. I think that's the back of that head. I'm not positive.

Connor 42:48

That really seems right. But, Jack, what are you watching? What are you reading? What are you listening to? What are you doing?

Jack 42:57

I've got a couple of great downers for you this week Connor.

Connor 43:00

Hit me.

Jack 43:01

Heck yeah. So I recently received my copy of "Reaganland," the latest in Rick Perlstein series of books about the history of American conservatism. Think basically, what Robert Caro is doing with the life of Lyndon Johnson, but for contemporary conservatism, and it covers 1976 to 1980. And as somebody who is pretty deeply committed to the idea that all of the problems of today are readily apparent if you look at the 1970s it is falling right in my historical sweet spot and everything about it is distressing, and it's about 1000 pages long. So yet another hefty tome to work my way through. It was recently thieved for me, because I left it on the dining room table and my dad is now reading it, but he doesn't want to read it beginning to end because that seems like a bit much so he's dipping into the chapters that look most interesting.

Connor 43:59

Alright.

Jack 44:00

So that's number one, in texts and then for for viewing since I needed a break from all that bleakness, I dipped my toe into the waters of the Netflix original "The Devil All the Time," which is a searing drama starring some of your favorite superheroes like Spider Man and Batman Tom Holland and Robert Pattinson, different roles. They're not actually it's they're not playing those characters in this one. It would be kind of cool if they were though,

Connor 44:30

I was like this is a crazy title for a superhero TV show.

Jack 44:35

No, it's it's a movie. And it is an adaptation of a novel that I haven't read. That is about like generational and inherited trauma basically. And violence and stuff. And it takes place in Appalachian West Virginia and in Ohio, in the the 50s, and the 60s, and it is very good, a lot of interesting storytelling going on. It's willing to take time with characters, it's willing to have kind of tangential stuff you can as I was watching it, I didn't know it was based on a novel, but I

suspected it was just because it very much doesn't fit the really clean construction of even artsier type Oscar Beatty movies. It's very much novelistic in the way it's put together, there is a central character who you kind of follow but it really does go off in other directions and you spend time with, you know, this random couple of serial killers for a while and all kinds of stuff. But it's really, really good. And it's interesting, and the way that it goes after it's subject matter is kind of unexpected. So a couple of downers.

Connor 45:53

That's all right. It's a sign of the times.

(Close Talking theme music)