

**STEPHEN  
EPPLES:**

I mean, it's an interesting take because we are past the happy ending and things are supposed to be happily ever after, and yet there's not the sort of expectation of happiness, the experience that you would think. It's not actually a very uplifting poem. I mean, it is "Gretel in Darkness", so that should key us into something.

One line that stands out to me the most that I'm kind of going to work out from is the "No one remembers" line. Because it seems like this is almost a traumatic reliving of events, or at least a sort of inability to separate from one's past. Very curious.

"We sleep, are never hungry." "Father bars the doors, bars harm from this house, and it is years." And so there's this idea that we're getting right here in terms of a physical, versus emotional, trauma. Because while there is this sort of literal bars the doors and this notion of harm being separated from the house, there is a very real sort of harm that is continuing, that is sort of being relived.

And so it's an interesting turn in the poem here, from the second stanza to the third, because "My father bars the door, bars harm from this house, and it is years." And then it turns.

"No one remembers. Even you, my brother, summer afternoons you look at me as though you meant to leave, as though it never happened. But I killed for you. I see armed firs, the spires of that gleaming kiln--"

So there is this contrast between sort of the physical and the psychic trauma that is going on, and the notion that there's sort of been this recovery, but then there's this one figure who lives on in this emotionally traumatized state. They can't relate it, and it's sort of coming out in this poem.

And so what's interesting about talking about this in terms of trauma is we have this very interesting way that we're punctuating it here. "Her tongue shrivels into gas..." there's an ellipse. And then we see this again here, "the spires of the gleaming kiln--" and again, we're kind of left where the reader is left to sort of their own devices and their own imaginings about the events.

But it's also an interesting sort of illustration of-- I don't want to say element-- of voice that's being used and conveying sort of this Gretel character, and this sense of trauma, the inability

to kind of live it, to sort of complete these memories, to go back and engage this.

"Her tongue shrivels into gas..." and it's sort of a broken thought, and we are moved forward and we're in a new stanza, and everything is changed.

And the same thing happens, "But I killed for you. I see armed firs, the spires of that gleaming kiln--" hyphen. We are left to hang. And again, we come back into this serene present. We're moving between past trauma and present trauma through this very interesting device. So that could be something wonderful to focus on.

There is certainly a lot of literature on violence and trauma, and how violence and trauma is represented in literature, and how it is sort of-- I mean, certainly this issue of violence and its effect on identity, which is something that's kind of coming up in here.

We're talking about sort of how Gretel identifies herself in terms of the trauma that she's experienced and how she tries to live past that trauma, this relived experience and no one remembers but Gretel, and no one has this sort of experience but Gretel, and how has her sense of identity come to be defined by these events, and how has she come to be sort of ostracized and disassociated from the world that she lives in now?

I think that people are very nervous about just writing, and just putting words on the page. And I think the one thing that surprises me a lot is that people think it's a failure if they write an introduction and that introduction doesn't work. Like, there's just such a fear of writing even half a page of anything, like half a page of writing, and if you can't use it, you somehow failed at your writing.

I mean, there's so many times where I'll just go down, type right away and see what stands out. And a lot of times, I won't use what I first wrote. I mean, I might use segments of it, but maybe you'll write three introductions and only end up with one of them.

But that introduction is going to be very strong and it's going to really set you up well for the rest of your paper. So I would say, don't be afraid to just write. It's really hard to just start and to just write, and sometimes that's the only thing you need to do.