

The Devil's Library Episode 17 – “White is for Witching”

[Intro Music]

Leraje

Welcome to another edition of the Devil's Library. With me this evening, I have Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan.

Leraje

Lithos.

Lithos

Hail Satan.

Leraje

And Ligeia.

Ligeia

Hail Satan.

Leraje

So this month, uh, we are reading Helen Oyeyemi's, uh, White is for Witching. The book starts with a question: where is Miranda? Miranda has disappeared from the Silver family home. a guest house in Dover on the south coast of England. In answering why this disappearance has happened, we are introduced to the 3 voices who will tell this story: Miranda's twin brother uh Eliot, her girlfriend Ore, who she met at Cambridge, and the Silver House itself.

We learn of Miranda's struggles with Pica and mental illness, and we learn of the female familial connections that the Silver House has absorbed and uses, starting with Miranda's great-grandmother Anna, who has made the house a racial horror, tormenting anyone who falls under its influence and who it deems not English. By which it also means, like all racist dickheads, not white.

Lithos

Boo!

Leraje

Go!

Ligeia

Yay!

Lithos

Well, there's actually, there's actually 4 people, isn't there? Because there's the author, there's a third-person voice in between.

Leraje

Yeah, that's true.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

The 3 are, are those are 3 first-person voices, and then there's a third-person voice which tends to describe what Miranda's doing, um and that is the author's voice. I wasn't sure why. Um So maybe some of you can enlighten me.

Leraje
Why there was that fourth?

Lithos
Yeah, why there were 3 different first-person voices, but Miranda was in the third-person voice, like from an I think it was the idea of the loss of identity.

Ligeia
She didn't have a voice anymore. I think the whole premise of the book.

Pike
That could be it.

Ligeia
Yeah. I don't know. That's how I understood. That doesn't mean anything, by the way.

Lithos
So no, that's fair enough. That sounds like reasonable explanation.

Ligeia
Okay. We can go.

Lithos
Bye.

Leraje
Next time on The Devil's Library.

Pike
Did we think uh the racist house was the best character?

Leraje
The racist house?

Ligeia
What do you mean, best?

Leraje
Worst character, but also the best in terms of the whole thing.

Pike
Best written. Mm.

Leraje
Mm. I feel like you've got something to say on this subject, Pike.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Pike
No, I'm waiting for people to argue.

Lithos
uh It's— I mean, the most interesting, yes. Not the best. It's a particularly terrible sort of person the house was. Was it Grand— do you all reckon it was Grandanna that started it, or just that it was already racist before? It just happened to be Grandanna who owned it at the time, or that when she—

Pike
Should we maybe say who these characters are? That there is a house.

Leraje

Yes.

Pike

And it's sort of that its identity blends with 3 women who are female relatives of Miranda, uh who lives in the here and now. And it's her mother, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother. And great-grandanna is the grandmother.

Lithos

Yeah. So there's great-grandanna, the grandmother. Then there's Jennifer, who was her grandmother, but who disappeared. I.e., Uh she was going to leave her daughter, and then the house kind of swallowed her up and kept her there. And then there was her mother, who was Lily. And then there's Miri or Miranda, who is the daughter, who is represented via the third person voice.

Is that— that's it, I think, isn't it?

Ligeia

Yeah. Yeah.

Pike

Very good.

Leraje

I think um maybe I fucking hallucinated this, but I thought in terms of your Oreginal question, wasn't there a bit in the book where um it was stated that it was Anna ah who who performed some kind of ritual and awoke the house, which then absorbed her uh characteristics, and then later on her herself.

Lithos

I don't remember that.

Pike

I think you hallucinated.

Lithos

I remember that there was a breakdown mentioned, and then Miri mentioned that she was by— Grandanna was by her bed on the floor covering her face, and there was blood on her hands. And her brother was saying, no, she was just having a breakdown. And her mother didn't seem to be too keen on the whole thing being brought up.

But I don't uh remember doing a ritual of any kind.

Pike

It's just your satanic side speaking.

Leraje

Yeah, could be.

Lithos

I mean, it is a very sort of difficult to follow because uh of the disjointed, not just the 3 different first-person voices switching in and out, they will actually switch in and out in the middle of a sentence, like sort of hinging on a word. There's a word in the sentence, the sentence won't end, and that word will be the beginning of another sentence.

And then you're suddenly another character. And then in addition, time goes forward and back, you know, and I found it really, really hard to kind of follow the narrative in my head. It took me a long time. This is, of all the books we've read, this one took me longest. And that's not necessarily a bad thing, right?

But there were passages I had to reread and then even sentences I had to reread and go, what?

Ligeia
What?

Lithos
What the fuck? Yeah.

Leraje
Ligeia and I were talking about that and um we sort of both agreed that the second half of the book is an easier read than the first half of the book.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
As soon as Ore comes in, who turns out to be Miranda's, who becomes Miranda's um girlfriend at college, that was, I read through that really quickly. Her voice was quite easy to read. And again, that's a good thing because, like, as we know from a previous author, when you switch first-person voices between people, different first-person voices, which she did do this time.

Leraje
Hi John.

Lithos
Yes. And so Ore's, uh apologies for mispronunciation, the name is spelled O-R-E. Um Her first-person voice was quite easy to follow so that and curiously uh part of the book definitely went quicker. But I think it was also partly because by that point, I had kind of like formulated some of the narrative in my head after rereading first parts of the first sort of half uh of the book.

I'll let someone else talk. I'll shut the fuck up now.

Ligeia
No, no, no, it's interesting. It's interesting. I'm happy somebody else struggled with the first half, not struggle in a bad way, but I really had to focus on that and was rereading a lot.

Pike
Yeah. It's, it was a little bit, I struggled with that change of perspective in the first half. Once I learned to expect it, I was like, okay, so are you the brother or are you the house? But in the beginning, it was like, oh shit, just rewind.

Leraje
I think that was deliberate. I think it was meant to be disOreentating. You're supposed to feel, I think, you were supposed to feel that being in that house was disOreentating in uh and of itself. And that was possibly a narra- try that word again. And possibly that was uh a narrative device to try and achieve that, maybe.

Lithos
M I mean-

Pike
But also, wasn't it a bit annoying?

Lithos
Oh yeah, I did. Yeah, I did.

Leraje
Really?

Lithos

Some of the things—

Ligeia

Did you enjoy it? I was enjoying it. I think that's how my brain looks. So just—

Lithos

Yeah, not mine.

Ligeia

Where do we start?

Lithos

I mean, she makes it quite clear, right? Right from the word go. Because when you start, right, there's some very short paragraphs, each from a different point of view. So it's like, here are all the characters and you're at the end of the story effectively. So the book begins where Miranda has disappeared.

And but when I got to the end of the book, I reread the very first few pages and it made more sense because it was like, ah, because when I read the first few pages, I thought, oh, fuck, I hope it's not all going to be like this. Because I'm really going to struggle because it was kind of like, here's one person um and then here's another.

And it's like, what? And now number 29. What the fuck is going on here?

Ligeia

Yes.

Pike

Number 29 is the house, which is actually a real address in Kent. M I wonder how the person who lives there feels about it being m the racist house.

Lithos

Well, you know, it's Dover. Chances are they're a fucking Reform voter.

Ligeia

Yes.

Pike

They love it. They're like, oh, they represented my house perfectly.

Ligeia

Yes.

Lithos

I live in a racist house. I vote for a racist guy.

Leraje

What do we think about um Miranda's pica and how that was handled?

Pike

pica. I also always said pica and it confused me. Is it pica? It says in the book it's pica. And then I looked it up in 2 different dictionaries. It is pica.

Lithos

All right. Okay. Well, that's something I've learned. Thank you.

Leraje

Yeah, me too.

Pike

Yeah, I had pica as a kid and I ate chalk and then graphite and then whole pencils, but it wasn't as bad as it's described in the book. Okay, I, I don't anymore. Eating pencils is the worst. It's, it's really bad. But, you know, in

the book she, uh she clearly has a very serious case because it's— she's anorexic as well.

She wants eat. She won't eat food.

Lithos

Yeah, full stop. Won't eat actual food, but will eat weird stuff you're not supposed to eat. Yeah.

Leraje

White chalk.

Ligeia

White chalk.

Lithos

Yeah, of course.

Ligeia

Because everything is white.

Leraje

Yeah. White is for witching. Um And also the house thinks white equals purity and—

Pike

White is right.

Ligeia

And also she's very pale. She eats chalk. They're in the Dover Cliffs. Then you have the Silver family, which is also— silver can be white, right? And so this whole thing is the racial purity, which says my notes.

Pike

Yeah, that is very good. I didn't pick up on the silver thing.

Leraje

No, I didn't either.

Ligeia

That's how I saw it. You know, it would be so silly to call them white.

Lithos

When did you first realise that the house was racist?

Leraje

I think it was when Anna, when we were here in the house talking about Anna, and there was that bit when she said Anna had played Britannia in a school play when she was a child or something like that.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

And how much she'd enjoyed being this representation of England and Britain and this kind of like...

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

And I thought, yeah, okay, that's where we're going. uh Yeah.

Lithos

I don't even, do you know what? I don't even remember that bit. This is the, The problem with the convoluted storyline is like you're mentioning things, I'm going, did that happen?

Ligeia
Did I—

Pike
I don't remember that bit.

Ligeia
Yeah, it is hard to follow and go back. But I remember that. Might be the first moment. I don't remember when I realised I—

Pike
I just want to say about the pica, I thought the um eating disorder stuff was actually quite a strong part of the book. I won't say I enjoyed it, but it felt real.

Ligeia
It felt real. And it felt like she was actually eating her own environment because the house was trying to consume her, to keep her, not to kill her, just to consume her, to consume her. And she was consuming, you know, the house, the walls.

Lithos
She was literally also in a way consuming Ore. Um Because Ore lost a lot of weight and didn't eat properly by the time she went back home. Um So it was almost like she was kind of sapping the energy. And there was one bit I remember where they're in bed together and she kind of almost imagines eating Ore.

Yeah.

Pike
Oh yeah.

Lithos
So, you know, it's sort of whether it's energy sapping or whatever. So through, you know, her being a representative of house was also kind of like almost turning her girlfriend anorexic.

Pike
And her brother as well. Do you remember towards the end, she— when she last sees her brother, she has a sort of idea or fantasy of um eating her brother as well.

Leraje
Mhm.

Ligeia
The whole relationship with her brother is kind of fucked.

Leraje
Fucking weird. Again, going back to the pica bit. Pica, sorry, fuck.

Lithos
Pica.

Leraje
That's in my head now, pica. Is there an argument that the author is saying that racism destroys the future? Because if Miranda is eating white chalk because the house thinks that symbolises racial purity, it's literally making her ill. Her racism is making her ill.

Ligeia

So the point is like, you think it's saying like racism is going to destroy the whole future.

Leraje

It's a destructive force.

Ligeia

Yeah, absolutely. Yes, I agree.

Pike

m Yeah, I agree with that as well. Mhm And I saw it in the way I thought the main idea was that racism also is something that can carry over time. It's passed down in family.

Leraje

Generational. Yeah.

Pike

Yeah. Because it starts off with a grandmother. Um She's not necessarily inherently racist. She starts off just having all this patriotic guff, which was popular at the time, I guess. But then her husband is killed in the war.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pike

And she has all those negative feelings about the people who killed her husband. That's how it starts.

Ligeia

The house is almost like the mother, you know, giving birth. That's what I thought. It's like, it's like, um the house becoming a mother who doesn't want her child to have a future, just ah to be kept in the family no matter what, no matter how you suffer. Just, you need to be a continuation of the family line.

Leraje

um Keep passing that trauma down through generations.

Ligeia

Yeah, I guess like many people, this is, this is not a made-up thing. Many people have to, you know, say bye to a toxic chain of family.

Lithos

Yeah.

Ligeia

Specifically when you feel like it is holding you responsible for the whole family and the past family and the future family, and it is keeping you from being anything else, just a little tiny chain. What is it called? Um The one ring in the chain. You know what I mean? Like, you are nothing, nothing more than that.

And if you Yeah. You are not allowed to be yourself, like separate, separate, separate being, and your future doesn't matter.

Leraje

Because there was that bit when, um, Miranda and Ore uh are sort of like together and their relationship is on the cusp of becoming something bigger, and uh Miranda goes through this process of wishing that she could not be in the house and that the house— she was free of the house. And she was free to pursue a proper relationship with Ore.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

So I think that's what— um that sounds very much like what you're talking about. Instead of just being, you know, the next link in the chain of this kind of like generational crap, she wanted to break free of that.

Ligeia

Yeah. Like all these mother figures have been in this family, so you just continue, shut up and dance, whatever situation That is, for me, that was the horror of the story, the loss of the identity of a person.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

This is exactly— are we going to the ending now? Maybe not. But the question of the story was not like, where is Miranda? The question for me in the whole story is, is there a Miranda to be still found, left somewhere? Is there anything we don't know?

Leraje

Yeah, I mean, that's right, because there was this constant kind of like hinting and alluding to the fact that Miranda and Lily were similar, uh interchangeable, maybe.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

So, um yeah, I think you're right. There's that loss of— m not even loss of identity, but this kind of like subsuming of someone's personality into the personality of other people.

Ligeia

Mm-hmm.

Leraje

Mhm He's, uh, and Eliot, we talked about him. Eliot did that a lot with Miranda, Miri, as he called her.

Ligeia

Yeah. And also it's this, you know, the racial, the skin, the wearing of skin is exactly, as I understand it, is, is also like just putting on the identities of other people, the roles you, you have to put on yourself, and then you don't even know Which skin is actually mine?

Pike

m I think I know exactly what you mean. Yeah, the character of Miranda is sort of— it's part of that trinity of women, and it almost doesn't matter that some of them are like the bad uh women, you know, the great-grandmother and the grandmother, and the mother is sort of the good one.

But it ultimately doesn't matter because none of them— no one there has a strong enough identity to stand, to be herself.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

Mm-hmm.

Pike

They're just a clump of hags.

Leraje

Yeah. Every— I think all the characters, all the kind of like the living and the dead characters, maybe apart from Lily, wanted Miranda to be something else other than what she was, sometimes with the best of intentions. Her dad Luke wanted her to be well, And be someone else, i.e., not someone with pica, not someone with um other mental health issues.

And that's possibly okay. The relationship with her twin brother Eliot was bordering on incestuous to me.

Lithos

Yeah, there were definitely hints of that.

Pike

It's okay in Dover.

Ligeia

I thought it's like, incest adjacent. Like, she didn't openly state that. She didn't state that. Sorry. I think I made a note, like, it's a horror. Like, the whole story is the horror of relationships, right? And with Eliot, with the brother, I thought he actually loved her and wanted her to be— he loved the living Miranda, the real Miranda, whatever that was.

I don't even know. And he wanted her to survive. And he was sort of like this Gothic other, the double. He was serving as this Gothic double, right?

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Exactly. They are twins. So he was just there too. So I think that incest is coming from there. Like, it doesn't really matter to me if that was true, because I think he was mostly used as a Tool to be a double, to show us the opposite somehow.

Leraje

So maybe not even incestuous, maybe more masturbatory to sort of like—

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pike

So this was not just a representation of um depraved uh yuppie life, bohemian lifestyle then?

Ligeia

I don't think so. But maybe I'm, you know, maybe I'm seeing things that were not put there. I don't know. This is how I—

Pike

No, I'm just kidding

Ligeia

Okay, I didn't get that.

Pike

It was, it was just very, um, the whole—

Ligeia

I'm sorry. Attack number 1. She's gone, she's under the desk again.

Leraje

She's gone. This is like our Ligotti episode.

Ligeia

I did not hit my desk this time, okay? Come on, come on, I can do it.

Pike

The whole— I thought the whole— the part for, for me, the weakest thing about the story that everything was shown through this very, very flat middle-class lens. Uh Even when you have like working-class characters, it felt like reading a Guardian article a uh lot of the time.

Ligeia

That is true.

Lithos

That is true.

Leraje

That is true.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

Because I didn't even realise until it was explicitly mentioned that Ore's parents were Um, one was a cab driver and the other— what was mom doing? She was doing something.

Pike

She was a dinner lady.

Lithos

That's it.

Leraje

That's right.

Lithos

So because the assumption was from the way it was written again that she, you know, she'd been fostered and then adopted by 2 white parents and that they were going to be middle class in the same way as everything else was. Um, and it was kind of like when I read that, I thought, oh, Right, okay, we've got some working-class people in here then.

Yes.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

That was presented in a— I remember there was that bit when Ore was talking about uh how people eat their tea or their dinner, whatever you want to. And they were like, oh, in our house, we would just put cushions on our knees while we were watching the telly and eat our tea, which is a very working-class thing.

But it's like a very, It's what the middle class think the working class do rather um than what they might actually do.

Lithos

Because they watch the Royal Family. Royal as in R-O-Y-A-L-E, not the royal. Incidentally, did everyone laugh at the same point in the book? There was one sentence that I did actually laugh at.

Ligeia

Oh, you have to remind me of it now?

Lithos

Which was when Miranda said, and I'd have gotten rid of Ligeia with holy water.
Oh my goodness.

Ligeia

Yes. Yes.

Leraje

You did laugh because you sent me a screenshot of it.

Ligeia

Yes. I'm like, what did you choose this book to show me that I should go? Or what did you do? Was your choice, Leraje. So I was like, is this a secret message for me?

Leraje

It was not. I promise.

Ligeia

Get rid of you, woman.

Leraje

That was funny.

Pike

I thought, where did you find a funny sentence in this book?

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

Funny to us, but.

Ligeia

ah Yes. Yes. Not to me, m by the way. Like, take your holy water. Well, actually, I don't care.

Leraje

That whole thing that— sorry, I'm going back. The incest question, it came up because Eliot uh went to his then-girlfriend Emma's house and she asked him to cut her hair. And that happened and he said no and everything. And then it just suddenly went into this, like, paragraph of talking about what people think being a twin is like, and how everybody thinks it's incestuous, and how everybody assumes that they could— and I was thinking, where the fuck did that come from, Eliot?

I mean, that just, like, came completely out of the blue.

Ligeia

That is true.

Pike

I never thought that about twins.

Leraje

No, I don't think I did, but I couldn't um make up my mind whether it was something that The author was putting in to make a general point, or make— or she was making Eliot think it because that's the way his thoughts were running anyway.

Ligeia

That's what, um that's what sounds might be true.

Leraje

But he also, uh, Eliot also towards the end of that paragraph also mentioned that idea that you mentioned, Ligeia, that idea of twins being literally the same person.

Ligeia

It— um I'm not saying this is in real life true, but it is being used in all sorts of Gothic-style literature as a tool to, you know, yeah, it is called The Double or The Mirror or something.

Leraje

This is a very Gothic book.

Lithos

Yeah. Isn't almost the good lady and the Soucouyant ah like that as well in the supernatural realm, like twin characters?

Ligeia

Yes.

Lithos

Um, one being, you know, the white people's house and the other one being sort of, um, the black sort of evil character who steals people's souls.

Pike

And drinks blood.

Ligeia

Drinks blood. Oh, no.

Leraje

Oh, no.

Ligeia

Oh, no.

Pike

Blood. I love a a fairy tale hag.

Lithos

Yeah.

Pike

I thought in general, though, they name-dropped a lot of really good um fairy tales. And my favourite parts of the book were the ones that seemed very inspired by fairy tales. Remember the part with Sade and uh the kettle?

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pike

It was just, I don't know, maybe a couple paragraphs or a short piece, but I thought, oh, this is This is really nice.

Ligeia

So what happened with the kettle?

Lithos

Yeah, I'm trying to remember that.

Pike

She sort of got— I think she got uh the electricity.

Lithos

Oh, yes.

Pike
She got zapped.

Leraje
Yeah.

Lithos
I thought the— when I read that, I thought, right, the house has killed uh her, because that's the impression I got from that.

Pike
Because that's what the house said. Said, oh, no more Sade.

Lithos
Yeah. But obviously didn't kill her.

Pike
What did you, those of you who read Poe, what did you make of Miranda's opinion of Poe?

Leraje
Outrageous.

Ligeia
Yes. Yes. I was ready to close the book. First of all, they wanted to get rid of Ligeia. I'm like, how dare you? What do you mean? And like, that was in the middle of talking about my Edgar. I mean, what do you— no, no. But I finished the book and I still hate what they were— no.

What did you think, Pike?

Pike
Well, I never read— I read all the other um fairy tale authors we mentioned except for Fanu. I haven't read his stuff either.

Ligeia
Well, this is unacceptable.

Lithos
I have only read a couple of short stories of that. and uh mainly seen Poe adaptations mhm um or come across them through sort of musical references or whatever. And there's plenty of adaptations of it. But I also have not really read— I wouldn't say I've read Poe.

Ligeia
Is it because you didn't like what you read or—

Lithos
No, it's because I'm lazy.

Leraje
Mhm.

Lithos
It's like I've watched I've watched the movie adaptation or I've listened to this song about whatever. Um No, I didn't. I like his stories basically, and I like the idea of them and I'm familiar with the stories, but I haven't actually sat down and read the stories because they have been referenced so often.

Ligeia
Yes. So basically it's time to do something about this. I'm making a note.

Lithos
You can always—

Leraje
I'm making a note! To hell with them! Short story collection.

Pike
Oh no, we're getting homework.

Lithos
Oh yeah.

Pike
I've read The House of Usher by Bradbury, which is, I understand, based on something.

Leraje
Fall of the House of Usher.

Ligeia
Yes, yes.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Yes, it's a short story.

Leraje
Yeah, but it's weird because that was Miranda's opinion about Poe. But the book itself does contain some fairly Poe-like elements to it, the kind of doomed romance and, um, the dead returning to plague the lives of the living and that kind of thing, which are very Poe things. I don't think it's something that Helen Oyeyemi thinks herself.

I think it's just something she wanted.

Pike
Is she drinking the blood of Poe?

Leraje
It was Miranda.

Pike
Not the author.

Leraje
Well, maybe, yeah. But I think that there might also have been a reason why Miranda didn't like Poe.

Ligeia
That's what I'm thinking. And I can't really, do you know? Do you have a theory?

Leraje
I don't know, but I think it was a comment on, I mean, a lot of Poe's stuff is kind of like romantic Gothic-ish type stuff. And I think Miranda was, it was by rejecting that style, on that directly, Poe himself. Miranda was maybe rejecting the idea of romance or relationships in general.

Pike
She—

Leraje

there was, there was a— all through the book there was this thing of Miranda rejecting relationships. Um, a lot of those were based on food. I mean, food in the book is used— made food, constructed food, i.e., food that's been prepared and cooked was a symbol, for me anyway, I saw it like this, as a symbol of family, relationships, love.

And she, her rejection of that was coupled with the rejection of, and that's why she didn't like authors like Poe who put an emphasis on romance in their dark fiction.

Pike

Oh, not to ruin your beautiful theory, but she does say why she doesn't like Poe in the book. She says that his books are filled with longing uh for the suffering of women.

Leraje

That's not exactly— I mean, that's a better way of putting what I meant, basically.

Pike

Oh, okay. So you took that into account.

Leraje

Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think that was part of it. I think uh Miranda wanted to reject the possibility of suffering And she saw uh relationships as a form of suffering.

Pike

See, I thought she was calling him a misogynist.

Leraje

She could well have been calling him a misogynist as well. That could well have been an equal message, but I don't think he was.

Ligeia

I don't think he was.

Lithos

Yeah, I've found a passage. Yes, he's awful. He was obviously, what's the term, disappointed in love at some point. He probably never smiled again. The pages are just bursting with his longing for women to suffer. If he ever met me, he'd probably punch me on the nose.

Ligeia

I would punch her.

Lithos

That's her opinion of— well.

Ligeia

What the fuck? I'll punch her immediately saying these words because obviously he was in love and he was hurt. Okay, this is not about Poe, by the way, but uh no. I mean, have you ever been in real love?

Lithos

Well, uh she obviously hadn't by that point.

Ligeia

Now, yeah, because, yeah, maybe people who haven't been in real love, never loved truly, don't understand that, but I do. So.

Lithos

And I don't think she wasn't with Ore either, because uh the impression I got was Ore was kind of much more drawn towards Miranda. Whereas Miranda was kind of like using her.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
Yeah, and I think that ties, I mean, not to fucking just keep harping on about it, but that whole thing about this rejection of all relationships and all things that reminded her of relationships. Uh You know, her opinion of Poe directly stated in the book is not dissimilar from what I thought she was really saying.

But I don't think anything that Miranda actually said can really be taken at face value at any point through the, through the book. She's not a narrator, but she's unreliable for sure.

Ligeia
Maybe, maybe we never know which Miranda was the real—

Leraje
That too.

Ligeia
Original Miranda. And maybe this was like injected in her by the toxic line of people before her and that were like occupying her body. Because there were parts where I couldn't really decipher who was actually thinking or speaking in her name.

Pike
Mm.

Ligeia
And maybe a real loving, true relationship would have taken her away from the house. So she was thinking all these things and hating Poe. who was in love, who loved with his tiny heart. And she was like, no relationships, no po, no love, because I'm staying in this house and eating these walls because this is better for me than to love.

Leraje
Yeah, uh I do think that rejection of relationships, of love itself, the idea of love was caught up with exactly like uh that. The house, the kind of like generational, um the mother, the grandmother, the great-grandmother. These were the figures that were largest in her, even if she didn't quite know it at the time.

These were the figures that were influencing all of her choices and all the things she was able to do.

Ligeia
Yeah, maybe that was connected to that.

Leraje
Yeah, there was that bit when, because there's Kosovan refugee, are they refugees or immigrants?

Lithos
I can't remember. Yes, yeah, there would've been, At the time, because it's set in, I mean, uh it was published in 2009, but I think it might be set a few years before that.

Leraje
Yeah.

Lithos
I just got that impression.

Leraje
But there was that bit when somebody attacked, um and sorry if I pronounce the guy's name wrong, Agim, I'm not sure how to pronounce it.

Pike
Choose one and stick with it with conviction.

Leraje
Hey, look, if I can say Celeste or Cecile, each time I do, I can say it.

Ligeia
It's fine.

Pike
Um Well, no, don't call him Celeste.

Leraje
So, yeah, Celeste was attacked. Yeah. But he— the guy was attacked by by somebody who apparently looked an awful lot like Miranda. M But then when he was shown a photograph of Miranda, he said, no, that's not her.

Ligeia
That's not her.

Leraje
Yeah.

Pike
That's her Soucouyant side.

Leraje
Right. So there's this constant thing of all these, the past generations of her uh grandmother, great-grandmother, constantly sort of like, like Jay said earlier, who is the real Amanda? Which uh Who is the real Miranda? Sorry, this is a competition to see how many names I get wrong in one episode. What are we up to now, 10?

Ligeia
Fucking hell.

Lithos
I'm gonna show up. There's also the mention that, um, um I think more than once, that people looking at her photo, um, or photos of her when she was even a little bit younger and not recognising her at all. And that she completely looked different. So that would fit in with also with maybe she attacked Agim.

Leraje
That was unresolved, that question as well. It never got a definitive answer about who it was who actually attacked this boy.

Lithos
No.

Pike
And then was he the one, the same one who drank bleach and died?

Lithos
M Yeah.

Pike

There was a very odd moment there where um Ore is talking to, um, Agim's sister, and she is— sister's crying and telling her through tears, you know, like, this summer my cousin, you know, committed suicide by drinking bleach after something horrible that happened to him. And uh Ahri says, I'm sorry your summer was like that.

Lithos
Mm, yeah.

Pike
I don't know, to my, to my ear it sounded like, quite a weirdly insensitive way to respond.

Leraje
It's a very underwhelming response.

Ligeia
I'm sorry you had an unpleasant day.

Pike
Yeah, yeah, precisely.

Leraje
Yeah. There was a bit in this that struck me as very strange. I mean, it's a strange novel anyway, but the mannequin, the, um the mannequin attack on Sade.

Pike
Oh yeah.

Lithos
Why?

Leraje
The house was doing perfectly well attacking people, possessing them, causing them pain, causing them misery, controlling them. Why was there a mannequin all of a sudden?

Pike
That was the house.

Leraje
Yeah, but why does it need that mannequin when it was doing all this stuff anyway?

Ligeia
Do you have a theory? You want—

Leraje
No.

Ligeia
You don't?

Leraje
But it seems quite— I mean, we've talked about mannequins quite a lot in the Ligotti episode, so...

Ligeia
I think—

Leraje
I'd like to hear your idea.

Ligeia

I think it was, I mean, it serves many, many um tiny things in any Gothic novel, any Gothic story. It's a vessel. It's an imitation of life without the actual life. It's a, you know, separate identity. It's a vessel for that. It can be the female vessel in this case. It is um a symbol of passivity and control.

But for me, in this case, um I think it was a representation of all the silver women.

Leraje
Ah.

Ligeia
A mannequin, like a concentration of all that toxic ballast, whatever that was. from past, the women line, as a personification of that. Because obviously we have the house, but uh to use a mannequin is more, you know, it's more human-like, but also it shows you the difference between human and being a puppet, being a mannequin.

Am I making any sense?

Pike
No, it m makes good sense.

Ligeia
That is my theory. I don't know.

Lithos
She got that mannequin, Miri, sorry, uh got that mannequin when she went shopping with Sade, didn't she?

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Yes.

Lithos
And that was a mannequin that then ended up feeding Sade a poisoned apple. The mannequin was kind of, I just saw it as something that was brought in to just do the house's bidding, like the physical bidding, as in, If you need to move things around or need to sort of go up and feed some poison to someone, this is what it does.

Leraje
So if I'm understanding what you're both saying, the house is one entity and the mannequin is kind of like this concentration of all of the relationships of the 3.

Ligeia
Well, it's easier to put the action into the hands of a mannequin than to, I don't know, I think. M I'm not really sure how it's— is it separated? Is it the same thing? Is it like—

Pike
Or is it symbolic of the way the house toys with m everyone?

Lithos
Yeah, I just saw it as a kind of avatar kind of thing that was doing the houses. It's kind of completely without anything. It's just like the house is operating it to do its stuff.

Ligeia
It's an empty vessel, like a mannequin is, you know, whatever you want to put on it or m make it look like something, you just put stuff on it and it changes a

little bit. You know, it's just an empty— you don't look happy with these explanations, Leraje.

Leraje

No, I think you're all right. I think what you've said is true. I'm just— I don't know why, but it's kind of like, I mean, m The house was doing— if we assume that it was the house that possessed Miranda, who then went on to attack Agim, Mm-hmm. Mhm I don't understand why that was— why is it necessary to have a mannequin at all, if the house is capable of manifesting itself through the actions of another person?

Maybe it didn't— maybe I'm just reading too much into it, and it was—

Pike

I really liked it there uh because I thought that was just another way to, you know, to show first that the house is toying with all these people, but also, you know, that it's got this— the nature of the house, it's vicious, and it's— but in a playful way as well.

Leraje

It was really well written. That bit was fucking terrifying.

Ligeia

I think it's also different for Miranda. Uh to have this experience with the mannequin than to— I don't think how— uh I don't know how aware she was of the house doing these things to her, but she had this physical, whatever that was, encounter with the mannequin, right?

Leraje

Yeah, that's true.

Ligeia

So maybe, maybe she was a little bit further downhill with her mental state and like her identity was dissolving so badly that she was actually now seeing a sort of humanoid, a mannequin.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Ligeia

I don't know.

Lithos

I felt there were, there were some loose ends in the book. I didn't, I didn't know why they were there. One of them being the character of Tijana, who threatens Miri and then ends up at university with Miri. And she's the one whose cousin, cousin, I assume, was assaulted by apparently Miri. And she appears and then she seems to be important, but then she disappears for loads of pages and then she reappears.

Ligeia

Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

Lithos

And then she disappears. And it's like, I got this feeling she is, she's presented as someone who uh has import in this story, but is then just tossed aside. Like, you know, well, okay, you're not relevant anymore. And that kind of jarred with me. I was like, well, why was she in there?

Leraje

mhm Yeah. Okay. Is there anything else we want to talk about?

Lithos

Luc's Pastries.

Leraje
Luc's Pastries.

Lithos
Again, I mean, come on. This, this again, this was, this was a bit of corn in there. Luc Dufresne, who was, who's kind of like French and is a pastry chef. And you're going, come on, the French don't spend all day scoffing croissants and pain au chocolat.

Leraje
That's true.

Lithos
But um they did sound very tasty. And that was his, his fatherly way of trying to, you know, help his daughter's mental state was, have some pastries.

Leraje
Yeah. I think it was just incomprehensible to him that someone wouldn't want to eat them. Yeah.

Lithos
Yeah, exactly. It's like, I'm going to heal you with my fantastic food, which never worked.

Leraje
Well, that's why I felt that sort of like prepared food was like a representation of relationships and love, Because m apart from the apple pie at the end, obviously, all the other food that was prepared was kind of light and was an attempt to get Miri better.

Lithos
mhm Yeah, but of course, you know, en France, l'amour, c'est la cuisine.

Ligeia
Oui, oui, Baguette.

Pike
Why was the apple pie not a representation of love.

Leraje
um Because it was made using the apples that the house had collected and prepared for. And then was it Eliot who made m the pie?

Ligeia
Yes.

Lithos
Yeah.

Pike
But he definitely had these positive intentions. I mean, even though he didn't know that the apples were—

Lithos
There was a distinct Snow White thing in there with the apple that's bright red on one side and white on the other, and the white side is poisonous. And it's like, hang on a minute, that's Snow White, isn't it?

Pike
But he doesn't know it's poisonous because it's poisonous in a weird supernatural um way that's controlled by the house. I don't know. I thought he was because he said, oh, I made this. I thought I wanted to make— I made this. I made something for you. And then he gives it to her on the saucer.

I thought it was Quite caring. And she chucks the saucer in the bin um and wants to drink his blood and then disappears.

Leraje

m Yeah, uh I think the preparation of the food is an act of love.

Pike

But the food itself?

Leraje

But the food itself, in this particular instance, because it was made using those particular apples, was—

Lithos

And did not contain chalk.

Leraje

And had no chalk in it, yeah.

Pike

But there was white. There was white.

Lithos

Yeah, white.

Leraje

White apples. Yeah. All right, uh, are we ready to pitchfuck?

Ligeia

Always.

Leraje

Okay, uh, Ligeia, what would you rate this?

Ligeia

I'm the first one. Ah, 8 for me.

Leraje

Okay, Pike?

Pike

I have not thought about the ratings, but I will say 6.5, maybe.

Leraje

6.5, Huh okay. Lithos?

Lithos

I, uh, excuse me, sorry, cut that bit out. I've got a bit—

Leraje

No way.

Lithos

I've got a bit— ironically, I had a bit of apple earlier.

Leraje

Please God, it was the red side.

Lithos

Yeah, so, um, I, I would give it I shouldn't really feel bad about this because the author has won awards and is highly praised, but I'd have to give it a 7 because I found it too confusing and disjointed in parts, whereas some parts were fucking excellent. There was too much disjointed stuff.

It was— she did not make it easy for me as a reader uh to follow the story. And again, there were these characters in there that were, you know, the loose ends.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
That was like, why were they in there? So 7.

Pike
7 is a high rating. I don't know why you would feel bad. I gave it 6.5. I mean, you know, it's not true. I thought you would give it like a 4 or something.

Ligeia
Yeah, I was expecting like—

Lithos
Yeah, on that consideration, I'm downgrading mine to 6.5 as well.

Ligeia
Why did you do that?

Lithos
No, because the good bits were really fucking good, you know, when the second half started and it picked up. And I really read that very quickly. And there were, the good bits were so good that they more m than made up for the bits where I went, oh, for fuck's sake.

Leraje
Mm-hmm.

Lithos
You know, the stylistic things with uh the sort of like one word appearing in the middle of nowhere and joining one person to another and 2 different sentences. And I just thought that was artifice and it was unnecessary. You know, um personally, I don't like that kind of thing. I'm going, yeah, you've just done that.

Pike
You didn't think of James Joyce?

Lithos
Oh, fuck James Joyce. I've never read Ulysses and I never fucking will. Life's too fucking short. Give me a story I can fucking read. Sorry.

Leraje
Okay, well, like Ligeia, I would give it an 8 as well because there were some beautiful writing in it, which I really, really very much enjoyed. I did struggle a bit at first with uh the way it was structured, but after it happened maybe 2 or 3 times, I realised just to fucking just let it happen and you'll figure out at some point what's going on.

Lithos
Yeah.

Leraje
Which it did most of the time. Yeah, there was a couple of— the thing you mentioned, Lithos, about the uh some of the characters sort of like just sort of falling off the face of the earth, apparently. But overall, I thought it was pretty good.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos

I'm glad I read it. I mean, in the end, I'm glad I read it. You know, I'm glad I stuck with it, even though it was hard work to start with. I don't regret for a minute having read it. And, you know, so I think it is a good book.

Pike

Yeah. If it was a bad book, they wouldn't have based Get Out on it.

Leraje

Yeah. Okay, so that's our take on uh White's For Witching. Uh, who is— Lithos, is it your—

Lithos

Yeah, it is.

Leraje

It is your pick next. Yeah. Okay, what we're reading next?

Lithos

uh What we're reading next is The Haar. That's uh H-A-A-R by David Södergren. Um, a Scottish horror tale by Scottish author. which I'm very much looking forward to.

Ligeia

Yay!

Pike

I feel like based on the back cover, we should— you should say a couple of sentences about the book, and every couple of sentences we should say, the harrrrr, you know, like when they present uh old films, because that's what they did on the back cover.

Lithos

I've already done mispronunciations. I'm not going to try and do Scottish, the harrrrr, you know.

Leraje

Okay, so that'll be next time. Um Uh, I've been— uh who the fuck am I again? Oh yeah, I think they said Lithos and then Ligeia. But actually, my name is Ligeia. Hail Satan. Pike?

Pike

Cecile. Your name is Cecile.

Ligeia

Fuck.

Pike

And hail Satan to that.

Leraje

Lithos.

Lithos

Gloire au soucouillon.

Ligeia

Oh, good.

Leraje

Ligeia.

Ligeia

Ah Hail Edgar Allan Poe.

Leraje
Excellent.

[Outro music]