

The Devil's Library Episode 6 – "Carrion Crow"

Ligeia

Hello everybody. This is Ligeia. Hail Satan. Welcome to the Devil's library again. Or if you are new, just welcome. Hopefully you will stay with us tonight. I am here with three of my great friends. Welcome Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan.

Ligeia

Welcome Lithos.

Lithos

Hail Satan.

Ligeia

And welcome Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan.

Ligeia

Are you guys up for, for a challenge?

Leraje

Yeah. Got my sick bags ready to go.

Ligeia

Okay. And you listeners, uh, are you up for a challenge? Because this is a big one. I think it was my choice. So tonight we will be peeking into an attic space. This space is thick with dust and rotten stuff and shattered hopes and decay. We are going to be talking about a book that's called Carrion Crow and was written by Heather Parry.

This was a first read for all of us. So we will be talking about really fresh opinions that we have after the first read just to, just to set the mood a little bit. So I mentioned the attic and the dust and you know, the rotten decaying space we will be in. This book is deeply triggering in many, many fields.

So please be warned. But I'm hoping because you are here with us, you are a brave, uh, brave listener, reader, brave person. So please don't put this book away just because we will mention few things. It's a great book. It's claustrophobic, it's deeply gothic gothic fever dream of confinement and metamorphosis where a female body is discussed in a, uh, detail in a way that you might not be expecting.

So please be warned. But also we invite you to, to join us and actually read this book. Because whatever we will say, there will be spoilers. But whatever we say, you know, it's not the same as reading it. So please read it. It's morbidly beautiful. Okay, are ah, we ready?

Lithos

Absolutely. And if you haven't read it by the way, just click stop on the podcast. Go read it, Come back to the podcast. Yeah, maybe do that because there will be spoilers.

Ligeia

Yeah, it's impossible. Again, maybe for some people it's possible to do that. Not for us. We even, even, even if we wanted to, it's not possible.

Pike

So do we go straight into phlegm discs?

Lithos

Chewy phlegm discs. Oh dear. Oh, shitting needles. Yes, we. Yeah, yes, yes people. That, that happens.

Pike

No, that's just Lithos was talking about his hobbies.

Ligeia

Yeah. First time activities. It's actually a simple plot. It opens in late Victorian London, Chelsea. Uh, there is a beautiful big house where a family lives. Right. Do you remember the name?

Pike

Chenrell?

Ligeia

No, the, the family Perigord. Yes. So it's a very noble name. Right. The family, they have noble ancestors. Right. This is this, like, old class.

Leraje

Well, the mum of the main character marries into the Perigord family, doesn't she?

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lithos

So you've got the Perigord family, who are, um, old French aristocracy who fled France with their money for obvious reasons. Um, I don't know which particular of the many revolutions in France they were on at that point. And then, uh, she is from a. A family of nouveau riche. So a family where the father has made a lot of money, um, from the new industrial revolution by selling soap.

So they are regarded, even though they are incredibly rich, um, from this industry. They are looked down upon by the French nobility because, you know, they. They. They've earned their money and that's really bad. You know, it's much better to actually be born with money. That's what. That's what really, really, uh, really quality people do.

Ligeia

Yeah, it's the old money versus new money.

Leraje

It's a very classist book.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

In that. That continual emphasis between old money and the new money and the idea that even if you've got lots and lots of money, if it's new money, you can't buy your way into another class.

Ligeia

Yeah. You are constantly.

Pike

I'd say, class conscious book, maybe. I don't know if it's.

Leraje

What did I say?

Pike
Classist.

Lithos
Yeah, it represents. Yeah, you're right, it's class conscious. It represents very well the classism of the. Of the era.

Pike
What time do we think this is? It's. I don't think it's explicitly mentioned.

Lithos
Yes, there was. There was a mention of something. I remember looking it up and I. I think it must have been around the mid 18th. 1850. 1860. Around that time. I can't remember what it was. Um, there was a mention of something and I can't remember exactly what it was, but they kind of placed it around that time.

Pike
Oh, is it the pictures of Queen Victoria?

Lithos
Cannot remember.

Leraje
No. Lithos is right. There was something, um.

Lithos
I should have. I should have actually made a note of it. I don't think I did.

Leraje
Did they mention a war or a conflict or something?

Pike
There was colonial expansion into the Congo that could potentially date it.

Lithos
Oh, I think. I think it was actually looking up when Mrs. Beaton's book came out. Might have been.

Ligeia
Oh, I was checking. That book is. It's gigantic.

Leraje
Yeah, it's huge.

Pike
I don't think it was newly published, though, at the time of the book, because it was handed down from one person to the next.

Ligeia
Yeah, yeah. It was like, generational.

Pike
Yeah.

Lithos
So it might have been. Might m. Have been late late 18th. Late, sorry, 19th century. Late late 1800s.

Leraje
Definitely the second half of the 19th century, I would say.

Lithos

Yeah.

Ligeia

I have not noticed, like, a specific year mentioned, but maybe.

Leraje

She very carefully doesn't mention a specific year or even decade.

Lithos

She very interestingly doesn't mention several things. Like one of the main characters in the book is never named. And I'm talking about the. The prayapic, rich, degenerate prodigal son who.

Pike

Yeah.

Lithos

Uh, the main character's mother marries. He. He is referred to only as the husband. Um, which is probably just as well because he's a horrendous piece of, um. That. That house must have been covered in his jizz. Absolute, you know, mentions of him walking down breakfast in front of the staff, you know, wearing, uh, only his shirt and fully erect and having his breakfast.

And then I think at one point there's mention of him digging into a meal while he's wanking. He's absolutely.

Pike

She refers to it as interfering with himself. I haven't heard that expression.

Lithos

Yeah, it is very good, actually. That's a good point. That the use of language is very, very, very clever as well.

Ligeia

Yes.

Lithos

And it is kind of like language of the time. And there are deliberate words thrown in just for emphasis so that when Fok appears, or at one point Ian cunt appears, then it kind of like punches you because the rest is kind of language of that time.

Ligeia

Right. So maybe we should start somewhere because. Okay, we are now wanking. And there is an, uh, attic. But I don't know if people understand what this book is.

Pike

For the benefit of the, uh, listener, we are not wanking during this recording.

Lithos

No, we are. We are definitely not. We are definitely not.

Leraje

Okay, save that for breakfast time.

Lithos

So there's.

Ligeia

I'm showing my hands. Okay.

Lithos

Kind of three generations mentioned here, which is the main protagonist who is locked up in the attic by her mother to prepare her for marriage. Ostensibly,

that's what the mum says. I think it's just because mum has gone a bit insane. Ah. And also. Yes, we might get on to that later. But basically the story is the grandparents, her grandparents.

Basically, this industrialist who's made a mint out of, um, making soap. And then there's his mother, who he marries off to this French nobility. Um, basically to get himself more status in society. Um, he ends up selling soap to Queen Victoria, in fact.

Ligeia
Um.

Lithos
And, um. And so she is then thrust from growing up in fairly humble circumstances. To making a lot of money via her father's soap business. To um, having to adjust to this French nobility who look down on her with absolute disdain. And then the main character who's in the attic is her daughter who has two siblings.

Leraje
There was an interesting parallel that occurred to me. The industrialist father of Celeste's father, Celeste, I can't remember Cecile. He was described repeatedly as kind of like not want. He always wanted something open. He always, he want. He didn't want. He wanted a window open or the roof open or something. And there's Marguerite completely enclosed and locked in.

And I just thought that was a very interesting comparison between the two characters.

Lithos
He was one of those at the time. I think it was a thing clean air fanatics who believed that fresh m air would cure everything. So he actually has part of the roof and the entire wall on one side of his bedroom removed. So he permanently is. In fact the room is permanently damp.

Cold.

Leraje
Uh.

Lithos
And uh, yeah. And he thinks that's healthy.

Pike
I thought it was going to be mentioned again towards the end as Marguerite's attic becomes sort of falls apart. I think the whole of the. The roof is coming off.

Ligeia
Mhm.

Pike
But it's never mentioned again. And I thought that was quite good. It's left there for you to make that. That connection.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
Yes. We should say they're two different houses. The one with the.

Leraje
They ah.

Lithos

Are the, the. The. The room where the wall was removed. That's, that's the, the main character's childhood home.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Lithos

No, hang on, I'm getting confused here.

Leraje

It's Cecile.

Lithos

Cecile's. Yeah. Her mother's childhood home. That's right.

Leraje

Um, let's do a quick rundown of characters. So we got the industrialist father and mother. We've got Cecile who is the mother of the main character.

Lithos

Yes.

Leraje

Uh, there is a brother and a sister of the main character whose name I can't. Whose names I can't recall. And um, there is the main character. Marguerite.

Lithos

Yes, that's right.

Ligeia

Her names are ah, Louis and uh. Therese.

Leraje

That's right.

Ligeia

So Marguerite is the main character. She is the one that ends up in the attic because we don't know her age when this happens. But she's of age where she is deciding to marry her husband to be. Is not somebody that the family actually really wants because he's just this nobody. He's not very.

He's not actually wealthy or rich or anything. He has to work to pay for his living.

Lithos

Yes. He's an accountant or something.

Ligeia

Something like that. Yeah. Not really. Yeah, I can't remember. Basically we are told that this is probably the offence, why she ends up in the attic. Her mum puts her there and she tells her, okay, you will be kept here, uh, because you need to get ready for them the, the status of, of being a married woman.

A wife, A uh, person who is going to keep the, the home nice and tidy and you know, all this roles.

Leraje

And to that end she is given a copy of Mrs. Beaton's book on household management.

Ligeia

Right. So.

Lithos

Which was basically a Victorian kind of middle class and upper class family bible. It literally tells you everything. Cooking, looking after kids, how to deal with your staff. Because it is expected that you have staff if you've got that book.

Ligeia

That book really exists. It's a real book. You can find. Oh yeah, you can actually get it. You can, you can buy it.

Pike

I had it for a while.

Ligeia

Yeah. Yeah. Just. So it's based. Not based on this book, but it's a, it's a big part of the book. Because even though the chapters are like lines from the book, I loved that. I really love the detail. It doesn't really make sense until you realise, okay, these are actually quotes from the book.

It is so surreal. I absolutely loved what she did.

Leraje

I realised that pretty quickly. But uh, my immediate thought was, oh God, someone's gonna get plucked and stuffed and eaten here at some point. Especially as the novel went on.

Ligeia

Yeah, like the, the descriptions from the actual words from the book are little bit, you know, it's dated, it's not how people talk anymore. And also the, the author, Mrs. Beaton, was so young. I don't think she was married when she wrote this book or she didn't have kids or anything, but like she was able to put all this advice into this huge book and women were made to follow it.

Just, just like everybody had to follow this. And it was like a big advantage to have it and have the knowledge. So. So Marguerite was put there to learn everything from this book. She had very limited space. I think there was just one space where she could actually stand up and, and there was the.

I almost said washing machine, not washing machine. Okay. Sewing machine.

Lithos

Singer. Yes.

Ligeia

What she was supposed to like learn by herself how to use it to make use of everything she can do once she, she's married and her mother was bringing her food and you know, just. Oh. She was also bringing letters from this guy she was supposed to marry.

Leraje

So you said earlier, ligeia, that you thought maybe that Marguerite's crime was this um, impending. Or her decision to marry this guy.

Lithos

Because there's one character here we haven't mentioned.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

I wanted to get there because the other thing is not very clear at the beginning when she's already in the attic and we know about her marriage being in, like, in her plans and her hopes. She really wants to get married and be a, uh,

normal, you know, a wife and take care of this guy and, like, learn everything she can.

She's like, really, really trying. And later we learn that the reason might be. Also we learn the name Alouette. I hope I'm saying it right. Yeah, I love that. So, and this is, uh, M. I love this part of the book because this is actually Marguerite's lover. Alouette is a feminine name. So what do we.

What do we see here is like, maybe she was hidden, hidden in the attic because she was a little bit gay or bisexual or what not. And her dream was to be married, to keep that status and just like, have this, you know, formally stable home and normal marriage and then have her real love life with her.

Love Alouette.

Leraje

Uh, yeah, she wanted this kind of like, shield of normality in air quotes so that she could, uh, have her, like you say, her real life.

Ligeia

Because they were hiding. They were absolutely hiding. They were meeting and hiding in that room. And those were those moments of happiness. It's so lovely written. The. That relationship was really making me, like, happy for them. Also sad because they had to just hide.

Leraje

It did up to a point. But I was kind of like, on Alouette's side, to be honest. Just. Just go, yeah, yeah, who cares? You know, it doesn't really matter how much money you've got. Just go, yeah.

Lithos

And I think her mum, um, Cecile, um, Marguerite's mum, who knew something was up, uh, and I think this is part of the reason because she could sort of tell that her daughter was coming in late and smelt of tobacco and, you know, had obviously been out and that might have, ah, rung some alarm bells considering who her dad was, who in the end was disinherited by the Perigord family because he just spent all his time drinking and going to brothels and gambling, um, and fathered innumerable illegitimate children and that a daughter was starting to do that.

Or that's what she thought, but that possibly she didn't know. And in right at the end of the penultimate chapter, I think there's a giveaway line which is that Marguerite takes out Mrs. Beaton's book and falls open at a page and she reads a sentence. Let her prove herself then. The happy companion of a man.

And this is after she'd been with Alouette. And Alouette had said to her, you should just leave. Leave home, Move in with me where I can make enough money for the both of us, you know. And she doesn't know what to do. She goes home, she sees this, and that's when she decides to look for a man to marry.

Pike

A big theme in the book is, um, intergenerational trauma and the kind of curse that carries. How you can't quite escape the life of your parents. And I think that's where. That's what in the end, um, damns her because at that point she can just walk out. But her mother has instilled this fear of being poor into her.

So she thinks she absolutely has to maintain enough wealth to be happy.

Lithos

Yeah.

Leraje

She never really questions her own decision not to just leave with Alouette, does she? Marguerite? Mhm. There's always this kind of like. Or it seemed to me there was always this kind of like belief on her part that it was the right thing to do. To stick around, get married and then have a secret life.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
She, uh. In. In. In Marguerite's eyes, that was. That required no explanation. That was just the way it should be.

Ligeia
Yeah. She was not questioning it. This is how it was in all the families she knew. You know, like her mum got married. Uh, everybody was just marrying and being a housewife.

Pike
Yes. To the very end. She tries to fix the situation the exact same way her mother tried to fix her situation by just being this ideal woman, learning all the tips. Um, and then somehow her life would just fall into place and everything would work out.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
I think she could have it all. She could be rich and live with Alouette and M. No, live. What's the guy's name she was going to marry?

Ligeia
Lewis. Yeah.

Leraje
He seemed like a fairly decent guy.

Lithos
She just. I think. Yeah, I mean, she's. It's someone she met at the zoo, um, because she liked going to the zoo. And I think. And that's where she first met Alouette as well.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
And she. She was looking for someone specifically older who. Who wasn't going to be as forward, um, as. And as sort of sexually aggressive as younger men and who was fairly stable. And the idea was, yeah, he'd be out at work and then she could go and have fun with Alouette. And then she'd come home and be the dutiful Wife.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
And I think there's a lot in her of trying to live up to her mum Cecil's expectation to. Because I, I got the feeling that Cecile resented Marguerite because she was the firstborn. And once Marguerite was born, that is when Cecile's husband, the degenerate rich boy, lost interest and started going out drinking because, you know, you know, there's kids.

He can't just sort of like have fun, sexy time all the time whenever he wants. You know, he's, he's now got kids and that's when he started kind of going back to his heavy drinking. That potentially she had some resentment towards

Marguerite. And there's the scene where they're at the zoo and Marguerite's brother is leaning over by the uh, frog pond or something and falls in and has to be rescued.

And he falls in because no one was paying attention. But afterwards her mother goes back and says to her husband that Marguerite pushed him in, even though that's a blatant lie. So there is at that point already starting to be. Her mother has for some reason got it in for Marguerite.

Ligeia

Absolutely. Because she, the other two kids were allowed to live normal lives. I didn't understand the, the hate towards Marguerite. Maybe it's what you were saying. I don't, I don't really know.

Pike

I think she was projecting um, herself onto Marguerite. You know, where she, at some point she um, calls herself a, uh, natural. And then she starts calling M. Later in the book she starts calling Margarita natural. And she tries to make, I guess she wants Marguerite to succeed where she failed because she feels she's a failed woman because, well, her husband walked out and now uh, the money's gone and you know, her parents abandoned her.

So she tried to achieve all these things and all these people told her she was a failure. M. So when Marguerite cannot achieve these things, her mother becomes very, um, very upset.

Lithos

Oh yeah, yeah, that's a good point. Yeah, she is, you're right. I think she's projecting. Yeah.

Leraje

I mean this from, from the mum's point of view, she's. She got married for somebody, uh, else, for her dad and she couldn't make it work. And maybe in her fucked up view, what she's done to Marguerite by locking her in the attic has saved her.

Ligeia

Her from a similar fate because her bubble was slowly. Not when she, she had Marguerite, obviously she knew her marriage was uh. But remember when Cecile was planning or the, the wedding happened and she thought, oh, this is so gorgeous what we have done. Like people will remember this Wedding forever. It's so beautiful and so much food and the feast.

Lithos

Green turtle soup.

Ligeia

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And then when she went to that party later.

Lithos

Yeah, yeah.

Ligeia

She was so unhappy, like, oh, my God, these people live like this all the time. Nobody's gonna remember my, my, my wedding because they have these parties all the time. It's nothing special. And. And her husband was already five other people in the next room. Everybody saw him and she puked all over the freaking feast.

And everybody was like, yeah, you are, you're pregnant. And like, she was so confused. I was so sorry at that moments for her. Like, oh, girl.

Lithos

Oh, yes.

Leraje

This is. It's a strange thing about Cecile. She's not completely, uh, hateable because of her own.

Ligeia

I wanted to ask you guys, what did you feel? Did you feel like she was a complete villain or did you have a little bit of sympathy at points?

Leraje

I had sympathy for her, yeah.

Lithos

Because at the end, yes, she was. There's a German word for this. It's called rabenmutter, which means raven mother, which is a bad mother, which kind of like fits with the whole crow theme. So she ends up being that. She ends up being an absolutely horrendous person to a daughter. Inexcusably bad. However, she has been mistreated throughout her life by men, essentially.

M. You know, she has just been. She had to do exactly what her daddy said. She had to work in his factory. She had to marry who her daddy said. Then she had to do exactly as what this rich boy and his family told her to do. Um, and then she was left alone to look after the kids.

And when the rich family decided to disinherit the prodigal son, her own father decided to also not give her any of his riches because he did not want to be embarrassed by having a failed marriage or, um, a son in law who was a degenerate. So he cut her off. So she was left alone to look after her kids after all that.

And she was 19 when she first married. I think that's actually mentioned.

Ligeia

Yes.

Lithos

That's around the same age that, that Marguerite was when she got shipped off to the attic. M. So there are parallels there. And yes, in the end I can see the reason why she ended up the way she did. Um, and arguably, you know, had all kinds of issues, um, with her state of mind.

Leraje

But yeah, yeah, I mean, nothing, nothing that happened to her excuses what she did to her daughters, to her daughter. But yeah, I mean, I remember the descriptions because the book goes into, uh, Celeste's life.

Ligeia

Cecile.

Leraje

Cecile's life quite a lot as well. I can't get that in my head properly. Um, and, um, she seemed. I mean, there were. There were times when she was like, working in her dad's factory that she seemed quite happy, she seemed quite satisfied. She seemed to enjoy what she was doing. And then she had to get married, you know, so all these choices that were taken from her made her, uh, what she was.

And that's not an excuse for what she did to Marguerite.

Ligeia

But it was interesting because there were memories of a happy life where, you know, the memories of the bath with the soap. You know, the soap was so luxurious because they were the only family except the, uh, the royal family that was getting this soap with the little flowers in it because her.

Cecil's father was making it. So. So they had this. And those memories how those kids were bathing and she was there and she was really trying to teach them they need to be clean. And Marguerite's memories, uh, of her mother always smelling like flowers, right? Like she. Like she was like, how did she do it?

Like, even when she was really, really tired or cried a lot because of her husband being an asshole, she always looked after herself. She was like, carrying herself. And she was a proud woman. She wanted to look like a, you know, a strong lady that takes care of herself, smelled nice. And she was teaching these kids.

And then something. Something had to happen to her when she did this to Marguerite. First of all, where does this idea. Like, maybe this was not so uncommon. Putting your kids in spaces like this for a while, I guess.

Leraje

Well, there's a. There's a great literary tradition of women going in attics. Um, there's a book I read a long time ago. Um, Carrion Crow reminded me of it. Um, and it's called the Mad Woman in the Attic. Uh, by a pair of researchers, uh, called Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, I think her last name is.

And they. They basically defined this whole genre of feminist literature. Looking at the writings of people like, uh, Jane Austin, Emily Dickinson, the Brontes, George Elliot. Um, where there is this. I mean, I guess the most obvious example is Jane Eyre, when Bertha Mason is kind of like confined in this attic. Uh, and, uh, she has this companion, Grace Poole, who kind of like assumes the role of looking after her.

Ligeia

Uh.

Leraje

Um. And this book, the M. Mad Woman in the Attic, basically says that this idea that Victorian woman was seen by male authors as one of two types. They were either positive, um, sort of like nurturing, soft, feminine, or Negative, mad, brutish, independent. And what these early feminist writers like the Brontes, uh, Jane Austen, George Eliot, etc were saying was this, this mad woman in the attic, was that, was that their feminism screaming to be let out?

And I think this, what uh, Heather Parry has done with Carrion Crow is kind of like taking that idea one step further or maybe even inverted it because this time it's not necessarily a man who locks Marguerite in the attic, it's her mum. So the trauma here might not be, uh, feminist based.

It might be more, as pike said earlier, generational.

Ligeia

Oh, there are women who are not very feminist, so it could be done by a female person because they don't like these ideas of being a, uh, liberated feminine.

Pike

There's definitely a feminist question there though, right? I mean it's uh, the lives that are being destroyed, they're being destroyed by, by the grandfather who also destroys loads of other lives in Congo. And the husband there.

Ligeia

Yes.

Pike

Even the um, the powerful women, right. Cecile, when she's at the height of her power, uh, or even Mrs. Perigord, they still, you know, Ms. Perigord still walks behind her husband.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah, that's what I'm saying. Like they don't necessarily need to be, or they actually don't want to be seen as feminist. And maybe that was like unacceptable that her daughter wanted to be a little bit more open with, with her feelings and how she wanted to live.

Leraje

It's true that all the major decisions, apart from one are uh, made by men throughout the course of the novel. Um, the only decision that's not, the only major decision that's not made by a man is uh, the, the decision to put Marguerite in the attic.

Ligeia

Maybe Cecile wanted to like establish some uh, idea of control in her life because she couldn't control anything anymore. So she, she took it quite far. Maybe her idea was really just keep her there for a few months or something, which we still didn't say, like how, how much time went on.

Pike

Yeah, I think that's exactly that.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah. And, and it just went. And she couldn't stop controlling this situation. And it was sort of, it was cruel, it was sick. How you know the time at the beginning we sort of knew that. Okay, so maybe this was a week, a few days. And then it got so confused. I, I think it was written like it's genius because I could feel how Marguerite was confused time wise.

She didn't know if it was a day or a month that she was lying on this quote unquote, um, bed that she had there. She didn't know.

Leraje

She wasn't even sure of the seasons. I think the only reference to time that she could get hold of was the life span of the baby crows.

Ligeia

Yes.

Ligeia

Yeah, the crow. Actually, we didn't mention the crowd still, so. This poor animal. Yeah, you can.

Lithos

We don't know when she first found the crow and. And I. I honestly think that when she finds the letters and it is revealed that she realised how long she's been up there, I. I think that is actually. That is actually how long she's been up there and that the crows appear sort of.

Pike

And.

Lithos

And it might not have just been one crow, you know, it was several. She, uh. Yes, she gets confused.

Leraje

Um.

Lithos

And I think, you know, part of the reason a mother keeps her up there is she's. Every time she goes up, she goes, oh, you're even more disturbed kind of thing. And it's like, yes, I've been locked up here by myself in the cramped little attic. You don't think I'm gonna get any more sane from this?

You know? Um. And the parallels that are drawn deliberately by the writing device between her mother's life and her life is the alternating chapters that it ends up with, like chapter on Cecile, chapter on Marguerite, chapter on Cecile, chapter of Marguerite. You know that the. The writing in this is so clever.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
As well as being immensely readable. Um, very. I mean, it's just a superb book in. In every which way. And there are so many things thinking back on it that. That you can go over and go, what about this? So I can't. Remember we said earlier, it's a fairly simple plot. On the surface of it, it is, but it is a very complex, deep novel. At least that's the way I saw it.

Ligeia
It talks about such deep, painful traumas that if the plot was more, you know, all over the place, we would be lost.

Pike
I think we got nearly lost when all four of us tried to explain the plot.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
There almost isn't really a plot. I mean, the only thing that really, truly happens is that Marguerite gets locked in the attic.

Ligeia
She is never let out and the meals become irregular. She has no means of, like, cleaning herself. She has one nightgown or whatever she's in. She is really suffering with her body. This is really like. The triggers are, uh, body horror, starvation, claustrophobic, dirty space where you can't. You. She couldn't leave. Well, could she have tried?

I don't know. This was always on my Mind like she was so under this, you know, that the oppression that she was not even trying to get out every time her mum. She wasn't even speaking back.

Leraje
But she was prepared to try and kill her mum.

Ligeia
Kill her mum like very late. But, you know, she wasn't really speaking back. Well, from how I was speaking back to my parents, you know, like she was thinking all these things, like, how is this is like I need to trust my mum. She was just trying to make her mum so happy and proud.

She was quoting and memorising all these, you know, the texts. And every time her mum came, the mum wasn't even looking at her, talking to her. She was just like, oh, uh, there is food. And Marguerite M always tried to talk to her and let her see mum. I learned all this. I am ready.

Do you approve of me? Are you happy with me? Look, I'm trying. And it was just heartbreaking that like she wasn't fighting, she wasn't screaming at her mum, um, towards the end where.

Pike
She attacks her mum. I think they're quite different, quite similar at that point. So both of their stories have been told. And you can see the parallels between the stories. And then when she attacks her mum, you can see also how both of them are quite old and both of them have gone quite crazy by that point.

I don't know. Have any of you seen, um, the Grey Gardens?

Ligeia
No.

Pike
It's a documentary about this mother and daughter who are old and crazy. Um, they are some kind of distant relatives of, um, Jackie Kennedy. And they live in this dilapidated house that's full of rubbish. It made me think of that because you also have these two rich women in this fancy house that's falling apart.

And they only really have each other at that point. That created universe between them.

Leraje
Yeah, like Ligeia. I was really intrigued by the fact that she didn't try and leave herself, but she was prepared towards the end to think about attacking her mum. Um, but even then, the much more simple thing to do would be to simply lift up the attic door.

Ligeia
I don't know if it was simple, but I would have been trying.

Lithos
The attic door was locked. There was a padlock. Yeah, there's a padlock mentioned. That's when she tries to strangle her mum. She hears the clink of the key.

Ligeia
But like every time the mum came upstairs, I would just be thinking, okay, I will just hit her over the head. I will not kill her. I. But like, I'm going out. You, you can enjoy this space now Mama.

Leraje
The other thing as well. I mean, we. We are treated in great detail to how this attic is rotting around her. It surely wouldn't have been that difficult.

Lithos
To remember how it ends up getting covered in various excreta, uh, from various orifices.

Leraje
Yeah, it was a particularly gross book in that respect.

Ligeia
Very much.

Leraje
Um, I told someone that it was like if David Cronenberg had decided to try and write a Jane Austen novel.

Ligeia
Yes, I think you told me, and I.

Leraje
Was it you? I said it to you?

Ligeia
Yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah. I like the body functions and how this poor girl is dealing with, like, she has nothing to do. It's either like she is really losing her mind, and also she is really uncomfortable with herself. Who wouldn't be? There is no water. She has, like, little sink and all the.

The river stink and, oh, my, the.

Leraje
The shit stink of the Thames.

Ligeia
Oh, my goodness. So she can't really clean herself. There is no toilet. She's using a, uh, bucket there.

Pike
Chamber pot.

Ligeia
Yeah, whatever. Like, her hair is so long and tangled and everything is living in her. Her hair and her. Her nails. Oh, that was something else.

Lithos
I mean, part. Part of the reason why, you know, it's like, well, why didn't she try and get out? Why didn't she push her mum out the way? For. For most of it, she is looking for validation from her mum.

Ligeia
She was still.

Lithos
She is actually, like, going, you know, look, mum, um, I've learned this. Oh, uh, I know all this by. Look, I've. I've sewn myself a baby. Uh, you know. Uh, yeah, that. Oh, does. She doesn't just sew the baby out of bed sheet. She. Yes, folks, that's.

Pike
Yeah, she sews the baby to herself.

Lithos
Yeah.

Ligeia
And she's like, now we are together.

Leraje
Holy.

Ligeia
I couldn't stop crying. This was awful. I felt so much for this girl. I can't even explain it so well written. I. I would like to meet this author and just, like, kiss her hands.

Lithos
Well, I. I did find out today that she. She did actually do a podcast. Um, it is out there, but I think most of the episodes have dropped off. And the last one was, um, in 2022, and it was called Teenage Scream, and it was about. It was with another author and about sort of teenage themed horror movies.

Um, and I think they did quite a lot of episodes because one of the episodes is called End of Season eight or something, but there's only one episode before it, so I. And her Patreon is dead as well, so.

Pike
Are you stalking her?

Ligeia
Huh?

Lithos

No. No. I just, I, I just, I, I.

Leraje
Actually, she's stalking us. Actually.

Lithos
I just did my. Did my research on the author. Call it stalking if you want.

Pike
All right.

Lithos
Research, research. I did, I did find, I did find that it mentioned podcast. And because we're doing a podcast, I tried to find out about the podcast, but it's, uh, it's dead. Um, it's no longer active, but there are a couple of episodes on there.

Leraje
Speaking personally, I'm very, very glad that we all really liked this novel and really enjoyed it because she did comment on our Instagram when I posted that we were doing this. We're gonna read this next, so I have a feeling she's gonna give it a listen. It would have been awful if we'd all thought it was shit.

Lithos
If you are listening, Heather, uh, um, and you do want to, um, join us for a podcast, you're more than welcome.

Ligeia
Wow.

Leraje
Yeah. We won't even make you say 'Hail Satan'.

Lithos
No, no. Absolutely not for guests on the podcast.

Ligeia
Her about this book or any book she wrote. I, I think I'm gonna reach out to more of her work because this.

Leraje
Yeah, I've got her other one. She's got another novel, I think, which she wrote before Carrion Crow, which I've got on order at the local library.

Lithos
Oh, I can't remember what it's called. Uh, it's Something makes a woman.

Pike
Orpheus makes a girl.

Lithos
Orpheus makes a girl. That's it.

Leraje
That's, uh, it. Yeah.

Lithos
Yeah, See, I didn't stalker that much to get to what the other novel. I'm stalking all podcast feeds as I'm a complete fucking podcast fanatic.

Pike
Since we are on the topic of podcasts, wasn't there a podcast we were going to mention and a campaign there is.

Leraje

Well done, Pike. Well done for remembering when we all forgot.

Lithos

Yes.

Leraje

All right, as Pike said, another podcast. Do you want to tell us about it, Lithos?

Lithos

Yes. Um, it's called Devil's Discourse. It is the sister podcast to this podcast. Ah, as in the four of us are definitely on it. Um, we also have K, uh, as an extra participant. It's more on general topics. It's not really related to books. It's just general topics from the perspective of modern rational Satanists.

Uh, some of them are light hearted, some of them aren't.

Leraje

We also have a new organisation which, uh, we're members of but is not officially affiliated to, either this podcast or Devil's Discount.

Lithos

Devil's Discount, that's Lidl Specialist. Sweet devil's discount.

Leraje

666% off. All right. Devil's Discourse is going well. Devil's um, uh, called Helltraef which uh, is basically an organisation of Satanists, uh, of which. And uh, that's basically us. But as I say this podcast and Devil's Discount which I'm now going to call it from now on, are not officially related to it.

However, Helltraef are running a campaign, um, which is kind of like affiliated to Devil, not affiliated to Devil's Library but shares an interest. Uh, the campaign is called Fruits of Knowledge and we are going to be raising money over a six month period to donate to Give A Book. Give A Book are a charity which provide books to uh, prisons, um, and ah, mother and baby units, secure units, remand centres as well as well as places like schools and I think, but don't hold me to this, hospitals, they basically distribute books.

Um, and the reason that we're having this campaign is because we believe that um, the best way to fight hatred, uh, and fascism and bigotry is by developing empathy. And a good way to develop empathy is by reading books. And that's not just our opinion. That's bloody science. That's proper science.

Lithos

As long as the books aren't like Mein Kampf or anything like that. Elon Musk's autobiography, some shit like that. You know, we're talking proper literature, not Might Is Right.

Ligeia

What?

Pike

Stop naming fascist books.

Lithos

Sorry, I'm m Just um. Yes, a a podcast that, that I uh, I sort of help um, put on YouTube. Um, is, is called Ave Satanas. My friend, um, Jack Violently from Free Society Satanists and they have just done a series of podcasts going into Might is Right in detail. And I so sorry, that one's on my mind.

Leraje

Okay, all right, that's enough self promotion. Now let's back to the book.

Ligeia

I, I had a question for you guys. Do you have any like a uh, specific moments or a line that really stuck with you the most?

Pike

Yes.

Leraje

I'm gonna get it wrong, but it was "Mother. I am rotting here".

Lithos

Yes, I think, I think that's actually the line I uh, have made.

Leraje

It absolutely knocked me for six, that line. It might not have been the actual first time, but in my mind it was the first time that the actual reality of everything came crashing down on her. And it was just an acknowledgement of both what was happening to her, uh, and also her mum's role in creating what happened to her.

Pike

If this was a horror film, that line would have been said in a guttural voice with a weird look on the face.

Leraje

Mother, I am rotting here. It would have been the strap line for the movie.

Pike

Yeah, for sure.

Lithos

Yes. It is a description of Mrs. Beaton's book. Um, by Marguerite. The Thousand Pages of Prescribed Femininity. The Dictionary of what Men Wanted from Women. As a description of Mrs. Beaton's book.

Pike

Mine's a bit of a longer explanation. It's a bit of an individual thing, I guess. So there is a bit where um, Marguerite talks about her confinement in the attic. Um, she says that she's like those who lay so long in the shape of foetuses that they had turned into them and could not be turned back.

And there is this creepy feeling of being both alive and dead at the same time. It made me immediately think of a quote from Carol. I don't know if any of you have read it. Uh, in a Teres looks at a uh, toy train that goes in circles and it says it was like something gone mad in imprisonment.

Something that was. That's already dead, that would never wear out. Like the dainty springy footed foxes in the Central Park Zoo. Uh, whose complex footwork repeated and repeated as they circled their cages. And I immediately thought back to that because they both talk about this thing where you are in that state, both dead and alive at the same time.

And I find it very interesting.

Leraje

Schrodinger's main character.

Pike

That's. Right.

Lithos

Schrodinger's torture attic. There's a name for a band.

Pike
She's at the end.

Lithos
Sorry, sorry, sorry.

Pike
I am making a serious literary point.

Ligeia
This is how we deal with stress.

Leraje
You did.

Lithos
I'm sorry.

Pike
And at the very end, uh, where Marguerite is watching herself where she has changed into a bird or she's dead and she's watching her body on the bed surrounded by people, she is both dead and alive. At that point it becomes reality.

Lithos
Yeah, that's a good point. Yeah.

Ligeia
Mhm.

Leraje
What about you Ligeia?

Ligeia
I don't have a specific quote because as I said I really loved the whole book. But there were moments that will stick with me forever. I think that one where the baby is attached to her body. That just absolutely floored me. See I, I want to cry even now. Like I think when she did that she actually was on that edge.

Like she was, she was like giving in to this. I think she knew she's never leaving. She's never going to have a life, a ah, child, a husband or her lover. Like she was done. I think that was her Last. I don't know, try to lie to herself, to. I don't know. That denial is absolutely heartbreaking.

And it was close to the end where she actually ate that bird that really. Because she was taking care of it. She was really like, this is life. She was trying to, you know, use the, uh, the motherly feelings and to protect the bird. It was her friend. It was like this little life that was bringing her a little bit of, you know, hope and.

And joy. She was listening to them and the babies were there. And then when she actually, she was. I. I think she was telling, uh, herself something like, we are feeding. When she ate the bird, she. She killed it and. And she was like, we are feeding. We need to survive. Like, she was, uh.

The body was taking over. Like, that was the last try of that tiny body to actually survive on something because she didn't have any food and she was dying and her brain made her, like, eat this. And that was awful because I was then thinking, like, oh, I have a problem eating a few things.

You know, I'm not a vegetarian or a vegan, but I understand when people are, and I think I would be if I actually saw how chickens and cows and, uh. Like, if I saw it, I'm also living in a, uh, denial. I don't want to think about it. I like my meat, but if I saw it, I think I would stop eating it.

And then you read this book and all that gorgeous food they had, you know, it was always a feast. It was so interesting to read about all those foods and. And she is starving to death. That is absolutely a horrifying thought. Like, if you are in that state of mind and your body is giving up, your mind is gone.

Leraje

All the way through the book. Those huge, like, feasts they were talking about. I never once got the impression that anybody was actually enjoying that feast.

Ligeia

It was all for show.

Leraje

It was. They were cramming it down to the point they were vomiting. They were, uh, throwing most of it away.

Ligeia

He hated that soup.

Lithos

Yeah, they hated. They always served up green turtle soup because it was, like, expensive and well, you know, what. What. What rich people ate. But they didn't like it. It disagreed with them, as mentioned making it.

Ligeia

And. And it was.

Lithos

Yes. And then. And then poured it. Poured it down the drain because they found out that the servants were. Were sort of giving.

Leraje

Giving it away to the.

Lithos

Yeah, the soup away. I mean. Yeah. But the thing I got about. I actually thought in the final chapter, the bit where she's eaten the bird, she's Hallucinating that she's already dying because she was turning into a bird and she was using her talons and. And then when she looks back on herself when she finally thinks she's turned into a bird and she sees people coming into the attic and seeing her curled up on bed.

And I think the people who turned up were potentially her grandfather and grandmother. Um, the Hargreave. Hargreaves, Is that their name?

Leraje

I thought it was her brother and sister.

Pike

That's what I thought as well because she said they looked like her.

Lithos

Oh yeah, yeah. But they were all. Yeah, they were, they were old. So they, they had. And that they found her and were horrified. Um, yes, of course it wouldn't have been her grandparents. They probably would have been dead by then. Yeah. So. Yeah, but that, that she hallucinated that whole bit about killing the bird.

Ligeia

But still it was a very strong moments.

Lithos

Oh God, yeah. Yeah, it is. I mean you can see it either way. You know, it's very, very viscerally described.

Ligeia

Also remember when she was hearing like people living downstairs and she was so confused and she thought like these are not like babies or little kids. Like uh, she thought her siblings are still small children. And she was like, oh, these steps are made by adults. But that can't be. That can't be.

There are still small. So who is living here? And that also broke my heart. Like she, she didn't realise she has been there for 20 years and those two siblings probably thought she was dead and they were living their lives and she was dying above them. Like this is absolutely crazy.

Leraje

I think it was longer than 20 years.

Ligeia

Yeah. M. Probably.

Pike

I think she said 23 years at one point.

Lithos

But she just calculated that from um, how. How often he wrote letters. But then the letters dried up and then her mum started making up letters. So yeah, it was probably 20. You're right, Pike. I think 23. Plus.

Ligeia

She has been lied to by her mum. Like those letters was actually. Were actually not coming from the future husband anymore. It was just her mum lying to her even like this.

Leraje

Oh well, I mean he was described when they first met as being kind of like middle aged. So he probably died as well.

Ligeia

He was dead. Maybe he was waiting for her and he just died or he just moved on.

Leraje

I mean she described her own. Marguerite described her own shock at realising that her hair was grey at one point. So I think a lot longer than 23 years. Probably most of it, most of her life.

Ligeia

There have been cases in history, like real cases like this. The Fritzl's Yeah. And the Blanche girl. Blanche. I keep forgetting her surname. It was actually French. And she was put into the attic by her mum. There is. I don't know if the pictures are real. You can find it on. On the Internet.

But if the picture before she was put there is true, she was the most beautiful girl I've ever seen on a picture. Absolute, absolutely crazy beautiful. And then you see her, if it's really the picture of her when they found her. She was found still alive, sort of. But she was kept in the attic for 25 years by her mum.

I don't know about, like, the details of the story, but this was real. So I'm thinking, how are sometimes. How are we human?

Leraje

Yeah. I did like the fact that Parry didn't just make, uh. I'm gonna say Celeste again.

Ligeia

Cecile.

Leraje

I don't know why I can't say that name. Anyway, I do like the fact that Parry didn't just make her, uh, an out and out villain. There had to be an element of. Likability is the wrong word. But you had to understand her and you had to have some empathy for her, uh, in order for the full horror of what she did to Marguerite to really matter.

Ligeia

I think that's very true.

Lithos

Well, yeah. I mean, she was literally treated as an object, a chattel by her father, who m. You know, her only purpose was to. To. To gain him more social standing.

Ligeia

Who was the. The. The most hated person?

Leraje

The husband.

Ligeia

The husband. Right.

Leraje

What a dick.

Ligeia

He was an absolute.

Lithos

Yes. The. The. The little wanking who's. Yeah. Absolutely reprehensible in every which way. Again, not a character out of f. Fantasy. You know, I'm pretty sure that there have been plenty of rich, uh, idiot sons who just were, you know, liberal with their seed and drank away the family's money.

Pike

I would say the grandfather, the father of Cecile, for, For me, was more reprehensible than the husband. The husband at least had some. Like, he was shitty, but he could see. See that he was shitty. He did nothing to improve. He thought he had, um, the right to be shitty. But her father does not have that kind of ability to see himself at all.

Lithos

M. No, no, that's true.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

And he all. He spent all the time talking about himself, basically all about his great exploits. And, you know, every time he was mentioned, it was like, oh, yeah, I've been to the Congo. I've done this, I've done that. And so he would talk about nothing but himself and how great he was.

Pike

I think both of them the husband was the same, wasn't it?

Lithos

Uh.

Pike

Isn't it mentioned at one point that he just talks about.

Lithos

About himself or Lord Byron or Lord Byron's poetry? He was obsessed with Byron.

Ligeia

It was sad because at the beginning of the marriage or the. The relationship, I think Cecile was actually kind of impressed by all the sexual energy that he was bringing to her.

Ligeia

She was confused, but I don't think she was unhappy with it before he started. Like, not. He didn't start, but she learned that it's not just with her, but, like, there were moments where I felt, you know, that was also interesting, like, he was not hiding. He was happening anywhere, even publicly. And because they were husband and a wife, he was actually allowed to be, like, obscene or, you know, and people were like.

They saw it, but they were like, oh, you know.

Lithos

Yeah, all the doors were open in the house when they were getting up to all kinds of.

Ligeia

Yeah, that. That was true as well. But, like, at points I was happy for her. Like, oh, God, okay, so you have this absolutely gorgeous sexual life. Fantastic. But it was sick. It was. He was ill. This was not. I think it was not completely okay, even for him. I think he was never happy, never satisfied.

It was just like him completely ruining himself because it was never reaching a point where he was.

Lithos

Yeah, he class himself as a sex addict now.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

You know, it's like. Yeah.

Ligeia

And also all the STD that could have. I. I was just like, you bastard.

Leraje

There's a parallel with the gluttony of. With the. Of the food, with his sexual appetite.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

And it ties back to the. What we were talking about right at the start, to do with class. Um, and that class of people, as well as eating whatever they wanted to the point of vomiting, did whatever the hell they wanted in front of their servants. They didn't give a shit. You know, it was.

Ligeia

Well, they. They didn't have to wash everything after m. That.

Lithos

Yeah.

Leraje

I mean, they didn't have to worry about anything. And they didn't care who saw them because why would they?

Ligeia
Disgusting.

Leraje
They were. They were. They literally saw themselves as the lords and ladies of all creation.

Lithos
If it ever came out that the servant had spread rumours about them or told stories, the servant would be out on their ear and all the other aristo families would be informed that this servant was not reliable, you know, to be employed.

Ligeia
And also they were doing the same, I guess, so it wouldn't be like, oh, she actually puked.

Lithos
Oh, yes.

Ligeia
No, like, everybody was doing it, so was like, oh, yeah. This is a part of the. The fun.

Lithos
Yeah. There's again the bit where he's, um, later on where he's. He comes back after debauched several days and gets lost in the house and pisses and shits in the larder.

Leraje
Um.

Lithos
Yeah. And then falls asleep next to it.

Ligeia
Okay.

Pike
Pitchforks. Since we're getting to the fine detail.

Leraje
Pike's bringing us back to sanity.

Ligeia
Yes, yes, yes.

Leraje
Okay. Um, Ligeia.

Ligeia
For me, this was easily like nine.

Leraje
Lithos.

Lithos
I mean, this book, literally, I was. I, uh, cried after I read the. The final sort of couple of paragraphs. So well written, so powerful, and so immensely good. I can only give it a perfect 10. It's a stunning piece of literature as far as I'm concerned.

Leraje
Pike.

Pike
Um, I. It. It was very good, and I think it deserves a nine.

Leraje
I'm going to give it a two.

Pike
Is it because you can't remember?

Lithos
Is that revenge for the score I gave Rosemary's Baby?

Leraje
I'm joking. I would also give it a 10.

Ligeia
Okay. I'm giving it a 10 as well. Then I was like, okay, because I suggested it, so I'm like, I shouldn't. I shouldn't say 10, but I want to. Wow. This is the first time we did this.

Leraje
Yeah.

Lithos
Next. Next book. And, um, the next book will have something to live up to. Fucking hell.

Ligeia
Okay.

Leraje
Speaking of which, Pike, do you want to tell us what we're reading next?

Pike
Next we're reading Annihilation by Jeff Vandermeer. I haven't read anything by this author, nor this book. It is the first book of. Of the trilogy. But we're not. We don't have to read the trilogy. We just read this one book. So no guarantees.

Ligeia
We'll see, right? So please go read this work of visceral beauty we recommend. As you could. You could tell and. Yeah, Heather girl, absolutely. If you want to talk to us, it will be our honour.

Lithos
And if any of you listening did not listen to my advice at the start to press stop. If you haven't read it and made it to the end, it is your solemn duty to go out, buy the fucking book and fucking read it. You will not regret it. Uh, don't. Just don't have any food around when you're reading it.

Yeah, it's not recommended.

Ligeia
Could be a good one after Christmas feasts, you know, like, you need to.

Leraje
Fucking Hell, Ligeia. No way. Ligeia and I say this every time when we do the Ligotti ones, that it doesn't matter what we talk about? There's nothing we've said that could match the prose that Heather, uh, Parry manages to generate through this book. Um, we could tell you every aspect of. We could talk to you

about every aspect of this book, and it still wouldn't be the same as reading it.

So just go and read it. It's brilliant.

Ligeia
Excellent.

Leraje
Okay. So, until next time. I've been Leraje. Hail Satan.

Lithos
I'm Lithos. Hail Satan.

Pike
I am Pike. Well, obviously. Hail Satan.

Ligeia
I will not tell you my name. Hail Satan.