

The Devil's Library Episode 7 – Talking With Heather Parry, Author of “Carrion Crow”

Ligeia

Hello, everybody. Welcome to another gathering in the Devil's Library, where we acquire far too many books, overanalyse fiction, and virtually ask authors to explain themselves. I am joined here by my esteemed co. Conspirators. That's a hard word for me in Gothic enthusiasm. Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan.

Ligeia

Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan friends.

Ligeia

And Lithos.

Lithos

Hail Satan.

Ligeia

Today we are incredibly honoured because the virtual becomes real.

Uh, we are joined by the brilliant Heather Parry, whose novel Carrion Crow has profoundly altered our ability to look at our bodies and attics of our homes without deep existential reflection. Heather, thank you for being here and for writing a book that's equal parts gorgeous, grotesque and wildly hard to describe at family dinners.

Heather

Thank you and hello.

Ligeia

Hello. So we are extremely grateful that you agreed to come help us untangle the feathers, the flesh and the metaphysics. We have many questions, so let's start.

Heather

Yes, it was. I listened to your podcast, um, discussing the book, and I was honestly, uh, so touched by your, uh, attention to detail and care and thoughtfulness. So what an honour to be here.

Pike

Well, since you heard that episode, um, was there any moment where you thought, oh, no, these guys got completely the wrong measure here about any part of the book?

Heather

Um, no, I think you. I think you really got what I was trying to do with it, which is, um, I think one of the. You can only ask so much with when you put a book out into the world and, you know, hoping that people get what you're trying to do is.

Is one of the big ones, I think. Um, but I also think, you know, when you write a novel, the. The meaning, the actual meaning of the book exists somewhere between what you put on the page and what the reader brings to it. So it is always in flux and always. It's just a kind of possibility of meanings, I guess.

So even if I had completely disagreed with your take on something, that would be like, it's a joint project between me, the writer and you, the readers, you know, inventing the meaning so it would have had a meaning. It would have had maybe just a different one, um, to what I thought, but no, you got it.

Pike

So you do. You do agree that the mother's name was Celeste?

Leraje

Oh, fuck you.

Heather

You know what? You change names so much when you write the book that for a second I was like, wait, what was her name?

Leraje

Yeah, no, I was. I was doing that all the way through the novel Heather.

Pike

Yeah, you were, you were.

Ligeia

My goodness, I couldn't stop laughing.

Heather

You know, I did.

Ligeia

There we go.

Heather

I did an event where someone said to me, um, did you Name, uh, the father at all. And I literally had to be like, I don't know, did I? It's been so long since I read it, obviously. And I don't name him in the book. Uh, but yeah, sometimes your readers know much more about what's in the book than you do.

Leraje

Well, I think we just refer to him as prick number one, so.

Ligeia

Oh, yeah, many names, many names.

Pike

That's right.

Ligeia

M, I hope you don't mind.

Pike

We made a big deal out of him not having a name.

Leraje

We did, didn't we?

Heather

Yeah.

Ligeia

Yeah. Okay. Okay, so I have a question. I have many, but I will start with this. So what kind of atmosphere or like, mindset do you need to enter while you're writing something as charged as this book?

Heather

Oh, that's a great question. And you know, it was actually a very distinct atmosphere, um, because I wrote it in, uh, first lockdown, the first of the COVID lockdowns in the UK. So I had been. The way I write novels is that I have to write them. I have to write a first draught really quickly.

So I spend maybe like a year, two years, maybe even longer thinking around a particular topic or reading into a thing. And, you know, I call it kind of magpieing, um, because I. I feel like, uh, you go through the world picking up bits of fact and bits of personality and bits of a storey that someone tells you in a bit of history.

And you kind of make this like bird's nest in the back of your mind with all these little bits of random shit. And then, uh, eventually, I guess the end of that metaphor would be you eventually sit on it and lay an egg. The kind of breaking the net.

Yeah, it turns out I'm all about birds. Um, yeah. But for a couple of years I'd been working on the nest, if you will, for Carrion Crow. And, um, I had, you know, my kind of like real life inspiration, um, which was a, uh, relationship, you know, if someone I know to their mother.

That had gone quite poorly. Um, there was the historical inspiration, which was, um, Blanche Monnier, which I'm sure we can talk about later on. And there was Mrs. Beaton, which is a book I had really fallen into. Um, so I had all of these things going on in my head and I usually know where I'm beginning and I know where I'm ending with the novel, but I don't really know what's going to happen in between.

Ligeia
Mhm.

Heather
And meanwhile, I had been, uh, waiting to work on another novel that I'd written. A first draught of in 2017. Um, and that was, ah, set on a Scottish island. It was a completely different novel. And I wasn't as good as I needed to be to realise that project when I first wrote it.

So I'd left it for, like, several years, thinking, I'll become a better writer and I'll come back to it. And I had been, um, selected for a residency just outside Edinburgh in this castle, um, which is amazing. And they bring you your lunch in a little Fortnum's hamper, so they don't bother you and they leave it outside your door.

Leraje
Blimey.

Heather
And, um. It's a crazy place, actually. It was, um. It was, uh, set up as a residency by a woman who used to be married to the Heinz Beans guy. It's called Hawthornden. And, um

Leraje
This is going in a direction I did not expect.

Heather
I know I'm going on such a tangent right now. Um, my friend was at that residency and the. The woman who. Her name was Drew Heinz, she actually died in the castle while there was a residency going on. And she didn't want to tell the residents because she didn't want. Put them off what they're writing.

Anyway. Very gothic setting is what I'm saying. Wow. And I was supposed to go there. Um, I think it was the end of March 2020, and I was supposed to go on the Monday for a month to work on this island novel. And on the Friday they announced, um, lockdown. So I had all this, like, creative frustration.

I had all this, like, energy. You know, I'd been, like, saving up for this. I was gonna, like, you know, spend a month rewriting this whole book. And then I couldn't go. So I was fucked off. Like.

I was so angry and obviously, like, everyone was fearful and anxious, uh, and worrying about our loved ones and learning about the state of the world. And then I also didn't have an agent at the time. I hadn't sold my first novel. Um, I was just very, very frustrated. And I think I literally woke up on the Monday and said to my partner, fuck it, I'm gonna write a novel.

So I sat down with the kind of. I sat on my Carrion Crow nest, my ideas nest. Um, and I wrote every day for, I think, six weeks. And what came out was pretty much Carrion Crow as you read it. Like, it had some. It had obviously some edits and some rewrites, but it did not change substantially, really.

Add, you know, a little bit of movement around. But, uh, what came out is. Is what you Read. So it was a very distinct atmosphere, I would say.

Pike

So when you, when you write, are you a sort of Hemingway and type, you know, wake up at 4:00am, finish 3:00Am?

Heather

I'm far too lazy to be waking up at 4:00am um, any day of the year. Um, I would say I'm kind of like, uh, I try and sit down at my desk by 8 and I have a set amount of words that I'm going to write before I leave that desk.

And sometimes that can be finished by 11:00am a.m. and sometimes it'll be finished by midnight. But I do it, you know, Like I, I absolutely have to finish within that six weeks. I have to get to 60,000, 70,000 words and have a finished manuscript. Um, and then I put it away in my drawer and then I come back to it and I edit and I rewrite and I do that again and again and again.

But yeah, Carrion Crow was like, you know, I'm going to make myself sound pretentious. You know, they describe creative flow where you're just getting to this like, almost like hypnotic state. This was the purest version of that I've ever had. And I think it was the conditions. I think it was because everything else in the world was so terrifying and you couldn't go anywhere and I couldn't go and spend any money, which I love to do to distract myself. And we were so confined. And obviously it is a book about confinement and it's a book about restriction and it's a book about....In retrospect, it's the most locked down book that's ever existed.

So, yeah, um, I think I just managed to get into the mindset of Marguerite, probably more than I have done with any of my other characters. And weirdly, I think she is like, the book's disgusting because I think I am disgusting. I think about bodies as much as Marguerite thinks about bodies, uh, which I think is quite revealing.

Pike

Well, one of you really loves that stuff as well. No. Who's into body horror here? Was it Ligeia?

Lithos

No, I bloody love body horror.

Ligeia

I think it's lithos, mostly. Yes.

Lithos

I would argue that. Doesn't everyone think obsessively about their own bodies to some extent?

Heather

Uh, this is my question. People keep asking why I write in this way. And I'm like, I don't understand how other people don't write in this way. Because how your body exists in the world defines everything. It defines your political place in the world, it defines your relationships. It defines, defines your relationship to work it defines, you know what I mean?

Like it's, it's everything, surely how your body is. And it's a constantly permanently changing thing. Like the body is such a shifting landscape. And I don't know why all literature doesn't. Doesn't start from that, really. I certainly can't ignore that.

Ligeia

I had a question around that. I. I have three questions that like, talk about the same thing. Would you consider this book being like sort of a manifestation of some sort of like a immortality project for you? Or is that too grand for you to think like that?

Heather

Go on, explain. Explain what you mean by that.

Ligeia

I do follow work of one, like, I think I can say philosopher, uh, Ernest Becker. And it's existentialism. I can't say it in English. You know what I mean? Yeah. And it's very, very, very about body and the functions and how it's called the denial of death. You know, how we live in this and like the form, what it takes in people's lives.

And I do struggle with this. I do like denying all the functions of the body. I like to feel like, oh, I don't even, you know. Anyway, so this book was really. I need, I need to deal with this and it's helping me. It's actually very healing for me in a way to go to these places.

So. By the way. Yes. So what I mean by the immortality project is, uh, he thinks we, not all of us, but some of us do try to deny the mortality, the decay, the death by, you know, the like, flow of your creativity going to these places. Like, you created this absolutely gorgeous book.

Did you feel like this or do you.

Heather

You know, that's a really interesting question because I, I'm really interested in transhumanists and I'm really interested in the way that people use technology to try and escape mortality. And I wrote, ah, an essay for the Scottish opera, uh, last year and it was around an opera called the Necropolis Affair, which is about a woman who lives for like 300 years. Um, and I wrote about. It was called the Temporary Incurables and it was about, um, uh, I can't think of the word, but the people who freeze their bodies.

Leraje

Cryogenics.

Heather

Yes, yes, it's about cryogenics, um, as an attempt to like, cheat death, basically. And now it really just gets taken over by capitalism and uh, you know, there's no proof that it would ever exist. But I'm really fascinated in this impulse towards immortality because I don't think I feel it really. But then you're Right.

If, if you're writing books, isn't that an attempt to reach some kind of immortality? Because when I die, my books will still exist. I mean they might go out of print, but you know what I mean, they're still like. It kind of stamps you on uh, on history in a way, in a really small way.

Uh, but yeah, that's, that's really interesting because I do, I don't feel, I, I think like immortality is a horrible concept. You know, I, I unfortunately come from a philosophical background, so I'm very overthinky. So I kind of. Yeah, you know, I hate this idea of uh, uh, existing forever. And one of my, one of my favourite novels is called the People in the Trees by Hanya Yanagihara.

It's her debut novel. Everyone thinks about a little life. But her debut novel was called the People in the Trees. And in fact I have a tattoo on my thumb which is from that. And it is about colonialism. Uh, and it's about. It's kind of like Lolita with uh, like a colonial aspect to it, which is amazing.

But part of it is about what happens to you if you eat something that makes you immortal. And what happens is that everybody becomes, uh, uh, everybody develops dementia because of course your, your mind can't deal with the longevity that your body then gets. Yeah, it's an interesting question and I want to say that like physically and mentally I'm not into the idea of immortality, but then creatively surely what I'm doing gestures towards it in a way.

Leraje

I've got a kind of follow up question to that. While my voice continues to hold out. Um, there's a kind of long literary tradition of uh, Women in the Attic type stories. Based on what you just said about the immortality of stories after, after, after we uh, after we die.

Were you kind of like aware that Carrion Crow was almost a continuation of that tradition? I'm thinking of characters like um, Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre, things like that. Were you aware of that when you were writing the book?

Heather

Absolutely, yeah. Um, I'm a huge fan of the Gothic genre and I take Jane Eyre as part of that as well. Um, and Wide Sargasso Sea. Obviously the, um, the kind of reimagining of Bertha Mason's history was a huge, um, influence on this book. Yeah, I, I love the kind of Mad Woman in the Attic and I'm doing, for podcast listeners, I'm doing air quotes here.

You know, the quote unquote Mad Woman in the Attic, uh, is such an incredible trope. For me, I kind of hate the word trope, but I can't think of a better one because it really is about who society makes expendable. Right. And what gets you kicked out of polite society. And you know, very often with women, it's that they don't conform to, like, the idea of femininity at the time m.

Or they don't, uh, submit to marriage or they don't have children, or they are racialized or, you know, they exist in disabled bodies or they exist outside gender norms. Um, so I was absolutely writing into that very thoughtfully. But you know what? I didn't really think of it. I grew up 45 minutes away from where the Brontes lived. I'm from South Yorkshire.

Leraje

Oh.

Heather

But I had never been to Haworth, which is where they're from, until about a month after the book came out. And I said, oh, my God, I should really make that kind of literary pilgrimage because my book, my book has so much, uh, to thank Jane Eyre for. You know, it really wouldn't exist if there wasn't Jane Eyre ahead of it.

Leraje

The other kind of sub question I had on that, and this is more a personal wondering, have you read, um, The Yellow Wallpaper?

Heather

Do you know, I don't know because everybody brings it up and I can't actually remember if I've read it or I just know of it because I do write into this space

and everybody talks about it. If I have, it hasn't been for about 20 years. Uh, because there's a lot of crossover, right?

Leraje

There's a lot of crossover. Yeah, yeah.

Heather

Yeah. Unfortunately, I can't say for sure. I at least know of it and what it's doing and have written alongside it, you know, as a cultural kind of artefact. There's also the Flowers in the Attic that people keep mentioning. And I've not read Flowers in the Attic.

Leraje

I can, I can see why people would say that. Yeah. But, um, your book is infinitely better than Flowers of the.

Heather

I won't, I won't comment, but I'll say thank you.

Pike

So something I personally really liked in the book is how sensual it is. Not just. And I don't necessarily mean just in a sexy way. I mean, it is sexy in a sort of manky way as well. But of, um, the descriptions are there to, to affect all of your senses. And in that way it made me think, um, I.

There's quite a lot of 19th century literature, I think, where you do get a lot of that. Say Oscar Wilde loves to do that. But what strikes me as distinctly modern in your book is how it mixes these really pleasant sensual experiences with, um, fairly repulsive ones. Uh, they are not side by side, they're not juxtaposed as such.

They are actually intermixing. And I was wondering, um, did you have some kind of inspiration for that and where you were worried about. Do you have a line somewhere and were worried about if you go beyond that line, it will be a bit Edge Lord, it would be overdoing it a bit.

Heather

Yeah, that's a great question.

I, um, don't think I worried about going over the line, because I think I did. You know, I think for a lot of people this book is way over the line in terms of like sensory experience. And, um, it's. The book is kind of like a personality test because people come and tell me which bit exactly made them feel sick.

So I'm getting like a, you know, it's like a. Was it this or was it this or was it this? I can group people according to what they found the most disgusting. Um, but yeah, that's really interesting. The kind of like pleasure and disgust or repulsive kind of. They're two sides of the same coin, aren't they really?

And I think I find that very interesting because what we find pleasurable and attractive and what we find disgusting and repulsive are very often context sensitive or, uh, dependent on who or, uh, what is involved. So, like, I'm thinking of sex for some reason. It's because I'm drinking and Negroni. It makes me think about sex, uh, something that one person does.

You can find the most alluring thing in the world and then from another person or in a slightly different context is the worst thing that you can possibly think of. Right? So that kind of duality of sensuality, if you will, I think does exist all the time. Um, I think about like eggs as well.

Right. I am a person who did not grow up eating eggs. So the way I can stand eggs is really on a knife edge. I love scrambled eggs. If they're a little bit too soft, they make me want to throw up. You know what I mean? It's like the difference.

Once someone described it as there, there being too much eggs, which I thought was a.

Suddenly they're just being too much eggs. And, um, what is the difference there? It's like a, A second of cooking or a slight difference in preparation or even just context or some. If you look at it a certain different way, suddenly you can just become immediately disgusted by something. And, um, this book is all about context.

And it's. With the food, for instance. It is so much about what gives food meaning and what makes food.

Belong, uh, to one class rather than another class? Or where is the line between using food as something to love and care with and using it as something to repress someone with? And the. The line between all of those things is really, really thin. So I guess the kind of repulsive, uh, compulsive dichotomy is just part of that as well.

But did I have an inspiration for that? I don't know if I did. You know, people talk about, uh, Patrick Süskind's, um, novel Perfume a lot when they read this book, but I don't think I read it until after I had written the book, and I don't love it that everyone thinks I will.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Heather
In fact, there's another Patrick Süskind book which is a much, like, stronger influence on the novel, and that's a novella called The Pigeon. Have you guys read it?

Ligeia
No.

Leraje
Um, I don't know. I've certainly read Perfume, but I can't remember if I've read that or not.

Heather
I think you would. You would remember the Pigeon because it's about a man who is, like, existentially menaced by a pigeon living in a stairwell.

Leraje
No, definitely not read that.

Heather
It's such a mad little novel, such a mad novella, but I really like it. And that actually has much more of an influence on the book, uh, than Perfume, I think. But then, like, what does have that influence on me? Like, I read a lot of, um, J.G. Ballard, and I guess he does the.

He talks about physicality really well, especially as it pertains to technology. And the line between, like, sex and violence or, you know, discussed and. And, um, attraction in his work is really interesting. So maybe it came from that. I think. I think that's probably. People wouldn't expect that with Carrion Crow, but maybe he was an influence on that.

Pike
I was wondering, have you seen a film called Tampopo?

Ligeia
No.

Pike

Dandelion in Japanese. It's. It's basically a food porn film. And there is a scene in it at one point where two people are having sex and they are passing a raw egg back and forth between them, um, until it breaks.

Lithos

I've seen that, yeah.

Heather

Oh, my God. That would turn my stomach.

Pike

I'm glad something turns your stomach.

Ligeia

Is this a test?

Heather

Do you know. It's so funny because, uh, when you write things like Carrie, uh, and Grow, or you write things that are, like, disgusting or very physical, people think you have no line. But actually the line is stuff that's really similar to stuff I write or is also like, just goofy. Like, have you seen, um, a, ah, Kevin Smith movie called Tusk?

Leraje

Yeah.

Heather

It's so stupid, isn't it?

Leraje

Yeah, it's ridiculous, but I know exactly what you mean.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Heather

I had to turn it off in the middle and go for a walk because it was affecting me so badly. But it's goofy and stupid and like a storey I might have written like five years ago. And for some reason that really gets me. So that would get me. The raw egg would. Honestly, I would probably vomit.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pike

John Waters really does the raw, um, the sort of. The disgusting egg thing quite well.

Heather

Yes. It's funny you mention him because, uh, I have a picture of Divine on my writing desk.

Ligeia

So.

Heather

Yeah, he's an influence too.

Ligeia

So, talking about food, uh, did you had. Did you have, like, any snack that fueled your writing? And if so, if so, do you now have, like, Pavlovian reflex?

Heather

That's a. Yeah. Interesting question. I can't remember what I was eating at the time. Weirdly, we were eating really well in lockdown because, um, we're blessed in Glasgow with an amazing food scene and all of the restaurants that closed suddenly had to think of ways to pay themselves and their staff. So a lot of them were doing kind of like, uh, at home delivery services.

And, uh, no one could go out and spend any money. So you suddenly had all this money to spend on amazing food coming to your house. Uh, so I think. Did anything put me off? Nothing that I was eating. I think I was eating a lot of, um.

I was drinking a lot.

Ligeia

That's awesome. I love that.

Heather

Yeah. I, uh. My partner and I instituted cocktail, uh, and Philosophy Hour in like, the first week of lockdown, where we went and sat by the bay window in the living room and had like a gimlet or something like that and talked about philosophy. And very quickly we had to put that one side because I was like, we're going to become like, completely dependent on alcohol.

So we had to put that to one side. So maybe it's a gimlet. I haven't had one in a while, but maybe that would turn my stomach now just because of context. It would remind me of the book.

Ligeia

You see, I didn't have a problem. I don't know. I. I knew what I'm. What I was reading at some parts. It was very disgusting, but I was still able to absolutely eat and drink, whatever.

Leraje

To be honest, it was more the kind of. The Depictions of the green turtle soup. It was just like. It sounds awful. Anyway.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Heather

You know, for me the thing that bothered me most, um, writing about was ah, aspic.

Which is the, the meat jelly. Uh, because I, I don't eat meat. And uh, jelly is like one of my pathological fears. Like I can't even be in a room with someone eating jelly. I would, I would throw up. So thinking like. And I used to date a Ukrainian and they used to eat loads.

They used to. There's so much meat J in my life for like a six year period. So that, that was just awful. I just can't fathom why adults would eat it.

Lithos

Yeah. So no 70s cookbooks then? I'm just thinking of jelly. Right, yeah, everything.

Pike

Defence of Eastern Europeans. Uh, since our jelly is not the same as the jelly on these aisles, jelly here is.

Ah, I'm sorry, it's really gross. But uh, our jelly, it is gross. Like broth that's been jellied. There is not. No, none of that weird sharp note to it. It's, it's just savoury tasting. Rich and savoury.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Heather

Yeah. Weirdly I do make uh, like bone broth for my partner. Like I really like cooking down chicken bones and making like. Because I love to cook. And sometimes if you put it in the fridge and you get it out and it's just completely become jelly and. Oh God. But what I wanted.

It's full of flavour. I understand that, but you could not make me put it in my mouth. But you see, everybody has this, right. Everybody has some food that they can't even look at or they can't fathom or that just the idea of eating it turns their stomach. But then they've got so many foods that they love and I think this, you know, approach we have to food is just so interesting to me.

And what makes us feel disgust at something and sometimes it's how it's prepared, sometimes it's where it comes from, sometimes it's just context or you know, like we've had this at a horrible time in our lives or you know, like when pregnant women, uh, they'll be eating something and then immediately they can't have it and they have to have it taken out.

Ligeia

Oh yeah.

Heather

You know, these, these changes are so fascinating to me and I think they're. For me they're so ripe for building a narrative around, you know. Mhm. And they're so personal too. Like everybody's is completely different.

Pike

But egg is extra divisive. I feel.

Heather

I don't know why it's egg.

Ligeia

It's. It's maybe the connection to life, you know, like.

Pike

Yeah, sometimes you can get an egg with a tiny, tiny piece of meat floating in it. You do. If you eat eggs, sooner or later you break an egg and there's a tiny, tiny piece of uh.

Lithos

Oh yeah, like a mini embryo kind of thing. Yeah.

Pike

And that can traumatise.

Lithos

Yeah.

Heather

I'm so fascinated by the, the point at which something becomes too much. Right. Like I, I love pasta. I love like really rich sauces and stuff. And a few weeks, a couple of months ago I. I took it upon myself to make like a carbonara, like a traditional carbonara from scratch without the actual meat.

So I found like a really old, like uh, Italian recipe for it and it had duck egg yolks and it had, it had 150 grammes of parmesan for two people. It was just the richest thing I've ever eaten and it was delicious. But like, I do feel like I might die. Like I feel like I'm going to have a heart attack.

And again, where is the line between like the most delicious thing you've ever had and just slightly too much? That's just so fascinating to me.

Lithos

Well that, yeah. And with carbonara there's also the texture thing because if you overdo the eggs, it's terrible. You get your horrible scrambled eggs. If you underdo them, you've got some kind of slimy, horrible mess.

Heather

Mhm.

Lithos

That is where the texture is off putting.

Pike

That's why Marguerite, uh, got only tiny meals from her mother. They're rich but they're small.

Heather

Right, Exactly. Yeah. Are you also trying to save Marguerite from the carbonara situation.

Ligeia

Today? I was listening to something about the old asylums and how many people just ended up there because the families just didn't want to deal with them for many reasons. Some of them because of, you know, being a little bit more gay than the family liked or bisexual, whatever.

So I was actually thinking about poor Marguerite while listening to that and thinking about her mom. Not Celeste, Cecile, Celine. I'm sorry.

Leraje

Never gonna fucking live this down, am I? Ever.

Heather

No, no.

Ligeia

Sorry. Leraje.

Leraje

Heather, could you do us a favour in your. Can you just name one of your characters Celeste??

Heather

I'll do it. I'll do it for you. Yeah.

Ligeia

Um, and I was thinking, would that have been like probably also an option for her mom to just send her to something like that? Like that is just awful. I, I'm not saying that was the reason why she was imprisoned. Mhm you, you can tell us. Was that the thing or because of the marriage, like they didn't like the guy or was it all.

But like. I just, I just in general was thinking.

Leraje

I'm expecting a David Lynch answer now.

Heather

He's everywhere.

Lithos

Not telling you.

Heather

Yeah, I mean I would. I am unfortunately going to give you a David Lynch answer.

I, I like to put enough, enough um. Suggestion into the book that the readers will make their own minds up about it. You know, again, talking about like what you bring to the book decides what meaning it has for you.

Pike
Almost.

Heather
So for me that's one of the possibilities for uh, Cecile is that she understood her daughter to be queer and um, didn't want to accept this. Although in my head, and I don't know if I really put this in the book enough for anyone else to pick it up, her father, like Marguerite's father, nameless asshole, uh, father, uh, is also bisexual.

Like in my head when he's like, you know, in all these kind of like orgiastic scenes, he's. He's. He's doing all kinds of things.

Ligeia
He's a man with.

Heather
Oh yeah. Men get away with it somehow. Yeah. For me I think it's like what does. What would the queerness represent for Cecile? And you know the, the term unnatural comes up uh, in how she describes her daughter very much. Um, word is just so good. You are so unnatural.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Heather
And what do you mean by that? What does that mean in the context, right. Is it that you wouldn't follow the path that's been prescribed for you, which is marriage and children? Um, is it a natural desires? Is it the, is it the fact of the desire itself that's disgusting. Or is it what it means for your life and how you're going to fit into the society or not fit into society?

Um, you know, the uh, the question of whether she could send Marguerite somewhere. I mean maybe people did used to just disappear kids all the time. Right. Or uh, problematic adults or people uh, who had disabilities or people who had intellectual disabilities. Which is kind of what she did. Right. She disappeared her.

Pike
Um.

Leraje
I mean, yeah, there's a good body of evidence to suggest that uh. Bedlam in London was created for that very reason to sort of like ship off inconvenient relatives.

Pike
And locking um, people up like kids and so on in attics is. Is a very old uh, tradition as well. I saw that on some sort of like a really trashy ghost hunters, uh, series. So I know it's true.

Heather
Yeah.

Ligeia
It's just my kids are also there, but, you know, I can't hear them. It's boarded up. It's all good.

Leraje

Yeah, we've all shipped our own children off for the evening.

Heather

Yeah. Look, there's a reason I don't have any.

Ligeia

Maybe you just forgot about them.

Heather

I will say there were, There were two cases that I really playing on my mind uh, when I wrote Carrion Crow. And one is, ah, I think, I think you mentioned her in the, in the podcast episode. Blanche Monnier.

Ligeia

Yes.

Heather

Right. Yes. Um, so she, for anyone who's not heard of her, it was a real woman in, uh, Poitiers in France and I think the 1920s, but maybe I've got my timeline wrong there. Uh, and she was locked in the attic of the family home by her mother and her brother. For without giving spoilers, the amount of time that Marguerite is locked in the attic.

Um, and I fell down that hole one day when I was just noodling around on the Internet and found the Wikipedia page for the Storey of Blanche Monnier. And it so immediately, uh, gave me a narrative for everything that I was trying to write about that. I read the headline and then turned it off.

I was like, I don't want to know anything more about this because I don't want to write that storey. I want to write a different storey with that through line.

Ligeia

Yeah, in your mind.

Heather

But there is a picture of her when she's found, which is really harrowing. So I always had that picture of Blanche in my head when I was writing about Marguerite. And the other one was, um, a storey that we studied when I was in college and I did English language, so I did like child language acquisition.

And it was a storey about a girl called Genie. I think it was maybe in the 70s or maybe the 60s, uh, basically, and this is a horrible thing to talk about, so apologies, um, but basically they found a, I think she was 11 or 13 and they found a girl and she had been locked to, ah, a crib basically by her parents for almost her entire life at that point.

So she was, uh, um, enormously unsocialised, you know, physically very screwed, um, up. Um, but she never, she had missed the, the period for language acquisition, which is a really distinct period in humans. So she never actually learned to communicate or speak in the way that, you know, we would use language now.

And um, yeah, these two cases I think were really playing on me when I was writing Marguerite. And, you know, what brings a person to do this to a child they've brought into the world? And what are the social pressures that are acting on all of the people in those scenarios? And how do you get from the place of having a child to thinking it's rational or moral or right to do this to a child?

That's kind of. That journey between those two points is what I wanted to explore in the book. I've bummed everyone out now. Sorry, guys.

Pike

Let's have a group cry.

Heather

Do you know what's really funny? Everybody thinks if you write books like this, you must be like, a really unfeeling asshole. And, uh, just yesterday I was crying reading the Jim Henson Wikipedia page. Yeah. Because I was just, like, so moved by how many people loved Jim Henson. And then I watched his funeral and I cried again.

So. So I'm all for group crying is what I'm saying.

Ligeia

Yeah, I think it's the opposite. Like, to be able to write like you, you actually need to be a really feeling, deeply feeling person. That's how I see it. But also, I'm a weirdo, so take it for what it is.

Heather

I don't know, honestly. The people who write the darkest books are, uh, the most empathetic and loveliest people. And the people you have to watch out for is romance writers who are dark inside. They're bleak people. Right?

Ligeia

Oh, yeah.

Leraje

I think that's true. I mean, to imbue your characters or your story, uh, with a sense of empathy is to know what is horrific. And therefore you have to have a certain level of empathy in order to know where the horrific lies. That seems to make perfect sense to me.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

I'm just thinking of the romance writers thing and imagining Barbara Cartland as a psychopathic monster who had piles of bodies in the settler.

Heather

I don't think that's too far away from, uh, who she was as a person, from what I've heard. It's true of, like, anyone who I think, um, chooses to look at the, like, dark things about humanity. Right. Or chooses to play in the realms of, like, horror or. You know, I always think about this with music. Right. Um, I used to. I used to live in Australia for, like, a year and a half, and I ran a music venue at the time.

So we would programme, like, metal acts, who would be called things like chemical, uh, abortion and you're like nuclear holocaust. And they were all the nicest boys.

Leraje

Yes, they're great bands. Love them both.

Heather

They were so lovely. And it would be like the pop acts, who would be like, you know, real stab you in your back.

Ligeia

Oh, yeah.

Heather

Bleak people.

Leraje

Yeah.

Heather

But this is true of Satanists, as, uh, as we. We all know. Loveliest people. That's right.

Leraje

Yeah. You know, yeah, yeah, we're all great.

Ligeia

Okay. We pay you after this.

Heather

But, like, yes, the cheque is in the post.

Ligeia

Oh, yes.

Leraje

Yeah, we'll stick that on trustpilot.

Pike

You said you wrote it pretty much in one go. And then in editing, not that much changed. Was there anything. Any part. Part in the book that's quite important now, but it looked completely differently when you first conceived.

Heather

I had to do quite a lot of work on the timeline because a very, uh, important part of the narrative is that Marguerite, uh, loses her sense of time and her sense of seasons. Right. She doesn't. She no longer knows how long she's been there. Um, she doesn't know how old she is.

She doesn't understand where other people must be in their lives. Lives, you know, because of the times of her confinement. Um, and that's difficult to do without really annoying your reader because your reader needs something to hang their perception of time on in the novel. So we had to do quite a lot of work on that.

And, you know, which seasons it was and how I was drawing attention to the time passing without showing it in Marguerite, because then that would be showing. Showing my hand too quickly, you know, showing it too early. Um, when she discovers the things she discovers. I think that needed a lot of work as well, but generally.

Not really. Like, I would say there was a much bigger change in my debut novel, Orpheus Builds a Girl, which is that the end. I, uh, changed quite a bit in editing, but it was very meaningful to me. So it was, um. It was a struggle to make sure that the meaning didn't change too much because I felt the end was really meaningful.

Um, but in this book, no, I was really. I really did edit it to death before it even went to my editor and my agent. Um, and I'm really lucky. I have a brilliant writing group who tell me everything that's wrong with it before I send it to anyone who's got authority.

Ligeia

It was perfect. I did not feel like there was one pothole, which always annoys me. I'm like, yeah, this author is also just human. It's possible. It's fine. But with your book, absolutely nothing. It was, like, flawless for me.

Leraje

Seamless, like an egg almost.

Ligeia

M.

Almost.

You're onto something.

Heather

I'm blessed with a really great editor, but in the editing process, you do end up in These ridiculous situations where, uh, like the, the, the sink in the attic, in Marie's attic. I mentioned the brand and the manufacturer. Sorry. And they're like, model of the manufacturer's sink. And, uh, me and my editor, who I love very much, ended up in an argument as to what language would, uh, be on the taps of this particular time.

And I had to go online and find a vintage version of the exact sink on ebay and send a picture to them. And they'd be like, look, it's fucking French.

So it's really annoying in the process, but, you know, it's for the greater good. And you, you do you go through this so that someone might say to you, I didn't know. It's one plot hole. So thank you very much.

Ligeia

Wow, that's, that's really incredible.

Heather

You see, I don't know why I made everything French in this book because I don't speak French. So then I've had to go on book tour and say the surname of the family over and over again and I've had to apologise every single time because I'm like, if there's any French person in the audience, I'm fucking it up.

I know I am. I'm so sorry. And you go, why just make them English, Heather?

Ligeia

It has a different flair when it's French.

Heather

I have my reasons.

Lithos

Well, arguably, if you want to make an aristocratic family look ultra snooty, dismissive, um, looking down on everyone, you make them French because. Because there is a difference between British aristocracy who tend to turn up in wellies and um, uh, old tweed and stuff, and French aristocracy who still to a large extent are what you would imagine an aristocrat to be.

Heather

Yeah, yeah. And exactly. And like, you know, politically and historically, uh, the influence of the French aristocracy on British grits, you know, you could, you can't get around that. You can't not write into that. That's, that's been so, you know, even like the language we use for food. And again, there's a reason it's beef and not cow.

Right. And that's because of French. So that for me, she was always going to be French. And also a little kind of uh, Easter egg. Is that Perigot. Ah, is a name of a type of truffle.

So even the family name is like a, ah, like an upper class food. And no one else has pointed that out ever. So I think it's something that no one will notice.

Pike

Well, we had on our questions list we just haven't got to it yet.

Leraje

I'll carefully edit that bit so it makes it look like we asked.

Ligeia
Okay.

Lithos
It is true that yeah, certainly the whole concept of chivalry and all that sort of polite interaction amongst the upper classes, for want of a better word, is largely come from the Norman invasion, uh, and across from France.

Ligeia
Mhm.

Lithos
Um, as an artist. Specifically with the advent of newer technologies, uh, thinking about how to make a living. If there is one thing you could change as an artist to ensure artists are properly recompensed for their work. And I'm not thinking so much of piracy which has always existed to a certain extent, but companies like for musicians, Spotify and um, maybe more for authors, companies like Amazon that sell online versions.

I don't know as a comparison how much you'd get from an online copy of your digital copy of your book sold on Amazon compared to a paper copy sold in the shop. Um, what would you actually change to make sure artists are paid properly for their work?

Heather
That is such a good multifaceted question. Yeah, Spotify is a good comparison. Although Spotify I think is much worse because it's like pennies, right? Pennies per stream compared to. You would used to go out and buy a CD. I mean God, I remember going and buying CDs in HMV with my Saturday pocket money, you know, um, and they would get a much higher percentage of that.

It's really just destroyed the music industry, um, Amazon. So for instance, if you buy my book in an independent bookshop, they have bought the book at a 40% discount. So then what I get is uh, takes into account that discount. And the problem with Amazon is that they can negotiate massive discounts. So huge, huge discounts or they just impose them.

So then uh, you know, and obviously they're destroying the ecosystem generally. Um, what I would do, and this probably speaks to my political leanings things, is I would introduce UBI Universal Basic Income which they're doing for artists in um, Ireland right now. But very limited. I think it's like 2, 000 artists who get UBI and I think it's about 350 uh, euros a week.

But like you're never going to, we're not going to escape the um, capitalist nature of the publishing industry. Right, which is that ah, they, publishers take a risk on you, they need to make money. Uh, they will only give you as much money as they think they can make back from your book.

You know, they're not going to give everyone 100 grand uh, every year and then you know, there, there just aren't the resources there. So I think taking the profit motive away from uh, that industry, well, or undermining it, I guess, by giving people just enough money to live on generally, I think opens up creativity to a lot more people.

It allows people to. So I'm talking about not just UBI for artists. I think we should have UBI for everybody. So they can take a year off to learn to do pottery or they can take a year and a half off to look after their parent. Uh, or you know, they can do the grand tour that they used to, the Aristocrats used to do in Europe and become a more cultured person.

That is what I think would really, really change the arts generally. Because I don't think we're going to alter capitalism at this stage. Um, as much as I would, as much as I would like us to, um, and much as I would invest in guillotines for that very purpose, I don't think.

It's going to happen. So taking away the need to get over these barriers and taking away the ability of companies like Amazon to dictate the terms of existence for artists would uh, be a, ah, huge thing, I think.

Lithos

No, it is, it's, it's a very good point. And yeah, thank you. That's um, that makes sense. I mean I, I tend to be more of the um, Stick, um, Jeff Bezos in one of his dick rockets kind of thing.

Heather

Look, I'd vote, I'd vote for it. I would vote for it.

Lithos

I have certainly, I've worked in education for a while in the past and seeing subjects like the arts gradually be eroded and um, defunded, unfunded, uh, to the expense of things that will inverted commas get you jobs, you know, like business studies and um, you know, you're talking about. I think that's a really horrendous, um, path we're taking now where we're actually thinking of art as a secondary to human existence and making money is more important, whereas art is so vital.

And what makes us as humans distinct from anything else?

Leraje

Well, yeah, I mean when we did the, the Devil's Discourse part the other day, um, I said that there's good evidence to suggest, um, anthropologically speaking that uh, art, literature, painting developed alongside uh, linguistic ability and how we develop things like speech and writing.

And general intelligence. So it makes no sense to sort of look at the world as a place where money is the reason why we exist rather than, ah, art should be the reason why we exist. Sorry.

Heather

So you could, you could look at that, um, that distinction, right, between, like, the death of humanity subjects and the rise of, like, vocational in inverted commas subjects like business and all these kind of things. You can look at that as an argument between critical thinking and acceptance, right? Because I. I feel very lucky to have studied philosophy in English, which I loved very much, but I took two courses called Critical Thinking.

So I feel I. I was taught to look at the world with, uh, a distrust for authority that couldn't justify itself. I was taught to look for patterns. I was taught to think about power structures. And I was, you know, all these things. What, what is on the page, what happens in written communication?

What are people trying to cover up what is conveyed? How can you, you know, what is the meaning of a system or a structure rather than just like one work of art, really? And, you know, the fact that fewer and fewer people are studying the arts, literature, philosophy, and those studying more things where it's like, here's what you do to get this far to make a load of money.

Don't question the system. Don't think too much about it. Don't try and think about meaning. Don't think of your place in these systems. Don't think about power. Don't think about politics. Um, to me, it's just very obvious why that's happening. Not to be all, you know, like, conspiracy theorists, but I think there comes.

Leraje

A point when it's so blatant, it's not really a conspiracy theory.

Heather

M. Exactly. I mean, the funding of the humanities, uh, generally is just the worst thing that could happen. Which is why I'm always being really annoying about philosophy and always bring it up, please do.

Lithos

Well, also in simple terms, if you just want to look at it in simple money terms, certainly for a country like the uk, the amount of money that has been brought in by the arts over the years, you know, even if you were just going to look at it, uh, you know, which I'm not suggesting anyone does, in money terms, it is actually profitable as well.

Heather

And the way that those, um, artistic ecosystems also contribute to things like health. Right? So when I used to live in Edinburgh, I live in Glasgow now. Used to live in Edinburgh. I used to volunteer at my local library. And once every two weeks we took a mobility van and we picked up, uh, elderly and disabled people in the community and we took them to the library to, ostensibly to change their books, but actually they got some cake, we had some biscuits, we had a cup of tea, coffee, we had a blather.

It was like a wellness Cheque for everyone and they could come and get um, batteries for their um, hearing aids. We took, we took a 101 year old lady to vote, uh, one time and she caused a real riot. But these things, these like ecosystems around the arts contribute to people's longevity and wellness.

Right? Because some people hadn't really seen anyone else that week and they got to come in and they got to take away their crime books on audio, audiobook which they all just. Old people listen to the most brutal fiction. Incredible. They love it. But all of this is around art, uh, and we don't talk about enough, we don't talk about the kind of like social aspects of it.

Um, and I really think we should because for every, it's not just someone writing a book, it's the books being in a library. It's people being, opening a library and making that available to the elderly and um, people who need to look for jobs and people who are new to the area, you know, people who are asylum seekers.

These things are so important and they, they don't function around business in the way that they function around the arts. That's my soapbox moment. Sorry about that word. Yeah.

I knew we'd get political.

Leraje

Can't help it really.

Lithos

There is, you know, the focus on the cold, harsh realities of life and having to you to make a living and make money. And if art is pure escapism, well, what is wrong with taking flights of pure imagination, uh, by reading something, watching something, listening to something, um, that actually will lift your spirits a lot more than any amount of money can.

Heather

Mhm. Yeah.

Pike

When you said what's wrong with taking flights of pure imagination? I was going to say, you know, like watching GB news or, or something.

Leraje

Jesus Christ.

Lithos

Now that uh, is proper horror. That is proper, absolute grim.

Heather

People say to me like how can you write books like this? And I'm like, look around you man. You live in a much more horrible world.

Ligeia

The gothic and horror traditions have long been obsessed with uh, the monstrous feminine. M. So do you feel that the monstrosity can be reclaimed as like sort of sacred power?

Heather

Uh, what an interesting. Yeah, just there's a lot of interesting words going on in that sentence. I think that, I think the kind of like monstrous feminine, which is a great phrase, um, is in the middle of being reclaimed very much by a lot of writers and filmmakers and uh, musicians even. You know, this idea of, of, of women as monstrous, uh, inherently I think is being reclaimed and I think it is a recognition of uh, the, the material reality of women's lives, you know, that we are very much less stable and a kind of.

I don't mean like mentally. I mean like, our bodies are less stable. Our bodies are like constantly in flux. They're constantly going through things. You know, you, you have your childhood and that's fine. And then you go through puberty and then you're on like a. And then you're on a cycle for like the rest of your life in a way that men just kind of aren't.

And you know, if you're a, ah, genderqueer person, if you're a trans person, you're entering into that cycle as well. This, this very changeable state all the time. And um, I think that is being reclaimed by people as a site of narrative and as a site of uh, exploration. Um, I don't know, the word sacred is, I think, tripping me up in that question because I.

Yeah, like, what do we mean by it? I guess like.

Ligeia

Yeah, I struggle with finding a better word. What I mean is probably as a female, I identify as a female, I would love to take that monstrosity, um, monstrosity, whatever it is, and, and stop making it sound negative because it doesn't have to necessarily. Yeah, but you know, we don't, we don't mean sacred as other religions.

Like somebody blessed it with something. No, that's not what I mean. But something higher than it is just a monster that is scary and bad and killing everybody. Valuable. It has values. Yeah, you know, like feminine rage or anger. It's just like uh, being in your own body and being happy with it and maybe not needing a uh, partner or being able to disagree.

M. Stand on your two feet, however, feed you have, whatever, you know.

So maybe this is what I pressed into that word. Probably.

Heather

Yeah, I guess what, I guess what you're describing as like sacred I think of as like, like uh, an appreciation of the material and the, the differences of material because, you know, like I'm, I'm 39 now, so all of my social, uh, media algorithm is always about having a baby, you know, like pregnancy, uh, test adverts.

And I'm like, you're so up the wrong tree here. But uh, I get so much about like the divine feminine, which is always about the womb and about, you know, ah, what's the, the kind of like maiden mother dichotomy and how you move from this into the other. And I hate it because I, I do think that the physicality of a woman is amazing because I think the physicality of everybody is amazing.

Like the Human body is so incredible, you know, Like I, you know, the menstrual cycle is amazing, but also so is like your spleen, you know, or like the human skin is so incredible. The, the brain, the way the brain works, like the, the fact that when you get sick, obviously I'm thinking of you (Leraje) having a slight cold here.

The fact that you, like, create like a. A material substance to try and get germs out of your body. It's incredible if you think about it. You know, the things that are happening in the human body on a daily basis baffle me so much. And the fact that we have like a day of health, health in every 30 days is what a miracle.

You know what I mean? Like what an actual miracle. You think of everything that can go wrong with you, physically or mentally. The fact that we remain largely healthy for most of our lives is incredible. So in that way, I, I do see the like, female physicality as just another part of that.

But I think it has been made socially taboo and it has been made monstrous, and that has been made other. So I guess what you're talking about is like a sacred, Sacred kind of way of looking at that. I would just bring it into what I think is like a sacred physicality for everybody, you know, and like, there are things that are seen as monstrous when it's women, like, ageing, like choosing to have children, choosing not to have children.

Basically any progress that a woman can make in any direction is seen as monstrous in some regard. I would love for us to just bring that back into this, like, amazing view we have of physicality and humanity and light life and the choices that we make. And I think it's incredible if someone has nine kids.

And I think it is incredible if a woman has no kids. You know, these. Everything in the way that we choose to use our physical bodies in the world is kind of sacred, I guess.

Ligeia

Just, if you have kids, please don't lock them into your attic.

Heather

Please, I beg you.

Or at least crack a window if you do.

Be like an 80s parent. Give them a bird, give them a cigarette, leave them in the car, but crack the window. That's totally fine.

Leraje

Yeah, you were around during my childhood then. Okay.

Heather

I have to start every event for this book by clarifying that it's not a book about my mother.

My mother never left me in a car with a cigarette and the window open.

Leraje

It's interesting what you were just saying about that idea of sacred and the reclamation, uh, uh, going on in the arts at the moment. I recently read Madeline Miller's second book. Uh, Circe (pronounces it 'sers') or Circe (pronounces it 'sersee')?

Pike

Circe (pronounces it 'sersee').

Leraje

Circe ((pronounces it 'sersee')). And, um, that idea is very much present throughout that whole novel.

Heather

M. You know, I was really moved by the other day. Do you know, um, an American writer called Jason Reynolds?

Leraje

Yeah, I know the name.

Heather

He's a. He's really wonderful. And he was being interviewed, and the interviewer said to him, like, do you have anything that in, like, your life that approaches prayer?

Ligeia

Right.

Heather

And I'm not a religious person at all. But he basically said that his mother, uh, was, like, getting older and was reaching a stage of her life in that he. In which he had to care for her and he had to do a lot of, like, physically intimate things for his mother, like washing her and cleaning her and, you know, dressing her.

And he said, uh, what is that if that's not prayer? And he said he was worshipping at the altar of the only creator who'd ever known. And that really, really moved me because, like, that's an appreciation of the physical. Right. It's an appreciation of creation, but of ageing and of, like, physical relation and all these kind of things.

And it's very material. It's very rooted. So I was really moved by that.

Ligeia

Yeah. Yeah. This is what I told my mom, because I used to be Christian first. And they. I hope they will never listen to this. I love you guys. But, like, yeah, they pray a lot. And sometimes when they visit, they always visit for like a week, two, even a month, because we are far away.

And they go like, oh, you stopped praying. And, like. Like, no, I didn't. I just do stuff for this family. This is me praying. So I absolutely understand. I had to reach a point where that actually makes sense. Call it a prayer. Prayer, whatever. It is my way of praying, loving people that mean so much to me, my friends, and, like, doing stuff for people.

I think that is so much better than just to be kneeling and, oh, you know, like, whatever. Whatever helps you. But, yeah, see, this is where.

Heather

This is. This is where I become the interviewer, uh, because I want to ask you about how you became Satanists.

Leraje

Oh, God Almighty. Yeah. That we could be here all night.

Heather

Yeah.

Ligeia

I can tell you what it means to you. I was.

Leraje

I think for some of us here, uh, they used to be religious and got sick of it being forced on them. And, um, for some of us, we've never been religious. Um,

but we did. The episode before this, I think, was a very short one about, um, how romantic Satanism, kind of the works of people, uh, inspired by Paradise Lost and the Shelleys, uh, Byron.

That kind of how that inspired our political and um, literature based Satanism.

Heather

Surely the best type of Satanism is uh, literature based Satanism. It's beyond.

Leraje

Well yeah, I mean if we can just lounge around sipping absinthe, you know.

Ligeia

Oh yes please.

Lithos

I mean I would say it's on the basis that it is. Satan is a metaphor for the self. Uh, it is about the self. So everyone has come to it from. For different reasons. So some of us as a rejection of religions um, that were sort of, for want of a better word enforced upon us um, from an early age as uh.

Some of us came from an atheist background, you know, um, everyone has their own reasons and it is more a thing about self realisation and um, sort of acknowledging yourself rather than some kind of um, outwardly imposed worldview for want of a better, for want of a better phrase. I could be putting this better but no, I think it's this time of year um, where there's a lack of sunlight and some of us Satanists do actually like sunlight, some don't.

Heather

But the way you're describing it is like uh, it's very existentialist. Right?

Leraje

Like yeah, yeah definitely.

Heather

Like I have a, I have a really, really bad tattoo on my back um, which is a Jean Paul Sartre quote and it's uh, in French which as we've already established I don't speak but it says the quote is um. I cannot escape from myself. Right. Every. Your engagement with the world is rooted in yourself and your physicality and your choice of moral authority and your choice of uh, how you move in the world, how exists what you do.

So it's very, it's very kind of humanist in the way that you describe it.

Leraje

It is humanist really. It is but it's uh, you know I think, I think if there is a bedrock for it it would be around the ideas of autonomy and consent and, and being informed about the things. And that ties into how we appreciate books and literature as well and poetry and things like that as well I think.

Lithos

Well, and having a lot of fun with it.

Pike

Yes, I think fun. Fun is a uh, is where a distinction lies because if you go to a humanist meeting there you'll meet a lot of really fine people. But it is, I hate to say it, it's pretty dull. Whereas you know I'm here for the ritual and the robes and the you know, opening gates of hell, all that stuff.

Leraje

Well yeah, I mean team in the ceremony is great but it doesn't compare to holding Up a skull and a black candle and getting Hail Satan at the top of your voice. Does it? Yeah, that's much more fun.

Heather
The performance element is so fun.

Leraje
Yeah, yeah, definitely.

Heather
Yeah.

Ligeia
Some of us, yeah, we. We love it. I love it. I need it. Absolutely love the, the imagery.

Leraje
Oh, hang on a minute. This started off as an interview of Heather.

Heather
Do you know what? Uh, I have interviewed so many people. Uh, chairing writers is another part of my job and I did that for many years before I had a book out. So I have this horrible habit on stage where I'm being interviewed, of starting to interview the interviewer. What do you think?

Right, yeah, this is what I think. Yeah, exactly. Everybody has, uh, an angle that's interesting, I think, and the Satanist angle is particularly interesting.

Pike
So you mentioned your other novel, Orpheus Builds a Girl. Um, and then, uh, you've written a short story collection as well, and then Carrion Crow. If someone was coming to your work, uh, for the first time, has never read anything, what would you. You like them to read first to get that first impression?

Heather
Oh, man, that's a great question and a hard one. Um, it's so funny because, like, you know, you're not supposed to have favourite children. I think you always do. You always do have a favourite book, which is the most recent one, because you feel like you have hopefully moved on as a writer and improved since the ones you wrote earlier.

Um, and it's really weird for me because Orpheus just came out in America in September, so, you know, that's like three years after it came out in the UK.

Heather
So it's having all these new readers and I'm kind of like, oh, I don't look at.

Ligeia
That's old.

Heather
That's my old child. Don't worry about that. Um, I feel like Orpheus probably is a good place to start. I feel like Orpheus is very different to Carrion Crow, but it shares a lot of the same DNA and the same interest, interests. Um, but I think it is probably a little bit more shocking.

I think it, you know, maybe. I'm not sure. You have to. You have to tell me. I think it's shocking in a different way and I think it has different literary influences. Like, you know, Lolita and Frankenstein are very huge influences on, uh, Obvious. But it's also very inspired by A True Storey as well.

So it has a lot of the same process in it as well. But I get. Guess, um, a little like, different Gothic influences too. So, yeah, I guess just start at the beginning and then Follow me through is what I'd like people to do now.

Ligeia

I'm very excited to read this book.

Heather

But you know what's weird? I have, uh, my next book is completely different to these two.

Leraje

Go on, tell us about the next book.

Heather

Well, it's really, uh. It's difficult to. I don't know how to describe it, really. It's again, very kind of JG Ballard influenced. And it's going to be like a book of interconnected fictions about, like, violence and politics and the media and what it means to be alive now and how you try and exist sanely in a world that is determined to make you feel insane.

Ligeia

Whoa, that sounds good.

Lithos

My interest is peaked.

Heather

Yeah. I hope it doesn't let you guys down.

Leraje

Yeah, well, I think you can guarantee we're going to be reading that when it comes out. Okay. Uh, I just wanted to say thank you very, very much, Heather, for coming on. It's been fantastic to have you on and thank you so much. We really, really enjoyed talking to you.

Ligeia

And couldn't wait to do this.

Leraje

No, we've been counting down the minutes, haven't we, collectively?

Heather

Oh, honestly, it's such a pleasure to speak to people who, you know, really got the book.

Leraje

Good.

Ligeia

We will try to get more books.

Heather

Yeah. I hope Orpheus lives up to expectations too.

Leraje

Can't imagine it won't.

Pike

It would be awkward.

Heather

You invite me back on in your life, like. Well, this one was.

Leraje

This was shit Heather what the hell happened?

Leraje

I've been Leraje. Hail Satan.

Ligeia

Ligeia. Bye bye. Hail Satan.

Lithos

Hail Satan. And I will reiterate what I said at the end of the last podcast. Buy the book. Read the book. You will not regret it. It's fantastic. Thank you very much for your time, Heather. Hail Satan.

Pike

I'm, um, Pike. And Hail Satan.

Leraje

Heather, you don't have to Hail Satan.

Heather

I've been Heather Parry. Hail Satan!

[Collective hurrah!]