

# Skins and Bones: The Horror of the Real

JOHN EDWARD MARTIN

*"No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone."*—Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

*"Our heartache poured into one another like water from cup to cup. Each time I told my story, I lost a bit, the smallest drop of pain. It was that day that I knew I wanted to tell the story of my family. Because horror on Earth is real and it is every day. It is like a flower or like the sun; it cannot be contained."*—Alice Sebold, *The Lovely Bones*

Modern horror, to be effective, must be *real*. It must be manifest, experiential, and inescapable by the usual means of covering one's eyes, thinking happy thoughts, or muttering desperate prayers. Unlike the shadowy, half-imagined terrors of the gothic or the fantastic chimeras of the supernatural, much modern horror is neither imaginary nor fantastical — it is disturbingly concrete and inextricable from the mundane world of the everyday. In fact, it is sometimes synonymous with the mundane and the everyday. Edgar Allan Poe shows us, in the opening of "The Fall of the House of Usher," that horror comes not from the dream of the reveler upon opium — those often fruitful and pleasurable sources of Romantic imagination — but from "the bitter lapse into everyday life — the hideous dropping off of the veil."<sup>1</sup> It is the grim and inescapable *reality* of the structure — its presence, its solid mass, and its sickening atmosphere — that, for the narrator, gives the House of Usher its hideousness, just as it is Roderick Usher's hyper-sensitivity to the material world that gradually twists his more delicate intellectual and imaginative faculties past the brink of insanity.

Similarly, it is under such conditions of “absolute reality” that Shirley Jackson’s Hill House goes quietly “mad,” taking its occupants along with it.<sup>2</sup> Eleanor Vance, like Roderick Usher, is a sensitive who finds the stark realities of her life (not just at Hill House, but prior to her arrival there) too much to consciously or unconsciously bear, and her ultimate confrontation with them is, quite literally, a car-wreck. Nothing, it seems, is more horrifying or destructive to our sensibilities than seeing the world for what it really is. Susie Salmon learns a similar lesson in *The Lovely Bones*, when her idyllic childhood of middle-class suburban comfort is shattered, not by vague, unaccountable terrors or demonic forces, but by a quiet and unassuming neighbor, Mr. Harvey. It is only afterwards, when removed from the world she once knew — into a fantastical afterlife where dreams hold sway — that Susie understands that “horror on Earth is real and it is every day.”<sup>3</sup> Like flowers and sunlight, it is natural, and bursts forth with its own living, if not always life-affirming, energy.

These examples are just brief illustrations of the larger concerns of this essay: to examine the ways in which horror, as an aesthetic mode or sentiment, is bound to an experiential perception of “the real” — one that engages our physical sensations, feelings, emotions, and primal intuitions, as much as our rational consciousness or our speculative imagination.<sup>4</sup> To say that modern horror is “realistic,” mundane, or everyday, is not to say that it is any more comprehensible to the rational mind, or any less shocking to our sense of normalcy, decency, or moral order, than the gothic or the fantastic. What allows horror to enter the usually safe and predictable confines of “the real world” — at least as we perceive it — is precisely its ability to disrupt and destroy those assumptions of normalcy and moral order, not to mention our illusions of physical safety and mastery of the world around us. Horror makes us aware that “reality” may not be what we think it is, that its grounding may lie beyond our limited perceptual or cognitive abilities, or that its rules may not be what either our rational scientific theories or our religious and philosophical doctrines have taught us to accept as truth. It presents us with the disturbing possibility that what we experience as everyday reality is itself the product of a diseased imagination that is incapable of directly confronting what it only intuits through dreams or religious visions or works of art. When those illusions of reality begin to crumble in the face of some undeniable physical monstrosity, then we see that it isn’t the monster that is unreal — it is *we* and our world of symbols, laws, and boundaries that lack substance. The monster is *not* a symbol, and it knows no laws or boundaries; it cannot be banished by fleeing to reality, because the monster *is* the real.

At least since Poe, horror writers, artists, and film-makers have wrestled with the need to represent the experiential reality of horror in a way that can evoke its concrete origins, effects, and consequences, even while working

within the symbolic and imaginative limitations of artistic expression. While some have preferred to retreat entirely into the world of fantasy and the supernatural, as a way of emphasizing the irrationality and wonder of horror (its sublime aspect), and others have chosen to explore its psychological depths and permutations (its gothic aspect), what Poe and his descendants in horror bring to the genre is an abiding interest in and understanding of the concrete, bodily experience of horror that causes us, as readers and viewers, to recoil in disgust or cringe in pain at the sight of that which refuses to be contained by the page or screen.

The difficulty, of course, is that both literature and film rely on those psychologically and socially constructed meanings — including language itself — for their form and expression. Short of literally striking their audiences in the face — an idea not completely renounced by purveyors of increasingly realistic sensory technologies like 3-D and virtual reality — artists in all genres still face a seemingly insurmountable barrier between what can be *said* or *seen*, and what horror, in its truest manifestations in experience, actually *does* to those who encounter it. That barrier, between “reality” as we are capable of perceiving and conceptualizing it, and “the real” that we can only intuit or traumatically experience, has been explored most thoroughly by theorists in the psychoanalytic tradition of Lacan and Kristeva.<sup>5</sup> And yet, as I will argue below, many of the insights provided by Lacanian analysis were already perceived and expressed in the literary work of Poe, and more concretely, in that of H. P. Lovecraft, who offers us one of the most cogent theorizations of modern horror and the limitations of language as a medium for expressing its reality.

But even if literature and film ultimately fall short of the reality of horror, I believe that there is another route to understanding and revealing its implications. The pedagogical situation of the classroom — of “teaching horror” — can offer opportunities for engaging with “the horror of the real” in even more complex and effective ways than merely reading or viewing horror through artistic media. If, in fact, “horror on Earth is real, and it is everyday,”<sup>6</sup> then it is likely within the range of most readers’ direct or indirect experience. Indeed, I’ve found that students almost can’t resist their own compulsions to draw on that experience when discussing horror texts — because the reality of horror is always a personal one. But if we also think of “the real” as a more evasive, incomprehensible level of experience that resists rational or imaginative attempts to disavow or contain its presence — the Lacanian assumption — then it is one that may require the tools and techniques of the analytic or therapeutic setting to fully appreciate or understand.<sup>7</sup> Through a combination of traditional reading and interpretation of horror fiction and film texts, individual reflection and storytelling, shared experiences of horror, and experiments in the conversion of “lived horror” into written or visual form, we can

begin to conceptualize and analyze those “terrifying vistas of reality” that Lovecraft identifies as the source of all our greatest fears, but also some of our most sublime and pleasurable experiences (what Lacan and Kristeva might call its *jouissance*).

These pedagogical approaches require a word of caution: Evoking personal horror, either through discussion or artistic production, comes with risks that any teacher, like the writer or the therapist, must be aware of and responsive to. This is, of course, true of any pedagogical setting or subject, but it can be particularly challenging for teachers of gothic and horror literature. As we approach whatever is “real” in the representation of horror, we should be especially cautious about what we ask students to do or say in the classroom, keeping in mind that there are limits to our roles as teachers and mentors. Even so, I think there is a great deal to be learned from students in these situations, as much as from the texts, or the instructor’s own theories and preconceptions.

Discovering “the horror of the real,” then, can be seen as a collective project — one that evokes comparisons to the two epigraphs that open this essay. Like the motley, but intrepid cast who gather at Hill House to investigate its “conditions of absolute reality,” reading horror requires its own specialized setting — one that involves physical presence, controlled isolation, a degree of intimacy, and a willingness to be open and intellectually honest. We should try, though, to take effective precautions against the potentially dangerous, or at least disturbing, influences of such an atmosphere. Self-destructive surrender to “whatever walks there” needn’t be the price of our curiosity, as it was for Eleanor Vance. Hopefully, the result will be more like Susie Salmon’s healing catharsis — “Each time I told my story, I lost a bit, the smallest drop of pain” — or at least, a recognition of the natural place and function of such stories in coping with the everyday horrors of human experience.

## Real Horror

*The time has come when the normal revolt against time, space, & matter must assume a form not overtly incompatible with what is known of reality — when it must be gratified by images forming supplements, rather than contradictions of the visible & measurable universe. And what, if not a form of non-supernatural cosmic art, is to pacify this sense of revolt — as well as gratify the cognate sense of curiosity.* —H. P. Lovecraft, “Letter to Frank Belknap Long, 22 February 1931”<sup>8</sup>

Horror is a revolt against reality. It is also a revulsion brought on by our encounter *with* the real. These are the two insights that connect the Gothic Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to the mod-

ern horror of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. And it is the fiction and theory of H. P. Lovecraft (largely inspired by his literary master, Poe), supplemented by the psychoanalytic insights of Freud, Lacan, and especially, Julia Kristeva, that brings the shadowy, religion-haunted, and often sentimentalized nightmares of an earlier age into contact with the skeptical, materialistic, and science-obsessed sensibilities of the modern era. The result is an understanding of horror that acknowledges its reliance on language, imagination, and cultural forms (particularly, gothic and supernatural forms) for its *expression*, but also its material origins in something more primitive, animalistic, and physiological — that is to say, its grounding in “the real.”

In several of his letters, and more systematically, in his seminal essay, “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927), Lovecraft lays out his own theory of a “cosmic horror” that is at once infused with supernatural and fantastic elements — “the normal revolt against time, space, & matter” — but ultimately grounded in something more intrinsic to human biology and psychology: a primitive fear of the unknown, or what he calls, “the sense of outsideness.” In the letter to Frank Belknap Long cited above, Lovecraft defines the role of “outsideness” in literature as, “the aesthetic crystallization of that burning & inextinguishable feeling of mixed wonder & oppression which the sensitive imagination experiences upon scaling itself & its restrictions against the vast & provocative abyss of the unknown.”<sup>9</sup> This sense of outsideness, he suggests, is derived from a combination of “the natural physical instinct of pure curiosity” and “the galling sense of intolerable restraint” experienced by all human beings when faced with their physical and perceptual limitations. Intellectual, emotional, and imaginative longing, frustrated by natural limitations, gives us the intuitive sense of powerful forces “outside” of ourselves that ultimately control our destinies. Or perhaps, he also suggests, it is *we* who are “outside,” and *they* who are real and tangible. Either way, our awareness of this “outsideness” provokes a profound experience of existential horror.<sup>10</sup> The conjuring of supernatural or fantastic forms to represent this unexplainable “abyss of the unknown” is, in essence, a revolt of the human imagination against its vague intuitions of a reality too vast or unapproachable for the psyche to represent or signify through its usual mechanisms.

In “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” Lovecraft traces the literary history of horror from its origins in classical mythology, medieval fairy tales, and folk traditions, through the Romantic and modern eras (the early twentieth century). There he argues that while superstition and religion may be the cultural origin of many of our expressed fears and beliefs in the supernatural, these feelings persist into the era of modern science and reason through “an actual physiological fixation of the old instincts in our nervous tissue, which would make them obscurely operative even were the conscious mind

to be purged of all sources of wonder."<sup>11</sup> We can have horror in the absence of superstition or religion precisely because it operates independently of those cultural forms — it is grounded in our physiology, in our "instincts" and "nervous tissue."

For this reason, what Lovecraft calls "cosmic horror" must address the physiology as well as the psychology of the reader — it should evoke the psychic longing for forbidden knowledge or experience, but also the crushing limitations of the human mind and body that torment us with those unimaginable realities that lie beyond our grasp. To accomplish this, Lovecraft takes a lesson from his master, Edgar Allan Poe, in echoing the sentiment — expressed by Poe in, among other things, "The Philosophy of Composition" — that, "Atmosphere is the all-important thing, for the final criterion of authenticity is not the dovetailing of a plot, but the creation of a given sensation."<sup>12</sup> Sensation or effect, rather than rational narrative, emotional satisfaction, or moral truth, becomes the hallmark of both Poe's and Lovecraft's peculiar brand of horror. But it is not sensation merely for the sake of sordid "thrills" — Poe would always seek to distinguish his work from those lesser sensationalist writers of the popular periodicals of his day, just as Lovecraft often renounced his own affinity with other "pulp" writers of his era. Instead, both men see sensation as the most effective tool of the writer who wishes to evoke the material origins and consequences of true horror (or beauty, passion, love, or whatever other "effect" the writer wishes to create). Sensation, more than ideas, connects us to the reality of horror.

But the sensation of fear is only part of the overall effect that horror evokes — the other part is that alienating sense of "outsideness" that separates humanity from the true objects of our longing or our fear.<sup>13</sup> Early horror writers, particularly those in what Lovecraft calls the "romantic, semi-Gothic, quasi-moral tradition" of the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, often lack this quality of "outsideness" because of a persistent "human element," that is, the tendency of the Romantic writer to take "a definite stand in sympathy with mankind and its welfare."<sup>14</sup> Placing the heroic or tragic individual, or the writer's own humanistic or religious values, at the center of their writing, Romantic authors often fail to recognize the *inhuman* and *amoral* quality of horror — or, at least, our perception of its inhumanity and otherness. Lovecraft's own "cosmic fear," on the other hand, presents humanity and its concerns as irrelevant and futile in the face of unknown forces that operate beyond our intellectual and moral judgment. Horror, he suggests, is inherently opposed to *idealism* in all of its typical Romantic guises. Horror, in fact, resides in the failure of idealism to provide coherent meaning.

And again, it is Poe who Lovecraft sees as the first artist to comprehend this distinction and use it to create legitimate horror:

Poe...perceived the essential impersonality of the real artist; and knew that the function of creative fiction is merely to express and interpret events and sensations as they are, regardless of how they tend or what they prove — good or evil, attractive or repulsive, stimulating or depressing — with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathizer, or vender of opinion.<sup>15</sup>

By removing the moralistic and sympathetic concerns of the typical Romantic writer, Poe, in effect, establishes “a new standard of realism in the annals of literary horror.”<sup>16</sup> In this case, the reality of horror is conveyed through the recognition that what is real remains “outside” of human perception or judgment — it is beyond good and evil, and can’t be made to conform to the humanistic fantasies of its author or readers. This troubling recognition, as much as the material presence of the monster or supernatural force, is what gives horror its power over the mind and body of its victims.

Of course, “realism” is not a term typically associated with the strange and macabre fictions for which Poe is generally known: the gruesome and awe-inspiring figure of Death gliding through the halls of Prince Prospero’s castle; the terrifying return of Ligeia in the body of her living rival, Lady Rowena; or the unnatural life and cataclysmic collapse of the House of Usher. Yet, while acknowledging that Poe is adept in the use of the fantastic, the bizarre, and the supernatural — poetic elements which add vividness and beauty to his writing — his real gift, as Lovecraft sees it, is his mastery of “the very mechanics and physiology of fear.”<sup>17</sup> Lovecraft notes the “scientific skill with which every particular is marshaled and brought into an easy apparent relation to the known gruesomeness of material life.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, all of the tales cited above, and most of Poe’s other fictions, revel in the physicality of his horrors, and present them with almost clinical accuracy and scientific objectivity. Take for example, the opening paragraph of “The Masque of the Red Death”:

The “Red Death” had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal — the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour.<sup>19</sup>

Here, we not only see the horrifying physical devastation and progress of the disease, but also its inevitable consequence: to be “shut...out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men.” Horror, as Lovecraft insists, removes us from the social and moral world of Men, and leaves us to suffer its very tangible agonies and terrors all alone. Descriptions such as this one

reveal the material and organic, as well as the inhuman and amoral, nature of fear in Poe's writing, and lead Lovecraft to conclude that, "Poe's weird tales are *alive* in a manner that few others can ever hope to be" [his italics].<sup>20</sup>

It is Poe's tradition of "living" horror — not the more genteel, romanticized, and moralistic Gothicism of contemporaries like Hawthorne and Irving — that Lovecraft credits for the emergence of modern horror, and which he traces through the work of later American writers like Ambrose Bierce, Fitz-James O'Brien, Robert Chambers, and one of Lovecraft's own much-admired contemporaries, Clark Ashton Smith. It can also be seen, he suggests, in individual works by authors not typically associated with the horror genre, including Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* and other ghost stories, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," and in much of the short fiction of Mary E. Wilkins. More importantly, Lovecraft finds it in his pantheon of "Modern Masters," all British, with whom he claims direct kinship and influence: Arthur Machen, M.R. James, Lord Dunsany, and Algernon Blackwood. As different as these writers are from one another, in both style and temperament, what they share is a clear skepticism of the easy idealism and sentimentality of their Romantic predecessors, as well as the pervasive influence of literary realism and naturalism which operates, in the case of a writer like Bierce, through the emphasis on sharp, sometimes gruesome, physical detail, vivid sensationalism, and an almost cold emotional detachment from the suffering of his characters. In a writer like James, on the other hand, sympathy and idealism, while present in many of his characters, often serve as only a superficial cognitive defense against more disturbing undercurrents of psychic dissolution and despair. It is the intuition of "outsideness," as Lovecraft puts it,<sup>21</sup> that ultimately overwhelms the cultivated sensibilities of the Jamesian protagonist.

But it is in Lovecraft's own work, and in those writers who come after him, that Poe's "living" horror finally becomes ascendant in American literature. It survives beyond its Romantic origins, through the rise of literary realism, and into the modern era, largely because it is grounded in those material realities — including biology and the physical, psychological, and social sciences — that these later generations accept as the foundation of most, if not all, human behavior and ideation. After Darwin and Freud, not to mention the devastations of the Civil War and World War I, most Americans could no longer doubt their basic animal natures or the power of the material world and larger social forces to shape human destiny. But accepting those realities and understanding or controlling them are two different things — and in our failure to master the ultimate sources and drivers of human existence, we again experience that sense of "outsideness" that Lovecraft sees as the foundation of "cosmic horror."<sup>22</sup> If anything, our acceptance of materialism and



objective science only moves us closer to the recognition of our own helplessness and insignificance in the face of a horrifying reality that lies beyond our limited capacity for control. The narrator of Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" perhaps puts this dilemma most succinctly:

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.<sup>23</sup>

The irony here, of course, is that science and reason have, until this moment in history, been the principle weapons defending us *against* supernatural horror and all its imagined evils — but only because we believed that horror resided in those fantastic forms and mythic sources. Freed of medieval superstition, religious myth, and Romantic idealism, we might imagine that the shadows of the invisible world would be exorcised and dispelled once and for all. But Lovecraft, here and in his other tales, reveals that it is precisely because of science's capacity to disrupt our "placid island of ignorance" and instead reveal "terrifying vistas of reality" that we are now on the verge of something truly horrifying — a direct knowledge of "the real." The most "human" reaction, he suggests, is not to rush forward into such realms of reality, but to either go mad or "flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age."<sup>24</sup>

Where, then, do we turn? If horror exists at the extreme limits of both imagination and objective inquiry, then what hope do we have of escaping it? Perhaps the answer is to avoid those extremes, and maintain our placidly ignorant psyche somewhere within the mundane limits of our everyday, socially constructed, and carefully policed world of symbolic meanings and cultural forms. This is precisely what psychoanalysis suggests that the Ego, operating under its own "reality principle," seeks to do: to construct and maintain a functional world of meanings, somewhere between the primitive drives and impulses of the Id, and the cultural and moral demands of the Superego. By sublimating both fear and desire into forms that are more accommodating to what we believe to be "reality," we can avoid the feeling of "outsideness" that Lovecraft posits as the origin of true horror.

Like Lovecraft, however, Freud finds the stability of such illusions of normalcy and control — manifested in everything from our belief in a coherent "self" to our grandest cultural narratives of religion and national identity — to be tenuous at best, and prone to the same horrific disruptions as the idealism

of the Romantics or Lovecraft's "placid islands of ignorance"<sup>25</sup> to which even the so-called "realist" clings. Indeed, it is Freud's theories that carry Poe and Lovecraft's legacy of real horror into the modern world.

### *The Horror of the Real*

*"There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects."*<sup>26</sup>

Julia Kristeva's seminal book, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), offers a remarkably similar analysis of the origins and effects of horror to that of Lovecraft, albeit through the lens of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Kristeva, too, sees at the root of horror an intolerable intuition of "outsideness"—of being separated, perhaps for our own good, from something primal and formless, but undeniably concrete and "real"; something that "fascinates desire" but also repulses and sickens us with its otherness. But where Lovecraft often looks outward, into the cosmos and its boundless mysteries, for his "terrifying vistas of reality," Kristeva looks inward, towards our most primitive levels of consciousness and physical instinct. There she discovers and names the monstrous reality that ultimately confronts us with its horror: the abject.<sup>27</sup>

The abject is theoretically related to what Freud called "the uncanny"—the disturbing feeling of familiarity and strangeness that, he believed, was at the root of most successful horror fictions, but also many real neuroses and phobias.<sup>28</sup> For Freud, the uncanny represents some disavowed or repressed aspect of the psyche—a traumatic memory, an inappropriate desire, or an uncomfortable identification—that manifests itself in strange feelings of fascination and repulsion, compulsive thoughts or behaviors, the imparting of human qualities to inanimate or dead objects, or strange delusions of "doubling" or pursuit by one's own shadow, reflection, or mysterious twin. The uncanny is, in essence, a vague and sublimated *recognition* of ourselves in the monstrous other; thus, its repulsiveness and horror. Kristeva's abject, on the other hand, is "different from uncanniness, more violent too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory."<sup>29</sup> The abject is a deeper, darker feeling of estrangement than the uncanny, with more primitive origins and more dangerous implications.

Building upon Lacan's descriptions of the earliest stages of infantile con-

sciousness and identity formation — in which our sense of a cohesive “self” emerges out of a series of (mis)recognitions, projections, and eventual symbolic identifications — Kristeva suggests that prior to any mirroring or imaginative self-formation comes an earlier, more traumatic and terrifying encounter with what she, like Lacan, calls “the real.” For Lacan, the real is simply that aspect of the primitive psyche connected to basic animal nature — the body, the instincts, our responses to the material world — that were once indistinct from the infantile psyche, and prior to any recognition of self and other. The real represents for him a lost paradise of undifferentiated being, governed solely by the pleasure principle and accessible, if at all, only in the most basic responses of the id, but never representable in the symbolic world of language, or even in the imaginative space of dreams. Indeed, he says in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* that, “Is not the dream essentially, one might say, an act of homage to the missed reality — the reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening?”<sup>30</sup> The real is “never attained” because it exists outside of the psyche’s imaginative and symbolic functions, which define the only “reality” to which the differentiated “self” ever has access.

Kristeva, however, suggests that the process of differentiation begins earlier than Lacan’s “mirror-stage,” and through a more painful and terrifying separation from the real than he might suggest. Before the psyche has come to recognize itself or to form those imaginative identifications that will eventually lead it into the symbolic world of language, *the body* begins to separate out that which can and cannot be a part of itself — namely through physical expulsion, feelings of revulsion, and rejection of whatever fails to bring pleasure or comfort. This separation of what cannot be assimilated or even acknowledged by our primitive psyche becomes the foundation of “the abject,” a permanent, yet un-representable element of experience that is both present and functional in our later development, but forever evading the cognitive boundaries of meaning:

familiar as it [the abject] might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, it now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A ‘something’ that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safe-guards. The primers of my culture.<sup>31</sup>

Here, Kristeva echoes the sentiment of “The Call of Cthulhu” in acknowledging that our tenuous grip on “reality” as we know it — through the symbolic constructs of “culture” — rests on a foundation of something “radically separate,” a “weight of meaninglessness,” “a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me.” The abject is the “primer of our culture” because

without it and its separation of what cannot be a part of us, our culture, as well as our sense of self, would collapse in the horrifying encounter with... *something*.

Why is the abject so incompatible with symbolic meaning, language, and culture? It is because the abject exists prior to these things, in opposition to them, and refuses to be constrained by their rules and boundaries. It is, Kristeva tells us, "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."<sup>32</sup> This is why it is related to both Freud's "uncanny" and Poe's "perverseness" — two other "composite" sentiments that disrupt identity and order. And this is precisely why the abject was rejected from the psyche to begin with — expelled as waste, purged like a poison — because it couldn't be contained by the body or the mind. Although it is a natural part of us, and necessary to our existence (if only by its expulsion), the abject is, to our way of perceiving, *inhuman*. When we experience certain powerful sensations anew — repugnance, disgust, revulsion, perversion — we feel the reverberations of that earlier primitive instinct to flee or reject, to deny what cannot, *must not*, be real. The abject and the feelings it elicits thus become the early warning system for all existential threats to our sense of self and the social realities that we've constructed: "abjection notifies us of the limits of the human universe."<sup>33</sup> Again, we see the conjunction of Kristeva's inner exploration with Lovecraft's cosmic awareness of that sense of "outsideness" that threatens our most desperately held notions of reality.

But there is something else in the abject that Lovecraft seems only obliquely aware of, but which is at the heart of Kristeva's understanding of horror, and that is our *longing for it*. This longing is not the same as desire, which requires a recognizable object, and operates according to a symbolic logic; the longing for the abject is more adequately described by the term that both Lacan and Kristeva designate as *jouissance* — the pleasure of excess, of transgression, of unrestrained passion. As Kristeva says, "It follows that *jouissance* alone causes the abject to exist as such. One does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it. Violently and painfully. A passion."<sup>34</sup>

This is the same pleasure that we derive from the perverse, from sado-masochistic acts, or from the wild orgiastic immersion of the carnivalesque — pleasure combined with pain, with revulsion, and with terror. It is also the strange pleasure and longing that we find in particular subjects of horror — a type at once recognizable in the fiction of both Poe and Lovecraft: the *deject*. The *deject*, according to Kristeva, is one who has developed a peculiar type of pathology — one defined by the lack of "place," a stray who is constantly in search of an ever-receding location. That is to say, the *deject* is one who has *become* the abject — a thing rejected and expelled from humanity, lost and

wandering in search of that wholeness of which it can never again be a part: "For it is out of such straying on excluded ground that he draws his *jouissance*. The abject from which he does not cease separating is for him, in short, a *land of oblivion* that is constantly remembered."<sup>35</sup>

Compare this description to any of a number of Poe's or Lovecraft's narrators who are constantly in search of, or wandering through, nameless lands, strange seascapes, "Cyclopean" architectures, or books of forgotten lore. These are placeless places that defy any sense of real space or time — and yet, they are experienced as real and concrete scenes of encounter, violence, and physical horror. They are also places secretly longed-for and sought-out by these narrators with perverse determination (I am thinking particularly of Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym or Lovecraft's narrators in "Call of Cthulhu" or *At the Mountains of Madness*, among others). The same might be said of Mr. Harvey, the serial killer in *The Lovely Bones*, who constructs an elaborate underground bunker for his own violent excesses (and perhaps of Suzy Salmon who cannot resist the allure of the cornfield); or, in a different way, of Eleanor Vance, whose journey to the Hill House is at once a literal escape from her previous reality, and "a straying onto excluded ground" where she will indulge her longing for self-torment. All are dejects, and all are drawn to the very places and things that threaten their own destruction.

So is this, then, the only value of the abject — to point the way towards self-annihilation through an embrace of our own rejected otherness, or, on the other hand, to serve as a warning never to stray too far from our "placid islands of ignorance"? Those are, of course, the two options offered by Lovecraft, at least in his fiction, where anxious narrators repeatedly warn us not to follow in their footsteps, never to open the forbidden books, or else be prepared for madness and oblivion. But Kristeva hints at another possibility, and it is one which recognizes the place of the abject, and of horror more generally, in our lives — and particularly in our art and literature. She notes the centrality of the abject in religious ritual, especially rituals of defilement and cleansing. The rejection or expulsion of the taboo, the exile of the other, and the condemnation of transgression (sin) are, of course, inherent to most religious traditions — they are, in fact, the central catharses of religious ritual.

They are also, she argues, the central catharsis of art — but not in the same way. Poetic catharsis is not a "purifying" act, meant to rid us of the abject and deny its power over us, but rather a "harmonizing" ritual that attempts to summon the abject and open the subject to its *jouissance*, without abandoning us to its destructive excesses. It is an act of "immersion" in the abject that "arranges, defers, differentiates and organizes, harmonizes pathos, bile, warmth, and enthusiasm."<sup>36</sup> In this sense, artistic horror bears a close, and not incidental, resemblance to the Dionysian rituals of the ancient Greeks,

or the modern celebrations of Carnivale and Mardi Gras — performances of *jouissance* that can evoke the abject, even revel in it, but also mingle it with the more temperate waters of imagination and symbolic meaning. Horror in these guises, while still real and powerful, is not, of necessity, self-destructive. So it is in great works of art, poetry, music, and dance — they have the power to “harmonize” even those forces which, in our everyday lives, seem dissonant and irreconcilable.

This is not to say that art can fully tame or integrate the abject — that remains forever outside the grasp of human imagination. But it can make the abject approachable and, perhaps, useful, without being annihilating. Anyone who has ever thrilled at the terrors, shocks, and even the gory excesses of their favorite horror movies can appreciate how pleasure, and a certain degree of pain, can be strangely comingled — not so far as to make us wish for that reality outside of the theater or the pages of the book, but far enough to satisfy our irrational longing for the *jouissance* of the forbidden. This observation of the ritualistic value of horror also brings us back to the question of pedagogy, and how we might approach the teaching of horror in a setting that, in many ways, mimics that of the ritual stage. A classroom, like a church or a therapeutic setting, offers a relatively safe and bounded space in which to explore the otherwise unexplorable — to speak about the unspoken, and the barely imagined levels of consciousness that art can evoke. The goal, as Kristeva suggests, is “harmonization” through “immersion.”

### *Really Teaching Horror*

What Poe, Lovecraft, Kristeva and other purveyors of what I’m calling “the horror of the real” suggest to us is that horror begins at home, in the mundane, everyday experiences of life. It often occurs while we are engaging in our most basic animal functions: eating, sleeping, defecating, having sex, wiping our noses. Kristeva famously opens her meditation on the abject with a story/memory of a certain food-loathing (“the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection”) that serves as a catalyst for horror:

When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk — harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail pairing — I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with the sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it.<sup>37</sup>

Because of this primal revulsion, the body rejects the milk, and as a result is separated from it as well as from the human imagos associated with it. And

because the infant still doesn't distinguish "self" and "other," this rejection is experienced as a rejection of a part of "me"—the beginning of an abjection that at once includes and excludes the nascent self; the beginning, also, of that sense of "outsideness" that infuses all later experiences of horror.

When I share this example with students, many are puzzled by the word "skin" in Kristeva's description of the milk. Most have never tasted fresh milk, or even milk with heavy cream, so the notion of "skin" on milk is, as intended, repulsive, but unfamiliar. This observation inevitably leads to a discussion of what they, the students, find repulsive or horrifying about certain foods, liquids, textures, tastes, etc. The idea that horror can be so basic is strangely appealing—it makes horror personal—and the enthusiasm with which many leap into detailed descriptions and dissections of nausea-inducing sensations can be, well, nauseating. But the exercise makes Kristeva's point beautifully: we all know horror intimately, and while repulsed by it, we also revel in the sharing of it.

A similar exercise can be conducted concerning less visceral, more amorphous sensations, such as aversions to certain sounds, mannerisms, places, or even colors and words. What makes us uncomfortable, anxious, or fearful of these things, and why? Can we explain or embody those fears in some concrete example, like the skin on the milk, or are we forced to use vague, elusive descriptions, re-enactments, or even recreations of the experience in order to fully understand it? I've encouraged students to try each of these methods—within the bounds of personal comfort and safety—and to share them, if possible, in the classroom. The results, including written journals, drawings, recordings, and performances, often provide us with our first "texts" for our analysis of horror; texts which require the eye of the analyst as well as of the literary critic. One such exercise, done together, involves a reading from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*—the chapter entitled, "The Whiteness of the Whale." After reading the chapter, I ask the students to do a simple pencil drawing, on dark construction paper, of an object or animal that provokes a sense of terror in them. A host of spiders, snakes, dogs, and the occasional odd duck or rabbit emerges. I then ask them to reflect on what about that animal provokes such feelings of terror or nervousness—personal experience, imagined dangers, stories or legends, films they've seen, or perhaps just its appearance, shape, or color. Finally, I ask them to color their drawings *white*, like Ahab's whale, and to reflect once again on the possible effects of such a simple alteration in the creature's appearance. Does it evoke a greater sense of terror or strangeness? Does it appear absurd and comical? Does it sap the horrific power of the initial image by "white-washing" its salient features? Whatever the answers, the exercise lends a deeper level of personal awareness to our reading of Melville's whale, and more importantly, of the subtle, name-

less causes behind both Ahab and Ishmael's obsession with the animal. If anyone in the room can be horrified by the sight of a white snake, or, to echo another famous literary text, "a dimpled spider fat and white," then perhaps the horror of the white whale becomes a little more real as well.

To extend such personal encounters with physical horror into the realm of art and literature, though, also requires an understanding of the boundaries that separate the two. While Kristeva's abject can be echoed in simple feelings of revulsion or nausea, what lies beyond those sensations remains obscure. Can art reflect "the real" more concretely and directly, or, is it, as Lacan suggests, beyond the scope of imagination? In a recent seminar on "American Gothic," I posed the question another way: "Can the gothic be real? Or can the real be gothic?" My question was aimed at drawing out the distinction between lived experience and the representation of that experience in a form often defined by its conventionality, traditions, and recurrent patterns of meaning. Could we, for example, view the Maysles brothers' 1975 documentary, *Grey Gardens*, as a "gothic" text, or does its foundation in autobiography and documented history remove it from the realm of genre fiction and its inherited conventions?<sup>38</sup> Here, the distinction was really between what we might consider the mundane, everyday "reality" of two women's lives and the artfully filmed, directed, and edited "story" of those lives as captured by the artists. But it also raises the question of whether even the most seemingly "objective" technology or method—in this case the camera and the documentary style—can pierce the boundary between our highly symbolic cultural forms and imagined meanings, and something that could be considered "real."

Similarly, I read to the class an account of a World War II survivor of the bombing of Nagasaki, in which the narrator details his childhood memories of the event in language that might evoke the most fantastic descriptions found in an Edgar Allan Poe or H. P. Lovecraft tale:

What a sight! The biggest thing I ever saw, the biggest that ever was, was sticking way up into the sky from the other side of the mountain. It was like a cloud but it was like a pillar of fire too. It looked hard and soft and alive and dead all at the same time, and beautiful and ugly, too, all at once. The light it sent out was all the colors of the rainbow. It almost blinded me with the glare. It kept getting taller and taller all the time, and wider and wider, twisting and rolling around just like smoke from a chimney. It was growing from the top; I mean the top was getting pushed up from the inside. Then the top began to spread out, so that it looked like an umbrella opening up... After a few minutes I saw something coming up the road that looked like a parade of roast chickens. Some of them kept asking for "Water! Water!" I wasn't burning up any more. I shivered. I ran back to the cottage. I would rather blind myself than ever have to see such a sight again!<sup>39</sup>

Here, the vivid, fantastical imagery, the contradictory descriptions of the mushroom cloud, and the mixture of the sublime and the surreal (or absurd)



in the contrasting vision of the burned victims causes both a physiological reaction in the speaker and that fleeing from the reality of the events that is the hallmark of gothic fiction. The contrived language of the gothic seems to be the only one capable of describing what was, to its victims, a very real horror. But given the historicity of the event, and its consequences for those who lived through it, would it be reductive, even offensive, to call this account “gothic” in nature?

The question proved more daunting than it first seemed, as the class offered example after example of similar accounts drawn from their own lives. Being in Louisiana, many had vivid memories of Hurricane Katrina and other experiences of real suffering and terror, some of which certainly bore a resemblance to events that we’d been reading about and seeing on film. However, when pressed to decide if these experiences were, indeed, “gothic” in nature, many of the students had trouble reconciling their own understandings of their experience with the highly artificial narratives and metaphoric complexities of the fiction.

The results changed, however, when I re-stated the question this way: “Is ‘horror’ real, or can the real be ‘horrific’?” At this, I received a resounding “Yes!” Citing not only their own experience, but the definitions offered by our authors and theorists, the students argued that “horror,” rather than “gothic,” is the term that most clearly draws the experience of the real and its various literary and cinematic representations together. Horror, they seemed to feel, is not a genre, but a function, a category of experience, like love or faith or the sublime — it carries with it, not a set of conventions and forms, but a set of sensations and effects. Thus it could more adequately convey the *reality* of the lived experience.

This, of course, only solves the problem of terminology, not the problem of representation. If we call a book or a film a “horror” text, rather than a “gothic” text, does that bring us any closer to understanding what that text is doing or revealing to us? Here, the medium of film seems to have certain advantages over literary texts. While applying the term “gothic” to real-life experiences seems clumsy and artificial, students generally have no problem identifying it as a form of literary representation — its conventions are well-established, its language and effects are easily identified, and even its psychological depths are readily analyzable through the tools of psychoanalysis and literary theory. Using “horror” rather than the “gothic” seems to open up the range of texts available for study, and introduces elements not always associated with traditional gothic conventions — realism, objective narration, scientific analysis, literal horrors that defy psychological or supernatural speculation. But still, the language of horror fiction is limited, as all language is, by its inevitably closed system of signification, by the weight of its history and inter-

textuality, and by its frequent failure to adequately convey "horror" in a way that is experiential, rather than referential.

The same might be said of film, of course — a medium rich in its own history and referentiality, as well as with its own set of conventions, techniques of artifice, and "authorial" manipulation. But there does seem to be something more visceral about the experience of horror on film that students find especially enticing, or especially repulsive. Film confronts the senses in a way that literary texts can only gesture towards or reproduce in the imagination; it attacks our eyes, our ears, sometimes even our sense of touch, as our skin crawls and the hair rises on the back of our neck as the ominous music rises in the background. When the monster springs on its victims, we leap from our seats, scream, cry, laugh, and experience that unique feeling of *jouissance* that thrills and terrifies us into a passionate frenzy. At least it can do these things, if we are sensitive and attentive enough to become immersed in the experience of the film.

I use films extensively in courses on gothic and horror fiction precisely because they seem to bring us a bit closer to the lived experience of horror in a way that can be experienced, contained, and analyzed in a group setting. I ask my students to be attentive, not only to the familiar elements of plot, character, language, allusion, and cinematic technique, but also to the individual *effects* of the film: their own emotions, physical sensations, thought processes, and even their moral reactions to what they are witnessing. These elements of the cinematic experience are usually the first things that we discuss in the immediate aftermath of our viewing, when they're fresh and powerful, saving the meta-analysis for later. I also ask them to write down such impressions either during or immediately after the first viewing of the film, and save those notes for comparison after a few days of discussion or writing on the larger themes and ideas. Did their physical and emotional reactions to the film influence their formal analysis? What did they find most "horrifying" and why; was it related to their own experiences of "the uncanny," "the perverse," or "the abject"? Did those sensations conflict with what they thought they wanted to say about the film's ideas, formal qualities, or cultural significance? Were there certain reactions that couldn't be adequately theorized or put into language, and why do they think this is so?

This way of analyzing film is certainly not technical or critical in the formal sense — but it is analytical, and in some cases, therapeutic, as students are encouraged to explore their own subjective responses both before and after they try for objective reasoning. The results, I think, can be enlightening. Students come to recognize the difficulty of reconciling the various levels of horror into a single cohesive "interpretation." They start to distinguish between craft or method (intention) and individual effects. They begin to draw out the important distinctions and boundaries between how horror is

experienced and how it is represented. Most importantly, perhaps, they are given room to “immerse” and “harmonize” themselves with any aspects of the abject that their own experiences of horror might evoke.

The last part, of course, is one that must be approached with caution. To evoke and confront the abject can be, for many students, unsettling and potentially traumatic. I have had students burst into tears at the sight of violence or gore on film, leave the room when the sensations become overpowering, or refuse to discuss certain details of their own responses that touched on something too personal to share in a group setting. I warn students of these risks before the course begins, and when we prepare to watch or read texts that have the potential for such complications. Fortunately, students who take such courses or watch such films are generally a self-selecting group of horror-buffs, or at least adventurers, for whom the pleasant nervousness of horror is more salient than its terrors. Still, some are not prepared for the degree of personal emotion or unsettling thought that can accompany this more introspective approach to reading.

I have several strategies for channeling and containing these kinds of reactions: the first, which I’ve already mentioned, is the group “debriefing” that occurs immediately after a film or particularly intense reading. These are not class “discussions” in the usual sense, in which we’d do a more formal analysis of texts and ideas, but rather an opportunity to express and record something more spontaneous and personal. Finding that others shared their reactions, or had similar ones, can often be cathartic in itself—it reveals the collective, ritualistic nature of horror. Secondly, their own notes and journals allow for a more private response and working through of individual feelings, memories, or ideas evoked by the texts or films. These are a required part of the class—but when the assignments are due, I make sure to allow them to withhold or edit any entries that they prefer not to share in their raw form. This gives them the freedom to respond spontaneously and without censure, but also to protect whatever aspects of their experience that they feel are too private. Finally, I give every student the opportunity to meet and discuss their reactions with me outside of the classroom, not just for scholarly guidance, but to share or explain what they prefer to withhold from their formal discussions and assignments. These are not “therapy” sessions, but individualized conversations about our subject and their thoughts about its significance to their own writing or thinking about the texts. If I or they feel that actual therapy is required, I stand ready with referrals to the appropriate counseling services. But in my experience, this has never been necessary—given multiple outlets for conversation and expression, plus their own innate curiosity, and perhaps their own experience of the *jouissance* of their immersion in horror, most students thrive on the encounter.

## NOTES

1. Edgar Allan Poe, *Poe: Poetry and Tales* (New York: the Library of America, 1984), 317.
2. Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 1.
3. Alice Sebold, *The Lovely Bones* (Boston, New York, London: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002), 186.
4. I should note the similarities of this argument to Noël Carroll's elaboration of what he calls "art-horror." See Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990). While I agree with his essential definition and description of art-horror as an aesthetic genre — namely one that focuses on instilling in the audience a particular type of affect, characterized by fear and revulsion — I do not maintain his distinction between "art-horror" and what he terms "natural horror," or the horror experienced in real life, outside of the text or artistic construct. For Carroll, art-horror is a "cross-art, cross-media genre whose existence is already recognized in ordinary language" (12). But, as I will argue below, I believe that the "horror of the real," as I am defining it, breaks down our psychic distinctions between real and imagined experience and affects us in much the same ways as if our beliefs and thoughts (i.e. the knowledge that what we are reading is a fiction) mirrored our feelings and emotions (i.e. that what we are experiencing is, in fact, *real*). What's more, I am suggesting, along with Lacan and Kristeva, that the essence of horror resides outside the boundaries of what is "already recognized in ordinary language"; indeed, our experience of horror, whether in texts or in everyday life, arises from a pre-linguistic level of psychic development that resists generic definitions like Carroll's.
5. See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1981); and Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
6. Alice Sebold, *Lovely Bones*, 186.
7. Jacques Lacan distinguishes what he calls "the Real" — an element of the sub-conscious connected to physical sensations, bodily functions, and basic animal instincts — from those later cognitive functions, the Imaginary and the Symbolic, which, respectively, allow us to form the conception of a coherent self and link that self to the social world of symbols and language. I will discuss the relationship of "the Real" to the Imaginary and the Symbolic further in the section on "The Horror of the Real," below.
8. H. P. Lovecraft, *The Annotated H.P. Lovecraft*, ed. by S.T. Joshi (New York: Dell, 1997), 341.
9. *Ibid.*, 340.
10. For the most direct representation of this existential awareness, see Lovecraft's tale, "The Outsider" in H. P. Lovecraft, *Tales of H. P. Lovecraft*, ed. by Joyce Carol Oates (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco, 1997).
11. H.P. Lovecraft, *The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature*, ed. by S.T. Joshi. (New York: Hippocampus, 2000), 22.
12. *Ibid.*, 23.
13. Here it may be useful to utilize Noël Carroll's explanation of "emotions" as states that involve both "physical perturbations" (i.e. the sensation of fear or revulsion toward an object of horror) and "evaluative thoughts" (i.e. the belief that the object/monster is a danger to us). See Carroll, 26. Here, the "evaluative thought" that coincides with the experience of horror is Lovecraft's "sense of outsideness." Thus, thoughts and feelings coincide to create the full affect of "horror."
14. Lovecraft, *Annotated Supernatural*, 37.
15. *Ibid.*, 42.
16. *Ibid.*, 43.
17. *Ibid.*, 45.
18. *Ibid.*, 44.
19. Poe, 485.
20. Lovecraft, *Annotated Supernatural*, 46.
21. Lovecraft, *Annotated Lovecraft*, 340.
22. *Ibid.*, 340.
23. Lovecraft, *Tales*, 52.

24. Ibid., 52

25. Ibid., 52

26. Kristeva, 1.

27. I am, of course, not the first to apply Kristeva's theories to the analysis of horror fiction and film. See, especially, Barbara Creed's "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, edited by Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999). Others who have looked specifically at American fiction and film include Michael Davis, "'What's the Story Mother?': Abjection and Anti-Feminism in *Alien* and *Aliens*" *Gothic Studies*, 2000 August; 2 (2): 245–56.; and Kate Sullivan, "Meeting Monsters, Loving Men: Abjection and Community in Peter Straub's *Ghost Story* and Stephen King's 'The Breathing Method,'" *Paradoxa: Studies in World Literary Genres (Paradoxa)* 2002; 17: 176–99. And for applications of Kristevan analysis to the classroom setting, see Anne Williams, "The Horrors of Misogyny: Feminist Psychoanalysis in the Gothic Classroom," in *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction: The British and American Traditions*, ed. by Diane Long Hoeveler and Tamar Heller (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003), 73–82.

28. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art Literature, Love, Religion* (New York: Haper & Row, 1958).

29. Kristeva, 5.

30. Lacan, 58.

31. Kristeva; 2.

32. Ibid., 4

33. Ibid., 11.

34. Ibid., 9

35. Ibid., 8.

36. Ibid., 28.

37. Ibid., 2.

38. *Grey Gardens*, DVD, directed by Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Elle Hovde, and Muffie Myer (Portrait Films, 1975).

39. Takashi Nagai, *We of Nagasaki: The Story of Survivors in an Atomic Wasteland*, translated by Ichiro Shirato and Herbert B.L. Silverman (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1951).