

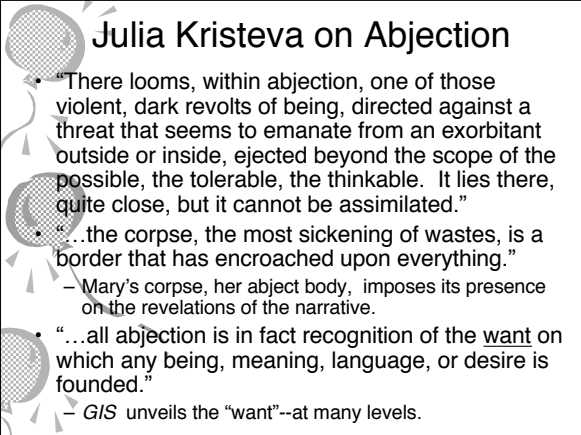


Doris Lessing: *The Grass Is Singing*

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Oates: "Reflections on the Grotesque" (1994)

- "What is the 'grotesque'--and what is 'horror' in art? And why do these seemingly repellent states of mind possess, for some, an abiding attraction?"
- "I take as the most profound mystery of our human experience the fact that, though we each exist subjectively, and know the world only through the prism of self, this "subjectivity" is inaccessible, thus unreal, and mysterious, to others. And the obverse—all others are, in the deepest sense, strangers."
- "...the grotesque always possesses a blunt physicality..." (*GIS 10-11*)
 - The Grotesque Body, according to Bakhtin, unashamedly "fecundates and is fecundated, ... gives birth and is born, devours and is devoured, drinks, defecates, is sick and dying."
- "This predilection for art that promises we will be frightened by it, shaken by it, at times repulsed by it seems to be ... deeply imprinted in the human psyche..."
- "... it is both 'real' and 'unreal' simultaneously, as states of mind are real enough... though immeasurable."



Julia Kristeva on Abjection

- "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."
- "...the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything."
 - Mary's corpse, her abject body, imposes its presence on the revelations of the narrative.
- "...all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded."
 - *GIS* unveils the "want"--at many levels.



Female / Feminist Gothic

- Ellen Moers argues female-authored Gothic texts are coded expressions about women's fears regarding the domestic space and the female body.
- Tania Modleski argues that in traditional female-authored Gothic novels:
 - The "heroine comes to a mysterious house, ... and either starts to mistrust her husband or else finds herself in love with a mysterious man who appears to be some kind of criminal."
 - At the end, "the woman is disfigured, dead, or at the very least, domesticated."
- Diane Long Hoeveler argues that Gothic heroines masquerade as blameless victims of a corrupt, oppressive patriarchal system, using passive aggressive, masochistic strategies to triumph over that system. This delineates a feminist Gothic.

Karen Stein: "Monsters and Madwomen: Changing Female Gothic." (1983).

- "The Female Gothic may thus be seen as a version of the Gothic created by women authors to explore formerly unspeakable, 'monstrous,' aspects of women's lives."
- "In their gothic narratives, women reveal deep-seated conflicts between a socially acceptable passive, congenial, 'feminine' self and a suppressed, monstrous hidden self." (*G/S* 131, 144)
- *G/S* in Chapter 1, "establishes a number of disturbing images: a murder no one wants to discuss; a married couple described as 'outlaws' and 'self-exiled'; a murdered woman perceived as 'unclean,' with dogs 'licking at her' body; an 'incurably mad' white man; a 'half-civilized native' named Moses, who is 'as good as hanged already'; a POV that desperately wants to name an apparently unnameable truth lying beneath the scene, and this rather singular point is 'stuck in' Tony's gullet. The point, of course, seems to be that the truth cannot be said." (*G/S* 5, 9, 14).

Karen Stein continued...

- "The rest of the text delineates Mary's descent from 'normal' into 'madness,' rather than the descent of her husband into madness.... The circumstances of Mary's life and death establish it as a text concerned with the politics of colonization." (*G/S* 32-33, 44, 194, 205)
- "That [concern] led me to re-examine that 'monstrous' woman's body, the native who so compliantly confesses to her murder, and the changing pattern of woman-authored Gothic texts."
- "While the monster is a physical emblem of unescapable stigma, madness is a more subjective aberration which may be overcome when the character or society ceases to regard certain types of behavior as monstrous or crazy." (*G/S* 201, 202-203, 211, 213, 221, 224)

Sheila Roberts, "Sites of Paranoia and Taboo." (1993)

- "...reinforce[s] colonial fantasies of racial and sexual otherness." (*G/S* 104, 127)
- "...the power of this reinforcement" and the "use of gothic devices" transforms a "fairly ordinary female" into an "extension" of herself and of the "uncanny."
 - Soon after arriving as a new bride, Mary develops negative feelings about Dick. (*G/S* 68, 84, 86, 100-101)
- Mary lives with the "interwoven fears of being the double of her mother and of being forced into sexual partnership with her father." (*G/S* 30, 31, 153, 186, 188)
- Mary is "trapped in colonial preconceptions" and comes to "rely on... a special relationship with a black man."
 - The "mysterious man" is Moses, and Mary becomes "hysterical as she tries subconsciously to deny her attraction." (*G/S* 134, 160, 162, 164, 172, 178)