

Immortality as Body Horror in T. Kingfisher's *What Moves the Dead*

ANNA LÜSCHER

In T. Kingfisher's novel What Moves the Dead, a retelling of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher", the fungus, mentioned briefly in the original, becomes a direct threat to the characters. This fungus embodies eco- and body horror elements, especially due to its characteristics of sentience and absorption. This essay examines how the fungus' influence over minds, bodily autonomy, life, and death turns immortality into a source of body horror. The unknown nature of the fungus and its spread add to the overall horror of the narrative.

In T. Kingfisher's Roman What Moves the Dead, einer Nacherzählung von Edgar Allan Poes Kurzgeschichte „Der Untergang des Hauses Usher“, wird der im Original kurz erwähnte Fungus zu einer direkten Bedrohung für die Figuren. Dieser Fungus verkörpert Elemente des Öko- und des Körperhorror, insbesondere durch seine Bewusstseins- und Absorptionseigenschaften. Dieses Essay untersucht, wie der Einfluss des Fungus auf Verstand, körperliche Autonomie, Leben und Tod die Unsterblichkeit in eine Quelle von Körperhorror verwandelt. Die unbekanntete Natur des Pilzes und seine Ausbreitung verstärken den Gesamtschrecken der Erzählung.

Introduction

In T. Kingfisher's *What Moves the Dead*, published in 2022, Alex Easton is asked to visit and help his old friend Madeline and her brother Roderick Usher at their remote English home since Madeline has fallen ill and is possibly awaiting death. This setup might already sound familiar to some as it is a retelling of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839). Both the original story and Kingfisher's new novel are, firstly, stories centering tightly around the eponymous 'falling' house itself. The house does not just merely denote the crumbling building but the family, too, as the text outright states: "the 'House of Usher' – an appellation

which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who use it, both the family and the family mansion” (Poe 92). This connection is reiterated and analysed more deeply by Arthur Robinson in his paper concerning “Order and Sentience in ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”. He states that ‘house’ “applies both to the mansion and to Usher’s lineage” (70). The second element that both narratives share is that they are horror stories describing the death of Madeline and her mistaken, premature burial. However, the new novel adds to the psychological horror of the burial an extended element of body horror. In addition to these two shared aspects, the stories also have the presence of fungi in common. The fungi are the focal point of my article since they appear to imply the potential for immortality, while also transforming this potential into a source of body horror. To analyse the connection between the fungi, immortality, and body horror, I will examine these three elements in conjunction before focusing on Madeline and her infected body. This will lead me to the question of Madeline’s death and her autonomy. I will describe how body horror is a distinct part of the immortality offered by the fungus. Due to the fungus being potentially unstoppable, the horrendous conditions of immortality will have to be borne forever with no way out. In the end, I will broaden my focus to the contamination of nature and the fungus’ possible immortality and, therefore, the threat of the fungus, before delving into the aspect of posthumanism. There I will argue that the threat of involuntary posthumanism is embodied by the body horror of the fungus.

In Kingfisher’s novel, the Usher house visited by the first-person narrator, the veteran Alex Easton, is situated in the fictional European country of Ruritania. Alex originates from the equally fictitious country of Gallacia, which is described as “near Moldavia and even smaller” (6). He is a woman who uses male pronouns in English. This is a compromise due to English’s lack of the specific “ka” and “kan” pronouns that all soldiers, male and female, use in the Gallacian language (23). Besides Alex, the American doctor James Denton and the mushroom expert Eugenia Potter are visiting the Ushers and the area, respectively. Over the course of the story, after Alex arrives at the Ushers’ house, it becomes clear that

the house and some of its inhabitants, like Madeline, are infested with a fungus. The source of the fungus is the tarn by the house. James Denton, Eugenia Potter, and Alex Easton work together to help the Ushers but are only able to save Roderick. Madeline supposedly dies, and the house burns down.

Fungus and Immortality as Horror

In the following, two types of horror will be central for discussing Kingfisher's novel, namely ecohorror and body horror. Generally, Carina Stopenski demonstrates in her paper on body horror and the female that, "[a]s a generic entity, horror forces us to evaluate the way terror impacts our bodies" (1), a characteristic that is present independent of the type of horror. She further writes that horror is essentially "the way that emotion is manipulated through the destruction of the body" (1), a sentiment echoed by Susan Yi Sencindiver in her article "It's Alive! New Materialism and Literary Horror", in which she describes "visceral body horror" (489) as central to horror in general. Sencindiver then elaborates that, besides the aspects of body horror present in all horror, ecohorror displays two additional key features in this context. She describes these key features to be "two related threats" (489) originating in nature: "the uncanny sentience or animation of nonhuman nature and the absorption of human characters into an unbounded natural world" (489). Stephen Rust and Carter Soles add that ecohorror has also "been narrowly defined in popular discourse as those instances in texts when nature strikes back against humans as punishment for environmental disruption" (509). 'Nature striking back' can be seen here as the fungus reclaiming human bodies by invading them. In *What Moves the Dead*, the general body horror aspect, the two threats of sentience and absorption, and nature reclaiming space are not just present but central to the story.

The horror of the original Poe story is invoked and expanded upon in *What Moves the Dead* by showing the overwhelming power and the accompanying horror of nature when it reclaims spaces and beings for itself in the form of the sentient fungus. The fun-

gus, as a part and a possible representative arm of nature, infects the water and food sources, like hares, cows, and fish, and turns that very nature from something that sustains human life to something life-threatening. The fungus is then not only speculated to be sentient but is so, using the pronoun *va* and the name *tarn* for itself. Thus, in addition to Roderick's possible madness and Madeline's undead state, which is expanded upon, the sentient fungus also becomes a source of horror. In the following, I demonstrate how the fungus is horrifying on three different levels. First, its characteristics of sentience and absorption threaten the characters' bodily and personal autonomy and life, following the conventions of ecohorror. On the second level, the fungus' control over the death and immortality of the infected body is horrifying, as the fungus is what moves the dead. Thirdly, the characters are generally afraid of the unknown nature of the fungus: its spread, characteristics, and how to kill it.¹ This is in response to their fear that the fungus has the potential to completely take them over and control their bodies, minds, and, ultimately, their lives, deaths, and futures.

Therefore, immortality is not a net positive experience but mainly a source of body horror due to the fungus, the source of immortality, being presented as an unknown threat. But how does the source of immortality turn into a source of horror, particularly of body horror? The notion of immortality being horror is especially interesting given that immortality may be viewed as a positive condition, evidenced by the enduring human desire for immortality. This constant aspiration for immortality then finds its expression in various cultural ideas such as the philosopher's stone and mythical food and drink which bestow immortality like the golden apples in Norse ("Idun"; Lindow 198–99) and peaches in Chinese myths (Welch 159; Chwalkowski 177). This longing is also reflected in more contemporary ambitions surrounding technologies like Cryonics. To answer how immortality becomes a source of horror, first, the two terms 'sentience' and 'absorption', mentioned above,

1 This fear of the unknown future is an element which, according to Fred Botting, connects the Gothic and science fiction, because "as long as [the future] is not 'predictable,' 'calculable,' or 'programmable,' 'the future is necessarily monstrous'" (111).

will be utilized to show how body horror is displayed in the story and connected to the fungus.

The Body Horror of the Fungus and Madeline

The aspect of body horror is introduced in the story even before it becomes clear that there is a threat in the form of the sentient fungus. Even more so, the first body horror incident is connected to a different, for now non-sentient fungus, which is introduced as follows:

The mushroom's gills were the deep-red color of severed muscle, the almost-violet shade that contrasts so dreadfully with the pale pink of viscera. I had seen it any number of times in dead deer and dying soldiers, but it startled me to see it here. Perhaps it would not have been so unsettling if the mushrooms had not looked so much like flesh. The caps were clammy, swollen beige, puffed up against the dark-red gills. They grew out of the gaps in the stones of the tarn like tumors growing from diseased skin. (Kingfisher 1)

These are the story's first sentences, describing mushrooms the narrator finds on his way to his friend Roderick Usher's house. These mushrooms are here explicitly portrayed as looking very similar to flesh, evoking the image of the ground being strewn with body parts – which is particularly significant because the narrator is a veteran, and the mushrooms remind him of dying soldiers. The narrator further identifies the fungus' smell, compounding the connection between death and the mushrooms, to be that of “rotting flesh” (3). The destruction of the human body, implied by the visceral description of the fungus and the smell, creates a connection between the two and introduces a first aspect of body horror early on, even though it is mitigated by the fruiting body of a fungus rather than a human body. The fungi, body horror, and the theme of death are already put into close association here. The horrific impression of these human-body reminiscent mushrooms is underlined by how repelled the narrator is: “I had a strong urge to step back from them [the fungi], and an even stronger urge to poke

them with a stick” (1). The narrator’s bodily reaction, which, as mentioned above, fits the horror genre, is crossed with an aspect of fascination when he thinks of poking the fungus. Later, this early introduction of the thematic cluster, containing fungi, body horror, and the theme of death, is repeated and expanded when, for example, Madeline walks around undead with a broken, crooked neck and “her lungs felted with fungus” (141).

The connection of this triad culminates in a scene in which Madeline admits that she died months ago (145), whereby the aforementioned threats of sentience and absorption act as two main representatives of this triad. At this point, Madeline also reveals that she has been teaching the fungus to talk (144), making it once more evident that it is sentient. Further, it becomes clear that, after the fungus became a part of Madeline’s body, the two developed a symbiotic relationship in which the fungus keeps Madeline alive, while Madeline teaches it the use of her body. While she says this, the narrator remembers that he met her several nights earlier, apparently sleepwalking and mumbling words. He now realizes that, at times, he had been talking to the fungus inside Madeline’s body, which had denied being Madeline by reiterating “No Maddy” (76) when questioned by the narrator. At this point, the difference between Madeline and the fungus remains apparent because the fungus is still learning how to use Madeline’s speech organs. Both sentience and absorption are here contained and represented prominently within Madeline’s body.

The threat of absorption is then shown, for example, when Madeline’s body and the fungus become a single entity so that what the narrator mistakes for white body hair are the fungus’ hyphae, growing in “puffs [...] like cotton wool [...] from under her fingernails, shockingly white against the bruise-black skin” (145). The fungus permeates Madeline’s whole body so that she needs to clear out her airways when talking to the narrator because the fungus fills her lungs and thus makes it hard for her to speak: “When I looked back, she had reached up to her mouth and was tugging. Long white strands came out and she wrapped them around her hand, then let them fall carelessly in her lap” (142). Her action’s casualness stands in contrast to the body horror of the fungus strands

filling her mouth and the rest of her body, removing her ability to speak. Meanwhile, she also has been teaching the fungus to speak – giving the moment a paradoxical layer, in which the fungus is gaining speech, while she is losing it. This casualness does not serve the function of making the scene less gruesome due to the action's reminiscence of removing a wayward hair in a process of familiarization. Instead, it highlights how detached Madeline already is from 'normal' human behavior and how her alien actions further distance her from the narrator. Thus, a clash of familiarity and alienation arises.

While the movement is casual in the instance above, the fungus' earlier abilities stand in stark contrast as it did not manage to produce smooth, natural movements or speech before. Its attempts to control the body it occupied often failed, and the narrator notes that Madeline's "walk was stiff and strange, starting and stopping the movements at odd places" (74) before he realized that it was the fungus and not Madeline controlling the body. The fungus' failure is further evident when it attempts to smile:

it was terrible. Madeline's lips pulled up at the corners in a terrible parody of good humor, her mouth stretching painfully wide, her jaw dropped so far that it looked almost like a scream. Above that awful grin, her eyes were as flat and dead as stones. (75)

This smile speaks to the uncanniness of the clash of the familiar and the alien. Ernst Jentsch defines uncanny thus as the "*doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate*" (11; original emphasis). It is here that horror starts, culminating in the question of how much of Madeline is now fungus.

Immortality versus Autonomy in Death

The fungus attempts to take over the bodies of human characters and, at times, succeeds in making those bodies part of itself – all the while threatening the bodily and personal autonomy of those characters. Similarly, the fungus removes the characters' autonomy

over both death and immortality throughout the story, adding to the horror aspect. Because Madeline is in a symbiotic relationship with the fungus, her four different deaths seem like a lesser example of this removal of autonomy over death and immortality. After all, she chooses to cooperate despite somehow constantly being in the process of dying: (1st) Madeline's first death had presumably nothing to do with the fungus but neither Madeline nor the fungus ever informed anyone of what happened when Madeline fell into the lake. Roderick and Denton seem unsure if she actually died at that time (131), but it is assumed that she did. (2nd) In the lake, she contracts the fungus, which leads to her second death. She died this time, Madeline reports, when questioned later, because the fungus "couldn't help but feed a little", so "[o]f course I died eventually" (145). She connects this death with a personal failure since "if [she] hadn't been so weak, the little bit va has to take to feed wouldn't have mattered" (147). It is not stated how much stronger she would have needed to be to be able to survive the fungus's needs. Her decimation seems to be an accepted cost on the fungus' side, as she admits to the narrator: it "can't keep my body going much longer, I'm afraid. I'm starting to fray at the edges. Some things break down after a while" (145) and yet neither the fungus nor Madeline attempt to change anything to prevent her next potential death. However, when the fungus took too much, and she died this second death, she came back, and the fungus kept taking over and from her. Therefore, the implication is once again that death might not be a permanent condition. Perhaps immortality is still a possibility; even though the question remains whether her body and her mind would both die or if her body would remain alive with just the consciousness of the fungus inside of it. Various possibilities are left open in the end. (3rd) Madeline's third death is then caused by her brother breaking her neck, which she survives again because the fungus takes over the function of her nerves (141). (4th) Madeline's last and, presumably, final death occurs when she is locked in the house by her brother and the narrator before they burn the house down. If Madeline managed to survive, her ability to survive all these deaths implies that if she wanted to die sometime in the future, she would probably need the fungus's consent. However, not

only the fungus makes decisions for her. By concluding that she is beyond their reach, presumably dead, her brother and the narrator justify the use of lethal force against the fungus with her as possible collateral damage. Therefore, they too make a decision concerning her life and death. The fungus, at least, had her consent. Consequently, she does not have autonomy over either her death or, vice versa, her immortality.

Therefore, the paradox of the story is that the fungus kills those it infects but grants them the possibility of immortality. At first, it appears like Madeline is still present as an individual within her resuscitated, infected body and, consequently, the immortality of the body is also one of the mind. However, when they burn the house with Madeline in it, Roderick says: “It sounds like her [...] but it’s not. It’s the other thing” (148). This statement casts doubt on the initial assumption by suggesting that Madeline may have survived physically but not cognitively. A possible interpretation is that while her body is in constant decline since being infected, her mind is too, and while the death of both seems ever present it has just not arrived yet – at least, until she is then trapped in the fire set by her brother and the narrator, Alex.

A second example for the removal of autonomy is introduced through Alice, Madeline’s maid, whom Madeline planned to infect to aid her in teaching the fungus speech – “[b]ut then Alice killed herself, that silly creature” (144), she reports callously. To begin with, Alice starts at a different level of autonomy than Madeline. Alice is a maid and as such her class and station in life afford her less autonomy even before the fungus enters the picture. Her station then enables Madeline to use Alice as an available helpmate when teaching the fungus. In contrast to Alice, the narrator, when asked by Madeline to infect himself, is more than happy and able to decline: “*The dead may walk, [he thinks,] but I will not walk among them*” (145, original emphasis). Such a refusal is a luxury Alice cannot afford. It is implied in the text that Alice killed herself before being infected because she grasps what being infected by the fungus actually means (141; 144). Alice exerting her agency in this drastic way makes Madeline’s continued expectation of the availability of her maid and her body even more horrible. Compounding on the

disregard of Alice's will, Madeline hopes that Alice's body can be revived by the fungus. Her plan for Alice's body was foiled only because Alice's brother incinerated it. It is Madeline who thoughtlessly removes Alice's autonomy. At this point, the fungus could not talk yet through Madeline's body, she is, therefore, the one to ask this of Alice. By being in a symbiotic state with the fungus, Madeline can even direct its control over the autonomy of the death and immortality of others. Leaving them at its mercy, perhaps even indefinitely.

Under these circumstances, immortality does not seem exactly desirable anymore – as immortality means sharing one's mind and body with the fungus forever. Death is not just an end for Alice and the narrator but an escape from the fungus' control. Before, it was not apparent that the all-encompassing grip of the fungus did not extend completely to death and immortality as it becomes apparent that the death and incineration of a human host removes the fungus' control. Aside from their own deaths, the characters figure out later that there are only two other viable methods of escape: first, fire and second, abandoning the Usher house, which is of course only a stopgap.

Infected Nature and Fungus-Destruction

In Poe's original story, the fungus is only mentioned twice. First, when the Usher's home is described as overgrown by fungi, "hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves" (Poe 93) and second, when Roderick's belief in the "sentience of all vegetable things" (100) is portrayed. In contrast to the literal and metaphorical house in Poe's story, which was overgrown by the fungus, in Kingfisher's novel, it is taking over everything. So much so that the house itself becomes a fungus: "The house squatted over it [, the lake,] like the largest mushroom of them all" (7). Therefore, the house is not simply a manmade, secure environment, but from the very beginning it is composed of what might very well kill its inhabitants, invoking even more the desolate manor setting of the gothic novel. Further, the house is not just personified by being described as only one face

as in Poe's story, but "a great many faces lined up together or it was the face of some creature belonging to a different order of life – a spider, perhaps, with rows of eyes along its head" (8). This implies that this building, which stands for the human family in Poe, might now be something else that does not fall with its humans in the end but is burned to the ground by them because it is less human and more of an alien entity. In the retelling, the fungus is not just growing around the house, symbolizing the danger to the family, but it grows literally within the family, out of Madeline's body, and has become a sentient being.

In Kingfisher's narrative, the house features an uncontaminated water source, which is used for drinking water by the residents. This prevents them from being infected, because they consequently have not come into contact with the lake water, unlike Madeline (156). Similarly to Madeline, only the animals that consumed water from or were in the lake are poisoned. The symbolism of the house containing an untainted water source suggests that there is still hope for the Usher family, evidenced by Roderick outliving his sister, in contrast to the events in Poe's novel.

In the following, I turn to the house and its surroundings and the fungus' contamination of water and food sources and its control over animal bodies. Hereby, the question is raised of how the presence of the fungus might negatively impact the rest of the nature surrounding the house. By contaminating food and drink, the fungus turns that which should sustain the body's regular functions into something that bestows death and perhaps immortality. You take it in when you eat and drink so that, in the end, the characters are worried that they have all been infected. However, they have been using the uncontaminated water source in the house (156) and, therefore, they remain free of the fungus. Further, the meat that had been procured is not infected because the narrator specifically avoids the infected animals by walking off the immediate grounds of the house and the lake the fungus originated from (48). Yet, the fish they catch have all been infected due to them living in the fungus-infected tarn, shown when Angus catches one and reports that it had "a gob of stuff trailing out of it [...] it were all through with stuff like slimy felt" (59–60). Interestingly, nobody

questions if the fungus infected grains or other plants; a question that remains unasked and unanswered but adds to the uncertainty of where the fungus is coming from and how dangerous it is.

Even though the characters find the fungus in dissected fish and hares, the contamination does not appear central to how they are affected by the fungus besides it being an issue of food safety for them (humans). However, the hares, Alex encounters, exemplify how the fungus is indeed a problem for other parts of nature. A hare's movements are described as a first clue: the hare "finally [...] did move, but not like any four-legged animal I'd ever seen. It put out one front foot and seemed to drag itself forward, then the other. Then one hind foot, catching up, then the other. It looked like a man scaling a sheer cliff, but on level ground" (58–59). As with Madeline, the fungus has not yet figured out how to control the hare's movements in a proper way. The fungus affects the mortality of the hares as demonstrated, for example, when Alex kills a hare, and he is appalled "when the dead hare began to crawl away" (88). Consequently, the horror aspects are not merely limited to the humans but spread to other creatures as well. The narrator's horse is also feared to be infected at one point, making the narrator worry that he killed his horse "by bringing him here" (124). This highlights how the infection of nature not only contaminates food sources but also affects loyal companions. The infection of the animals raises again more questions: if they are already dead but still being animated by the fungus, (how) will they procreate? How will the fish in the lake or the bovine on the fields survive as species? Then, when thinking about the unknown and a possible further and wider spread of the fungus, more existential questions considering the overall future of the story world are raised. These questions remain open at the end of the novel; like the question of what happens after the house has been burned down and the lake has been cleansed, but the fungus lives on inside the area's animals.

As the spread of the fungus is unclear, nothing guarantees its destruction. Therefore, instead of a clear-cut ending, the finale contains an implied question mark. The story ends with the alleged triumph of the humans over the fungus in the lake which they killed with a Sulphur fire. However, Alex requests a guard to be posted

at the lake in case of “any animals coming to the water to drink” and orders to “shoot them and burn the bodies” (160). This shows that he is aware that they do not know if the fungus has survived and might spread again (154). It is the unknown which establishes another looming horror: It is known that the fungus can spread if someone drinks contaminated water, but can it spread through the air or infected meat? Can it spread from one mammal to another, or is the water as a medium needed? Is there another way to kill it besides fire? As Alex reflects: “Surely if the water had been boiled for tea, it would be safe. Surely” (153). It might be safe to drink the tea, but it might also infect you. These questions are never answered.

Involuntary Posthumanism

In this unknowability, I suggest, the fungus is reminiscent of alien invasions in science fiction, functioning as an unknown threat which needs to be understood to be fought. Referring to something alien, a passage at the end of the book is particularly interesting when the narrator muses: “But it wasn’t evil that I was seeing here, it was alien, a monstrous alienness so far removed from what I understood that every fiber of my being screamed to reject it, to run, to get it *away*...” (146; original emphasis). This remoteness of the fungus from human understanding could only be bridged by Madeline, who might have answers and could resolve the horror of the unknown but who is primarily loyal to the fungus. At the same time, the fungus is also a threat from the inside. It stems from the lake, which is on the grounds, right next to the house, while the question of agency and whether Madeline’s mind is still her own are reminiscent of the real parasite fungus *cordyceps* (see Petruzzello), which grows in ants and controls their movements. Both outside and inside threat connect the fungus back to the body horror aspect. Furthermore, a fungus like this raises the question of posthumanism, an aspect connected to ecocriticism, which leads to the question of whether the Madeline-fungus hybrid is still human. Serpil Oppermann argues that posthumanism is not something that should solely “evoke

considerable angst" (275). While this might be true for Madeline, as she is voluntarily sharing her body with the fungus, for all other characters, in this context, it is not just posthumanism but involuntary posthumanism. A state which could last forever, is mostly a great unknown, and, therefore, some apprehension might be a reasonable response.

Conclusion

In *What Moves the Dead*, the fungus is a source of horror, death, and immortality, and the characters become aware throughout the story that it, or nature itself, might be inescapable. The fight against it might not be won. In this article, the aspects of sentience and absorption, as well as of death and immortality, have been observed regarding the motif of the fungus. Both the outside and inside threat of the fungus (coming both from outside the body and being ingested into the body) connect the fungus back to the body horror aspect. Furthermore, the fungus infecting Madeline foregrounds the notion of posthumanism, an aspect connected to ecocriticism, that leads to the question whether the Madeline-fungus hybrid is still human. Now that the sequel, *What Feasts at Night*, has been published, further exploration of the ecohorror concept in Kingfisher's work could include this novel or other novels by her, like *A House with Good Bones* and *Byrony and Roses*, both novels featuring particularly aggressive roses. *What Feasts at Night* does not answer the questions mentioned here. It depicts the narrator returning to his home country and encountering another horrific mystery. The aspects of gender roles and class could not be exhaustively explored in this article; therefore, future research could continue here.

Works Cited

Botting, Fred. "‘Monsters of the Imagination’: Gothic, Science, Fiction." *A Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by David Seed, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 111–26.

- Chwalkowski, Farrin. *Symbols in Arts, Religion and Culture: The Soul of Nature*. Cambridge Scholars, 2016.
- “Idun.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 19 June 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Idun>. Accessed 25 June 2024.
- Jentsch, Ernst. “On the Psychology of the Uncanny.” *Angelaki: A New Journal in Philosophy, Literature, and the Social Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1996, pp. 7–21.
- Kingfisher, T. *What Moves the Dead*. Titan, 2022.
- Lindow, John. *Norse Mythology: A Guide to Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Oppermann, Serpil. “From Material to Posthuman Ecocriticism: Hybridity, Stories, Natures.” *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, edited by Hubert Zapf, De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 273–94.
- Petruzzello, Melissa. “zombie-ant fungus.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 7 Mar. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/science/zombie-ant-fungus>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Fall of the House of Usher.” *Works: Tales*, vol. 1, Widdleton, 1876.
- Robinson, Arthur E. “Order and Sentience in ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’.” *PMLA*, vol. 76, no. 1, 1961, pp. 68–81.
- Rust, Stephen A. and Carter Soles. “Ecohorror Special Cluster: ‘Living in Fear, Living in Dread, Pretty Soon We’ll All Be Dead’.” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2014, pp. 509–12.
- Sencindiver, Susan Yi. “‘It’s Alive!’ New Materialism and Literary Horror.” *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, edited by Kevin Corstorphine and Laura R. Kremmel, Palgrave, 2018, pp. 483–98.
- Stopenski, Carina. “Exploring Mutilation: Women, Affect, and the Body Horror Genre.” *Journal of Literature, Culture and Literary Translation*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2022, pp. 1–19.
- Welch, Patricia Bjaaland. *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*. Tuttle, 2008.