
Robert Ziegler. *Beauty Raises the Dead: Literature and Loss in the Fin de Siècle*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002. 189p.

Darryl Hattenhauer. *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003. 236p.

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Both of these books should be of interest to scholars working in Gothic Studies. Each makes a contribution to our understanding of the Gothic, but in strikingly different modes. What they have in common is heavy reliance on psychoanalytic theory to provide a framework for interpretation. And in each book this approach imposes some serious limitations.

Ziegler's topic is the French Decadents, with whose works, even the most obscure, he shows impressive familiarity. The discussions have the rare elegance that comes from profound, loving understanding of the rhythms and imagistic possibilities of both French and English. Not only are the translations perfect, they capture the poetics of the original language, which seem to diffuse into Ziegler's English, as well. Here is an interpretative passage typical of the loveliness of Ziegler's writing: "Unlike the narrator in Baudelaire's 'La Chambre double,' for whom the illusion of the beloved's perfumed presence stops time, d'Athol reasons that, since death has broken the mechanism of Véra's heart, it has also broken the spring of the clock that strikes the eternity of their pleasure" (41). Or this: "In Rodenbach's novel, life's delicate bloom fades, its scent disperses, so that it may return as the luminous ruby of a text that is a relic of blood turned hard" (58). One of the many pleasures of this beautifully written text is that it provides a very full introduction to the Decadence, covering writers and works that are frequently ignored in other studies. Ziegler also achieves the difficult task of "collaps[ing] the traditional oppositional paradigm defining naturalism against Decadence," convincingly tracing the continuities between these movements.

Less successful is the application of psychoanalytic theory to the texts, although this aspect of his project is obviously important to him, as he provides a glossary of psychoanalytic terminology in an appendix of the book. The psychoanalytic approach does work well here as the groundwork for several compelling readings of specific texts. It is only when Ziegler uses it to attempt overarching descriptions of Decadence that the arguments become strained to the point of failure. His central premise, that we can see in the writings of the Decadents how artistic production can function as an expression of mourning is logical and could have been more illuminating here than it is, if only he had chosen to work more with

Judith Butler's extensive theorizing of the connections between mourning and the construction of gender identity. Unfortunately, Butler's work seems thrown in as any afterthought. She is not even included in the index, although she is cited in the chapter concerning the woman Decadent, Rachilde (Marguerite Eymery). And in this application of Butler's ideas, Ziegler seems to mistake what Butler considers the ordinary and inevitable process of gender identification for a description of pathology. The absence of attention to Lacan's work is also a defect in a book that takes as one of its main foci art's substitution of the Symbolic for the Real.

Instead of going to the ideas of psychoanalytic theorists who rose to prominence in literary studies in the last decades, Ziegler generally relies on the traditional Freudian attribution of unhappiness and maladjustment to improper mothering. (Melanie Klein's theories also play a large role.) Since the Decadents themselves lambasted mothers and the maternal throughout their works, Ziegler's own frequent recourse to blaming the mother closes some of the distance between critics and their subjects that is necessary to truly perceptive analysis. For instance, the intense animosity the Decadents uniformly express toward women, noted in the book's opening, is not historicized in relation to the successful entrance of women into professional life as writers and artists that for many critics characterizes this period, and on which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar pioneered literary scholarship. Homosexuality is also often treated, as it was by early psychoanalytic theorists, as a sort of acting out of anger with its roots in improper parenting, rather than as a cause of alienation in writers who felt spontaneous same-sex attraction but were trapped in a homophobic culture.

Consequently, while *Beauty Raises the Dead* seems essential to anyone seriously interested in the Decadents, due to its attention to individual texts and the stylistic and thematic connections between them, it works best as a series of beautifully written essays rather than as a comprehensive, fully historicized, picture of this Gothic moment.

Darryl Hattenhauer's study of Shirley Jackson's Gothicism is in many ways the exact opposite in approach. While Ziegler carefully identifies each writer he discusses, provides relevant biography and pertinent summaries of the works, so that even a reader with no prior knowledge of the Decadents will find ample orienting material before Ziegler embarks on his interpretations, Hattenhauer's book seems aimed at an audience of Jackson scholars, plunging us into debates with which we are assumed to have familiarity. Somewhat annoyingly, the text also seems written for readers already very knowledgeable about the details of Jackson's life. For instance, there is a sudden reference to Jackson's "obesity" with no prior explanation of when she became fat, how dangerous to her health this was, or what exactly

Hattenhauer considers obesity, for that matter. A Leslie Jackson is discussed, but we are left to figure out from the context that this is Shirley Jackson's father.

Hattenhauer also differs from Ziegler in drawing on much more recent psychoanalytic theories, especially Jane Gallop's interpretations of Lacan. However, because Jackson, unlike the Decadents, lived and wrote in a post-Freudian world, it is problematic that this study overlooks the influence discussions of Freudian theory would inevitably have had on Jackson's work. Instead of assuming that Gallop's Lacanian adaptation of the figure of the phallic mother explains Jackson's vision of the maternal and of mother-daughter relations, it might have been more productive to look to relevant Freudian theory popularized during Jackson's periods of literary productivity, and before. Contextualization of this sort of influence is also neglected. It would have been interesting to see how Jackson's use of fragmented consciousness, heteroglossia, multiple maternal imagoes, and so on, compare to similar motifs in the works of her contemporaries, especially writers she admired like Elizabeth Bowen and Flannery O'Connor, as well as her fellow Marxist, Christina Stead. Near the conclusion, Hattenhauer writes: "Society selected her as its object, and her production is the record of its contradictions" (189). Greater attention to the social, cultural and literary contexts of her fiction's production would have made this case more convincingly.

Nonetheless, this is a wonderful book for Shirley Jackson's admirers and for all scholars of women's literary traditions in that it does the important work of establishing Jackson as a significant Gothic writer. Hattenhauer's passionate sense of mission about ensuring Jackson's reputation shines through on every page. And the perceptive close readings of dialogism throughout Jackson's *œuvre* do convey the complexity of her fiction's politics.

Taken together these two books on figures who are often marginalized within consideration of Gothicism demonstrate the breadth of the Gothic and suggest many reasons for its enduring appeal. ✿