



Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin

Richard Davenport-Hines

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Beginning with the eruption of Vesuvius in 1631, an event so powerful it created a new landscape and inspired the desolate and savage paintings of Salvator Rosa, Richard Davenport-Hines traces the evolution of the gothic imagination. This revelatory history ranges through art, architecture, gardening, literature, photography, filmmaking, music, and clothing design, and takes in artists and creations as various as Byron, Horace Walpole, Goya, Frankenstein's monster, Edgar Allan Poe, Jackson Pollock, David Lynch, The Terminator, and The Cure.

Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin Details

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From Reader Review Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin for online ebook

Chris Cangiano says

A well written overview of the Gothic revival movement commencing in the 1630's with the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius and Salvador Rosa's painting of blasted and witch-haunted landscapes and following up to the edge of the Millennium and looks at the music of The Cure, the writing of Poppy Z. Brite, and the films of David Lynch. Davenport-Hines posits the Gothic as a reaction to Enlightenment values and thus focusing on the irrational, the pessimistic and the anti-human aspects of our nature. He makes stops along the way to explore key artists and works of art and offers interesting mini-biographies and interpretations showing how they fall into his general definition of Gothic but also how the meanings of those key precepts changed over time. His approach is truly interdisciplinary taking in aspects of Gothic revival in the visual arts, literature, music and film. Highly recommended.

Knibbs says

DNF. Unbearably dry and not cohesively written.

Mike Lester says

2nd go-round...always something new to absorb...

The first 100 pages or so focus extensively on Gothic and faux-Gothic architecture. If this isn't your cup of tea, I suggest skipping ahead to the chapter on Horace Walpole and the beginnings of the Gothic novel....

Bill Kerwin says

This is an extraordinarily well-written survey of the Gothic, filled with insights about theme, amusing biographical details, and a profound emotional and intellectual appreciation of the subject. Davenport-Hines is particularly good on the origins of the movement in landscaping and architecture, showing how a habit of ostentatious display by the rich and powerful was soon transformed by Walpole, Beckford and others into a self-amused--almost camp--commentary upon its excesses.

This wide-ranging, inter-disciplinary study begins in 1631 with the effect of the eruption of Vesuvius on the aesthetics of landscape painting and concludes with some sharp observations on the films of David Lynch, the novels of Poppy Z. Brite, the mutilated mannequins of the Chapman Brothers and the music of Robert Smith of The Cure.

My only criticism is that it lacks an overall philosophical unity, but this may be unfair: it is--after all--a wide-ranging work, and it does have a kind of unity in the distinctively crisp style and rich sensibility of

Richard Davenport-Hines.

U?ur K?l?nç says

Kitaptan bilgi ta??yor; gotik imgeleme dair kapsaml? bir tarihsel bilgi mevcut. Kitab? ikinci kez okuyunca tam olarak kavrayabildi?imi fark ettim. Özellikle 18. ve 19. yüzy?l goti?inin tarihsel ayr?nt?lar?n?n aktar?m? s?ras?nda, dönemin onde gelen ailelerinin ve yazarlar?n?n günlüklerinden yararlan?lm???. Bu yönyle yer yer mizaha yakla?an pasajlar da mevcut. Goti?in sanatsal ilerleyi?ini ayr?nt?lar?yla kavramak için elimizdeki tek Türkçe kaynak (Kaya hocan?n "Gotik" kitab? goti?e dair yaz?lan ilk Türkçe kaynaklardan olsa da, konuyu genel hatlar?yla ele almakta) olmas? bak?m?ndan da çok önemli bir kitap. Gotik sanat?n resim ve mimari ilerleyi?inin anlat?m? s?ras?nda çokça görselden faydalanan?lm???.

?lla ki bir ele?tiride bulunmak gerekirse, 21. yüzy?l goti?inin anlat?ld??? bölümlerde, televizyon uzant?s? olarak Dark Shadows dizisine (1966'da yay?nlanmaya ba?layan) ve sinema k?sm?nda ise Tim Burton'a de?inilmesini beklerdim. Zira hem dizinin hem de Tim Burton'?n goti?in geleneksel ve modern unsurlar?n? bar?nd?ran anlat?lar? benimsedi?i barizdir.

Frank McAdam says

Well written though the author sometimes too hard to impress the reader with his erudition. The book is strongest when discussing the early Gothic movement in England. It descends into cheesiness in the final chapter in its discussion of goth writers and musicians of the late 1990's who are largely forgotten today.

Ozan says

I hate this book. Yes, it's lots of information about gothic culture but also there is so much unnecessary subjects and infos too

Connor Coyne says

I very much love this book though it is deeply problematic; in the tradition of Gothic schlock, the author is given to grandiose, unsupported pronouncements, and clearly gravitates toward the prurience and brutality of a Matthew Lewis over the delicate subversions of an Ann Radcliffe. But I love it regardless: as a survey of the Gothic, this text is sweeping, audacious, impassioned, and fierce. A fitting introduction for those reasons. Just take some of the more outlandish claims with a grain of salt. Gothic *can* be subtle when it wants to be.

Maureen says

I enjoyed this lots, except for the final chapter, when the writer started talking about modern stuff and it slowly dawned on me that he might just be a stinkin' ol' GOTH.

Jennifer says

I have no idea why the author starts off announcing this book will cover decay, submission, vampires, inversion and despair...and then launches into a chapter almost entirely about landscaping and architecture. Mmm, grottos and crenellations. Once he gets the gardens out of his system, the book is fascinating and wide-ranging, covering a huge amount of themes and history in interesting ways. Dracula, Frankenstein, Goya, Walpole, Faulkner, Poe, The Cure, Poppy Brite--he does a great job of finding themes and connecting them through time. I ended up appreciating certain things (like splatterpunk and David Lynch) more once given the centuries of context.

Mark says

Slapdash, poorly argued, full of errors, but worth perusing...

Mina Villalobos says

This book is tightly packed with information. As I close it, I am left feeling that even the endless talk about gardens and castles and abbeys was necessary to cement an understanding of the genre, not just in fiction, music and art, but as a social and psychological state.

The analysis on art and literature are what I enjoyed the most, since it gives a political context to all reviews, shining different lights on books I had read with a different context in mind -Sade's, Dracula and Frankenstein's in depth analysis were probably my favorites.

As a tool to understand and recognize Gothic this book is really great. It does have its downsides, like the extensive chapters on architecture and landscape that even as an architect I found terribly long, especially because there were so few illustrations. A picture is worth a thousand words explaining crenellations or grooves. It also feels like it pushes the readings of the material a little too far -who knows, I'm certainly not an expert, but it does feel like at a certain point he can infer pretty much anything out of any book, given how stories can be searched for meaning. Which is cool as an exploration, but it does get confusing and far-fetched at places.

He also is pretty much a Poppy Z. Brite fanboy, and all this book is missing is a love letter to Robert Smith. As much as I like The Cure, the fanboyish glee felt out of place and not very academic, and it wasn't half as gleeful as the Brite's squealing praise.

It was a slow read for me because of how much information this packed, and that's kind of a good thing. Still, the introduction might be the best part of the book, if just for how exciting it makes the journey ahead feel. And, well, if you're looking to analyze Batman and Gotham City from a Gothic fiction point of view: This is a good book for that :P

Elle Maruska says

Interesting, engaging, and well-written. I wish more space had been devoted to gothic cinema, and perhaps the book was a bit heavily focused on architecture but otherwise I really enjoyed this and it certainly has pushed me to read more literary and cultural criticism on gothic style

B. Zedan says

Whew. This book is packed with stuff, I had to keep taking breaks. And though by the end it's clear that Davenport-Hines is just a touch, like, obsessed with Poppy Z. Brite and that other than a few things he hates the States, this is a pretty well rounded book. It's like a solid primer to one's self education in Gothic, because after reading it you're gonna wanna read all the books he mentions and quotes from.

Biggest problem for me? Didn't mention Cronenberg (hello, degradation of flesh and constant exploration of power relationships?), didn't mention the rest of the Americas ('cause like, I think that a lot of the writing, magical realism or not coming from Central/Southern America is just as Gothic as anything else).

The thing to remember when reading this is that though Davenport-Hines may be a historian, but he's also a devotee of the Gothic movements in art and culture in the past four hundred years.

Maryellen says

nicely researched ~ interesting & informative!
