

ANALYSIS

"The Haunted Palace" (1941)

Elizabeth Madox Roberts

(1881-1941)

"The Haunted Palace' is an eerie sketch of poor farmers who move their sheep into the great rooms of a deserted mansion. The wife routs what she believes to be the ghost of the old aristocrat, 'the creature or the thing,' moving among the sheep with a club and a light, by striking at it, and so shatters the great mirror. It is, of course, her own reflection that she has seen, but she does not know this and is now at ease, and she and her husband count the new lambs born that night and are 'pleased with the number they had counted'."

Louis Auchincloss

Pioneers & Caretakers: A Study of 9 American Women Novelists
(U Minnesota 1963) 134

"Although Roberts spoke of the short story as an 'unsatisfactory form' and doubted that anything 'very good can be done with it,' many of the stories in her two volumes demonstrate a mastery of what Eudora Welty calls 'the lyrical impulse'--the orderly realization of a substantial world through the magic and mystery of language. Leon V. Driskell has shown how 'Love by the Highway' manifests what Welty calls 'beauty of order imposed.' 'The Haunted Palace' has a unique place in Roberts's work as a reverse image of the harmony with nature and affirmation of the novels: Hubert and Jess befool a mansion in a will to destroy what lacks utility; Jess is herself the haunted palace."

William H. Slavick

Fifty Southern Writers after 1900
eds. Joseph M. Flora and Robert Bain
(Greenwood 1987) 417-18

Michael Hollister (2021)