



The House of Lost Souls

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The Fischer House was the scene of a vicious crime in the 1920s - a crime which still resonates as the century turns. At its heart was a beautiful, enigmatic woman called Pandora Gibson-Hoare, a photographer of genius whose only legacy is a handful of photographs and the clues to a mystery.

Just weeks after four students cross the threshold of the derelict Fischer House, one of them has committed suicide and the other three are descending into madness.

Nick Mason's sister is one of them. To save her, Nick must join ranks with Paul Seaton--the only person to have visited the house and survive. But Paul is a troubled man, haunted by otherworldly visions that even now threaten his sanity.

Desperate, Nick forces Paul to go back into the past, to the secret journal of beautiful photographer Pandora Gibson-Hoare and a debauched gathering in the 1920s, and to the dark legacy of Klaus Fischer--master of the unspeakable crime and demonic proceedings that have haunted the mansion for decades.

Because now, the Fischer House is beckoning, and some old friends have gathered to welcome Paul back. . .

The House of Lost Souls Details

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From Reader Review The House of Lost Souls for online ebook

Angela Wade says

House of Lost Souls was touted as a thrilled/horror novel, but I wouldn't put it in either classification. It's too focused on the inner workings of the main character's mind to ever really evoke any feelings of terror. I never approached a point where I felt drawn to the character or wondered what had happened during his lifetime to make him into the man he had become. The secondary characters were really useless and could have been omitted all together.

The plot of the book was a mishmash of what should have been three independent stories, none of which, when added to the rest, made the book any better. A good editor would have helped immensely, especially with regard to continuity and purple prose.

The ending was ridiculous on a level that made me literally laugh, and yet completely vague to the point where the reader is left wondering exactly what the hell just happened.

The only reason this book gets two stars is because of the descriptions of the places the characters visited (especially the monastery); they were vivid, breathtaking, and immersing. And the parts written in diary-format, while they only lasted 15 pages or so, helped me get through the heavily sagging middle part of the book, when I had gotten so bored as to want to give up reading entirely.

Cthulhu Down My Chimney 2Night says

What a superb book-and an author I am going to watch for! I was reminded throughout of the joy which reading John Harwood's "The Ghost Writer" brought to me. "House of Lost Souls" has that same slowed-down, gentle, "Between the Wars" pace, that same sense of barely-concealed secretiveness, the sense of mysteries piled in on themselves like matruska dolls. So many layers atop layers in this book, and every one a marvel. This is a book worth reading, buying, and keeping for reread.

"House of Lost Souls" is a tapestry in which no thread is left loose or unwoven. Ranging from the first decade of the 21st century, back to 1983, to 1937, 1983, 1927, and returning to the present day, Author F. G. Cottam teaches that time is indeed simultaneous, and what affects an earlier era also inevitably impinges on our contemporary period as well. Ghosts, evil, black magic, historical figures, demons from beyond, and much more revel throughout this wonderful novel. Not missing either are marvelous characterisations, interpersonal relations and conflicts, friendships, sibling amity (doubled!) and so much additional. This book is nearly perfect. Aleister Crowley and Hermann Goring frolic through the pages, against the backdrop of a charismatic German who builds an estate purposely to summon and capture a demonic being.

I highly recommend this book, and am on to enjoy Mr. Cottam's several other novels.

Laura says

When I was a kid reading a good book meant immersing myself in the story so deeply that often coming back to the "real world" was like waking up from a dream. That rarely happens now that I'm an adult, there's a part of my brain that always remains distant from the story and never really stops thinking about things like groceries and whether the dog needs a bath. I miss that feeling of really losing myself in a book and am always on the lookout for a book that can help me recreate it. I am happy to say that F.G. Cottam's *The House of Lost Souls* is that kind of a book.

I find myself wanting to use the word "atmosphere" to describe Cottam's book. Many times while reading I'll find myself skimming over the descriptions because they never stop being words on a page, but Cottam can describe the way the afternoon light slants in through a window, or the sound of a neighbor's stereo, in a way that you can see - and almost feel - the reality of the scene. Not only does this give his characters and story more depth, but it makes the scary parts much, much scarier. I found myself haunted by some of the scary images in Cottam's book the way I hadn't been since I first read *The Shining*. And not necessarily even the climactic scenes, in fact one of the scariest moments for me was when Paul Seaton notices a shopkeeper looking at him through a store window. Paul is across the street in a phone booth, the details are indistinct and they don't exchange a word, but the scene is terrifying.

The only problem I had with *House of Lost Souls* was that when I was done reading it I couldn't settle down to read anything else. Nothing else was as well written, as atmospheric and most of all as frightening as Cottam's book. In the end the only way I could solve the problem was by going to bookdepository.com and ordering both his other books. I may still be dissatisfied with other books, but at least that gives me something to look forward to.

Terry says

An ethics class inquiring into the nature of evil visits the Fischer House, an ancient mansion on the Isle of Wight. Now one of the girls is dead and the others are deteriorating. The enigmatic Malcolm Covey asks Paul Seaton to help them. Paul visited the Fischer House twelve years ago and, while it destroyed his world, he still survived it. Will the Fischer House let him survive a second time?

The set-up of *House of Lost Souls* describes a haunted house story, but the bulk of the narrative concerns the events leading up to Paul's first visit. Lucinda Grey, Paul's love interest, is working on a dissertation about little known Flapper Era photographer Pandora Gibson-Hoare. Unfortunately, Pandora's early death by suicide presents a dead end in Lucinda's research. Paul, with his crime beat reporter background, agrees to take up the hunt.

Paul's discovery of lost diary reveals that Pandora was involved with notorious occult figures Aleister Crowley, Hermann Göring, Dennis Wheatley and Klaus Fischer. Pandora grows uncomfortable with their practices leading up to a dark event at the Fischer House where her diary abruptly ends.

F.G. Cottam is a strong writer, but a more experienced writer could better handle the levels of narrative found in *House of Lost Souls*. The driving action should be in the present day, where Paul must once again face the Fischer House, but we spend too much time dwelling on the flashback of a flashback.

Cottam further muddies the waters with Nick Mason, brother of one of the afflicted students, who reminisces on an occult experience in Africa. Then, when it seems like the plot is finally moving forward, we take a detour to France and Wales.

The problems in the novel's structure could be forgiven by a strong ending, but the inevitable showdown ends on a disappointing note -- a cheat really. It's a shame because the parts that work in the novel, work really well. *Lost Souls* is never scary, but it is unsettling and its tortuous route would otherwise warrant a re-read.

John Wiltshire says

I've read a few other novels by this guy and one of them, *The Colony*, was outstanding. *The Memory of Trees* was slightly more hit and miss but still a great read, so I approached this with some anticipation and so far I've not been disappointed. The writing is dense and engaging, rich yet evocative and extremely readable. It entirely suits what is building to be an extremely unnerving story. Personally, I think scaring readers is one of the hardest things to pull off as an author. Grossing them out is easy, making them chuckle, also fairly straightforward, but actually terrifying someone in print is a genuine skill. Cottam got it just right in *The Colony*, so I have high hopes for this one. As ever, I'll update when done. As I barely have time to eat these days, reading is proving challenging, but, clearly, reading comes first...

I'm about 75% into this one and I'm finding it hard to put down. I actually took it on a plane with me the other day, and it's a hardback from the library, so you can see how engrossed I was. Brilliant storytelling. Great writing. Can't be beaten when it comes together.

Finished.

Ending supernatural stories is, apparently, very hard. Stephen King rarely got it right, in my opinion, which goes to show what a skill it is. I'm not entirely convinced by the ending of this but that aside, the journey to that slightly dodgy conclusion is fantastic. This is such a good read. It's curl up by the fire with red wine and snow outside and not a f***** interrupting you sort of book. I found it particularly fascinating because it recreated real life characters such as Alistair Crowley and Denis Wheatley. Even as a youngster, I felt something wasn't entirely right about Denis Wheatley. I read one book by him and swore off ever reading another.

Very high level of story telling skills. Great read. Spooky and fun. Recommended.

mark monday says

first off, although there is an Evil House at its center, this is not a haunted house story, not really. it is rather the tale of two men pitted against ghosts of the distant past and the evils those ghosts have conjured up. and a rather starry set of ghosts they are, as they feature such celebrities as Aleister Crowley and Dennis Wheatley. the narrative moves all over place, through various locales and backwards in time as well. but outside of the climax, very little time is actually spent within the house in question, at least in its modern and ghost-ridden incarnation.

Cottam is an effective writer and the novel is a good one. he's also a classy writer, one who puts characterization before special effects, so I was spared a lot of eye-rolling. the novel recovers from a rather risible start (sorry, the image of a soldier dressed in his camouflage gear as he spies on a funeral made me snort a little) but other issues come in to play. mainly minor: a tiring over-reliance on dropping the names of oh so many songs and a tendency to include details that have nothing to do with anything whatsoever. one major issue: he leaves a couple very important scenes out - scenes that would have strengthened the novel. I suppose I understand why we don't get to witness the 4 girls and their prof's experience at the scary Fisher

House that drive the narrative forward (but gosh that would have been awesome); I am more perplexed at why we don't see a very important confrontation and death happen at the end - it's like the author didn't care enough about that character.

but despite the flaws, I still liked this one. several reviewers did not appreciate how the novel jumped all over the place, but I thought that was one of the novel's strengths. I would have loved to have read a story about people stuck in a haunted house - but that's just not this novel and it is certainly not the novel's fault that it wanted to be something else! demon-hunting in Africa, a sad visit to a Welsh village, flashbacks to college life in 80s London... I enjoyed all of that and thought it was well-executed. I especially liked the very lengthy flashbacks to the 20s (I think that was the era). the story of photographer Pandora Gibson-Hoare's misadventures with a group of dastardly satanists were my favorite parts. poor, brave Pandora!

musical accompaniment

Alice Coltrane: Journey in Satchidananda

talkdemonic: mutinysunshine

Jimmy Scott: All the Way

Nadia says

I *should* have liked this book. After all, it's about the paranormal, the occult, 1920s flappers, and has a pretty cover to show for it. And yet, it wasn't as good as I expected at all.

Some of the detailed descriptions in this book were amazing, and there were some interesting moments as well.

However, for the most part I found it to be extremeley confusing, for one thing. After having read it, I'm not quite sure I'd understood everything. The first two chapters of the book were quite difficult to get through. So I'm not much of a fan of the writing style. Or perhaps I just can't read through a novel about the paranormal without getting confused.

Sure it's 'atmospheric' and maybe you could consider it 'well-written' but to me, nothing in this book explained why it got such good reviews everywhere.

Geraldine O'Hagan says

I hope for Cottam's sake that this haunted house novel didn't take long to produce, since it reads as a half-formed premise converted into a novel over a weekend, an approaching deadline leaving no time for editing or re-writes.

Summary: The novel introduces a protagonist, Nick Mason, an ex-soldier, using his military training to spy on his sister as she attends a funeral, for no reason that is apparent. He is then almost immediately abandoned for the second protagonist, Paul Seaton, whose defining characteristic is being Irish. We know he is Irish because every other character refers to it on every individual occasion on which they meet him. Also, he randomly uses a selection of cod-Irish phrases, which his companion of the moment never fails to react to with bemusement and confusion.

The bulk of the novel consists of a backstory stretched across more pages than it deserves and randomly parcelled out to the reader using such well-worn techniques as old diaries discovered at opportune moments and the appearance of decrepit old friends and relations of the key characters of the past, who recall just enough information to be sinister, but not sufficient to explain clearly what's happening. All these characters and long-lost diaries are written in exactly the same style, lacking almost any character-distinction whatsoever. We do however learn the motivation of our two protagonists: Seaton learnt of the supposedly evil Fischer House whilst researching the life of long-dead photographer Pandora Gibson-Hoare, an idealised glamorous flapper, in order to allow his girlfriend, an even more idealised gorgeous fashion student, to complete her degree paper on said dead photographer. This girlfriend then left him, apparently because he was spending too much time helping her cheat at her degree. Meanwhile Paul Mason is involved in order to help his sister, glimpsed at a distance in the first chapter and thereafter absent, who was exposed to the house during a rather unlikely field-trip for her own degree course and immediately and inconveniently commenced to run mad. Several other students and their professor also visited the house and lost their minds, but they are quickly relegated to collateral damage and removed from the story. None of these events seem to make particular sense, and no part of what is described obviously leads to the two characters' assumption that they are destined to destroy the evil the house contains via some gung-ho stupidity and essentially no plan whatsoever. None-the-less, this is indeed the conclusion of the book, and a very weak conclusion at that.

Basically, a trite Satanist plot featuring two macho cipher characters performing a series of random actions in order to save a trio of female plot-devices from the machinations of some famous occultists from history, thrown in to the mix in the hope that some of their supposed glamour will rub off on the text. It doesn't. Nor does it distract from the fact that there is no underlying logic to most of the characters' actions beyond the need to further the story. There is no real reason for any of them to visit the house. There is no justification for Seaton and Mason's belief that they can destroy the evil. The conclusion is reached through no apparent pattern or rationality and is thus devoid of meaning; plus, it is dull, anticlimactic and oddly places a heavy emphasis on a boxer who has had nothing to do with the novel up to this point.

In conclusion, I would ask that if Cottam indeed has neither the time nor the inclination to write horror stories, as evinced by this text, that he avoid any financial temptations and refrain from producing them regardless of ability and temperament, thus avoiding wasting any more hours of my life.

❀?RoryReads?❀ says

2.5

I wish I could rate this higher but it wanders too much.

Laurie says

A good supernatural thriller is a rare thing, and one doesn't expect it of a writer in their first novel. But Cottam manages a story on his first time out that combines suspenseful horror with actual good writing.

Paul Seaton had a run in with horror at the deserted Fischer House several years before the story begins, but thinks he has put it behind him. Then four students enter the house. One commits suicide and the other three are edging into madness. Seaton must face Fischer House again to save their lives. This scares him worse than anything- as well it should. Because the builder of Fischer House was a Satanist, who, along with his friends, has made a deal with the devil. And the deal is still 'alive' in the house. Along with Nick Mason, the brother of one of the students, he must figure out the details of the deal and put an end to it.

The book switches from the present to the past numerous times- most of the book takes place in various past eras- and Cottam manages to hold this together well, better than many authors do. What I did find confusing was the large cast of characters, some of which I continually mixed up.

Creepy things happen continually along the way, both in the present and the backstory. New revelations occur at a rapid clip. Sadly, I thought that the ending happened in far too quick a manner- it could have been much more powerful- but it's still well tied up. I'll be waiting eagerly for future books by the author.

Joanne Freitas says

Tinha tudo para ser um livro de terror assustador mas não esteve nem lá perto. Demasiada descrição das personagens em vez de descrição da casa e do que realmente aconteceu com as raparigas.

Eric says

an absolutely wonderful novella wrapped in a rather mediocre slog of a book.

If the tale were just about Paul Seaton and his experience with the house and perhaps the diary of the photographer, this would be a five stars must read low key tale of obsession and consequence of one man's brush with evil, but that it starts with a special forces guy hiding in the trees to watch his sister attend a funeral and ends with a string of conceits and coincidences rather than natural plotting and strength of characters, leaves this book at two stars.

i will, however, admit to enjoying the reversal of Mother Maiden Crone by the three male characters

edit: this also contains one of my most loathed memes in horror, the treatment of previous horror authors as practitioners of the dark arts or as though their writing were non-fiction etc, etc, etc. Horror must not be conversations about horror as genre or history in order to succeed.

Roz says

I truly savored the last few pages of this book ... I could have finished it MUCH SOONER, but I just couldn't bear to say goodbye to it. it kind of reminds me of how I felt reading December, a book I was very sad to see end. I CANNOT wait to read this author's new books!!! I think Dark Echo & Magdalena's Curse are the other titles.

Such intricate orchestration of multiple timelines leading to a present-day conclusion. I love that theme, in films as well as books. Such poetry of prose. The English (especially, the King's English --- or should I say Queen's?) never looked or sounded as good as it does as you read (& hear in your mind) this book!

The impending doom mixed with horror --- but there's no overindulgence or gratuitous violence – even the book cover is un-nerving --- a photo of a 20s girl with her face scratched out (looks like with an exacto-knife!), entering the gates of a gloomy English country house.

Contains my favorite themes --- 1920s-1930s, the UK, haunted people and places, multiple time periods, secret rituals, real people as characters, and ALL the characterizations are realistic in portrayal. The use of music as another theme of menace --- ragtime, modern songs (“Imagine”, the Fairport Convention songs) given a ragtime kilt gives so much more depth to the story. This is by far THE BEST BOOK I HAVE READ this year, and I have been SO Lucky in my choices.

If you like atmospheric, edge-of-your-seat psychological suspense (that's not to say that there are some very sedate, almost pleasant scenes within), READ THIS BOOK!!!!

Ellen says

In my opinion, this is a nearly perfect spooky book. It certainly gives a lot of authors a run for their money. The Fischer House is haunted by a beast summoned from beyond and a cast of ghosts. It wreaks havoc on the lives of a group of female students of philosophy who are interested in the "problem" of evil incarnate. Nick Mason's sister is one of the girls and he is willing to sacrifice his own life to help her recover from her experience. This leads Nick to consult Paul Seaton, a survivor of Fischer House. How Paul came to Fischer House in the first place and how he survived his encounter with evil there is a large part of the story. Nick and Paul's assault on Fischer House is the second part. A creepy cast of characters moves back and forth in time through this book. It is definitely one of those books that may be hard to read on a dark, stormy night and yet too good to put down.

Blair says

Fantastic! An original, inventive and brilliantly involving read, this is both a compelling mystery and a genuinely unnerving ghost story. I felt truly drawn in by the secrets of the Fischer house and the unorthodox nature of the 'hauntings', and found myself constantly eager to know more. However, there's just too many simple errors and annoying instances of repetition - which, I feel, could easily have been ironed out before the novel was published - and they were noticeable enough to taint my enjoyment to the extent that I can't quite bring myself to give the book the five stars it might otherwise deserve.
