



The Hawkline Monster

Richard Brautigan

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The time is 1902, the setting eastern Oregon. Magic Child, a fifteen-year-old Indian girl, wanders into the wrong whorehouse looking for the right men to kill the monster that lives in the ice caves under the basement of Miss Hawkline's yellow house. What follows is a series of wild, witty, and bizarre encounters. The book was originally published in 1974.

The Hawkline Monster Details

Date : Published September 15th 1975 by Simon and Schuster (first published 1974)

ISBN : 9780671221560

Author : Richard Brautigan

Format : Paperback 216 pages

Genre : Fiction, Fantasy, Westerns, Horror, Novels, Humor, Gothic

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From Reader Review The Hawkline Monster for online ebook

Ben Loory says

i can't even really begin to think about understanding why this book is so great. on the one hand, it's simplicity itself; on the other, it's a big shimmering cloud of mystery that floats through your eyes and into your brain and then turns to diamonds when you close the book. so, yeah, i liked it.

Arthur Graham says

Just like I always say, whiskey solves everything.

Jacob J. says

A Gothic Western?

Really? Pretentious much? What were you Brautigan, one of those writers who said '*I write so-and-so books, but with a so-and-so twist*'? I mean, seriously, give us a bre — oh! Hey, so yeah, a gothic western. Spot on. Who knew one could be so apt in labeling their work. My apologies. Well done.

Having A Go at One of Those Superficially Clever, Show-offy-but-in-reality-rather-hokey-and-stilted-and-at-bottom-irrelevant Mash-up Comparative Descriptions That Critics Tend to Enjoy

Implementing:

Imagine if Cormac McCarthy and Kurt Vonnegut travelled back in time to assassinate Jesse James only to find that Mary Shelley had already travelled *forward* in time and was using his body for scientific experimentation, and Robert Louis Stevenson was... probably somewhere near... like in the basement, with his chemicals... hearing bits and pieces... eh, forget this. It *does* have in common some of the comic simplicity of Vonnegut, dreary dialogue involving cowboys, sort of like McCarthy, and indeed a science-gone-wild gothic aspect not entirely unlike *Frankenstein*, but those are just some things that came to my mind viz. it doesn't smack of a rip-off at all. It's easy to read, elegant in its lack of verbose adornment, and it is wonderfully entertaining.

Main Characters and About Them:

Cameron counts. Greer fucks. Cameron fucks too though. Cameron and Greer also both kill people. Miss Hawkline fucks. Magic Child fucks. Miss Hawkline and Magic Child also both want to be rid of an evil (or at least highly inconsiderate) entity that dwells beneath their house. Cameron and Greer also both want to kill this entity because they will get paid. But sometimes both Cameron and Greer and both Miss Hawkline and Magic Child would rather fuck or eat than kill the entity.

Cameron counts everything; shots fired, hoof clops clopped, silverware. If there are amounts of things, he'll count them. When he is counting the amount of times someone does something, he always anticipates it to be done 1 more time. He expects to count to infinity, all the time. There is no expectation of a cut-off point for Cameron, and numbers are everything.

The House, What Surrounds it, and What is Contained Within it:

(view spoiler)

Writing this review is preventing me from getting fucked. I'm going to go get fucked.

??? says

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Greg says

My first experience with Richard Brautigan was not a positive one. I disliked *A Confederate General from Big Sur*. Karen a similar bad Brautigan reaction to her first book, but she was convinced to give him another try with this book, and I was given the task of taking it out of the library for her. She read it and gave it four stars. Since it's my job to return it to the library, and because she asked me to, I give Brautigan a second chance.

It was ok. I found it enjoyable and it read quickly and I didn't break out in any hives from Brautigan's hip-counter cultureness. There is something very 1970's about the book, and the sex aspects of the book are a little creepy in the way that decade excels in (just the thought of being conceived in that decade makes me feel a little queasy sometimes, no wonder my generation grew up to be stereotypical asexual slackers in the early 90's, too much ickiness back in our formation).

I feel like I've read this book before, though. I can't remember what books it was. But the whole *détournement* of the Western and the of the myths of the American West, you know the cowboys and indians and shit like that I know I've read before. The only person that I can confidently say I've read who also did this though was Ishmael Reed, but there must have been others. The theme is interesting but not really ground breaking or anything that gets me very excited. I can imagine in the 60's-80's when this theme was worked on quite a bit was a exorcism of sorts for authors and readers who had grown up immersed in the myths of the American West, John Wayne and *Gunsmoke*. I only know the images, and the scenes in movies about the post-war time but this is a time when little boys wanted to be cowboys and dressed up like cowboys with plastic six shooters. I think these books are in a way the expression of grown-ups still reeling from finding out that their childhood dreams had a different reality then they had believed. I could just be making shit up though.

I liked this book well enough but not enough to make me want to venture into the dangerous, childish nihilism that I imagine most of Brautigan's other books to be seeped in.

Bonus rant:

My own personal favorite *détournement* of the American West / whitey's relationship with those that were here before we got here comes from the very un-Situationist Rush Limbaugh. He railed against the 'liberal'

myths of conquest (you know the killing of in upwards of a million Native American's in the name of Manifest Destiny) on the day before Thanksgiving last year. In a rant that sounded suspiciously like a Holocaust Revisionist saying six million Jews couldn't have been killed and anyone saying that there were that many killed are falling for a Zionist conspiracy, he was ranting and raving about some number that Ward Churchill had for the number of Native Americans killed. Limbaugh ranted about the number being inflated liberal nonsense, and then he had this gem (I wish I had the actual transcript to quote verbatim), even if we had killed (I'm making this number up, I forget what number Churchill stated and Limbaugh disputed) 20 million Indians, that is nothing compared to the number of Americans have killed by the introduction of tobacco to pale faces. He added that he doesn't think that this means the Indians deserved to be killed off, but that they weren't the innocent victims they are made out to be. Ha! What a subversion of narratives for political purposes.

Gabe says

A minuscule, oddball masterpiece. Essentially functioning as one extended deadpan joke, "The Hawkline Monster" is a strange story told straightforwardly. Structured in Brautigan's characteristic fragmentary chapters (which average about two pages and sometimes contain little more than one singular thought), the plot begins with contract killers Greer and Cameron being approached by a stranger named Magic Child. She has a job for them: come to Hawkline Manor, a house in eastern Oregon but near nothing of note, and kill the monster that lives in the ice caves below the house. The wholly original voice Brautigan creates depends in large part upon the originality of his story, which, in large part, depends on its weirdness. In the book, this weirdness takes two forms, which alternate: first, the setting and circumstances are inherently weird, as if they have always been that way, and the characters simply accept them for being weird; second, additional weird circumstances pop up along the way and the characters call them out for their weirdness. There's something inherently satisfying about the off-the-wall creations Brautigan comes up with here, but you'll also be reading for their comedic payoff. Some of the laughs come from the audacity of the story's twists and turns, and some come from the ways in which he gets out of the situations he puts his characters in. And though the book can be read in one sitting, I found myself extending it for five days because I didn't want it to end. I can't remember the last time a book made me slow down to finish it. If there's any higher mark of praise you can give a book, I don't know what it would be.

Miss Ravi says

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karen says

i am willing to give second chances.

even if i am angered or bewildered or heartbroken, i am always willing to take stock of circumstances, offer up the opportunity for redemption, and allow someone back into the warmth of my heart. we should all be as

emotionally charitable as me. just don't fuck up a second time.

i read this brautigan novel with trepidation. that motherfucker burned me before.

are you distressed that i have already used variants of the word "fuck" twice in the first fifty or so words?

then you will probably not like richard brautigan. read this instead. (i love the angry southerner's review of this - teehee)

maureen assured me that this was a "good" brautigan book. unlike the brautigan to which i had been exposed in the past. if i had the correct facial muscles, i would have raised a single eyebrow at her, but i cannot do anything cool, so instead i grunted. she was in canada, and so could not hear me.

but i'm game, so i made greg get this for me from the library. (princess neither does her own taxes nor leaves her own library-rental paper trail)

and it was not at all bad.

pretty enjoyable, in fact.

i was doubly concerned before reading, because remember when robert coover wrote his version of a western; Ghost Town? i did not love that book at all. usually, his schtick works for me, but i remember being annoyed by that one. this one also does a sort of western mash-up, decorating the traditional western theme with some furnishings from the gothic genre. big isolated house, subterranean caverns, unnameable force of eeeevil. (well, pretty nameable, actually. it is called the hawkline monster, as a matter of fact)but it's got some ionesco lunacy and a lot of fuckin'. also teenaged prostitutes and a giant butler and an umbrella stand made out of an elephant's foot. also, some fuckin'.

it is a little icky, of course, as artifacts from the seventies will be in the attitudes towards the interchangeability of women as sex partners and icksome group sex.

but it is also a fast and perplexing read, where people suffer memory loss and blend into other people, sort of, and things are all a bit eerie. but funny. i don't know how to explain it. it is like watching a bunch of clowns in cowboy hats and eyeliner having an orgy. who can find the words?

i am going to magnanimously let greg read this book before he returns it to the library. maybe he will find a better way of describing it.

but for me, i will say - welcome to my heart, brautigan - watch your step...

Maureen says

a phenomenal book i keep carrying around with me and dipping into over and over again. i read it twice the first time i read it which is always the hallmark of my great favourites.

the simple story really sort of sketches in a lovely series of scenes that play out in a matter of fact way that always hints at poetry, and engages my imagination so that i can see everything so vividly. i love everything

about these characters: they are so real to me, natural and utterly charming.

though it's supposed to be a gothic western, in some ways i feel very strongly a kinship here to viking sagas or beowulf: fighting, eating, fucking, codes, women, and monsters.

Gypsy says

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Chrisl says

Hawklne Monster - Purchased this book with tax payer dollars soon after becoming director, ("chief, cook and bottle washer") of a then 12,000 population "Cowboy" county library. I enjoyed Brautigan's creativity. Sometimes felt it justifiable to buy other books by him, for a limited audience of local readers. Trout Fishing, anyone?

It is mountainous timber and ranching territory with a single small city, located about 35 miles northeast from Bend, Oregon. Near Bend, one of the places I enjoyed visiting was a down sloping ice cave, in which the regrowing quilt of ice had covered the lower steps of a wooden stairway that had led to a former ice harvesting operation. Scary place. Slippage could have been ... When seeing this title that cave comes to mind.

In the last presidential election, pro Trump voters accounted for about 75%. There are no longer Brautigan books in the library.

Emad K.A Hossein says

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Short Review of "The Hawklne Monster" GoodReads - 1/5/2017 by Emad K.A Hossein

Melki says

"It just howls and pounds on the iron door that's between the ice caves and the laboratory. We've kept the door locked ever since our father disappeared."

"What does it sound like?" Cameron said.

"It sounds like the combination of water being poured into a glass," Miss Hawkline said. "A dog barking and the muttering of a drunk parrot. And very, very loud."

"I think we're going to need the shotgun for this one." Cameron said.

...and maybe a bigger boat while you're at it...

This is a freaky acid trip of a "gothic western," Judging by that description, I should have found it delightful, but mostly I found it pretty damned dreadful.

There *is* a plot, so there's that.

Two hired guns take on the task of killing a monster that lives under a house. Lots of sex and weird stuff ensues. There's a climax, (well, several, if you count the sex), and an epilogue.

Brautigan's work seems a precursor to Bizarro fiction only it's no where near as good as most of the Bizarro stuff I've read. His dialogue seems stilted and the situations, while imaginative, tend to churn around aimlessly for far too long. There are some funny bits and I never completely lost interest, hence my very weak three-star rating.

But...all of my reading life, Brautigan has been painted as some sort of literary god.

Truthfully, I found him not only ungodlike, but pretty mediocre.

And yet...I will give his fans the benefit of the doubt.

I'll read another.

I have plenty of his books. In hardback, first editions, no less.

You see, my father was a Brautigan fan. Since he is deceased, and I can't ask him why, I asked my husband, who has also read most of Brautigan's books.

Me - "Why?"

Him - "Everybody kept saying what a great writer he was."

Me - "So after the first one, you kept reading them to see which one was the worst...right?"

Him - "Well...I thought they might get better, but they didn't."

There you have it.

Now I understand how we've managed to stay married for 23 years.

Vit Babenco says

Whatever **Richard Brautigan** wrote, his writings, despite their deceptive simplicity, possessed some hidden magic. And so it is with a playful gothic tale *The Hawkline Monster*.

"They did not look tough or mean. They looked like a relaxed essence distilled from these two qualities. They acted as if they were very intimate with something going on that nobody else could see." These are the heroes – the goodhearted killers for hire.

"When they were a hundred yards away from the house, the air suddenly turned cold. The temperature dropped about forty degrees. The drop was as sudden as the motion of a knife." And this is the seat of evil.

There is an allusion to Thanatopsis, a mysterious and a little bit mystical poem by William Cullen Bryant in the book:

“Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,
Save his own dashings – yet the dead are there:
And millions in those solitudes, since first
The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep – the dead reign there alone.”

Probably it was one of the stimuli to write this unique gothic fable, where everything, right from the start and straight to the end, defies every rule of every genre...

Rick Slane says

How many gothic westerns are there? I read this long ago and remember it fondly.

Tfitoby says

The Hawkline Monster by Richard Brautigan

My rating: 3 of 5 stars

A Gothic Western

*'This sure is a weird place,' Greer said.
'It ain't any weirder than Hawaii,' Cameron said.
As it turned out, Cameron was wrong.*

Blurb: It is the beginning of the 20th century. A huge yellow house stands in a field of frost in the Dead Hills of East Oregon. In the basement of the house are The Chemicals.

The Chemicals were Professor Hawkline's lifework - but the Professor has disappeared and his lifework must be completed by his two beautiful daughters...Who lay in bedrooms upstairs with two professional killers, Greer and Cameron. While their beloved giant butler lies dead and ignored on the front hall floor. Meanwhile, in the ice caves below the house, the Hawkline Monster laughs and roars.

Thoughts: I must admit that I have been reading outside my comfort zone with this one. I know nothing of the gothic style of literature and as far as I know I haven't read any previously. My knowledge of the western genre consists of a few interesting movies (my favourite being perhaps McCabe & Mrs Miller) and the general idea of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood that has become synonymous with the genre. So my expectation going in to this was practically zero. **The words "gothic western" just appealed to me** and the

premise of this one equally so. This being my first Brautigan also added to the newness of the experience for me.

Greer and Cameron are instantly likable heroes, interest and sympathy for them created from the very first page with their wise cracking and obvious humanity. The journey to face the Hawkline Monster is interesting and well told in short bursts of anecdotal description that is in turns funny and obtuse. The majority of the chapters are a single page in length with the chapter headings often providing more of the plot movement than the contents, this is a new literary trick for me and I really grew to appreciate it when combined with Brautigan's almost picaresque style of storytelling.

It's just a little too bizarre for me to really love it. I couldn't really work out if the "monster" was real, if the entire story was just a metaphor for religion or some such other major literary topic and maybe that is the point of gothic literature? Something tells me it might be but I'm ready and willing to listen to others explanations on the subject (hint hint.)

Although having said that I got the **sudden urge to watch The X Files** whilst reading this, the behaviour and description of the monster felt like the kind of case Mulder would have dragged Scully to investigate in the late 90s. Does anybody remember the episode **How The Ghosts Stole Christmas** from season 6? Am I on the right track now?

As my friend from Manchester said of this book, a good, unusual and interesting novel **but not great**.

Once upon a time Hal Ashby had lined up Jack Nicholson and Jeff Bridges for a film adaptation but it sadly never happened, then Tim Burton also had Jack Nicholson involved in an adaptation but this time with Clint Eastwood, happily this one never got off the ground.

Further viewing suggestions:

McCabe & Mrs Miller

Ride With The Devil

Hombre

Additional reading:

Blood Meridian

Welcome To Hard Times

The Sisters Brothers

Originally posted at blahblahblahgay

Dan Schwent says

I grabbed this one because it said Gothic Western on the cover. It was a really odd one. The writing is

simpistic but has a bit of a hypnotic quality. I'll read more Brautigan if I happen across them.

Mattia Ravasi says

Video review

A postmodern *House on the Borderland*. If you thought Cortazar's "House Taken Over" was already that, hey you're good, and also, that's intellectual postmodernism; this is the crazy hippy variety. Guns, laughs, random sex and an actual monster: what else you need?

Christoph says

My first exposure to Brautigan, although I have one of his trilogy collections in my stack. I wasnt ready to dig into that so when I came across this little volume I snatched it up. A very light read, its only about 150 pages or so and Brautigan uses a very minimalist, trimmed down language in this dark story. You could easily put this down in half a day. Not only does this style make it extremely easy to read, it aptly sets the mood for the story through the eyes of the stark, simple, no-nonsense gunslingers, Cameron and Greer. But, with Brautigan, do not confuse an easy read for a light read.

Billed as a "Gothic Western", which is actually a very appropriate description, this is a turn-of-the-20th-Century story of two old west-type gunslingers approached by a mysterious Indian woman on behalf of the remote Miss Hawkline. They are propositioned to take care of some business for her. The two gunslingers agree and travel to rural Oregon to meet this Miss Hawkline. When they arrive, they learn of the disappearance of Miss Hawkline's father who had been working on a strange experiment for the benefit of mankind known only as The Chemicals. Disaster has befallen this experiment by his disappearance and the emergence of the Ice Caves which have turned up under the basement where he performed his experiment causing the house and its immediate surroundings to turn blustery and freezing. Now, A monster in residence of the Ice Caves is terrorizing the caretakers of the Hawkline Mansion both physically and in much more frightening psychic forms. Can the Gunslingers destroy the Hawkline Monster and return things to the way they were?

Under the extremely allegorical storyline we find some interesting ideas. The question of the duality of events is very evident in this story. There is always a division of good/bad, light/dark, him/her, even him/him and her/her. Beyond that, the basic moral of the story, that lofty endeavors usually go awry causing much devastation for coming generations to deal with in picking up the pieces, seems undeniable clear to me. Also, that even in resolution, the story that continues is almost as bleak as the devastation that proceeded. Perhaps, Brautigan is saying, for mankind one bad deed follows another.

I am looking forward to reading more Brautigan from this. I may be disappointed if he uses the same minimalist writing style for other stories unless it plays into the mood so well such as this. But for those who like abstract, period-piece literature, do not miss this book!

ZaRi says

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