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H.P. Lovecraft

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Circles and pentagrams loomed on every hand, and told indubitably of the strange beliefs and aspirations of those who dwelt so squalidly here. In the cellar, however, the strangest thing was found--a pile of genuine gold ingots covered carelessly with a piece of burlap, and bearing upon their shining surfaces the same weird hieroglyphics which also adorned the walls.

The Horror at Red Hook Details

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From Reader Review The Horror at Red Hook for online ebook

Becky says

Catch-up review #4!

I listened to this one on Friday night as I was driving back from Philly after my business trip. It was dark, and I was alone in the car, so of course I'm like "Let's listen to some Lovecraft! :D"

I have this weird thing about Lovecraft, though. I love the IDEA of Lovecraft's horror more than I like the reality of it. I just find the writing tedious at times. It's true. I said it. He was wordy. He'd use 4 words when one would do, and for me, that just bogs things down and distracts me and takes me out of the story. I want the meat and bones. I want to be terrified by the story, not bored by the overabundance of words used to convey it.

But I will say that it's better on audio. I can just sit back and listen and not get aggravated by the wordiness. And this audiobook, read by Jim Donaldson and (I think) put out by Trout Lake Media, was a pretty good one to listen to because it used sound effects to set the tone and build the tension. Maybe the sound effects were a little distracting at times when they are louder than the reader, or in between sections where there's a loud building screech noise (typical in horror movies), but they do serve the purpose they were intended for. The creaking was particularly effective, and I liked it quite a lot.

I did enjoy the story here too, but think that I would likely have enjoyed it a bit more if it was a little bit more streamlined. But I liked the format, meeting the investigator who is clearly disturbed by the events he's witnessed at Red Hook, and then learning about those events. I thought it was a creepy little story and maybe there's hope yet for Lovecraft and I! ;)

Lyn says

In a trial in the nameless and eldritch hereafter:

Prosecutor: Did you write the Horror at Red Hook?

Judge: You don't have to answer that question!

Lovecraft: I'll answer the question. You want answers?

Prosecutor: I think I'm entitled!

Lovecraft: You want answers?!

Prosecutor: I want the truth!

Lovecraft: You can't handle the truth!

Son, we live in a world that needs horror, and that horror has to be written by men with guts. Who's gonna do

it? You? You, Lord Dunsany? I have a greater responsibility than you can possibly fathom. You weep for fantasy and you curse the pulps. You have that luxury. You have the luxury of not knowing what I know, that pulp magazines, while tawdry, produces horror. And my existence, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you, produces horror! You don't want the truth, because deep down in places you don't talk about at parties, you want me writing horror. You need me writing horror. We use words like "unspoken", "occult", "eldritch". We use these words as the backbone of a life spent describing the unknowable. You use them as a punchline. I have neither the time nor the inclination to explain myself to a man who rises and sleeps under the blanket of the very horror that I provide, and then questions the manner in which I provide it! I would rather you just said "thank you", and went on your way. Otherwise, I suggest you pick up a pen, and write some copy. Either way, I don't give a damn what you think you are entitled to!

Prosecutor: Did you write Horror at Red Hook?

Lovecraft: I did the job that—

Prosecutor: Did you write Horror at Red Hook??!

Lovecraft: YOU'RE GODDAMN RIGHT I DID!!

Jason Koivu says

Love it! I love the showing that goes on in this one!

I also love that the setting, Red Hook, is a place where Lovecraft lived for a time and hated. He regretted ever moving there and it seems like he put his emotions into crafting this horror story.

For those who haven't read *The Horror at Red Hook* before, I won't bother summarizing as you can read the synopsis yourself, but I wouldn't suggest it. Just dive into this one. It's not that long and it's really good. Lovecraft's use of language is esoteric at times and that might ward off some readers. Understandable. You read enough words you don't understand and you lose the thread of the story. Work through it. The pay off is worth it!

Tom Britz says

H. P. Lovecraft was a product of his time and unfortunately his time, the early 1900's were rife with racism and hatred of the unknown. I see a lot of comments that shred this story as a racist diatribe. That can also be said of a lot of the literature from that period. This comment is in no way trying to make light of the racism that is found here in this story, it's just trying to put it into a sort of perspective. Yes, H. P. Lovecraft was a racist. He was a loner brought up by a doting mother, he never socialized except through letters and the occasional visits from other authors. He was certainly, from what I've seen, anti-social. If there had been an attempt by others to school him, I doubt he'd have taken the advice.

That said, the man could write nightmare fiction. I wouldn't classify it as horror, per se. He wrote of monsters, but they were monsters of the psyche. He rarely described them, except as other-worldly and most

of those who did see these monsters were driven insane or died outright from fear. So, I call it nightmare fiction. His stories do stay with you long after you close the book.

Montzalee Wittmann says

The Horror at Red Hook by H.P. Lovecraft is an audio book I requested and the review is voluntary. I did like the story, not as much as I did when I was a teen. I am sure this was terrifying in the late 1920's when it was first published. It was creepy now, I can't imagine then when they weren't shown realistic horror movies and shows daily like we are. I thought the narration was very good and added to the story. I forgot to add that in to my initial rating so I will add that now since this is a rating for the overall book. It is funny how the tastes change as you grow older. As a teen I craved all things Lovecraft, maybe that is why I am so warped! LOL

Nathan says

H.P. Lovecraft's influence on horror/weird fiction is undeniable. He had an amazing imagination. Too bad, because he was an absolutely awful writer and an even worse human being. I would call this story racist shit, but that seems somewhat unfair to feces.

Obsidian says

This is going to be short. This story was terrible and it has Lovecraft's racism and xenophobia on full display. I think if he could have torched New York and wiped it clean of those he saw as inferior he would have.

The Horror at Red Hook tells a story taking place in the 1920s with a New York police detective named Thomas Malone. Malone is left disturbed by an incident that left several people dead.

Lovecraft then works backwards telling how a rich and eccentric old man named Robert Suydam. Suydam ends up buying property in Red Hook and people are disappearing. The police believe something nefarious is happening, but can't prove it. And then suddenly Suydam seems to be slowly reverse aging and marries a young 20 year old distant relative of his.

The story jumps around too much to really get a handle on the story. Lovecraft doesn't include the Chulhu mythos at all. Instead it seems to be about human sacrifice and Lilith. I don't get what caused Suydam to be turned against unless that was the plan all along. And the ending with Malone being buried after falling into another portal and witnessing what Suydam was up to was pretty lame. The story honestly put me to sleep for a few minutes and I was not happy when I woke up and realized I still wanted to do this story. It is short though and I finished it in about 25 minutes (nap included).

Naz (Read Diverse Books) says

NOPE. NOPE.

If you don't want to be simultaneously bored & offended, then I suggest you avoid The Horror at Red Hook.

Myk Pilgrim says

Well.....that was.....different.

Lovecraft's xenophobia is probably more rife in this story than any of the others i've read.

The story mostly hinges around:

"them pesky foreigners coming to 'our country' and taking our jobs and bringing their foreign ways and their different coloured skins and it's evil! evil I tells ya"

So don't say I didn't warn you.

But if you're dead set on reading it - start halfway in and you'll skip most of the racial slurs & get straight to the hairiness. There were of course a couple of really creepy moments which I won't spoil here, but they did make the read worth the time.

? Irena ? says

What a New York police detective Thomas F. Malone experienced, saw (or dreamed) while working on a case in Red Hook made him retire and avoid big buildings.

During one of the raids in Red Hook, some of the buildings collapsed killing many policemen, smugglers. It all connects back to an educated recluse and a folklore researcher Robert Suydam. *'Just at the time when a wave of kidnappings and disappearances spread its excitement over New York, the unkempt scholar embarked upon a metamorphosis as startling as it was absurd.'* It was the case of Robert Suydam which brought Malone to Red Hook.

As weird as it may be, I am rating this story for what it could have been.

Chakib Bahbaz says

This novel is racist to a certain extent, but somehow its good.

"...and Malone could not help recalling that Kurdistan is the land of the Yezidis, last survivors of the Persian devil-worshippers." What ?!

"Suddenly the leader of the visiting mariners, an Arab with a hatefully negroid mouth, pulled forth a dirty, crumpled paper and handed it to the captain" Double What?!

The language is amazing

"In case of sudden or unexplained accident or death on my part, please deliver me or my body unquestioningly into the hands of the bearer and his associates. Everything, for me, and perhaps for you, depends on absolute compliance. Explanations can come later—do not fail me now.

ROBERT SUYDAM."

Andrés Diplotti says

I read this mostly out of curiosity, because I had learned that some of Lovecraft's most unsavoury tendencies were on full display here.

The straight supernatural horror part is not exactly *bad*, even though it reads more as a vignette, or a description of a tableau, than a story. Funnily enough, Thomas Malone feels less of a cipher than the usual Lovecraftian protagonist, even though his characterisation stops at the facts that he's Irish and a policeman and he's interested in the Occult. The fact that this is not a first person narrative might contribute to that feeling.

Other than that, "The Horror at Red Hook" reminds me somewhat of the blood libel, with orgies of devil worship and child sacrifice, except the Medieval Jews have been substituted with immigrants. Lovecraft is neither shy nor subtle to let us know about his dislike for the mixed neighbourhood of Red Hook, which he calls "a maze of hybrid squalor" populated by "a hopeless tangle [of] Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and negro elements impinging upon one another, and fragments of Scandinavian and American belts lying not far distant," a "babel of sound and filth" where "the blasphemies of an hundred dialects assail the sky." It is, in some way, an extension of Lovecraftian ethos: that which is different is bad and must be avoided.

I have noticed that most present-day tributes to Lovecraft recreate his esthetics rather than his ethics. After reading stories like this, that doesn't seem to be such a bad thing.

Patrick says

I liked how Lovecraft included the incubus and succubus monsters. I've never read a story that actually included them!

Nek0 Neha (BiblioNyan) says

This is one of the most disgustingly racist, bigoted, pieces of shit that I have read all year. The writing is a god-awful catastrophe of "smart" words that are used to veil the grossly offensive discrimination and disrespect that is shown towards people of color, poverty, and varying religious backgrounds. I sincerely hope the rest of Lovecraft's work isn't this type of ridiculousness because if it is, then I have no idea how someone like him could be so idolized in the literary world. **Unacceptable.**

MarytheBookLover says

I will do a full review. I liked this story and understand that it is an old short horror story. I did enjoy it though and loved the narrator Jim Donaldson - I think his voice was perfect for this.

Edgar Roberts says

A great story, I thought! Lovecraft uses his style of prose quite nicely in my opinion at the end and the storyline and frightful atmosphere are very well presented. Even though the key basis for this story was xenophobia, I honestly don't feel that this marred it, as most do. The racism adds something of vulgar touch to the horror in my opinion and Lovecraft can be excused for being human with faults like the rest of us :) Obviously, I'd rather he wasn't a racist, but there isn't much that I can do; he is dead, after all. This tale is wonderfully frightening.

Jennifer ? says

I'm learning that I have a thing for phosphorescent horror. I can be completely ho-hum about a book and then suddenly *"Ooooh, phosphorescence. This is fantastic!"*.

[Name Redacted] says

This is arguably one of Lovecraft's most racist stories, born out of his increasing sense of isolation and negative impressions of immigrants while living in Brooklyn. It was this antipathy towards others that gave birth to one of my favorite songs by The Mountain Goats (cf: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrHgZR...> also: <http://www.thejeffreylewissite.com/Mt...>).

Lovecraft's racism appears to be a manifestation of modern post-Enlightenment racial theory, but I think that's giving modernity entirely too much credit. Everything he says is perfectly in keeping with the ancient xenophobic writings of the Greeks & Romans; they curse the same races, they implicate the same religions, they use the same descriptive language...Lovecraft's version is simply slathered in a veneer of early-20th century Scientism. When I finish my dissertation, I could probably write a book about the ancient authors who inspired Lovecraft's racial antipathies -- using almost all the same sources.

Aside from all that, this is one of the most effective urban-horror stories H.P.L. ever wrote. The sense that dark things lurk beneath the surface of the urban landscape, that the countless strangers surrounding the urbanite could be -- and likely ARE -- planning something nefarious, that the old world and the new world are alike in venerating things which most humans on their own would shun... Well, it all works extremely well here.

Bogi Takács says

I read this novelette because I'm interested in reading "The Ballad of Black Tom," Victor LaValle's new novella that subverts it.

I read most of my Lovecraft in Communist and immediately post-Communist Hungary, at an age when one probably shouldn't be reading Lovecraft. This one hadn't been translated back then (I just checked and it was

first published in Hungary in 1998) - you have one guess why.

Lovecraft on diversity:

"From this tangle of material and spiritual putrescence the blasphemies of an hundred dialects assail the sky."

.....oookay.

Yes, this story is as racist as people claim. (It's also really ableist.) Many different races, cultures, ethnicities, religions get a brief mention; Hungarians might be especially interested in reading about the "hellish vestiges of old Turanian-Asiatic magic and fertility-cults". The antagonists are basically a combination of everything around the globe that Lovecraft found repellent. He put a lot of effort into it, and his intent really comes across. It's some powerful reading.

I think he would've found me repellent on at least four different counts explicitly mentioned in the story, and yet I felt an inordinate amount of fascinatorepulsed glee while reading. I mean sure, people hate all sorts of minorities and I get that in my daily life. But as a kind of mild-mannered and not very confrontational person, I seldom get to be described as an incredible menace of cosmic proportions. Now excuse me, I must be off to hatch my nefarious schemes...

Bill Kerwin says

This long short story—written in August of 1925 and first published in *Weird Tales* in 1927—is the worst Lovecraft tale that every Lovecraft fan *must* read. Not only is it morally suspect, suffused with nativism and darkened by racial panic, but it is also indifferently constructed, and poorly written too. Yet the fears and prejudices first unleashed and expressed most explicitly here would become the source of the cosmic terror that distinguishes his best work.

“The Horror at Red Hook”—the story of Irish police detective Malone and his investigation of aged eccentric Robert Suydam’s connection to a series of abductions and disappearances—was written at what was perhaps the lowest point in H.P. Lovecraft’s life. H.P. left Providence in 1924, but he never enjoyed Manhattan, and was particularly unnerved by the dark foreign faces which seemed to surround him. And things soon got worse: wife Sonia left town for better business opportunities in Ohio, and H.P.—living on a small allowance from Sonia—was forced to settle for a single room in Brooklyn Heights, not far from the rowdy waterfront of Red Hook, where the sea of foreign faces Lovecraft had come to fear grew even deeper and darker. As if this weren’t enough, his little room was broken into; all that remained of his possessions were the clothes he had upon his back.

In “Red Hook,” Lovecraft gave passionate expression to his fears, loneliness, and his suspicion and hatred of “the other.” and the result was a lengthy, baroque and mediocre story. The climax—what Malone witnesses when he decides to enter Sydam’s basement (always a bad idea in a Lovecraft tale) is particularly ludicrous and inept. H.P. piles horror upon horror—and adjective upon adjective—in an attempt to force the horror, and he does not succeed.

Soon after the burglary, Lovecraft returned to Rhode Island, alone, for the remainder of his life. His last decade--one of extraordinary creative effort—began the summer after Red Hook with “The Call of Cthulhu”,

and soon bore fruit in a frightful series of cosmic yet personal stories. After “Red Hook,” Lovecraft learned to sublimate his racist fears into a terror of “the other” beyond the stars, and the literature of horror is richer because of what he learned.
