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The second of a five volume set collecting all of Hodgson's published fiction. Each volume contains one of Hodgson's novels, along with a selection of thematically-linked short fiction.

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The Collected Fiction, Vol. 2: The House on the Borderland and Other Mysterious Places Details

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From Reader Review The Collected Fiction, Vol. 2: The House on the Borderland and Other Mysterious Places for online ebook

Chris says

Still scary as hell one hundred years later; especially the House on Boarderland.

Orrin Grey says

I'm a big fan of William Hope Hodgson, and previous to reading this I'd already read all of his Carnacki stories. This volume collects his Carnacki stories, along with probably his most famous novel-length work the titular *House on the Borderland*, as well as some mystery stories that appear supernatural at first glance but wind up with naturalistic explanations. The Carnacki stories are great, of course, and I even enjoyed some of the other shorts ("The Terror of the Water Tank" was particularly good, I thought), but the main event was *The House on the Borderland*. And it was certainly interesting, and sometimes very good. The influences it had on Lovecraft were obviously incalculable. But I didn't enjoy it as a whole quite as much as I did his Carnacki stories, or some of his earlier Sargasso Sea tales.

One of the problems may've been that I just recently read Richard Corben's graphic novel adaptation, which, while quite good, departed from the source material rather more drastically than I would have expected, which left me constantly losing my bearings as to what had just happened and where the thing the comic would come into play, etc.

Still, there's some very compelling imagination and imagery in *The House at the Borderland* that, combined with its status as a classic of the weird tale, makes it a worthy read.

John Mark King says

I really did not like this. HP Lovecraft fans should enjoy it, though. It is also good for anyone who prefers all-out weirdness to plot and character.

Connor Brown says

Only finished *House on the Borderland* for now, keeping the other stories for when the mood strikes. It was remarkable, very original and not at all the archetypal weird fiction granddaddy I thought I was in for. However, the last 1/4 excluding the final few pages was very overwrought, and had its conceptual coolness bludgeoned to death by about a twenty-five page excess.

A pretty striking example of horror as cosmological (in the ancient way) rather than strictly supernatural.

Randolph says

The title novel is just one of the strangest stories I have ever read. It still disturbs me on re-reading. Obviously an influence on H.P. Lovecraft.

Joseph says

The second in Night Shade Press' five-volume collection of Hodgson's fiction. The highlight of the collection was the short novel *House on the Borderland*, which I hadn't read before. It really felt more like a series of vignettes than a single narrative -- after about two layers of framing story, we get to a manuscript about the House's former occupant, who was apparently subject to a series of increasingly strange visions and manifestations, some of which took place in distant realms of space & time. I'm not sure how direct of an influence Hodgson had on H.P. Lovecraft, but I know Lovecraft read him, and this story had a bit of the same feel to it -- the sense of cosmic horror.

In addition to *House*, this volume contained the stories of Carnacki the Ghost-Finder (who I don't believe ever actually found any ghosts -- in some cases there were "presences" of the sort beloved by early 20th century spiritualists, and in other cases there were mundane explanations straight out of *Scooby Doo*) and an assortment of other standalone tales. For my money, when he wasn't doing the cosmic thing *a la* *House on the Borderland* or *The Night Land*, Hodgson was at his strongest with the tales with a nautical element -- I believe he'd spent time on ships and it shows in his casual command of maritime details.

On the whole, mostly of interest as a historical curiosity, although I'm glad I read it. I'll read later volumes as well, but not for a while -- these kinds of things are better spaced out.

Michael Battaglia says

If you're going to buy any of the volumes of this series, presuming you've arrived at Hodgson the way most people have as an influence on the style of "weird fiction" that was later made famous by Lovecraft and the rest, then this will probably be the one to get, although if you have enough of a passing interest in a writer who died a hundred years ago to go and seek out a five volume collection of his works, then you might qualify as someone who has slightly more than a "passing interest". Although, needless to say, those who were turned off by all the nautical stories interspersed with giant crabs and tentacles that took up most of the first volume will probably find themselves on more familiar soil here, as things take a turn toward the weird and the ghostly.

If you have heard of Hodgson, even vaguely, its no doubt due to the lead story in this collection "*The House on the Borderland*" which remains a touchstone for writers of a particular brand of strange even today, something that writers like Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith went out of their way to note. Hodgson's gift was to take what was weird and potentially macabre and strip it of any lurid details that might steer the story into sensationalism, instead sticking with a more realistic approach that only highlighted just how weird everything was getting. He envisioned this novel as a thematic trilogy of sorts with "*The Boats of the 'Glen Carrig'*" and the later "*The Ghost Pirates*", but anyone who has read all three (I have the latter coming up in the third volume) will probably find this story the easiest going despite how trippy it gets later on, simply because the tale is written in a more modern style and not Hodgson's deliberate attempt at writing in what

feels like a nineteenth century style that can bog down the other two.

Indeed, "House on the Borderland" is weird to the point of being psychedelic but it's also one of those novels where the beginning doesn't at all prepare you for what's coming later. As is typical of his longer stories, it's structured as a story discovered by someone else who is exploring the ruins of an old house with a friend. Inside they find the diary of a man later termed the "Recluse" who moves into this strange house with his sister and dog, at which point things start to go utterly wrong. The landscape is strange in itself, with a pit and a river, but that quickly becomes the least of his problems as he becomes beset by swine-like creatures that continually attack the house like persistently homicidal salesman, turning the story into a variation of the last stand at the Alamo and the movie "Signs". It makes for tense reading, both for the inhuman circumstances and the strange architecture of the house. But even that pales in comparison to what comes next.

In what has to be one of the smoothest yet jarring shifts I've ever read in a novel, after the immediate threat is taken care of the story deftly slides into a sequence where the house apparently takes the Recluse on a whirlwind tour of space and time as he whips further and further into the future in what feels like a much grittier and despairing form of "The Time Machine" and a near presaging of Olaf Stapledon's "Star Maker", where eons pass in an instant and we're not quite capable of grasping all that we're seeing. It doesn't help but that chunks of the Recluse's diary are missing and thus we have to piece together what happens in the fragments by what remains. Then after that all calms down the story takes one last left turn into pure horror before simply ending right as the soundtrack is beginning to peak unnervingly in frequency and pitch. He also manages to do all that in about a hundred and thirty pages. For all the tonal shifts that occur over the course of it, the story never feels like a sewn together monstrosity but instead easily shifts from place to place as if it's all part of some seemingly incomprehensible plan. Reading it, you can understand why a lot of authors who were starting out in the wake of it found that blew a lot of preconceptions of what the genre could do out of the water. It's quite possible that you'll never read anything else quite like it, even very close imitations. There's a distinct feel here, cosmic and terrible and calm, that can't be easily recaptured.

After that, pretty much anything else is going to feel like a denouement but fortunately the collection is able to hold off that feeling by including the Carnacki the Ghost Finder stories. Some people might recognize the name as one of the members of Alan Moore's League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (as part of his quest to use every public domain character that was ever published) and here he's basically an Edwardian gentleman who investigates the supernatural and then calls his friends together for dinner to tell them about it later. Much like the Captain Gault stories of the first volume, Hodgson proves he knows how to work inside the structure of a formula and never come across as repeating himself even when the stories could easily be bogged down in a rut (though the repetitive "Mr Roger's Ghost Neighborhood" aspect of it does make it somewhat comforting after a few stories, like settling in to watch your favorite TV show). What makes these fun is that Carnacki is a good storyteller, to the point without getting hysterical and keeping an open mind from the get-go, no matter how odd things seem at first glance. In fact, what makes these interesting is how many of the situations here don't actually involve ghosts and yet some do, keeping the reader off base since you never know if there's going to be a logical answer or a simply supernatural explanation (and sometimes Carnacki can explain most of the occurrences but not all of it . . . though he is quick to whip out the All Purpose Pentagram Circle when things start to get too "I ain't afraid o' no ghosts!" for his liking) and the tension as strange happenings stack on each other as Carnacki has to quickly sort out whether he needs to bring in the heavy artillery or simply hit someone over the head can be fun. The best of the stories, the ridiculously titled "The Horse of the Invisible" nicely blends a human drama (a young woman is next in line to be killed by a maniacal horse from beyond the grave but she would rather get married than be trampled on by intangible hooves) with an escalating series of events with plenty of reasons to believe that it could be human or otherworldly in origin, leaving Carnacki to sort out the mess before anyone else gets killed (runner up: "The

Hog" pushes the series neatly into "House on the Borderland" territory, with winning if weird results).

After those are over, what we're left with is another set of catch-all tales, these ones focusing on supernatural incidences, although the eventual explanation winds up being something rather mundane (though sometimes gruesome in its own way . . . even if you don't believe the statue is murdering everyone brutally in "The Goddess of Death" the truth of it isn't much better). They run the gamut of his career, with the aforementioned murderous statue story being among the first he ever wrote and not all of them involve boats or people at sea. Most of them average between ten to fifteen pages in length, long enough to get their point across without overstaying their welcome and even if some are more memorable than others (the one that surprised me the most was "The Homecoming of Captain Dan" which takes quite a long time to get to its ultimate point but when it does hits like a minor punch to the gut) the quality never seems to veer too far away from readable. It makes for a nicely consistent collection that unfortunately tends to frontload the good stuff but at least makes the case that his masterpieces didn't come out of nowhere, and weren't the only stories he was capable of writing.

David says

If you ever wonder if H. P. Lovecraft was unique, or first with his vision, Hodgson answers the question. In many ways House on the Boderland prefigures most of the Lovecraft tropes.

Alhtough occasionally uneven The Collected Fiction, Vol. 2 is an excellent example of the best of Hodgson...very much worth the effort.

Rating 5 out of 5 stars.

Riju Ganguly says

I had enjoyed the Carnacki stories, I had also enjoyed some of the shorter stories, but the titular and legendary novel had found me somewhat out-of-breath, because the events kept piling up agonisingly, without things getting resolved (to my satisfaction). Yes, it was definitely a terrific precursor of mythos-related literature that was eventually rolled into motion by HPL, but at any given point of time I would go for the stories, rather than the longer works. What's your take?

Phil says

This second volume in Night Shade Books' excellent Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson contains The House on the Borderland, all of the "Carnacki, the Ghost Finder" tales, and some miscellaneous short stories. While the book begins on a very strong note, it loses steam towards the end

While I prefer The Night Land and Boats of the Glen Carrig, The House on the Borderland is an incredibly atmospheric work of weird horror. It chronicles the bizarre events experienced by a so-called "Recluse" living in an isolated home in Ireland. While there doesn't seem to be much rhyme or reason behind the supernatural incidents he experiences, they remain engrossing and filled with tension. Hodgson must have had a fear of pigs, as the "swine-things" that terrorize the Recluse are very effectively (and disturbingly!)

rendered.

The "Carnacki, the Ghost Finder" stories are a much more conventional form of horror, but still fascinating. They take the form of what the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction editor John Clute calls a "club story." Basically Carnacki, an Edwardian gentlemen, invites his (probably tweedy and pipe-smoking) friends over to his house to tell them of his encounters with ghosts and psychic phenomena. All of the stories share this framing device, but it didn't become monotonous.

The Carnacki stories were an interesting mix of traditional ghost stories with something closer to the type of otherworldly horror that Lovecraft would later popularize. While they're referred to as "ghosts", these hauntings tend towards psychic phantasms and poltergeists more than conventional apparitions. Hodgson's terrifying swine make another welcome appearance in the delightfully creepy story "The Hog." I liked that Hodgson mixed a few hoax stories in with the "authentic" haunts. Another reviewer said those stories had "Scooby Doo endings," but I think that's a little too dismissive. The fakes were just as interesting as the supernatural stories

Unfortunately, the last portion of the book is fairly weak. The remaining stories don't have any particular theme to tie them together, and even the tales of the sea--Hodgson's specialty--included here are pretty unexceptional. The stories included in the first collected volume were all pretty great, perhaps some of those should have been reserved for this second book.

Weak conclusion aside, this book is still worthy of a place on weird fiction fans' bookshelves. Hopefully Night Shade Books will continue to champion overlooked classics like this.

Dan says

The House on the Borderland is the story of an old recluse who lives in a strange old house with his sister Mary and faithful dog Pepper. Or rather the finding and retelling of their tale. The cool thing about this book is that it is completely original, there was no precedent that this is based off. This isn't a ghost story. It's a story of madness, of weird creatures, of other dimensions, and of the end of the universe. If I were to liken this style to anyone or anything else it would have to be David Lindsay's psychedelic sci-fi classic Voyage to Arcturus mixed with the other-worldly terror of Clark Ashton Smith, but it pre-dates them. This edition is really nice, I love the chaotic cover art and having all the Carnacki stories included. Nightshade always do good work with their books.

Mike says

Really amazing tale of nightmare worlds. I'm looking forward to rereading it soon!
