

William Hope Hodgson

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

William Hope Hodgson (1877–1918) was an English author. Despite a career cut short by his death at the age of 40, he produced a large body of work, consisting of essays, short fiction, and novels, spanning several overlapping genres including horror, fantastic fiction and science fiction. Early in his writing career he dedicated effort to poetry, although few of his poems were published during his lifetime. He also attracted some notice as a photographer and achieved some renown as a bodybuilder.

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Life

Hodgson was born November 15, 1877 in Blackmore End, Essex, the son of Samuel Hodgson, an Anglican priest, and Lissie Sarah Brown. He was the second of twelve children, three of whom died in infancy. The death of a child is a theme in several of Hodgson's works including the short stories "The Valley of Lost Children", "The Sea-Horses", and "The Searcher of the End House".

Hodgson's father was moved frequently, and served 11 different parishes in 21 years, including one in County Galway, Ireland. This setting was

later featured in Hodgson's novel *The House on the Borderland*.

Hodgson ran away from his boarding school at the age of thirteen in an effort to become a sailor. He was caught and returned to his family, but eventually received his father's permission to be apprenticed as a cabin boy and began a four-year apprenticeship in 1891. Hodgson's father died shortly thereafter, of throat cancer, leaving the family impoverished; while William was away, the family subsisted largely on charity. After his apprenticeship ended in 1895, Hodgson began two years of study in Liverpool, and was then able to pass the tests and receive his mate's certificate; he then began several more years as a sailor.

At sea, Hodgson experienced bullying. This led him to begin a program of personal training. According to Sam Moskowitz^[1],

The primary motivation of his body development was not health, but self-defense. His relatively short height and sensitive, almost beautiful face made him an irresistible target for bullying seamen. When they moved in to pulverize him, they would learn too late that they had come to grips with easily one of

the most powerful men, pound for pound, in all England.

The theme of bullying of an apprentice by older seamen, and revenge taken, appeared frequently in his sea stories.

While away at sea, in addition to his exercises with weights and with a punching bag, Hodgson also practiced his photography, taking photographs of cyclones, lightning, sharks, aurora borealis, and the maggots that infested the food given to sailors. He also built up a stamp collection, practiced his marksmanship while hunting, and kept journals of his experiences at sea. In 1898 he was awarded the Royal Humane Society medal for heroism for saving another sailor who had fallen overboard in shark-infested waters.

In 1899, at the age of 22, he opened W. H. Hodgson's School of Physical Culture, in Blackburn, England, offering tailored exercise regimes for personal training. Among his customers were members of the Blackburn police force. In 1902, Hodgson himself appeared on stage with handcuffs and other restraining devices supplied by the Blackburn police department and applied the restraints to Harry Houdini, who had

previously escaped from the Blackburn city jail. His behavior towards Houdini generated controversy; the escape artist had some difficulty removing his restraints, complaining that Hodgson had deliberately injured him and jammed the locks of his handcuffs.

Hodgson was not shy of publicity, and in another notable stunt, rode a bicycle down a street so steep that it had stairs, an event written up in the local paper. Despite his reputation, he eventually found that he could not earn a living running his personal training business, which was seasonal in nature, and shut it down. He began instead writing articles such as "Physical Culture versus Recreative Exercises" (published in 1903). One of these articles, "Health from Scientific Exercise," featured photographs of Hodgson himself demonstrating his exercises. The market for such articles seemed to be limited, however, so inspired by authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, and Arthur Conan Doyle, Hodgson turned his attention to fiction, publishing his first short story, "The Goddess of Death", in 1904, followed shortly by "A Tropical Horror" He also contributed to an article in *The Grand Magazine*, taking the "No" side in a debate on the topic "Is the Mercantile Navy Worth Joining?" In this piece, Hodgson laid

out in detail his negative experiences at sea, including facts and figures about salaries. This led to a second article in *The Nautical Magazine*, an expose on the subject of apprenticeships; at the time, families often were forced to pay to have boys accepted as apprentices. Hodgson began to give paid lectures, illustrated with his photography in the form of colorized slides, about his experiences at sea.

While he wrote a number of poems, only a handful of his poems were published during his lifetime; several, such as "Madre Mia," appeared as dedications to his novels. Apparently cynical about the prospects of publishing his poetry, in 1906 he published an article in *The Author* magazine, suggesting that poets could earn money by writing inscriptions for tombstones. Many of his poems were published by his widow in two posthumous collections, but some 48 poems were not published until their appearance in the 2005 collection *The Lost Poetry of William Hope Hodgson*.

While his poetry did not see print, in 1906 the American magazine *The Monthly Story Magazine* published "From the Tideless Sea", the first of Hodgson's Sargasso Sea stories. Hodgson continued to sell stories to American magazines as

well as British magazines for the remainder of his career, carefully managing the rights to his work in order to maximize his remuneration. Still living with his mother in relative poverty, his first published novel, *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"*, appeared in 1907, to positive reviews. Hodgson also published "'The Voice in the Night'" the same year, as well as "Through the Vortex of a Cyclone", a realistic story inspired by Hodgson's experiences at sea and illustrated with tinted slides made from his own photographs. Hodgson also explored the subject of ships and cyclones in his story "The Shamraken Homeward-Bounder", published in 1908. Also in 1908, Hodgson published an unusual satirical science fiction story "Date 1965: Modern Warfare", a Swiftian satire in which it is suggested that war should be carried out by men fighting in pens with knives, and the corpses carefully salvaged for food, although in letters to the editor published at the time, he expressed strong patriotic sentiments.

He published his second novel, *The House on the Borderland* in 1909, again to positive reviews; he also published "Out of the Storm", a short horror story about "the death-side of the sea," in which the protagonist drowning in a storm rants about the horrors of a storm at sea. According to Moskowitz

[1],

This story proved an emotional testament beyond all other evidence. Hodgson, whose literary success would be in a large measure based on the impressions he received at sea, actually hated and feared the waters with an intensity that was the passion of his life.

Also in 1909, Hodgson published another novel, *The Ghost Pirates*. In the foreward, he wrote

...completes what, perhaps, may be termed a trilogy; for, though very different in scope, each of the three books deals with certain conceptions that have an elemental kinship. This this book, the author believes that he closes the door, so far as he is concerned, on a particular phase of constructive thought.

The Bookman magazine in their review of the novel in 1909 included the comment

We can only hope that Mr. Hodgson may be induced to reconsider his decision, for we know of nothing like the author's previous work in the whole of present-day literature.

Despite the critical success of his novels, Hodgson

remained relatively poor. To try to bolster his income from short story sales, he began working on the first of his recurring characters: the Carnacki character, featured in several of his most famous stories. The first of these, "The Gateway of the Monster", was published in 1910 in *The Idler*. In 1910 Hodgson also published "The Captain of the Onion Boat", an unusual story that combines a nautical tale and a romance. He continued to publish many stories and non-fiction pieces, occasionally resorting to the use of recycled plot elements and situations, sometimes to the annoyance of his publishers.

His last novel to see publication, *The Night Land*, was published in 1912, although it likely had its genesis a number of years earlier. Hodgson also worked on a 10,000 word novelette version of the novel, now known as *The Dream of X*. He continued to branch out into related genres, publishing "Judge Barclay's Wife", a western adventure, in the United States, as well as several non-supernatural mystery stories and the science fiction story ""The Derelict", and even war stories (several of the Captain Gault tales feature wartime themes).

In 1912, Hodgson married Betty Farnworth, known

also as Bessie, a staff member for the women's magazine Home Notes. After a honeymoon in the south of France, they took up residence there, due in part to the low cost of living. Hodgson began a work entitled "Captain Dang (An account of certain peculiar and somewhat memorable adventures)" and continued to publish stories in multiple genres, although financial security continued to elude him.

Hodgson returned with his wife to England. He joined the University of London's Officer's Training Corps. Refusing to have anything to do with the sea despite his experience and Third Mate's certificate, he received a commission as a Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. In 1916 he was thrown from a horse and suffered a broken jaw and a head injury; he received a mandatory discharge, and returned to writing. Refusing to remain on the sidelines, Hodgson recovered sufficiently to re-enlist. His published articles and stories from the time reflect his experience in war. He was killed by an artillery shell at Ypres in April of 1918; sources suggest either the 17th or 19th. He was eulogized in The Times of London on May 2, 1918.

Most famous works

Hodgson is most widely known for two works. *The House on the Borderland* is a novel of which H. P. Lovecraft wrote "but for a few touches of commonplace sentimentality [it] would be a classic of the first water".[1] *The Night Land* is a much longer novel, written in an archaic style and expressing a sombre vision of a sunless far-future world. These works both contain elements of science fiction, although they also partake of horror and the occult. According to critical consensus, in these works, despite his often laboured and clumsy language, Hodgson achieves a deep power of expression, which focuses on a sense not only of terror but of the ubiquity of *potential* terror, of the thinness of the invisible bound between the world of normalcy and an underlying reality for which humans are not suited.

The Ghost Pirates has less of a reputation than *The House on the Borderland*, but is an effective seafaring horror story of a ship attacked and ultimately dragged down to its doom by supernatural creatures. The book purports to be the spoken testimony of the sole survivor, and the style lacks the pseudo-archaism which makes *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* and *The Night Land* tedious reading for many.

Hodgson is also known for his short stories featuring recurring characters: the "detective of the occult" Thomas Carnacki, and the smuggler Captain Gault. The Carnacki story "The Whistling Room" has been reprinted in numerous anthologies, including collections introduced by Alfred Hitchcock. Hodgson's single most famous short story is probably "The Voice in the Night", which has been adapted for film twice. Another story regarded highly by critics is "The Shamraken Homeward-Bounder".

Hodgson's literary estate

Hodgson's widow, Bessie, worked to keep his books in print, and to publish works he was not able to get published during his lifetime. This work included two books of poetry. After Bessie Hodgson died in 1943, Hodgson's sister Lissie took over his literary estate.

While the first six Carnacki stories were collected during Hodgson's lifetime, "The Haunted Jarvee" appeared posthumously in 1929, and two more Carnacki stories, "The Find" and "The Hog," were not published until 1947 by August Derleth. Some

critics suspected that Derleth might actually be the author of these two stories, but that theory has been discounted.

One Captain Gault story, "The Plans of the Reefing Bi-Plane," was not published until 1996, when it was included in the short story collection *Terrors of the Sea*.

Some of Hodgson's poems were first published in 2005, when they appeared in *The Lost Poetry of William Hope Hodgson*. Some may be still under copyright protection.

A number of other Hodgson works are reprinted for the first time since their original publication in the five-volume *Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson* series published by Night Shade Books.

Copyright protection has now expired on most of Hodgson's work, with the exception of some of the works published posthumously, including many of his poems.

Novels

- *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* (1907)
- *The House on the Borderland* (1908)

- *The Ghost Pirates* (1909)
- *The Night Land* (1912)
- *The Dream of X* (1912) (a 20,000 word abridgement of the 200,000 word novel *The Night Land*)
- *Captain Dang* (unfinished)

Order of writing versus order of publication

Sam Gafford, in his essay "Writing Backwards: The Novels of William Hope Hodgson" has suggested that Hodgson's four major novels may have been published in roughly the reverse order of their writing. If this is true, then *The Night Land* was Hodgson's first novel, in which he poured out his imagination at its most unbridled, and not his last. Gafford writes:

This concern over the order of composition of the novels may seem of little importance until we consider the implications toward Hodgson's work overall. .. in effect, Hodgson moved away from *TNL*'s quasi-science fiction scenario (which contained an astounding number of original conceptions) and toward *BoGC*'s more basic adventure slant.

If we accept Gafford's thesis, then Hodgson actually wrote *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* last, and it benefits from the modernization of style to the point where it is Hodgson's most accessible novel:

When he finishes the group with *BoGC*, Hodgson has managed to rid himself of these affectations of style and produces a book written in a flat but serviceable tone. With each book, Hodgson learns better control of language and more writing savvy and eventually begins to develop his own voice.

But despite the excessively archaic prose style, which does make them less approachable, it is actually Hodgson's earlier works that are considered masterpieces today. And as Gafford says:

...we can only wonder what wonderfully imaginative excesses like *The Night Land* may have been lost because of an unappreciative public.

Short stories

Miscellaneous stories

Note: the following list of stories is based on the 5-volume *Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson* published by Night Shade Books to be completed in late 2006.

- "The Goddess of Death" (Hodgson's first published story, which appeared in 1904 in *Royal Magazine*)
- "Terror of the Water-Tank" (first published in 1907 in *Blue Book Magazine*)
- "Bullion" (first published in 1911 in *Everybody's Weekly*)
- "The Mystery of the Water-Logged Ship" (first published in 1911 in *Grand Magazine*)
- "The Ghosts of the *Glen Doon*" (first published in 1911 in *The Red Magazine*)
- "Mr. Jock Danplank" (first published in 1912 in *The Red Magazine*)
- "The Mystery of Captain Chappel" (first published in 1917 in *The Red Magazine*)
- "The Home-Coming of Captain Dan" (first published in 1918 in *The Red Magazine*)
- "Merciful Plunder" (first published in 1925 in *Argosy-Allstory Weekly*)
- "The Haunting of the *Lady Shannon*" (first

published in 1975 in the collection *Out of the Storm*)

- "The Heathen's Revenge" (first published in 1988 in a chapbook as "The Way of the Heathen")
- "A Tropical Horror" (first published in 1905)
- "The Voice in the Night" (first published in 1907)
- "The Derelict" (first published in 1912)
- "Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachthani" (first published as "The Baumoff Explosive" in 1919)
- "The Shamraken Homeward-Bounder"
- "Out of the Storm"
- "The Albatross"
- "The 'Prentices' Mutiny"
- "The Island of the Crossbones"
- "The Stone Ship"
- "The Regeneration of Captain Bully Keller"
- "The Mystery of Missing Ships"
- "We Two and Bully Dunkan"
- "The Haunted Pampero"
- "The Real Thing: 'S.O.S.'"
- "Jack Grey, Second Mate"
- "The Smugglers"
- "In the Wailing Gully"
- "The Girl with the Grey Eyes"
- "Kind, Kind and Gentle Is She"
- "A Timely Escape"

- "The Homecoming of Captain Dan"
- "On the Bridge"
- "Through the Vortex of a Cyclone"
- "A Fight with a Submarine"
- "In the Danger Zone"
- "Old Golly"
- "Demons of the Sea"
- "The Wild Man of the Sea"
- "The Habitants of Middle Islet"
- "The Riven Night"
- "The Heaving of the Log"
- "The Sharks of the St. Elmo"
- "Sailormen"
- "By the Lee"
- "The Captain of the Onion Boat"
- "The Sea-Horses"
- "The Valley of Lost Children"
- "Date 1965: Modern Warfare"
- "My House Shall Be Called the House of Prayer"
- "Judge Barclay's Wife"
- "How the Honorable Billy Darrell Raided the Wind"
- "The Friendship of Monsieur Jeynois"
- "The Inn of the Black Crow"
- "What Happened in the Thunderbolt"
- "How Sir Jerrold Treyn Dealt with the Dutch in Caunston Cove"
- "Jem Binney and the Safe at Lockwood"

Hall"

- "Diamond Cut Diamond with a Vengeance"
- "The Room of Fear"
- "The Promise"

Sargasso Sea stories

- "From the Tideless Sea Part One" (first published in 1906 in *Monthly Story Magazine*)
- "From the Tideless Sea Part Two: Further News of the *Homebird*" (first published in 1907 in *Blue Book Magazine*)
- "The Mystery of the Derelict" (first published in 1907 in *Story-teller*)
- "The Thing in the Weeds" (first published in 1912 in *Story-teller*)
- "The Finding of the *Graiken*" (first published in 1913 in *The Red Magazine*)
- "The Call in the Dawn" (first published as "The Voice in the Dawn" in 1920 in *Premier Magazine*)

Carnacki stories

- "The Thing Invisible" (first published in 1912 in *The New Magazine*)
- "The Gateway of the Monster" (first published in 1910 in *The Idler*)

- "The House Among the Laurels" (first published in 1910 in *The Idler*)
- "The Whistling Room" (first published in 1910 in *The Idler*)
- "The Searcher of the End House" (first published in 1910 in *The Idler*)
- "The Horse of the Invisible" (first published in 1910 in *The Idler*)
- "The Haunted Jarvee" (first published in 1929 in *The Premier Magazine*)
- "The Find" (first published in 1947 as part of the *Carnacki the Ghost Finder* collection)
- "The Hog" (first published in 1947 in *Weird Tales*)

Captain Jat stories

- "The Island of the Ud" (first published in 1912 in *The Red Magazine*)
- "The Adventure of the Headland" (first published in 1912 in *The Red Magazine*)

Captain Gault stories

- "Contraband of War" (first published in 1914 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Diamond Spy" (first published in 1914 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Red Herring" (first published in 1914

- in *London Magazine*)
- "The Case of the Chinese Curio Dealer" (first published in 1914 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Drum of Saccharine" (first published in 1914 in *London Magazine*)
- "From Information Received" (first published in 1914 in *London Magazine*)
- "The German Spy" (first published in 1915 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Problem of the Pearls" (first published in 1915 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Painted Lady" (first published in 1915 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Adventure of the Garter" (first published in 1916 in *London Magazine*)
- "My Lady's Jewels" (first published in 1916 in *London Magazine*)
- "Trading with the Enemy" (first published in 1916 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Plans of the Reefing Bi-Plane" (not published until its inclusion in *Terrors of the Sea* in 1996)

D.C.O. Cargunka stories

- "The Bells of the Laughing Sally" (first published in 1914 in *The Red Magazine*)
- "The Adventure with the Claim

Jumpers" (first published in 1915 in *The Red Magazine*)

Selected short story collections

- *Carnacki, the Ghost-Finder* (1913)
(collection of short stories)
- *Men of the Deep Waters* (1914) (collection)
- *The Luck of the Strong* (1916) (collection)
- *Captain Gault, Being the Exceedingly Private Log of a Sea-Captain* (1917)
(collection)
- *Carnacki, the Ghost-Finder* (1947)
(expanded from the 1913 edition)

Poems

- "Amanda Panda"
- "Beyond the Dawning"
- "Billy Ben"
- "Bring Out Your Dead"
- "The Calling of the Sea"
- "Down the Long Coasts"
- "Eight Bells"
- "Grey Seas are Dreaming of My Death"
- "The Hell! Oo! Chaunty" (appears in *The Ghost Pirates*)
- "I Come Again"

- "I Have Borne My Lord a Son"
- "Listening"
- "Little Garments"
- "Lost"
- "Madre Mia" (appears as the dedication in *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"*)
- "Mimosa"
- "The Morning Lands"
- "My Babe, My Babe"
- "Nevermore"
- "The Night Wind"
- "O Parent Sea"
- "The Pirates"
- "The Place of Storms"
- "Rest"
- "The Ship"
- "The Sobbing of the Freshwater" (first published in 1912 in *London Magazine*)
- "The Song of the Great Bull Whale" (first published in 1912 in *Grand Magazine*)
- "Song of the Ship"
- "Speak Well of the Dead"
- "Storm"
- "Thou Living Sea"
- "To My Father"
- "The Voice of the Ocean"
- "Shoon of the Dead" (appears in *The House on the Borderland*)
- "Who Make Their Bed in Deep Waters"

Poetry collections

- *The Calling of the Sea* (published posthumously by Hodgson's widow in 1920)
- *The Voice of the Ocean* (published posthumously by Hodgson's widow in 1921)
- *Poems of the Sea* (published in 1977 and collecting the poems from the two previously published collections)
- *The Lost Poetry of William Hope Hodgson* (published in 2005, edited by Jane Frank, including 43 previously unpublished poems)

Recent publications of Hodgson's work

- *Out of the Storm: Uncollected Fantasies* (1975) (Sam Moskowitz, ed.) The 1975 hardcover edition contains an introductory 100-page essay by Moskowitz about Hodgson's life and work; the paperback reissue lacks the essay.
- *The Haunted "Pampero"* (1991) (Sam Moskowitz, ed.)
- *Terrors of the Sea (Unpublished and Uncollected Fantasies)* (1996) (Sam Moskowitz, ed.)

- *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig" and Other Nautical Adventures: The Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson Volume 1* (2004) ISBN 1-892389-39-8
- *The House on the Borderland and Other Mysterious Places: The Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson Volume 2* (2004) ISBN 1-892389-40-1
- *The Ghost Pirates and Other Revenants of the Sea: The Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson Volume 3* (2005) ISBN 1-892389-41-X
- *The Night Land and Other Romances: The Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson Volume 4* (2005) ISBN 1-892389-42-8
- *The Dream of X and Other Fantastic Visions: The Collected Fiction of William Hope Hodgson Volume 5* (not yet published, planned for release in 2007) ISBN 1-892389-43-6
- *Adrift on The Haunted Seas: The Best Short Stories of William Hope Hodgson* (2005) (Douglas A. Anderson, ed.)
- *The Lost Poetry of William Hope Hodgson* (published in 2005, edited by Jane Frank, including 43 previously unpublished poems)
- *The Wandering Soul: Glimpses of a Life: A Compendium of Rare and Unpublished Works* (2005), edited by Jane Frank. This

volume contains photographs, articles, and essays by and about Hodgson, including an essay on bodybuilding, one of his sailing logs, and his obituary.

Notes and references

1. ^{a b} Moskowitz, Sam. "William Hope Hodgson." In *Out of the Storm*. West Kingston, RI: Donald M. Grant, 1975.

External links

- Works by William Hope Hodgson at Project Gutenberg
- Online editions
- William Hope Hodgson
- Carnacki the Ghost Finder with its original illustrations
- H. P. Lovecraft on Hodgson
- An appreciation of William Hope Hodgson by Clark Ashton Smith
- Dr. Prune's Apothecary
- Bibliography
- An account of the Hodgson-Houdini controversy
- Night Shade Books, publishers of the 5-volume collected fiction of Hodgson

- A podcast of recordings of Hodgson's work featuring Creative Commons-licensed music
- A site dedicated to keeping Hodgson's vision alive with new fiction and artwork

See also

- List of horror fiction authors

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"http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Hope_Hodgson

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