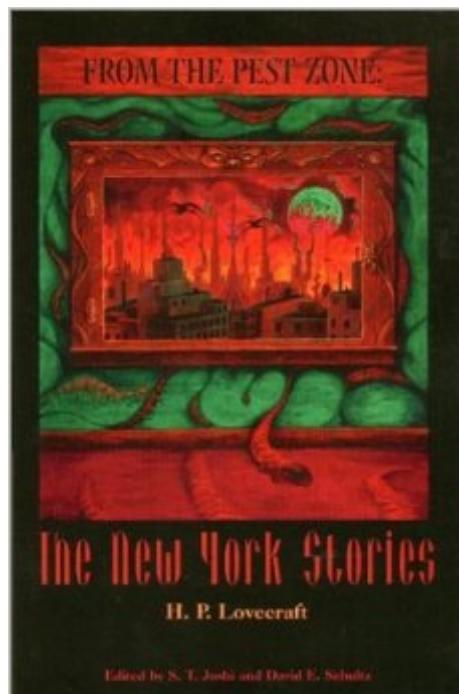


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From The Pest Zone: The New York Stories



Synopsis

H. P. Lovecraft's "New York Exile" of 1924-26 was perhaps the unhappiest period of his entire life: living in a city whose giganticism and heterogeneity he loathed, unable to find work and forced to economize drastically on food and other necessities, and trapped in an uncongenial marriage, Lovecraft could only express his anger and despair in his work. This volume, which gathers the five stories he wrote during this period, shows how Lovecraft sought refuge by returning imaginatively to his native New England ("The Shunned House," "In the Vault"), lashing out at the many "foreigners" occupying the city ("The Horror at Red Hook"), seeking the antiquarian havens that still remained in the metropolis ("He"), or boldly confronting New York's clangor and stridency ("Cool Air"). Editors S. T. Joshi and David E. Schultz supply a lengthy biographical introduction as well as exhaustive notes to each story, supplying information on their background, influences, and use of the history and topography of New York City. As a result, these five stories present an underlying unity beyond their varied themes and locales: they show how Lovecraft came to terms with America's only true megalopolis.

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Customer Reviews

It's always interesting the way genius deals with its surroundings: most writers go to Gotham to stoke the fires of imagination, leash a muse, and gain enough inspiration to unleash their literary Djinn. America's Old Man of Providence and Grandmaster of Horror H.P. Lovecraft didn't: he despised New York. That is the central theme and unifying device of these five stories, written during

H.P. Lovecraft's "New York period", and fleshed out by scholarly biographical notes and commentary by Lovecraft scholar S.T. Joshi. Even as he hated it, the great metropolis worked on Lovecraft's fevered imagination. His stories of star-spawned, ancient, slumbering Evil are choked with revulsion and loathing for the tired, huddled masses of teeming immigrants, and for the clangor of industry that accompanied them. Lovecraft saw them as alien agents busy swarming over and erasing the old gambrel-roof settlements of Brooklyn that so reminded Lovecraft of his own Puritan haunts. With that in mind, this a tight little collection comprised of the five stories most directly influenced by Lovecraft's years in New York, which Lovecraft scholar S.T. Joshi brands "the most miserable of his life". It is a startling observation, but one that jibes well with the undertones flowing like a Stygian underground river through Lovecraft's tales of gelatinous horror and ancient evil.

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