



Facts Concerning The Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family

H.P. Lovecraft

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Chris says

Hrm. Is it racist? Or is it REALLY racist?

Or is this just a spin on Lovecraft's typical fish-people ancestry story that just so happens to be moderately offensive and racist? It's difficult to give Lovecraft the benefit of the doubt, given his persistent racism throughout other stories.

I dunno. It's not a great story, but it's a quick read at least.

Thomas says

That was... pretty fucking racist, man.

Tom says

The reaction was just a touch drastic, but memorable

David Meditationseed says

Although the tale is curious, involving myths from Congo, Africa, in an interesting hybrid mythology between human monkeys beings and stories about different generations of the same family, unfortunately maybe for some readers the tale can run into a probable racism from the years in which this story was written: beginning of the 20th century.

Lovecraft refers several times to people, monkeys, gods and subjects by the color of their skins: White or black.

In addition to this supposed racism, this is really not one of the best tales of the author.

H. P. Reed says

This isn't Lovecraft's finest work. He signals the horror he's leading up to pages ahead of time so that the denouement is rather flat when it comes. His early 1900s prejudices are blatant and his language is stilted even for that era. And yet....I had to give his story three stars rather than the more deserved two because, even now, the story creeps up on the reader building from his assertion that "Life is a hideous thing" and dragging the reader inch by inch through the ravaged lineage of Jermyn's ancestry. One of the things I love

about Lovecraft is his depiction of weird families, with their "unholy" mesalliances. While he implies that the fish gods were married for their ability to bestow wealth on their human spouses, he doesn't always treat these marriages as loveless unions. This story is a case in point: " Jermyn... by close questioning obtained a very picturesque legend of the stuffed goddess.

The ape-princess, it was said, became the consort of a great white god who had come out of the West. For a long time they had reigned over the city together, but when they had a son all three went away. Later the god and the princess had returned, and upon the death of the princess her divine husband had mummified the body and enshrined it in a vast house of stone, where it was worshipped. Then he had departed alone. The legend here seemed to present three variants. According to one story nothing further happened save that the stuffed goddess became a symbol of supremacy for whatever tribe might possess it. It was for this reason that the N'bangus carried it off. A second story told of the god's return and death at the feet of his enshrined wife. A third told of the return of the son, grown to manhood—or apehood or godhood, as the case might be—yet unconscious of his identity. "

Some devotion at least is shown by the "white god" to his other-species consort. Facts concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family is a good introduction to this unusual and tormented writer's world.

Phil Fillinger says

Wasn't expecting beastiality, but that's what I got, lmao.

Not at all what I expected, which was a little disappointing.

Not terrible, but not great either. The majority is somewhat full setup. Good intro and ending though.

John Cesarone says

HERE THERE BE SPOILERS!!! TURN BACK, TURN BACK!!!

I expected "his family" to mean his wife and children, but I was wrong. The unfortunate titular Arthur Jermyn was wife-free and childless, but he did have a family history dating back six generations or so, and that is the family that was being referred to. They were a noble family of England, of high intellectual standards and strong scientific curiosity, but with unfortunate tendencies. I really liked how most of the story was the history of the generations, and how every generation came to a HORRIBLE end, leaving one and only one descendant to carry on to the next generation, and the next cycle of horror! Until Arthur Jermyn himself finally wraps things up. Basically, it was about a family of scientists who investigate deep dark tribes in darkest Africa, where humans and ape-human hybrids form a society, and as each generation discovers their mixed ancestry, they go MAD!!! Much has been made of the inherent "racism" of the story, but I just find it an amusing tale of genetic horror and self loathing. One of the rare HPL stories not set in New England, but in actual England (and Africa, of course). Also one of the rare HPL stories told from a pure third-person perspective.

? Irena ? says

In the most common Lovecraft's way of retelling something, this story starts from the end, from Arthur

Jermyn's suicide, emphasises the importance of something he found out, then goes back a couple of generations to tell the story of his family. The past explains his peculiar appearance and the way and reason he died.

Brian says

I can see why people may give low ratings: he gives summary and it reads like textbook archaeology. I like the way he writes. He includes archaeology and ancient gods and cultures in this story, another aspect of his writings I find intriguing. This one concerns the white god and apes, and a family haunted and tortured by a dead ape. I laughed writing this but the story reads well and has entertaining value.

Joshua Shioshita says

This is sort of a genealogical mystery with a big reveal at the end. It's like going into Ancestry.com and finding out your family tree was nothing like you assumed. It's a common Lovecraft theme, and I love all the little clues peppered along the way. The story is a little dry and reads like you're actually pouring through the historical records of a family line, which for me gave it a sense of realism that I loved, like a found footage horror film, but in short story format.

Godzilla says

Lovecraft ventures into the dark recesses of colonial Africa, and the temptations and repercussions of meddling in things you shouldn't.

He paints a wonderful portrait of a deeply flawed family, dealing with generations of oddity and madness culminating in a twist that whilst may be obvious in the modern world, I'm sure shook some of his contemporaries.

Self-immolation is never done lightly I'm sure....

Colleen says

Written in 1920, published in 1924, 8 pages. This is a weird little story, with lots of historical information on the Jermyn family. The descriptions of each generation's madness are actually quite gripping and terrifying. And the idea that a well-educated man who KNOWS that his family is viewed as strange and unstable would actually seek to disprove the rumors by BECOMING strange and unstable...that's creeptastic. The descriptions of the things found in Africa also appear to be the harbingers of Lovecraft's future Cthulhu stories. Considering that Lovecraft had never been to Africa, his descriptions of places and tribes are quite detailed.

Walter Schutjens says

This was a very disturbing tale, well I guess then it was supposed to be, but not in a good way. The story was riddled with Lovecraftian racism, and anti immigrant ideology (Jermyn- German). The telling of it was good, with adequate horror at the end.

A.N. Mignan says

An 18th century expedition in Congo, a collection of relics, the curse of a family over several generations, the search for the truth back in Congo, the tragic fate of intelligent gentlemen scholars turned madmen... Reads like the first chapter of a Preston & Child novel; excellent, especially for the detailed description of the family tree and the many delicious anecdotes.

Gabriel Ávila says

Un relato clásico de Lovecraft que ahonda en sus temáticas habituales: los dioses que habitan dormidos en los rincones más alejados del globo (a la espera de quien sepa despertarlos), y la degeneración racial producida en ciertos núcleos de población dedicados a la endogamia (generalmente entregados a los cultos de esos mismos dioses). Y su estilo también es inconfundible: la narración fría y externa, como si fuera el trabajo de un reportero que realiza crónica de los hechos. Todo eso resumido en unas pocas páginas. ¿Se puede dar más por menos?

Oleksandr says

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Tempo de Ler says

«Science, already oppressive with its shocking revelations, will perhaps be the ultimate exterminator of our human species.»

Bill Kerwin says

This early Lovecraft story (first published in the amateur journal *The Wanderer* in 1921) is crude and only partially successful, but it is interesting for five reasons:

- 1) It embodies Lovecraft's autobiography in a distorted, fearful form. Like Lovecraft, Arthur Jermyn is sensitive about his personal appearance, and, because of this sensitivity, he takes all his long walks at night. Like Lovecraft, both his parents die in the madhouse, and he fears his hereditary history may hold secrets more ghastly than his physical ugliness,
- 2) It specifically connects Lovecraft's suspicions of his own heritage to his larger, more pervasive fears of degenerate races,
- 3) It influenced that later, far superior tale *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*,
- 4) It is the only Lovecraft story (to my knowledge) influenced by Sherwood Anderson (?!). Lovecraft wanted to rip the mask off the human family in gothic fiction the same way Anderson ripped the mask off small town American hypocrisy in *Winesburg, Ohio*: "I, in my weird medium, could probably devise some secret behind a man's ancestry which would make the worst of Anderson's disclosures sound like the annual report of a Sabbath school,"

and

- 5) Its first sentence is a doozy:

Life is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer daemonic hints of truth which make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous.

There you have it, in a nutshell. The classic Lovecraft view of existence!

Amy (Other Amy) says

[bestiality is a bad idea; hybridization doubly so (hide spoiler)]

Lindsay says

Lovecraft does Joseph Conrad, without the boat bits. The perils of colonialism, interfering with ancient tribes and the repercussions of going a bit too native.
