



The Vulture

Gil Scott-Heron

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A body lies on New York's West 17th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. A crowd gathers, horrified, curious, staring at the corpse on the pavement. It is July 12, 1969, and John Lee is dead. This is the story of John Lee's murder in the words of four men who knew him.

The Vulture Details

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Author : Gil Scott-Heron

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From Reader Review The Vulture for online ebook

Ignasi Balsells says

Soy fan de Gil Scott-Heron. Ya solo por eso me interesó el libro desde que vi que lo habían publicado en castellano (maravillosa edición de Hoja de Lata, y buenísima traducción de Antonio Vallejo, seguro que no fue fácil).

El libro nos sumerge en una realidad que nos queda muy lejos, Nueva York, el gueto de un verano de 1969, un cadáver y cuatro voces para desentrañar una historia....

Novela negra de primer orden, con un ritmo impuesto por el talento de Gil Scott-Heron.

Kars says

I wanted to love this, but in the end I can only say I liked it. The main reason for this is the plot. Scott-Heron serves up a murder mystery set in 1960s East Harlem. It may just have been me, but I think he tried to be too obfuscatory about who actually did it and in the process makes the narrative more confusing than it needs to be. What I did love was the very believable portrayal of life in the ghetto as experienced by several young men. The language used by the various characters in particular sounds true to my ears although I of course have no real way of knowing.

Eric says

Written when he was only 19, this early novel by Scott Heron is a bit of a mixed bag. Strong (very!) for one so young, it has some rocky bits of characterization here and there, but an overall feel of the times (or so I imagine them...) rings through.

At points I found myself in a parlour game of trying to figure out which parts of Scott Heron he imbued to particular characters. Is he the well-read I.Q., quoting maxims on his way through life? The organizer Afro? A bit of the master of the street Spade?

Even with the roughness, a worthwhile read for anyone who has appreciated Scott Heron's work on record or in poetry.

Mariano Hortal says

Me sorprende muy negativamente la poca repercusión que está teniendo esta fantástica novela negra; hardboiled desde el punto de vista de varios narradores que, a modo de plano secuencia, van conformando una trama compleja que no se resuelve hasta la última página; por si fuera poco el autor consiguió dotar a cada uno de ellos de un estilo propio construyendo voces muy distintas de gran viveza. Es un prodigio de estilo y trama. Uno de los libros del año.

Matthias says

"The Vulture"

Standing in the ruins
of another Black man's life,
or flying through the valley
separating day and night.
"I am death," cried the Vulture.
"For the people of the light."

Charon brought his raft
from the sea that sails on souls,
and saw the scavenger departing,
taking warm hearts to the cold.
He knew the ghetto was a haven
for the meanest creature ever known.

In a wilderness of heartbreak
and a desert of despair,
Evil's clarion of justice
shrieks a cry of naked terror,
taking babies from their momas,
leaving grief beyond compare.

So if you see the Vulture coming,
flying circles in your mind,
Remember there is no escaping
for he will follow close behind.
Only promise me a battle,

Battle for your soul
and mine.

- Gil Scott-Heron

Full experience here: [Scott-Heron reciting this poem on his own music](#)

Andrew says

The Vulture is a 1970s crime novel, but it's also a Black American novel of the street and the culture of the time. The central theme is "Who Killed John Lee" but as the four separate interweaving narratives unfold there is much more depth to the prose than a simple crime story.

It has its faults - the first voice, Spade, is especially strong and compelling, and when we leave his narrative for another's some of the momentum is lost. This effect is repeated when the next three narratives unfold. And the few pages taken from the police point of view feel out place.

These are minor gripes, however. The Vulture is a strong and powerful novel from an interesting voice. I want to check out more of Scott-Heron's writing and music. As his first novel, this was a good place to start.

jeremy says

poet, pianist, songwriter, and protorapper, gil scott-heron is also the author of two novels (and a rumored third to be released in 2011). the first, *the vulture*, was published in 1970 (when scott-heron was 21), the same year his debut album and first book of poetry were released, both titled *small talk at 125th and lenox*. set almost entirely in the chelsea neighborhood of manhattan, *the vulture* is a compelling murder mystery comprised of street poetry and sociopolitical observation. taking place between the summers of 1968 and 1969, the story is told from the perspectives of four main characters, each with a motive for the killing of young john lee. scott-heron's gifted prose could make even the most banal story intriguing, and his ability to convey a convincing portrait of urban strife in late '60s new york is uncanny. gil scott-heron's talents are many, and *the vulture* is a rhythmic, passionate, and smart sampling of his skill.

the vulture

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Matthew Sarookanian says

Brilliant prose. I've never read a book quite like this, dealing with drugs and harlem and danger in the late '60s. It was such a captivating story that I never wanted to put it down, and the world Scott-Heron creates is so real that I feel like I can picture everything happening so perfectly. The way he structures things and the dialouge feels so real that at times I have a hard time reading it because its so forgiem to me. An absolute blast. Loved it.

Gordon Davie says

The first half of this book is a real page turner. A proper snapshot into early 70s street life in New York. The 2nd half for me kind of lost its way a bit and became quite hard to follow. Bearing in mind he was 19 when he wrote it, still a rawness to his talent.

Simon says

The Vulture by Gil Scott Heron

I was reading this book when Gil Scott Heron died and held off reviewing it for a while, it was his debut novel first published in 1970 and is about growing up in black Ghetto's of New York in the 1960's.

The book is drowning in poverty and drugs and the racial politics of the time as we follow the stories of four friends of John Lee who is the books Murder victim and the interweaving stories of the four characters and there involvement or otherwise in his death.

I found it hard to put down this book and it sits well stylistically between the books of Nelson Algren and Iceberg Slim with a slice of Donald Goines thrown into the mix.

For a debut novel from a young writer this is a great book, when you also look at it through the prism of hindsight and knowing the life the Author went on to lead it is also very prophetic when dealing with the heartbreak and hatred that drugs brought to the milieu Gil deals with.

A fine book well worth finding, it was a bargain bin staple when I found my copy.

Dave says

It was okay. You can really feel the vibe of the streets.

Vsmarron says

Exceptional story telling

ArtBooksLife Denise D Cooper says

Reading both The Vulture and The Nigger Factory back to back in a combined book. Since finishing this one The Vulture I am ready to Brea my buying ban and buy everything he has written. I love The last poets and only own two of Scott's books, well three since this coupled. I enjoyed the characters Afro and IQ, the writing seemed to elevate and I found it hard to put down. The beginning is obviously necessary and sets up the story but I didn't enjoy the writing as much as I did with the last two men. Now to finish the next in this collection.

Vivienne Neal says

A Page-Turning Murder Mystery

I had no idea that the late Gill Scott-Heron was an author. I am familiar with his lyrics on the political, social, criminal and economic systems and the impact they have on the disenfranchised and society at large. The character John Lee has been murdered. You begin to learn more about the victim from the four protagonists who knew John well, each bringing his own point of view into the story line. The murder takes place on lower Manhattan, where gang violence, drug trafficking, the allure of making quick and easy money, envy, apathy, mistrust and deception are notably visible. The plot is filled with complex characters with inner and outer conflicts, shocking revelations, and an ending that you will never see coming. Although this story takes place in the late '60s, the author did an excellent job at exposing the many ills, which continues into the 21st century.

Lawrence says

Gil always acts as a cynic, his assessment of the Black Civil rights was overcome by illicit and chronic drug use speaks to the fringe of the movement. Those involved in the movement did not have time for those less engaged. Anyway the Civil Rights movement was never an organization such as the SCLC, the NAACP, or SPLC. Those organizations identified and address objectives in the movement such as the voting rights and equal opportunity on jobs. Gil is more concern with the real grass roots (where to get some reefer) instead of getting petitions signed for breakfast programs, reading programs, and after school programs.

That being said, you realize Gil is on the wrong side working his way further to the fringe.
