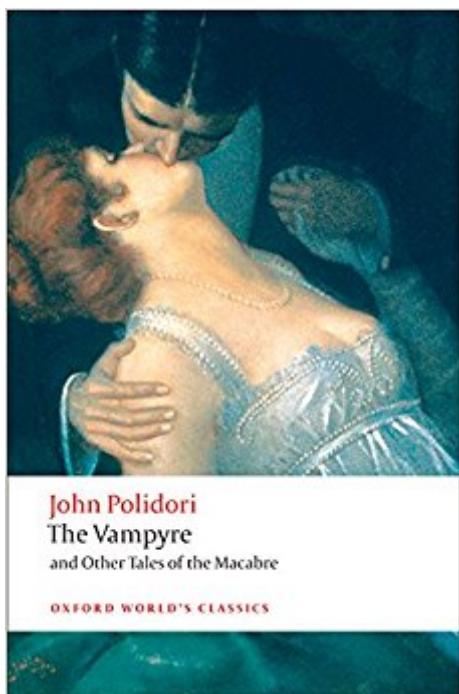


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The Vampyre And Other Tales Of The Macabre (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

John Polidori's classic tale "The Vampyre" (1819), was a product of the same ghost-story competition that produced Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The present volume selects thirteen other tales of mystery and the macabre, including the works of James Hogg, J.S. LeFanu, Letitia Landon, Edward Bulwer, and William Carelton. The introduction surveys the genesis and influence of "The Vampyre" and its central themes and techniques, while the Appendices contain material closely associated with its composition and publication, including Lord Byron's prose fragment "Augustus Darvell." *About the Series:* For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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Customer Reviews

'Moving effortlessly from folklore to melodrama, the Introduction assesses the position that Polidori's story . . . We may not be able to recover the experience of the original readers, but we can be grateful to the editors for bringing back to life tales that are not only of academic interest but which still exert their own nightmarish fascination' *Studies in Hogg and his World*

Chris Baldick is Head of English at Goldsmith's College, University of London. Robert Morrison is Associate Professor of English at Acadia University, Canada.

Out of these 14 stories, I thought 6 were excellent, 5 were quite good. 2 did nothing for me. A couple of caveats. These stories were written in the early 19th century. Atmosphere counted for a lot. If you've read a lot of modern horror stories, and especially if you watch horror movies, these stories might seem tame to you. The horror often focuses on the situation and psychological experience rather than physical detail. It aims for a deeper level. Also, in most stories, the language is old-fashioned. I feel it adds to the sense of ancient horrors, but it's not everyone's cuppa java.

The Vampyre - This vampire seems rather human. (Not a very nice human, mind you.) Vampiredom is presented as only one of many evils in the world, part of life's tapestry. Humans, we're reminded, have been as cruel as, or crueler than, vampires. The supernatural element is there, but played down. In a way, this makes Lord Ruthven even more frightening because he's an accepted part of society; women love him. Lord Ruthven is said to be based upon Lord Byron, whom the author knew (and apparently didn't like too well).

Sir Guy Eveling's Dream - Bloodcurdling! However, the archaic language gets in the way and makes for difficult reading.

Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman - An ugly revenge tale. The horror here is how heartless and evil people can be, and how mob rule can make us do things that we might not do otherwise. Lots of psychological insight. Supposedly based on a true event. This one will get you in the gut.

Monos and Daimonos - It has a folklore feel to it. Enjoyable.

The Master of Logan - Excellent! Very gothic, supernatural and suspenseful, loaded with atmosphere. Gripping, with nice plot twists. Suspenseful from beginning to end.

The Victim - Harrowing. One of many stories from the time about Resurrection Men from whom medical schools and students bought bodies on which to practice their anatomy. Sometimes digging up a corpse is just too much trouble. The ending was a bit flat, otherwise a powerful heartbreaker.

Some Terrible Letters from Scotland - I didn't see much of a point in this. Three unrelated men write letters to the editor about different aspects of the cholera plague.

The Curse - Rousing horror story about revenge. Nice use of foreshadowing and suspense, with a delicious plot twist.

Life in Death - The old 'scientist tries to beat God at his own game' routine. Downright creepy tale that'll send chills down your spine.

My Hobby,--Rather - A dud. Hope the author kept his day job.

The Red Man - Excellent! A dark, gloomy, gothic atmosphere is built up creatively and very effectively, this time in not-so-gay Paris. A terrible and sad tale of obsession and revenge.

Post-mortem Recollections of a Medical Lecturer - Inside the mind of a doctor entering a state of delirium while giving a lecture on insanity. We remain in his mind as he dies, and possibly

(hard to tell) shortly after he dies. Fascinating. The Bride of Lindorf - Great start, but then it went downhill. We're introduced to two fascinating characters. One we never hear of again; the other becomes ordinary. I felt as though I had read the beginning of one story and the end of another. Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess - Starts out slow, but once the suspense starts, it doesn't let up. I consider this a psychological thriller. More mystery than supernatural (not a bad thing, just not expected). This is the plot Le Fanu later expanded into his novel, "Uncle Silas." Excellent!

The book has some really well written gothic fiction. I am always pleasantly surprised with these anthologies as they bring back works that have been largely forgotten by the reading public, and which deserve new attention. I expected gentle stories akin to Edith Wharton's ghost stories, but these tales are more shocking and many of them will flay your sensibilities. They contain curses, murder, infanticide, and other crimes. In one story, a newborn baby is squashed under his own grandfather's boot. Like the very best writers of gothic horror, masters like Shirley Jackson and Edgar Allan Poe, the writers of the literary age represented in this book were keenly aware that the greatest and most effective horror is human evil. The Vampyre, by John Polidori: An aristocratic vampire takes advantage and destroys young women of noble lineage. The story introduces the aristocratic vampire to the English readership for the first time. Sir Guy Eveling's Dream, by Horace Smith: The classic ghost story of a young man who falls for a ghost woman. Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman, by William Carleton: A story of a terrible revenge in which innocent men are forced to bear witness. An entire family is murdered, including the little babes, because the father reported a house robber to the police. The robber is sent to prison, and the robber's family decides to avenge him by burning the house down with the family inside, and killing anyone who attempts to escape. Monos and Daimonos, by Edward Bulwer: A murderer is pursued by the phantom of his victim, which never leaves him alone for a second. The Master of Logan, by Allan Cunningham: The defilement of a grave and its contents leads to the ghost persecuting the master of an aristocratic house, and a showdown between the forces of good and evil. The Victim, by Anonymous: A story relating to the murders committed by Burke and Hare, who murdered innocent people in order to provide cadavers to medical students as anatomy subjects. Some Terrible Letters from Scotland, by James Hogg: Unrelated letters containing frightening accounts about the cholera epidemic in Scotland. The Curse, by Anonymous: An old curse impels the scion of a great house to murderous actions, ruining himself and his noble family. Life in Death, by Anonymous: A scientist discovers a way to come back from death which depends on someone rubbing his corpse with a life-restoring

balm. But the horror occasioned by the task makes it impossible to perform. My Hobby--rather, by NP Willis: A young medical student is asked to hold an overnight vigil over a corpse, and in the process of doing so discovers the corpse being eaten by a cat. The Red Man, by Catherine Gore: Impressive story combining a travelogue style with gothic elements. The author utilizes France and its then recent past of the French revolution as a setting for a truly horrifying tale that includes murder and infanticide. Post-mortem Recollections of a Medical Lecturer, by Charles Lever: A professor dies and comes back from death being able to describe the process of what happened. The Bride of Lindorf, by Letitia E. Landon: A tale full of classic gothic elements (old castles, damsels in distress that turn out to be villains, madness, and murder). It is similar to stories by Anne Radcliffe, though not quite as good as Radcliffe. Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess, by J.S. Le Fanu: After the death of her father, a young and innocent heiress is placed in the care of her uncle, a man whose reputation has been tarnished by the suspicion of murder. This anthology has something for everyone, and especially for students of literature.

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