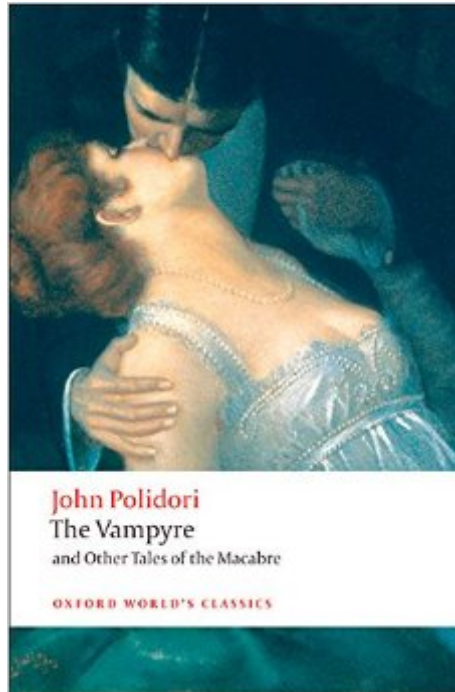


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The Vampyre And Other Tales Of The Macabre (Oxford World's Classics)



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

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.) Vampirism 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.

With the shift from agriculture to industry and advancements in technology and scientific understanding, the 19th century was one of rapid change. This collection of horror stories, anchored by John Polidori's "The Vampyre," reflects the popular tastes and issues of the times. A sense of vice, moral ambiguity, and lawlessness pervades many of the stories. Polidori's vampyre does not simply drain blood and life in the literal sense; he tempts the innocent, further corrupts those who are debauched, and supports the sinner financially whenever he can. He is known for his social and emotional vampirism because even the most rational members of mainstream society can witness these evident depravities. Criminals, living and supernatural, appear in stories such as "Sir Guy Eveling's Dream," "Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman," "The Victim," and "Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess." A contemporary fascination with madness manifests itself in "Monos and Daimonos," "The Red Man," "The Curse," and "The Bride of Lindorf." The interest in medicine and medical research, exploited in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, appear here in "The Victim," "Post-Mortem Recollections of a Medical Lecturer," and, less successfully, "Some Terrible Letters from Scotland." "Life in Death" touches upon one of Frankenstein's themes: man's imperfect and arrogant attempts to mimic or best God and nature. The most horrifying of these stories rely strongly on either realism or fantasy. "Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman," based on an actual event, takes the reader into the inner circle of a criminal brotherhood for whom brutality mocks and replaces morality and spirituality.

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 genteel 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.

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