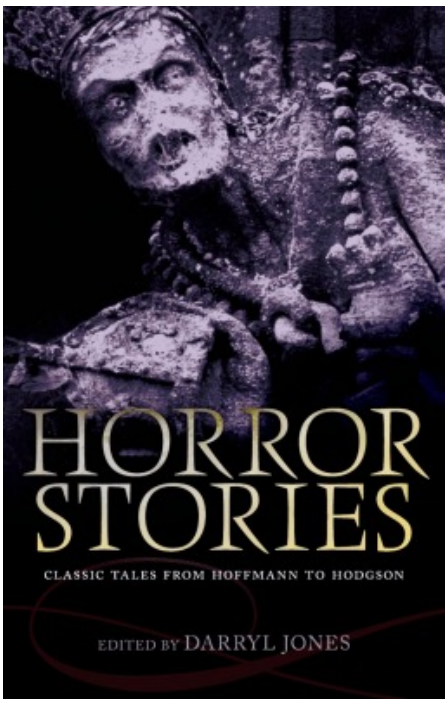

Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson

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The modern horror story grew and developed across the nineteenth century, embracing categories as diverse as ghost stories, supernatural and psychological horror, medical and scientific horrors, colonial horror, and tales of mystery and premonition. This anthology brings together 29 of the greatest horror stories of the period from 1816 to 1912, from the British, Irish, American, and European traditions. It ranges widely across the sub-genres to encompass authors whose terror-inducing powers remain unsurpassed.
The book includes stories by some of the best writers of the century - Hoffmann, Poe, Balzac, Dickens, Hawthorne, Melville, Zola - as well as established genre classics such as M. R. James, Arthur Machen, Bram Stoker, Algernon Blackwood, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and others. It includes rare and little-known pieces by writers such as William Maginn, Francis Marion Crawford, W. F. Harvey, and William Hope Hodgson, and shows the important role played by periodicals in popularizing the horror story. Wherever possible stories are reprinted in their first published form, with background information about their authors and helpful, contextualizing annotation. Darryl Jones's lively introduction discusses horror's literary evolution and its articulation of cultural preoccupations and anxieties. These are stories guaranteed to freeze the blood, revolt the senses, and keep you awake at night: prepare to be terrified!

Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson Details

Date	:	Published October 1st 2014 by Oxford University Press, USA
ISBN	:	9780199685431
Author	:	Darryl Jones (Editor)
Format	:	Hardcover 510 pages
Genre	:	Short Stories, Horror, Fiction, Gothic, Anthologies

From Reader Review Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson for online ebook

Althea Ann says

E.T.A. HOFFMANN, The Sandman
(1816). Remarkably modern-feeling in theme, probably because lately we've had quite a few writers harking back to this kind of story. The sinister traveling merchant Coppelius/Coppola, selling his 'eyes-a' is reflected in “Ilse, Who Saw Clearly” by E. Lily Yu, for example. And of course, the whole steampunk genre loves to explore the idea of clockwork automata.
To a modern reader, the structure of the story flows a bit oddly and unevenly, and the language is quite overwrought (although this may be an artifact of translation [?]) - but its careful ambiguity and depiction of a decline into madness are effectively done. I was familiar with the plotline of the ballet, Coppélia, which was based on this story - but the original tale is far, far darker.

WILLIAM MAGINN, The Man in the Bell
(1821). A bell-ringer is accidentally trapped in a belfry while his colleagues are ringing the bell: an overwhelming experience. That's it. I guess that the brief piece is supposed to function as a metaphor for psychological breakdowns and the difficulty of dealing with life in general... but still. The overwrought language left me saying, "Dude! OK, that all sounded a bit dangerous and unpleasant and all, but pull yourself together already!"

JAMES HOGG, George Dobson's Expedition to Hell
(1827). This is one of those creepy tales that feels suited to late nights around a bonfire.
A coachman is hired to take a fare to an unusual destination: '"there is no man in Scotland who knows the road to that place better than you do. You have never driven on any other road all your life; and I insist on you taking us.'
'Very well, sir,' said George, 'I'll drive you to hell, if you have a mind..."
With hell, getting to your destination is easy. But it requires a contract to get out of that place... a contract promising to return.
I usually don't like tales that depend on the "it was all just a dream... or WAS it?" device, but this story actually uses that human tendency upon wakening to confuse dream and reality to great effect.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC, La Grande Bretêche
(1831). Very familiar-feeling... perhaps I've read this before, possibly a different translation? Similar to Edgar Allan Poe in feel (view spoiler).
I'm not at all sure the multiple 'layers' of the story are necessary: At a social gathering, a man tells a story about a man who is drawn to the grounds of a decrepit and abandoned mansion, who is then told a story about the circumstances of that abandonment, and then seeks out further information on the former inhabitants of that home and the appalling events that occurred there.
However, the story itself is quite effectively horrific, driving home its point about the cruelty and evil that men can do...

EDGAR ALLAN POE, Berenice
(1835) I've read nearly all of Poe at some point or another, but I didn't have a memory of reading this one before.
For such a short piece, I felt like it took a while to draw me in. However, it certainly ends with some drama... ("Pow, right in the kisser...?")

Here we have a young couple - the young man: dark, brooding, and perhaps unhealthily obsessive... the young woman: lovely, without fault, yet languishing of illness.
Of course, tragedy will strike - and horrors beyond tragedy.
Just coincidentally, I read this the same day I went to see the Poe exhibit at the Grolier Club:

SHERIDAN LE FANU, Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter
(1839) Another multi-layered tale: our narrator tells us that he used to know a man who owned a strangely evocative painting with an illustrative air about it. Whne he finally asked his acquaintance to tell him more about the artwork, this tale was the one that was told.
An artist of no great means has long been in love with the daughter of his wealthy patron. However, since he has never declared his hopeful intentions, can he really say anything when the father decides to bestow his daughter's hand upon another? There's true love - and then there is the hope of wealth and position - and then there is the possibility of far, far worse than a simply loveless marriage; which is what befalls this hapless bride.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, The Birth-Mark
(1843) A young woman has always thought that the small birthmark on her cheek was rather a charming feature. Certainly none of her many beaus ever thought it detracted from her beauty. But the man she finally married not only sees it as a flaw, but becomes obsessed with this imperfection, and insists on trying medical and alchemical methods to remove it.
This obsession leads to the destruction of the couple's happiness, some ethically suspect actions, and, of course, eventual tragedy.
The whole piece is heavily allegorical and works as a metaphor for the potential that all of have to let small things bother us more than they should. I actually thought the piece would've been stronger if the message was a little less heavy-handed, and a little less religious.
(Previously read... many years ago.)

HERMAN MELVILLE, The Tartarus of Maids
(1855)
I've read elsewhere that 'The Tartarus of Maids' is usually published along with another 'sketch' called 'The Paradise of Bachelors'. I do find it rather odd to only present one, because 'The Tartarus of Maids' refers several times to the 'Paradise of Bachelors' in a way that is quite confusing to one who has not read it.
'The Tartarus of Maids' is a socially-motivated piece. The protagonist travels to a paper mill to place an order for his company, and takes the opportunity to tour the facility. While there, he observes the wan-ness and misery of the female workers, and describes their plight with sympathy.
The language is very poetic and evocative - it's a beautiful piece, and relevant as well, considering that unhealthy and unhappy working conditions in factories are still a problem in many places around the globe.
I also found it fascinating that this writing - as early as 1855! - points out the problem with calling working women 'girls.'
Too bad that apparently few people took this bit of Melville's writing to heart...

FITZ-JAMES O'BRIEN, What Was It?
(1859)
A very Hammer-Horror feel to this short horror story.
The proprietress of a boarding house decides to move the location of her premises from Bleecker Street to a bit further uptown, 26th St. She's got a great deal, because the house she's moving into is reputed to be haunted.

Her boarders are more enthused than otherwise about the move. Indeed, it sparks a veritable craze for the supernatural. The common area is all abuzz with the possibility of ghosts.. but for quite some time, nothing unusual occurs.
However, one night, after two men have been smoking perhaps a bit too much opium, something does happen...
No morals or allegories here, just a fun, spooky story. Loved the New York City setting.

CHARLES DICKENS, No. 1 Branch Line: The Signal-Man
(1866) I believe I read this one years ago... it seemed familiar.
Out for a stroll, a man decides on a whim to strike up a conversation with the railroad-worker he encounters. The signal-man seems intelligent and interesting - but something is clearly bothering him. When he starts talking about strange spectres and phantom bells, his new acquaintance begins to seriously consider trying to get him to seek help.
However, there may be more to the eerie manifestations the signal-man reported that those of a more scientific bent would have credited...
Nicely creepy, classic ghost story.

ÉMILE ZOLA, The Death of Olivier Bécaille
(1880). What would you do if you were buried alive?
No, really, what would you do?
This story takes this horrific scenario, and deals with it remarkably calmly and realistically. A man becomes conscious of his wife wailing over his seemingly-dead body. he can hear and see, and is aware of everything in the room around him. However, he's unable to move a muscle to respond to her. He wonders: is he actually dead? Might it be that consciousness does not depart the dead body?

RONALD ROSS, The Vivisector Vivisected
(1882). Apparently, this story was unpublished at the time of its writing, which is slightly odd, because out of all these stories I definitely felt most with this one that I was missing nuances that would've been obvious to a contemporary reader. But humor is often like that, and this is clearly intended as a humorous story. Some of the 'Irish' humor feels... dated, to put it kindly, but other bits have aged quite well, as in the description of Dr. Silcutt, "famous for his excellent work on the encephalon of politicians. He was... at the time, much excited by his recent excellent discovery that gold produces effects different from those of copper when approached to the different nerves of those engaged in public services. Titillation of the palm with the former metal produces contraction of the flexors, with the latter, contraction of the extensors."
It's a riff on the Frankenstein tale, with mad scientists and a moral message. The story is of particular interest to those with an interest in the history of medicine for its prediction of an artificial 'heart.' Interestingly, the author was himself a physician.

ROBERT-LOUIS STEVENSON, The Body-Snatcher
(1884) Great set-up, excellent writing... but the 'scary' ending didn't work for me at all. I felt like it was on the level of spooky stories kids tell each other during sleepover parties (do kids still do that?)
It's about some young medical students whose duty to procure dead bodies for their eminent professor leads them down a spiral of moral depravity and blackmail. A nice exploration of guilt and complicity.

RUDYARD KIPLING, The Mark of the Beast
(1890) Just recently, Kipling's horror stories were recommended to me. This one is quite excellent.
The 'mark of the beast' here has nothing to do with Satan. It's a bit more literal than that...
Some wealthy British men in India are out late at a party. One of their number gets falling-down drunk, and two of his associates take it upon themselves to get him home. However, on their way, the drunk man gets

aggressive, and before his friends can stop him, in a move of total douchebaggery he intentionally desecrates a shrine of Hanuman that they happen to be passing. Religious services were in progress and the less-drunk men fully expect to be physically attacked in punishment for their serious transgression. Instead, the only thing that happens just then is a strange encounter with a leper at the temple.
Later, however, they realize that they might not actually have gotten off as easily at it seemed.
Kipling often gets a bad rap for his colonialism and belief in manifest Destiny - but this story, while it may not portray Hinduism accurately, has a pretty strong message about having respect for belief systems that may differ from your own.

AMBROSE BIERCE, Chickamauga
(1891) This is an attempt by Bierce to depict the horror of the aftermath of the Battle of Chickamauga (1863)- a significant Union defeat, and a bloodbath. To do this, he describes the perspective of an uncomprehending toddler who comes upon the retreat by chance. It really didn't work for me - I found it too over-the-top and contrived.

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN,The Yellow Wall Paper
(1892) A re-read of a classic. ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ is a spooky-as-hell ghost story which maintains a nice ambiguity all the way through – but it’s also a raw, effective protest against the infantilization of women and even a call to arms regarding awareness of mental illness. Gilman is great at leaving what doesn’t need to be said unsaid. There are no ‘morals’ stated here, but her stance is clear.
(And was that room ever a ‘playroom’ or ‘gymnasium’? Oh hell no.)

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, The Case of Lady Sannox
(1893) Not a Sherlock Holmes story - nor would I say it's one of ACD's best. It is, indeed, truly horrific - but it's also quite predictable. Perhaps that's intentional. At the very outset of the story, we're told that a society lady has 'taken the veil' and that a celebrated surgeon, who had 'relations' with her, has gone insane. Naturally, we expect to find out what caused this - and indeed we do, in a disturbing tale of jealousy and vengeance.

BRAM STOKER, The Squaw
(1893) Sometimes evil comes wrapped up in a jolly package.
A honeymooning couple, travelling through Europe, make the acquaintance of a vacationing American, straight from the Wild West (and it's rather hilarious to read the British stereotypes of such a character). The American seems genial and amusing, and they gladly accompany him to Nuernberg, where they visit the torture museum. (Which is still there - although the iron maiden that the story references is now on display in Rothenburg ob de Tauber.)
When the American kills a kitten through a combination of foolishness and callousness, the events that transpire weirdly echo and reflect a story he told the honeymooners about something that happened among the Native American tribes - a story that the reader feels has had some of the worst - and most damning - details removed.
Mothers are legendarily fierce in the protection of their children - or in taking vengeance for them - and this tale makes full use of that.

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS, The Repairer of Reputations
(1895) I have the whole 'King in Yellow' collection sitting on my ereader... I really need to get around to reading it! This story is wonderfully weird - and disturbing on several levels.
Set in a future 1920, the world has made several steps toward peace and stability. (I'm not sure I like them, and I'm also not so sure the author does, either.) The introductory segment drags on a bit, reminding me a bit in style of Edward Bellamy's 'Looking Backward' (1888). Then, the story really starts...

Our narrator lets us know that after a fall from a horse, he was unjustly confined to a mental institution for some time, until his doctor realized that it was all a mistake, and released him. However, he still seems to have a strong desire for vengeance against this doctor. He also seems to harbor ambiguous feelings toward his brother, and his brother's vibrant young fiancee.
He enjoys spending time with a grotesque and mysterious man who claims to make his living 'adjusting' reputations - dealing with scandals - through a network of informers. Everyone else seems to think this man is insane. Is he? And our narrator himself? It's true that he admits to having read 'The King in Yellow' - the enigmatic work that is reputed to drive every reader mad...

ARTHUR MACHEN, Novel of the White Powder
(1895) Straight-up horror, here. The narrator is concerned about her brother. Intent on becoming a lawyer, he has devoted himself to his studies... to the point of obsession. His health seems to be declining from stress and long hours. Finally, she convinces the young man to see a doctor. He returns with a prescription - and soon, he's more outgoing and relaxed. She breathes a sigh of relief - but not for long, as the pendulum swings in the other direction. Soon, he's out partying all the time, neglecting his studies completely. And that's only the beginning...
The first section, the story, is excellent. I wasn't so enthused about the overlong 'explanation' appended to the story. I felt it detracted from the horror.

RICHARD MARSH, The Adventure of Lady Wishaw's Hand
(1898) Have I read this one before? I'm not sure. It was familiar, but it's not the only horror story to feature a disembodied hand...
Here, the hand in question is received as an unsolicited gift by a collector of curios. However, such a gift is too morbid for his tastes. He's further squicked out when he touches the hand and discovers that it feels alive... and even moves. Yet more disturbing is when he realizes that he is unable to even speak to his friends about the strange object.
Gradually, the grisly story behind this curio is revealed. Classic, spooky stuff.

W. W. JACOBS, The Monkey's Paw
(1902) Previously read (several times).
The definitive tale of wishes gone wrong. Strong, but not as scary as I'd remembered it, somehow. (I didn't recall there being so much forethought about what state the son might be in when he returned.)

MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN, Luella Miller
(1902) Classic horror. There's a haunted house in town... since it was abandoned, fifty years ago, only one person has dared to try to live there... and she promptly died. Rumors abound about the curse on the place... but only one elderly town resident remembers the woman who used to live there, Luella Miller, and what happened to give the house a bad name forevermore.
The tale skirts around the edges of the supernatural in such a way as to remain thoroughly believable - and its insights are cuttingly acute. I hope you've never known anyone who'll you'll see in the character of Ms. Miller - but chances are, you have.
I liked this well enough to immediately pick up a whole collection of the author's stories.

M. R. JAMES, Count Magnus
(1904) The 'Dracula' influence is strong in this one... A definite must-read for fans of classic vampire fiction. Some papers found in a long-empty house reveal the story of one would-be travel writer's experience with the titular Count, whose locked sarcophagus lies in a remote Scandinavian church. The writer uncovers local stories of men who walk when they should be lying dead... and the reader can assume that there'll be no good end to this investigation.

FRANCIS MARION CRAWFORD, For the Blood is the Life
(1905)Previously read; not sure when - this is a heavily-anthologized piece!
A classic of vampire fiction; it features a seductive femme fatale whose unrequited love persists beyond the grave. The supernatural elements are mixed in with a story of mundane theft and murder in a small village, with all the expected drama of the Italian setting (as the author puts into his character's mouth: "Deeds that would be simply brutal and disgusting anywhere else become dramatic and mysterious because this is Italy and we are living in a genuine tower of Charles V built against genuine Barbary pirates.")
However, I found that the most memorable part of the story was its framing device, with the eerie image of the grave with a body lying on top of it, which is only visible from a distance.

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD, The Wendigo
(1910) A hunting party that ventures into forbidden territory has a run-in with a creature out of legend. This horror classic has some very well-done elements. I like how the 'rough' talk of the huntsmen and their guides is contrasted with the lovely and evocative descriptions of nature. Blackwood does an excellent job of conjuring up the vastness and mystery of the untamed North American wilderness. Unfortunately, it does contain a few racial slurs and depictions which, while they may serve to contribute to the setting of the story, are quite jarring to a modern reader. There are also elements of the 'horrific' in this story that came off as... well, just a bit silly. But overall, the juxtaposition of small blustering (but strangely vulnerable) men against the unknown is quite effective. It does indeed evoke "savage and formidable potencies lurking behind the souls of men, not evil perhaps in themselves, yet instinctively hostile to humanity as it exists..."

Too long! Continuing in comments!

Mary says

I received this book from Good Reads in a giveaway. I was so excited to see I had won this giveaway, I love to read creepy stories and there is something really captivating about reading scary stories from the past. Not only were the stories fun to read, but they also gave a unique look into the culture and society of the time period the stories were set/wrote in. By seeing what they were afraid of, we learn more about the people of that time. Some of the stories were truly scary even now, and some were more interesting because the "monster" in the story was bizarre. My favorite was a story by Poe I had not previously read, titled Berenice. The end notes were incredibly helpful for understanding references I did not have any knowledge of, my only complaint with them is it would have been easier if they were at the end of each page instead of at the back. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in historic societies, scary stories, or just great pieces of literature. This is a book I will read again and again.

Champaign Public Library says

Recommended by Kelly S.

This is a compilation book of short stories called “Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson”, edited by Darryl Jones. This fantastic anthology brings together a wide variety of horror stories primarily written in the nineteenth century. So if you're looking for old-time frights from both American and European traditions, this is the book for you. Twenty-nine stories by such well known authors as Bram Stoker, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Emile Zola have been selected to stir your

fear to an unimaginable boiling point. These old titles are a perfect counterpoint to someone recent like Dean Koontz, and feature a variety of sub-genres, like ghosts, paranormal beings, and medical horror.

H.C. Gray says

The introduction to this book says that those unfamiliar with the stories inside might like to treat the Introduction as an Afterward, which is what I did, ignoring notes on text, and experiencing the stories just for their own worth.

I confess that though I've read plenty of Victorian literature over the years, when I come back to it after a period of reading modern literature, I do find it a grind at first. They take their time, the Victorians, long sentences, paragraphs, explanations. They are in no hurry to get to the point! It took me a few stories to settle into this book therefore, but how glad I am that I carried on. In the end, each night I picked a story at random and found some real gems in here.

I was very excited to read the famous The Signal Man, The Yellow Wall Paper and The Monkey's Paw. Brilliant also to find works in here by Zola, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoner, and M.R. James. What a collection!

Reading all of the accompanying scholarly information after reading all the stories really made this book. Highly recommend.

This book was provided by the publisher for an honest review.

Elisa says

I consider myself a big fan of horror stories, but I had not read most of these texts, or I had not read the full version, such as Poe's Berenice. The Introduction is very informative, and the Explanatory Notes at the end enrich the reading experience. Even the stories I didn't like (The Tartarus of Maids by Fitz-James O'Brien was one of the few) are interesting and help give a more complete overview of the history and evolution of the Horror genre. Most of the stories are great (how come I'd never read W.W. Jacobs' The Adventure of Lady Wishaw's Hand or The Room in the Tower by William Hope Hodgson?) and it is surprising to see that writers not known by their horror stories authored such gems (Balzac, Zola). A great read for Halloween!

Letesa Campbell says

it's was good!!

Claire Gordon-Bouvier says

All these stories were written some time in the 19th or early 20th century - the golden age of horror. These

are the stories of some of the best horror writers of all time, and there weren't really any bad ones, though I did enjoy *The Man in the Bell* and *Chickamauga* less than the others. The explanatory notes were useful, too. There really isn't anything negative to say about this wonderful collection.

Kerri says

All in all a varied collection of stories, which is nice so it's not like the same thing over and over. Each story is individual and while some are ho-hum, there are definitely enough of interest to give this book a 3 stars. The beginning stories are slow after Sandman, but the last stories more than make up for it.

Some of the stories have pretty gory elements either hinted at or described.

The Sandman *by E. T. A. Hoffman*: Has a definite "creepy" factor with Coppelius, and the theme of eyes. I do not quite understand the ending though.

The Man in the Bell *by william Maginn*: Boring. It was a like a bad retelling of the Pit and the Pendulum. Or was this written first? If that's the case, then the Pit and the Pendulum is a better version.

George Dobson's Expedition to Hell *by James Hogg*: Fascinating dream sequence and consequences. Very surreal.

La Grande Breteche *by Honore de Balzac*: Dark twist, though the form of narrative seems to take away from the story.

Berenice - A Tale *by Edgar Allen Poe*: Classic Poe full of dark themes, madness, obsession, and death of a young and beautiful woman. Fascinating and macabre.

Strange Even in the Life of Schalken the Painter *by Sheridan Le Fanu*: This one definitely was a very interesting story. But because of my modern sensibilities, I want more answers!! More background and details! I want it fleshed out more.

The Birthmark *by Nathaniel Hawthorne*: This one is a sad story of dwelling on a small imperfection to the point of obsession while losing sight of all that is good and perfect. Choosing disappointment over happiness.

The Tartarus of Maids *by Herman Melville*: First off, I didn't think Melville had written anything BUT Moby Dick. Hahaha! Oops. This was an interesting story though very heavy in detail and description to the point of being bogged down. I think it would be more powerful in companion with its fellow, The Paradise of Bachelor's, as it seems to be written in juxtaposition to that story.

What Was It? *by Fitz-James O'Brien*: What a wacky story. Again, the difference in writing styles then and now made me want more answers and left the story feeling unfinished. Fascinating idea though.

No I Branch Line: The Signal Man *by Charles Dickens*: Remarkable story, very well told. Mystery and supernatural and a lonely spot all balled into one.

The Death of Olivier Becaille *by Emile Zola*: I really liked this one! Fascinating and not sure where it's

going to go in the end, kept me on the edge of my seat even though not a whole lot is actually happening. Foreshadowing lets you know WHAT is going to happen, but what will be the resolution? I liked it.

The Vivisector Vivisected *by Ronald Ross*: Meh, Frankenstein-ish idea but they should have known their machine would be highly impractical to begin with which leads to problems (of course). More a psychological turn than otherwise. A weird story.

The Body-Snatcher *by Robert Louis Stevenson*: This one was a good read, dark and strange. Again, psychological elements but in a much different stream than Vivisector. The reactions of two similar people to a horrifying event. Fascinating.

The Mark of the Beast *by Rudyard Kipling*: Interesting with the deity dynamics, I don't actually remember it too well at this point which doesn't speak much for it, though I do remember liking it when I read it. Huh.

Chickamauga *by Ambrose Bierce*: A story of war through an innocent child. Gruesome elements, sad.

The Yellow Wall Paper *by Charlotte Perkins Gilman*: I have reviewed this one before - I really like it. Fascinating descent into madness with subtle social commentary. An unreliable narrator makes you wonder what is Actually going on, but that leads to the fun of the story. Very well told.

The Case of Lady Sannox *by Arthur Conan Doyle*: Smartly told story of a woman and her illicit lover. Fascinating.

The Squaw *by Bram Stoker*: You can see what will happen from a mile away but the American is a complete and utter idiot in every possible way. I couldn't always understand what he was saying, but it didn't matter. Described gore.

The Repairer of Reputations *by Robert W Chambers*: What a wacky story! Bizarre. Another descent (?) into madness with a question of where and how did it actually start?

Novel of the White Powder *by Arthur Machen*: Interesting story, though too many questions and not enough answers for my modern mind. The letter at the end was unsatisfactory storytelling to me, though from reading this collection it seems to be in keeping with the times.

The Adventure of Lady Wishaw's Hand *by Richard Marsh*: What even. Fascinating, though it got really drawn out in describing the background of the hand and seemed blah blah blah. Again, not enough answers! Too many questions of "Well, what was this about?" or "What did that mean??" Because I am too lazy to think more deeply about the story. Maybe I will come back to it at sometime and understand more. But I did like it all in all.

The Monkey's Paw *by W. W. Jacobs*: I knew the basic story somehow, but it was interesting. A sad story about letting curiosity get the better of one. Very dark.

Luella Miller *by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman*: Yikes. Good story, great story even, so well told. Lots of questions, but the good kind that don't frustrate me.

Count Magnus *by M. R James*: Again, I remember the basics of the story but not so much how it affected me or anything like that. Meh.

For the Blood is the Life *by Francis Marion Crawford*: Fascinating story of greed, murder, intrigue, mystery, the supernatural. Really liked it!

The Wendigo *by Algernon Blackwood*: I have heard other stories of the Wendigo, so I was a bit confused as they clashed with this one. Well told, good suspense and descriptions, but it is still hard for me to settle the differences of what I expected from what I got.

August Heat *by W. F. Harvey*: I liked this one. A twisted mystery very well told.

The Room in the Tower *by E. F. Benson*: So fascinating! I am a "constant dreamer" as he says, so maybe that made it more interesting to me but it was a very interesting idea of supernatural forces at play both good and bad.

The Derelict *by William Hope Hodgson*: Interesting and exciting read, once you get past the boring introduction and into the actual story. Suspense, danger, supernatural elements, all the good things. I was reading it on my lunch break and was 4 pages away from being done when it ended. My boss let me finish it on the clock since it was so quiet at work and the suspense was driving me nuts!

Maria says

I picked up this collection of 19th-century horror stories mainly for three stories in particular: "The Yellow Wall Paper," "August Heat" and "The Monkey's Paw." I had read references to them several times in Stephen King, and other places, citing them as great classics. They did not disappoint! Other standouts for me were stories by Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Rudyard Kipling, and a particularly dark one from Arthur Conan Doyle. Great spooky stuff!

Elaine Aldred says

The Editor's enthusiasm for his subject is clear and has resulted in an informed commentary as well as a sense of being invited to read a very special collection of short stories. This expectation is more than fulfilled, as the book represents the very best in the tradition of horror stories from the early nineteenth century to early twentieth century. It is the quality of them that makes them as unsettling by today’s standards as they must have been then, read at night by a flickering open fire.
It is an excellent source book for anyone wanting to understand what makes a high quality horror story, because they still have the power to pull the reader in and make them feel as if they are a part of the story’s world. There is also a considerable range not only of story categories (from outright terrifying monsters to subtle psychological manifestations), but also writing styles. The fact that they are still able to resonate with a reader today speaks of the excellence of the writers’ craft.
Horror is about tapping into the human psyche to make the writing trip an emotional switch in a reader and unsettle them (in the same way a low and almost indistinct frequency might) to leave a lasting sense of disquiet. These stories do this well. So this is a book best not read by the faint-hearted, alone on a dark and stormy night.

Leah says

Something for everyone...

This anthology consists of twenty-nine horror stories from the long 19th century: that is, roughly, up to the beginning of WW1. It comes with an interesting and informative introduction written by the editor, Darryl Jones, Professor of English Literature and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Trinity College Dublin. I recently read and reviewed Jones' own history of horror, Sleeping with the Lights on, and while obviously that book goes into considerably more detail, this introduction covers similar territory, discussing the various sub-genres, and how horror reflects and to some extent addresses the anxieties of its times. The stories in the collection are selected to give a feel for the broad range of horror writing in the Victorian era, so there's everything here from mild and humorous to too strong for my moderate tastes, from a few pages to near novella length, from household names to people of whom I'd never heard. Jones also discusses the importance of periodicals in that era, and tells us that around two-thirds of these stories first appeared in those.

There are plenty of lesser known stories in here to make it an enjoyable read even for people who've read a fair amount of Victorian horror already, but I felt that, because it also includes several major classics, it would be an ideal collection for someone relatively knew to the genre who wanted to get a feel for the style of some of the better known authors too. Robert Louis Stevenson is here, with *The Bodysnatcher*; Dickens' *The Signal-Man*; Kipling's *The Mark of the Beast*; Gilman's *The Yellow Wall Paper*; Jacob's *The Monkey's Paw*; and Blackwood's *The Wendigo*. There are also examples of horror writing from authors who are probably better known (to me, at least) for their other works: Balzac, Melville, Zola. And a couple of my newer favourites, found since I started this little detour into the delights of terror, appear too: Arthur Machen and Robert W Chambers. There are ghosties and ghoulies and lang-leggedy beasties and things that go bump in the night, and mad scientists, of course, and family curses, and vampires, and insane narrators, and Gothic houses galore.

Because of the wide range of content and styles, unsurprisingly my reactions to them varied wildly too. Seventeen got either four or five stars, which is a pretty high proportion of the total. But several got two stars and one, a hideous story from Bram Stoker that starts with the killing of a kitten, was abandoned before I finished the first page! However, different readers will bring their own tastes to the stories and may well find that they enjoy the ones I disliked – I knew as I was rating them that often my reaction was based on how the stories made me feel rather than their intrinsic quality. The same may apply to my five stars, of course – stories moderate enough for me may be too mild for those who prefer harder hitting stuff. In short, there will be something here for everyone and inevitably everyone will be less keen on some too. That's why I think it's such a good sampler, which I happily recommend to the seasoned reader or the horror newbie alike. 4½ stars for me overall, so rounded up.

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Oxford World's Classics.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

David says

Trying to trace the development of a genre is never easy. There are always some obvious choices, but there

are also those moments when you see something emerging that would come into play latter. Given how horror bleeds out from fantasy, science fiction, crime and thriller, it’s influences can come from anywhere. This anthology takes the nineteen century as the main point for the emergence of horror as a genre, even if that term was rarely used.

The introduction discusses the usual suspects of the basis of Victorian fears: the unease at having an empire, worries about scientific progress, sexuality and spiritualism. This does establish the context of the stories, which needs to happen even if this may be familiar territory, for some people. Without knowing the context, it can be difficult to fairly judge older material.

These are some of the stories have been chosen for the anthology to represent the genre's progression.

'The Sandman' by E. T. A Hoffmann does predate Frankenstein, with the story of artificial life created. Although the overall tone of the story appears to swing from satire to horror, as if Hoffmann was not sure of what it was himself, so it feels like two separate stories pushed together. Still, it is a story which is historically important and remains, after so long, surprisingly undermined for spin-off material.

This feeling of the genre's typical formulae not yet being set in stone, continues with 'The Man in the Bell' by William Maginn. It is based on a simple premise dealing with a man being trapped under a church bell. With the narrator trapped in an enclosed space and that provided by an everyday object made it frightening, and so it is a more important step in the evolution of the genre then may have been noticed at the time.

'George Dobson’s Expedition to Hell' by James Hogg deals with everyday travel turned into and object of horror. It also establishes the use of dreams as way to break with reality. 'The Room in the Towe'r by E. F. Benson also uses recurring dreams with a specific location and dialogue. As it goes on, the narrative becomes more conventional with what we have seen before, but the use of recurring dreams is interesting for the time.

'La Grande Breteche' by Honore De Balzac has the sense that it is possibly a satire of the gothic genre with a decaying estate, wills given out on deathbeds and walling up people up alive. As the narrative mentions Anne Radcliffe, I think that it is a possible interpretation.

As others have previously noted, comedy and horror can be very closely linked. 'The Adventure of Lady Winshaw’s Hand' by Richard March, a story of a severed limb with a life of its own reads nearer to humour then horror. Similarly, 'What Was It?' by Fitz-James O’Brien also runs close to parody, with a house full of people expecting to see a ghost, which is then captured and a plaster cast made of it. The latter could be seen as a reflection of the paradox with people expecting ghosts in a world with the rational increasingly gaining ground.

'Berenice –A Tale' by Edgar Allan Poe, is one of the authors less familiar works but is still fairly interesting, going over his familiar territory of an obsessed narrator going into madness. 'Strange Event in The Life of Schalken the Painter' by Sheridan Le Fanu is a less familiar work as well but also lesser in general, with another account of a young idiot summoning up the devil. 'The Birth-Mark' by Nathaniel Hawthorne is something that sounds like it could be a good commentary on beauty standards a husband obsessed with removing a blemish on his wife’s face. Unfortunately it reads as if it was meant to be taken seriously with much mucking about with alchemy.

When the stories move into authors moving with the changing times, the material starts to get interesting again. 'The Tartarus of Maids' by Herman Mellville turns a paper mill into a place of nightmare. 'The Signal

Man' a classic by Charles Dickens is a great ghost story using the emerging landscape of the trains. 'The Death of Olivier Becaille' by Emile Zola, re-invents the story of burial alive by bringing in the disappointment of failed aspirations. 'Chickamunga' by Ambrose Bierce confronts a lost child with the horrors of the civil war.

The sub-genre of body horror is also represented with three stories centred around this. 'The Vivisector Vivisected' by Roland Ross has not aged well with a scientist attempting to keep someone alive through an artificial heart. 'The Squaw' by Bram Stoker is a rather weightless tale of revenge, enlivened by the question of if there was a general sense of snobbery against Americans in the English literary circles. 'The Case of Lady Sannox' by Arthur Conan Doyle is another empty story about revenge on an adulterous wife.

Near the middle point of the anthology, the book starts to move into the range of the more familiar authors and stories The Body-Snatcher by Robert Louis Stevenson does play on the lasting shock and guilt of the Burke and Hare murders and is a step on the path to writing Jekyll and Hyde . 'The Mark of the Beast' by Rudyard Kipling is a dull colonist nightmare that says it is all right to torture people with leprosy, if they curse white military jerks.

'The Yellow Wall Paper' by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a justly lauded tale of madness from a woman suffering post-birth depression. It’s one of these stories that you can see how it inspired other authors. 'The Repairer of Reputations' by Robert W. Chambers stands apart from the others being set twenty five years into the future. This is another story that has become influential through introducing the idea of ‘The King In Yellow’ a text that will drive mad anybody who reads it.

There is less of an impact in the story 'Novel of the White Paper' by Arthur Machen in which somebody decays due to exposure to strange drugs. The premise is good, it’s just the way that narrative handles it. A similar comment could be made for 'Luella Miller' by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, with an account of a psychic vampire that feeds off other people’s attention and work, which has the sense of needing a bit more editing.

'The Monkey’s Paw' by W. W. Jacobs still remains one of the greatest short horror stories. 'Count Magus'by M. R. James is also a good representation of this authors work with an academic stumbling onto the supernatural. 'The Wendigo' by Algernon Blackwood has been cited as an influence on Lovecraft. The story raises the possibilities of fear through the vastness of the American landscape and the idea of procession.

In conclusion, this anthology does a good job of representing the genre's evolution. However, this one might be a better choice for a starting point then for people more familiar with the subject matter. A lot of the stories here have been reprinted in other titles and collections. The most interesting moments are with the less familiar material such as 'The Tartarus of Maids' and 'The Death of Olivier Becaille' which mix what was the modern world with what where becoming the familiar genre tropes. This is anthology is worth reading but, if you are a bit of a horror collector, check your book collection before buying to make sure that you are getting sufficient new material to that which you already have.

Originally published
at SF2 Concatenation
http://www.concatenation.org/frev/jon...