



# The Beetle

*Richard Marsh*

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'The Beetle' (1897) tells the story of a fantastical creature, "born of neither god nor man," with supernatural and hypnotic powers, who stalks British politician Paul Lessingham through fin de siècle London in search of vengeance for the defilement of a sacred tomb in Egypt.

In imitation of various popular fiction genres of the late nineteenth century, Marsh unfolds a tale of terror, late imperial fears, and the "return of the repressed," through which the crisis of late imperial Englishness is revealed.

This Broadview edition includes a critical introduction and a rich selection of historical documents that situate the novel within the contexts of fin de siècle London, England's interest and involvement in Egypt, the emergence of the New Woman, and contemporary theories of mesmerism and animal magnetism.

## **The Beetle Details**

Date : Published April 30th 2004 by Broadview Press Inc (first published 1897)

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Author : Richard Marsh

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Genre : Horror, Classics, Gothic, Fiction, Mystery, Historical, Victorian, Literature, 19th Century

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# From Reader Review *The Beetle* for online ebook

Jeffrey Keeten says

"A face looked into mine, and, in front of me, were those dreadful eyes. Then, whether I was dead or living, I said to myself that this could be nothing human,--nothing fashioned in God's image could wear such a shape as that. Fingers were pressed into my cheeks, they were thrust into my mouth, they touched my staring eyes, shut my eyelids, then opened them again, and--horror of horrors!--the blubber lips were pressed to mine--the soul of something evil entered into me in the guise of a kiss."

**OMG those LIPS those EYES!!!**

*The Beetle* was published in 1897 the same year as the Bram Stoker's classic book *Dracula*. Initially *The Beetle* outsold *Dracula*, but as word got around the Stoker book became the hit of the season. I pulled up a time line to see what else of significance happened in 1897 and the one interesting literary tidbit that jumped out at me was it was the year that Marcel Proust fought a pistol duel with Jean Lorrain. What I know about Proust it seems so improbable, but there you have it mentioned on a history timeline. I'm sure the Proustians among us can confirm or deny the validity of that occurrence.

The story is told by four narrators. The first by Robert Holt, a man who has fallen on hard times. Caught in a downpour, he sees an open window, and in a moment of desperation to secure shelter from the drumming on his head he enters the house. He finds a creature there that goes way beyond his imagination to comprehend. He is stripped naked, mounted, fondled, and kissed most vile. He is mesmerized and turned into a...**ZOMBIE**.

**Poor Robert Holt, a man no longer worried about the weather**

The second narrator is Sydney Atherton, a brilliant scientist in love with Majorie Lindon, but who should be in love with Dora Grayling. Don't worry as the story progresses the women get him straightened out on this fact. He is drawn into the action of this story by his association with Lindon and more importantly by her association with Paul Lessingham. He sees a transformation that tests the bounds of what he believes to be true of the natural world.

*"The light was full on, so that it was difficult to suppose that I could make a mistake as to what took place in front of me. As he replied to my mocking allusion to the beetle by echoing my own words, he vanished,--or, rather, I saw him taking a different shape before my eyes. His loose draperies all fell off him, and, as they were in the very act of falling, there issued, or there seemed to issue out of them, a monstrous creature of the beetle type, --the man himself was gone. On the point of size I wish to make myself clear. My impression, when I saw it first, was that it was as large as the man had been, and that it was, in some way, standing up on end, the legs towards me. But, the moment it came in view, it began to dwindle, and that so rapidly that, in a couple of seconds at most, a little heap of drapery was lying on the floor, on which was a truly astonishing example of the coleoptera. It appeared to be a beetle. It was perhaps, six or seven inches high, and about a foot in length. Its scales were of a vivid golden green. I could distinctly see where the wings were sheathed along the back, and, as they seemed to be*

*slightly agitated, I looked, every moment, to see them opened, and the thing take wing.*

The third narrator is Majorie Lindon who is engaged to Paul Lessingham. She enlists the aid of Atherton to help her discover what is troubling her fiancé. This is a most cruel assignment as Atherton is a most bitter rival of Lessingham for the love of Majorie, and the last thing he wants to do is help him.

The last narrator is Augustus Champnell a confidential agent who is brought into the plot by the solicitation by Paul Lessingham for help. His objective thinking does turn out to be a key to resolving the case.

Now it turns out that this creature is a follower of Isis and has pursued Paul Lessingham from Cairo to London to exact revenge. Lessingham took a walk on the wild side along the Rue de Rabagas while he was in Cairo and drank the drink the young lady offered him and woke up on a pile of rags.

### **Isis**

*"By my side knelt the Woman of the Songs. Leaning over, she wooed my mouth with kisses. I cannot describe to you the sense of horror and of loathing with which the contact of her lips oppressed me. There was about her something so unnatural, so inhuman, that I believed even then I would have destroyed her with as little sense of moral turpitude as if she had been some noxious insect.*

Lessingham escapes and brings the horror back to London where he is just beginning a promising political career.

I usually try to include a picture of the author in my reviews. Below is the only picture I could find.

### **Richard Marsh**

A very mysterious man this Richard Marsh. I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It is of course pulp horror so if you are looking for a more literary work I would suggest *Dracula*. This book is well written for the genre and certainly intriguing from the stand point of presenting some of the fears of the Victorian Age. This is considered Marsh's best book, but I will certainly not hesitate to read another of his books. If anyone has enjoyed other books besides Wilkie Collins that falls into this genre please share your suggestions.

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### **Cheryl says**

What a weird, fun book this is! It's a bit of a combination of horror, mystery, and Victorian Sensation novel.

Here's what Wikipedia says about it:

"The Beetle (or The Beetle: A Mystery) is an 1897 horror novel by the British writer Richard Marsh, in which a polymorphous Ancient Egyptian entity seeks revenge on a British Member of Parliament. It initially

out-sold Bram Stoker's similar horror story *Dracula*, which appeared the same year."

It's told in four parts, each part narrated by a different character. Some passages are over-the-top creepy, especially if you're creeped out by giant bugs. Other parts have romance and even some humor. It's fast-paced and while it's certainly not serious Literature, I couldn't stop reading it. A creepily fun read, if you're in the right mood.

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## **Tim says**

Probably the most interesting thing I can say about this book was that it was published in 1897, the same year as Stoker's *Dracula* and was initially a much better seller. Though I think in the end, the good Count has had the last laugh given that his book can be found in nearly every bookstore and library (not to mention the countless film adaptations) whereas *The Beetle* is one of those books you most likely would need to special order.

I've had this book sitting on my shelf for years. I picked it up for a college course called "Horror and Insanity in Victorian Literature" (and yes, that class was as awesome as it sounds), but due to a snowstorm that knocked out power and made classes canceled for over a week, a book needed to be cut from the syllabus and this was the one chosen. Considering how many books I was reading at the time for classes, any losses were a relief and thus the book went forgotten on my shelf for some time.

I've finally corrected this, and how did I react? Was it a lost classic worthy of outsell *Dracula*? Did it deserve to be mostly forgotten by the public? What did I really think of it? Honestly, I have a mixed opinion.

The book is broken down into four sections, each with a different narrator telling a piece of the tale. Occasionally these stories overlap and we will see the same scene from a different point of view. Sometimes (much to my annoyance) a character will recap something we saw from a different point of view and go on at great length despite the fact that we already read this. While this aspect can be frustrating, part of me wishes it would have been played with more in depth for a more *Rashomon* style effect.

The problem lies in that the book uses the best section up first. The narration of Robert Holt is a shockingly disturbing read. This section creates a genuinely frightening monster and a scenario that starts off sadly realistic then goes into the genuinely eerie. I read a lot of horror novels and I was startled at how disturbing this section was given the age of the book and looked forward to seeing where it would go next.

Well it goes into a tediously boring section about love lost and plotted revenge. This section is so slow and tedious that when the supernatural starts up again, I genuinely sat there for a moment with a sense of wonder at how tonally it had felt like an entirely different book for a good portion of the novel. Seriously, most of this section could be cut as we get recaps of it in future sections and most of this goes nowhere. (view spoiler) The only thing worthy of note in this section is that the narrator could be the villain of another novel, and the fact that this is seemingly ignored in the other sections is just frustrating.

The third section kicks the horror back in again and fairly successfully. This section has the most tonally like a classic horror novel, and is quite entertaining. While I don't have the page counts on me, this felt like the fastest paced and also the shortest section, but set up nicely for the final.

The fourth section is a mixed bag. Aspects of horror here are quite effective (with some truly disturbing

aspects hinted at, but never quite made explicit), that said it is also borderline ridiculous at times. It can be summed up with a lot of traveling and an abrupt ending... and when I say abrupt, I mean ABRUPT. Without spoiling anything I genuinely thought we were still setting up for the ending when the story was concluded (not helped by the fact that the edition I have has several essays printed in the back, thus suggesting a higher page count).

There are aspects of the book that I like. Had I not known the date of publication, I would have thought it influenced by H.P. Lovecraft given the “go mad from the revelation” aspect in some parts of the story as well as the unknowable nature of the creatures true from. I suspect that the book probably influence good old H.P. instead, but would have to do more research there. I also love the first section and had it be a short story, it would rate as one of the underrated in horror literature.

Good aspects aside, the pace is incredibly off with some sections moving at the pace of a bullet and others unbearably slow. The horror works in the first section wonderfully, but seemingly becomes another book as it goes on until it abruptly remembers that it is a horror novel and kicks back in with some pretty good scenes. Sadly nothing captures the horror and helplessness of the first section.

Overall I sadly cannot say that I like this book. There are some truly wonderful aspects, but overall (other than the first section) it does very little for me. Recommended only for classic horror fans who have already checked out the major works.

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### **Anna K?avi?a says**

DNF

The first part was really good but the second part was slow and boring.

The story *might* get more absorbing and I'm somehow reluctantly DNF-ing this book but chapter 16 was the last straw.

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### **Hannah Greendale says**

[Click here to watch a video review of this book on my channel, \*From Beginning to Bookend\*.](#)

Set in London amidst the Victorian era, *The Beetle* gives the testimonial account of four characters whose lives intersect as they struggle to solve the mystery behind a terrifying creature – a gruesome beetle originating from Egyptian lore – sent to enact revenge on a British politician.

As a gothic novel, *The Beetle*'s claim to fame is that it was published in 1897 – the same year as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and, for the first twelve months after publication, outsold Stoker's eminent novel.

Through its four protagonists – Robert Holt, Sydney Atherton, Marjorie Lindon, and Augustus Champnell –

Marsh explores multiple genres within one book.

Horror is the defining element of Robert Holt's encounter with the beetle. Starving and desperate for shelter, he crawls through an open window in a seemingly abandoned house and finds himself face-to-face with an unknown entity in the pitch dark.

*I became, on a sudden, aware, that something was with me in the room. There was nothing, ostensibly, to lead me to such a conviction; it may be that my faculties were unnaturally keen; but, all at once, I knew that there was something there. What was more, I had a horrible persuasion that, though unseeing, I was seen; that my every movement was being watched.*

In tantalizing fragments, the many-legged creature creeping through the darkness materializes in the reader's imagination, and Holt's fear is quickly justified.

From the account given by Sydney Atherton, Marsh delights readers with social drama and unrequited love. Politics, the demands of polite society, and a torrid exchange of love letters command Atherton's attention, though he's distracted by his affection for Miss Marjorie Lindon and by a rogue encounter with the hellish beetle. Many would seek to explain-away the horrid sight of the beetle, but Atherton embraces the prospect of the supernatural.

*That all things are possible I unhesitatingly believe – I have, even in my short time, seen so many so-called impossibilities proved possible. That we know everything, I doubt; that our great-great-great-great grandsires, our forebears of thousands of years ago, of the extinct civilizations, knew more on some subjects than we do, I think is, at least, probable. All the legends can hardly be false.*

Testament to what would have been contemporary social issues at the time of its publication, Miss Marjorie Lindon emerges as a progressive female figure. She's beautiful, her dance card is always full, and she's pursued by two men, but Miss Lindon is not your average female. Rather than being demure and obedient, Miss Lindon proudly asserts an interest in suffragist politics and defies her father at every turn. It's a shame that the men who long for her hand in marriage unintentionally pull her into the mystery of the beetle, for she is afraid of only one thing . . .

*My whole life long I have had an antipathy to beetles – of any sort or kind. I have objected neither to rats nor mice, nor cows, nor bulls, nor snakes, nor spiders, nor toads, nor lizards, nor any of the thousand and one creatures, animate or otherwise, to which so many people have a rooted, and, apparently, illogical dislike. My pet – and only – horror has been beetles.*

Finally, the fourth leg of Marsh's book is an homage to the classic detective novel à la Sherlock Holmes. The honorable Augustus Champnell, confidential agent, arrives to investigate the mysterious happenings involving the skittering beetle. Blending crime fiction with horror, Champnell reveals his own experience with dark forces.

*I can only suppose that through all those weeks she had kept me there in a state of mesmeric stupor. That, taking advantage of the weakness which the fever had left behind, by the exercise of her diabolical arts, she had not allowed me to pass out of a condition of hypnotic trance.*

Champnell arrives just in time to assert his investigative prowess and, in due time, it becomes necessary to give chase to the beetle, closing out the story in a race against time before one or more lives are lost.

Due to the year in which it was first published, *The Beetle* includes some racially insensitive terms. Less offensive, though somewhat irritating, it's four-character format lends itself to some repetition.

Articulate constructed and unduly forgotten, *The Beetle* is an intriguing examination of social concerns relevant to Victorian London and a thrilling horror novel.

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### **Amy Sturgis says**

*The Beetle* was published in the same year as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and there are many aspects of the two gothic novels that are similar: the multiple narrators, the exotic and mysterious supernatural threat, the remarkable sense of place. *The Beetle* initially was the more popular novel, and I can appreciate its appeal. It's got a little bit of everything sensational, from orgies, shape shifters, and human sacrifice to cross-dressing, hypnotized victims, Isis worship, and dead bodies in disreputable hotels. In the end, it did not quite compare with *Dracula* for me, and the fault perhaps lies mostly with its characters, who overall were less sympathetic and well formed. The pacing also seemed uneven at times. Despite these quibbles, this is a "must read" for lovers and students of the gothic -- especially those who have already read and enjoyed its contemporaries such as *Dracula* and George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), both of which I recommend.

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### **Molly says**

Everyone should read this. It was released the same year as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and was actually more popular at the time, but has since fallen into obscurity. I think it's even better than *Dracula* and definitely twice as weird, a genre-spanning supernatural romp that draws from Dickens, Conan Doyle, Victorian romance, and weird scientist fiction and involves cross-dressing, sex cults, and just about everything else. Make sure if you get the Broadview edition to not read the footnotes the first time 'round, they're chock-full of spoilers.

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### **Hesper says**

This sounded so tremendous, and then it turned out to be your standard Victorian Orientalist hissy fit with a healthy side of period-appropriate sexism. Yay.

In fairness, the first part is elegantly creepy, so that alone is worth a read. However, that momentum is simply not sustained throughout, in spite of some snappy dialogue here and there. The book fails as a weird tale but succeeds as a social document of its era's anxieties regarding gender roles and imperialist attitudes.

Except that's not what enticed me to read it. I'm still stuck on giant vengeful Svengali beetle. There needs to be more literature about that.

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### **José Nebreda says**

Una historia gótico-victoriana muy entretenida. Lluvia, brumas, un Londres desangelado habitado por



políticos, cinetíficos inventores, damas enamoradas en apuros, caballeros enamorados también en apuros, cocheros, desempleados, suburbios devastados por la especulación, viejas cotillas y un malo oriental muy malo, muy oriental y muy vengativo. Hay capítulos magníficos (desde mi punto de vista, sobre todo los del científico) y deliciosamente divertidos. Una sorpresa inesperada que recomiendo a los amantes del misterio y las aventuras de ambientes victorianos.

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## **Jason Hyde says**

So far, so splendid.

The Beetle was first published in 1897, the same year as Dracula, which it outsold consistently for the next 25 years or so, until the Hamilton Deane play revived interest in Stoker's book and made the Count the cultural icon he is today, while Marsh's book fell into undeserved obscurity.

There are a lot of similarities between the two, from the shifting narrators (admittedly done better and with greater complexity in Dracula) to their stories, both of which involve sinister foreigners wreaking havoc on the fabric of proper Victorian society. Both deal with the social concerns of that society, and both address the coming of the emancipated (although not too emancipated) New Woman then emerging. What The Beetle really has going for it, though, is an air of decadent perversity that far surpasses anything in Dracula.

The first section, in particular, is quite charged with androgyny and ambiguous sexuality, and it really should have been illustrated by Beardsley, or even better, Austin Osman Spare (sort of a less classy Beardsley during this period).

The air of decadence dissolves with the second section, which concerns itself more with the social structure of polite, upper-class Victorian society. A bit too much so, actually, although the second narrator, Sydney Atherton, is delightfully amoral, and the dialogue is witty enough to almost pass as Wildean, if you squint hard enough. But then there's a near death by poison gas, a transformation of the androgynous villain into beetle form, and suddenly things are back in fine perverse form.

To be continued...

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## **Maureen says**

once i realized that the beetle's author, richard marsh (pseudonym for richard bernard heldmann), was the grandfather of one of my favourite writers, robert aickman, i was very excited to read it, and it is clear that a talent for horror was passed down the generations. the novel was published in 1897, just prior to bram stoker's dracula, and i'd say the rather more engaging novel of the two.

horror stories quite often depend on the idea that none of us are safe from random chance. any innocent person might stumble into a nightmare, enter into the wrong place at the wrong time, and have their life destroyed. the beetle relies on this device: in its opening section, robert holt, a clerk who has lost his job and cannot find another, becoming a tramp, seeking and being shut from the last place of refuge he has the energy to strike for, a workhouse in hammersmith. he wanders up the streets, in the pouring rain, starved and exhausted, and then sees a opened window in what appears to him to be a derelict house. he climbs through

the window, and finds his doom there: a horrifying skittering heard brings a creature to him that he cannot resist, and a strange person, that he cannot tell is man or woman, who kisses him with swollen, blubbery lips that revolt him, that he wishes he could turn from, but finds he cannot resist. simply by climbing in a window, he has lost the only thing he had left to him: his free will. he is commanded to break into the house of paul lessingham, a up-and-coming politician, who has a dark past that he thought he had escaped, a nightmare that he too, stumbled into, many years ago.

the book is told in four parts, by holt, sydney atherton a romantic rival of lessington's, marjorie linton, lessington's betrothed, and finally a detective lessington engages, augustus champnell.

i enjoyed the first three sections much more than the last: i found the chasing of trains a little rushed and anticlimactic, but also appreciate that chance turns on you, it takes no sides, and might spin its wheel again.

i liked marjorie, but had rather hoped that dora grayling had played a larger part but they are both strong female characters, and the book seems rather open on many questions around sex and gender. of course, we speak of women of fine white english stock -- colonial attitudes as regards race are very prevalent here. a good creepy summer read, especially throughout sydney atherton's section -- the beetle is not the only one to fear in the book.

3.5 stars

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## Stela says

It was a pleasant surprise, this book. Very readable in a totally unpretentious way, a typical Victorian gothic story, which seems to have been more successful than *Dracula* at its apparition (both were published the same year) but was eclipsed by the latter in time, unduly, I'd say.

There is nothing really extraordinary in its structure, which resembles *Dracula*'s and many other novels' of the nineteenth century – with its several narrative voices that intend to increase the contrast between real and fantastic, nor in the shaping of the characters', which are not very complex (with one exception), nor in the ambiguity of its end, which insinuates that evil is everywhere, waiting to surface. No, as any horror book that is true to form, *The Beetle* relies mainly on the tension generated by the plot to attract its readers, and the plot, with its allusions to ancient rituals, barbaric sacrifices and sexual perversions, is interesting enough.

However, there is more (isn't it always?). To begin with, it is noteworthy the author's ability to describe the fear, the pure and naked fear that contaminates the reader:

*Higher and higher! It had gained my loins. It was moving towards the pit of my stomach. The helplessness with which I suffered its invasion was not the least part of my agony,— it was that helplessness which we know in dreadful dreams. I understood, quite well, that if I did but give myself a hearty shake, the creature would fall off; but I had not a muscle at my command.*

But this desire to capitalize on the darkness of our subconscious is cleverly counterbalanced by a fine irony that eases the tension and allows the reader to notice some interesting facts: various aspects of different levels of British society, the never-ending political war between radicals and Tories, the true purpose of scientific discoveries, etc. With a merciless sarcasm, Sydney Atherton delivers two undeniable truths. One about the infinite power of the scientist:

*What a sublime thought to think that in the hollow of your own hand lies the life and death of Nations.*

The other about the quality of the politician's followers:

*... it is essential to a politician that he should have his firmest friends among the fools; or his climbing days will soon be over.*

Finally, Paul Lessingham, with his mixture of weakness and moral strength in both his public and private image could have become a memorable character, should have he been fully developed. If it is not so, maybe the fault lies not entirely with the author's lack of skill but also with the reader's horizon of expectation regarding the genre.

After all, no matter how talented, Richard Marsh is no Edgar Poe.

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### **Alex says**

Very entertaining and exciting! Loved the different narrators...the light tone of the book kinda made up for the really creepy and disturbing goings-on...Also--THERE'S A REASON I HATE BUGS!!!

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### **Nancy Oakes says**

The Beetle may not be the greatest book in terms of literary value, but I will say that it is a hell of a lot of fun to read. To me it is the literary equivalent of comfort food, and its Egyptian flavor along with all of its over-the-top moments remind me a lot of the old pulpy horror/gothic books I devoured as a nerdy kid on rainy days.

It seems that no matter where I turn to find a literary review of this novel, everyone wants to compare it to Bram Stoker's Dracula. The two books were published in the same year, both stories are related through the use of journal entries from the principal players, both imagine an evil force coming into England from outside for its own wicked and abominable purposes, and in both books, the vile alien threat has to be neutralized to keep England from peril. Yet, while I see that between the two, in terms of "literary" value, most people prefer Stoker's book, to me Dracula wasn't nearly as entertaining. The Beetle is a lovely, unputdownable mix of supernatural horror, revenge tale, creepy gothic fiction and mystery all rolled into one, and bottom line, it's just plain fun. Sometimes the fun is what it's all about -- and that's definitely the case here.

There are four narrators in this novel; the first is Robert Holt whose bizarre story throws us right into the midst of the strange. Entering a deserted house to escape the rain after having been denied lodging at the modern equivalent of a homeless shelter, he is set upon by a "creature" that reminds him of a spider (the "Beetle" of the title). As he tries to make his escape back out the window, suddenly a light comes on in the house and Holt finds himself face to face with a deformed man whose eyes were his most "marked" feature. As Holt notes,

"Escape them I could not, while, as I endeavored to meet them, it was as if I shrivelled into nothingness. They held me enchained, helpless, spell-bound. I felt that they could do with me as they would; and they did."

Holt discovers that he has no choice but to do what he is commanded by this horrific figure and he is ordered to break into the home of Paul Lessingham, member of Parliament. While carrying out his task, he is confronted by Lessingham who is stopped in his tracks when Holt screams out "THE BEETLE!" Holt's narrative sets the tone for the remainder of the story, which is revealed in turns from the points of view of Sydney Atherton, an inventor of weapons who just happens to be in love with Lessingham's love Marjorie Lindon, Miss Lindon herself, and the Honorable Augustus Champnell, Confidential Agent. It is during this last section that we discover exactly why this threat has appeared in England and why it is targeting Lessingham (and through him, Miss Lindon) specifically.

Barebones outline, for sure, but there's a LOT churning around in this novel. Under its surface, though, as Minna Vuohelainen explains in the introduction, Marsh also explores "constant, traumatic shifting of class, social, gendered, sexual, ethnic and national identities." How all of these thematic elements are manifested becomes pretty self evident without having to seek them out, especially in terms of sexuality. I would imagine that this was a pretty daring tale back in 1897 -- for one thing, we don't even leave the first section before Holt in his hypnotized state is set upon sexually by the Beetle in masculine form, although this creature can also manifest itself as a woman. For another, Lessingham's account, as given to Champnell, refers to a strange cult that kidnaps English victims, both male and female, holding them for prolonged periods to be used in strange rituals involving torture and sexual depravity. I suppose one could also read the novel as a story that plays on the fear of invasion by foreign elements or fear of those outsiders already living among the English, obviously with sinister intentions toward England's men and women.

Recommended, without any hesitation whatsoever. Even if it's a little silly sometimes, it is truly a delight. Once again, my thanks to Valancourt Books for publishing some of the finest old books ever.

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## **Bettie? says**

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

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## **Rebecca McNutt says**

This classic in Gothic literature wasn't bad, I really enjoyed its mystery and elements of terror. The British setting was also described very vividly.

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## **Kay says**

*"A face looked into mine, and, in front of me, were those dreadful eyes. Then, whether I was dead or living, I said to myself that this could be nothing human, -nothing fashioned in God's image could wear such a shape as that. Fingers were pressed into my cheeks, they were thrust into my mouth, they touched my staring eyes, shut my eyelids, then opened them again, and-horror of horrors!-the blubber lips were pressed to mine-the soul of something evil entered into me in the guise of a kiss."*

Published in 1897, the same year as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *The Beetle* is a classic Victorian weird/sensation novel, written in wonderfully ripe, overwrought prose, and featuring (of course!) a sinister oriental figure with the power to transform himself. This fiend persecutes and hypnotically asserts control over an

upstanding British man, the hero of the novel.

In many ways, this sort of novel foreshadowed Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu novels, but it also fed into the late 19th-century fascination with all things Egyptian. Later this sort of tale would be the grist for 20th century mummy films and Boris Karloff's mesmerizing stare, but unfortunately *The Beetle* never seems to have made the leap into popular modern culture the way that Dracula did. A pity, as this is an equally engrossing supernatural tale.

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### Eryn🌿 says

Putting this one aside, for now. I have no time to read it!

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### Jack Tripper says

Review to come, eventually. Damn my new job and all the hours it's taking away from me. I will say that it starts off great. Then it was just long-winded and boring as hell until the end (I know, such great analysis there). Three stars may be too generous.

2.5 Stars

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### Oscar says

La historia se abre con un hombre que está pasando una mala racha e intenta entrar en un albergue. Al no dejarle pasar, este personaje, deambulando por la calle, da con una casa que tiene una ventana abierta. Como parece que la casa esté sin habitar, se cuela por la ventana. Pero cuál será su sorpresa cuando se encuentre con un extraño hombre, aunque a veces parece una mujer. Esta es la típica novela en la que mejor no contar demasiado, ya que es un placer ir descubriendo lo que acontece según se va leyendo.

‘El Escarabajo’ (The Beetle, 1897), del inglés Richard Marsh, es un *thriller* sobrenatural, con enredo, romance y misterio. Hay algo de terror, pero yo no catalogaría esta novela bajo este género. Me ha gustado la manera de escribir del autor, y la estructura de la trama, basada en las diferentes voces de los personajes. Al empezar la historia, admito que me descolocó un tanto, es un poco extraña, y no era lo que me esperaba, aunque no sé realmente lo que me esperaba porque no quise leer nada sobre el argumento, así que me costó un poco entrar. El libro va de menos a más, y mi parte favorita es la última, que resulta trepidante.

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