
This paper deals with the publication history and popular appeal of a novel which, when first published in 1897, was characterised by contemporary readers and reviewers as “surprising and ingenious”, “weird”, “thrilling”, “really exciting”, “full of mystery” and “extremely powerful”. According to reviewers, this “well-written” story was “narrated with a clearness of style and a fullness of incident which hold the reader’s attention from first to last”. Compared favourably to the work of Wilkie Collins and Bram Stoker, this novel was presented “with hideous actuality”, was “difficult, if not impossible, to lay down... when once begun” and succeeded “in producing that sensation of horror which should make the flesh of even the least susceptible reader creep” (“Opinions of the Press”). Given the recent scholarly interest in late-nineteenth century popular fiction, one would expect to find such a thrilling novel the subject of ample academic attention. Yet Richard Marsh’s popular potboiler The Beetle: A Mystery is now only known to readers of cult fiction and collectors of rare books. First published in 1897, almost simultaneously with Bram Stoker’s Dracula with which it makes a remarkable comparison, Marsh’s bestselling shocker has been sadly neglected by post-war readers. This paper examines its immense initial popularity, critical history and slow decline, locating the novel within a specific context of time and readership.

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Richard Marsh. First published in 1897. This web edition published by eBooks@Adelaide. Last updated Wednesday, December 17, 2014 at 14:19. To the best of our knowledge, the text of this work is in the “Public Domain” in Australia. HOWEVER, copyright law varies in other countries, and the work may still be under copyright in the country from which you are accessing this website. It is your responsibility to check the applicable copyright laws in your country before downloading this work. eBooks@Adelaide The University of Adelaide Library University of Adelaide South Australia 5005. Table of Con In imitation of various popular fiction genres of the late nineteenth century, Marsh unfolds a tale '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 siecle London in search of vengeance for the defilement of a sacred tomb in Egypt. 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 a 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