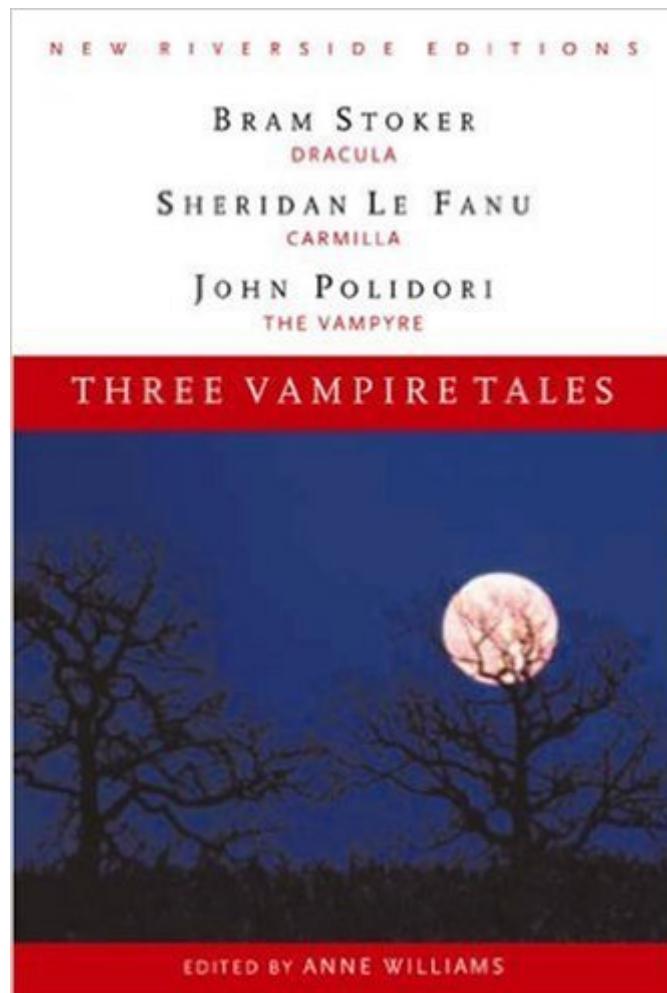


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Three Vampire Tales: Dracula, Carmilla, And The Vampyre (New Riverside Editions)



Synopsis

Three classic works of vampire literature come together for the first time in one volume. Complementing the complete texts are background essays as well as additional selections by the three authors and others. Because the vampire novel has proven so influential in film, an extensive filmography is included.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Three Vampire Tales" is a collection of 19th century vampire literature that follows the increasing popularity of vampires in English literature, from Lord Byron's 1812 poem, "The Giaour", to the culmination of that century's vampire tales in Bram Stoker's 1897 gothic horror novel "Dracula". The three featured stories are: John Polidori's "The Vampyre", the first vampire short story in English, published in 1819; "Carmilla" by Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu, published in 1872 as part of Le Fanu's "In a Glass Darkly" collection; and Bram Stoker's mythic 1897 novel "Dracula". All three works are included in their entirety."The Vampyre" concerns a taciturn, enigmatic vampire called Lord Ruthven, and Aubrey, a young naive aristocrat, who is at first pleased to have Ruthven as a traveling companion. In the course of their adventures on the Continent, Aubrey comes to understand Ruthven's predatory character. But Ruthven requests an oath of secrecy on his deathbed, to which Aubrey agrees, only to find himself in a dire predicament when Ruthven turns up again, very much alive. This is a good story once you acclimate to the somewhat overburdened prose style.Sheridan Le Fanu is the most accomplished stylist of these three authors, and "Carmilla"

has a crisp, delicate style. It shares with "Dracula" the technique of "authenticating" the story by making it out to be a first-person documentation of the events in question. A prologue explains that the story was written more than a decade after the events described, by the woman who experienced them in her youth. The story tells of 19-year-old Laura, who lives on an estate in Styria, Austria, with her widowed father and 2 governesses. The family takes in a lovely, but oddly languid, young woman named Carmilla who was shaken up in a nearby carriage accident. Soon after, women in the surrounding countryside begin to die mysteriously, and Laura experiences strange visitations in the night. I won't say much about "Dracula" here, because I have said so much elsewhere. The novel has never gone out of print since its publication in 1897, and its continuing influence on literature, film, and popular culture is incalculable. "Three Vampire Tales" is not as limited as the title implies, however. After an informative introduction by editor Anne Williams, the first part of the book addresses other 19th century literary vampires and their influence on Polidori, Le Fanu, and Stoker. This is interesting, because that century's vampire stories are closely related. For those who aren't familiar with the legend, I'll briefly describe the events of July 1816 at the Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva to which so much of the 19th century's vampire literature can be connected by some means: Lord Byron, his personal physician John Polidori, poet Percy Shelley, and his wife-to-be, Mary Godwin were staying at the Villa and, on one rainy evening, entertaining themselves by reading poetry aloud. After the recitation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" provoked some sort of panic attack in Shelley, Lord Byron proposed that each member of the party write a ghost story. "Christabel" was the inspiration for Le Fanu's "Carmilla". Two notable works of fiction emerged from this writing exercise. Mary Shelley wrote "Frankenstein". John Polidori wrote "The Vampyre", based on a fragment that Lord Byron wrote but never finished. Polidori published the story under Byron's name to boost sales, and Byron subsequently fired him. Part One of "Three Vampire Tales" includes a fragment of Lord Byron's poem "The Gaiour", the story fragment upon which Polidori based his story, the introduction that Polidori wrote to "The Vampyre", most of the poem "Christabel", an except from the penny-dreadful "Varney the Vampyre", 3 excepts by "Dracula" scholars Christopher Frayling and Elizabeth Miller about Bram Stoker's sources for "Dracula", including a source list from Stoker's notes, and the "lost chapter", "Dracula's Guest", which Stoker at one point intended to be "Dracula"'s opening chapter. Emulating "Carmilla", it takes place in Styria. So this is a nice selection of the works that led up to and influenced the more prominent "Three Vampire Tales". There are also chronologies for Polidori, Le Fanu, and Stoker in the back of the book. And there is a vampire filmography that lists title, date, and director by year. I don't know if this is supposed to be a comprehensive list of vampire films, but there are about 200,

so it might be.

There was John Polidori's *The Vampyre* and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. This book has all THREE plus chapters that trace early appearances of vampires in literary works and chapters that focus on Stoker's research into and his creative use of vampire sources. Also the cancelled chapter never used in *Dracula*, called "Dracula's Guest", which is a story all by itself. To wrap up the book there is a list of vampire films, listed by year, in the back. Very detailed, very complete - perfect as a gift or just an addition to any vampire library.

A note from the editor (Anne Williams): This volume brings together the texts needed to follow the evolution of the vampire through the nineteenth century. The vampire first appears in Lord Byron's "The Giaour," a bit of folklore he picked up when traveling in Greece. The first vampire tale in English emerges from the ghost-story-writing contest in 1816 that also produced "Frankenstein." Sheridan LeFanu's novella, "Carmilla" describes the dangers of a female vampire, a story which in turn influenced Bram Stoker, whose "Dracula" provided the archetype of the monster that has influenced countless movies and novels. This edition also contains an introduction speculating about the enduring appeal of this monster, a filmography, and critical and literary excerpts establishing the cultural context out of which the fantasy emerged.

This book... and those stories... poems within are fantastic! I love the college "bound" versions of literature, and often seek these out first for my collections. This book has each story in chronological order (including the "back-stories" about the authors and WHY and HOW they came to write the article/poem/story etc...), and once you've read about the tale... then read the tale... one can see how the Vampire has evolved through history and taken on various aspects etc.... it is a great place to go when you've finished with a favorite story or movie and wish to continue on with that mood while you can!

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