



Tales of Mystery & the Macabre

Elizabeth Gaskell , David Stuart Davies (Series Editor)

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In the great mirror opposite I saw myself, and right behind, another wicked fearful self, so like me my soul seemed to quiver within me, as though not knowing to which similitude of body it belonged... Elizabeth Gaskell is better known today for her pioneering social novels such as *Mary Barton* (1848) but she also wrote some fascinating tales of the supernatural and the macabre, which are collected here in this volume. The real charm of this dark anthology is its variety. Unlike so many writers of this kind of material, Gaskell allows the story to fit the style rather than the other way around and as result there is a charming freshness to each tale. This remarkable author uses different voices, tones and topics to engage her readers and as you turn from one story to the next you cannot be quite sure what to expect.

Tales of Mystery & the Macabre Details

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Author : Elizabeth Gaskell , David Stuart Davies (Series Editor)

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From Reader Review Tales of Mystery & the Macabre for online ebook

Jeff Hobbs says

Already read:

The Old Nurse's Story--3
The Squire's Story--
The Poor Clare--
Lois the Witch--
The Doom of the Griffiths--2
The Ghost in the Garden Room--
The Grey Woman--
Curious, if True--2
Disappearances--

Lynn K. says

A more apt title would be Tales of Misery & Misfortune. The blurb on the back of the book lead me to believe that these were supernatural short stories. Only one story contains a ghost and it's not even the one with the word 'ghost' in the title!

Overall, these are well written, and if you don't go into this collection thinking they're all going to be spooky you won't be disappointed.

David says

Really 3.5. Maybe even 3.75. 3.85?

This is, as with all short story collections, a mixed bag. Most are enjoyable; but the last four (starting with "The Ghost in the Garden Room") really dragged for me.

Overall, however, this is an enjoyable anthology of creepy stories. Many reviewers seem put out that there aren't a lot of ghosts in these stories. They're right; there aren't. However, the volume is titled Tales of Mystery and the Macabre, and to that end the stories contained are extremely effective: atmospheric, colorful, tightly plotted, with memorable and highly varied characters. Sometimes the "macabre" element is merely a misconception on the part of one character regarding another. Sometimes it is truly supernatural. Sometimes the story is simply a straight mystery. So, if you're looking for a collection of Victorian ghost stories, then this ain't it. But if you want a well-written bunch of spooky stories, look no further.

This book is my introduction to Gaskell. I look forward to reading more.

Miguel Troncão says

Although in general the stories are interesting, and retain a little of suspense, especially "Poor Clare" and "Lois, the Witch", the building up of the stories takes too long and it loses some of its way. Too many times the climax of the story is just plain boring or uneventful, particularly in "The Grey Lady". Overall an agreeable book, but do not foresee rereading it ever.

Tamara says

I couldn't finish this. I enjoyed the first story but the others were dry and slow.

Mafalda Fernandes says

4.5*

- The Old Nurse's Story - 4*
 - The Squire's Story - 4*
 - The Poor Clare - 5*
 - Lois the Witch - 5*
 - The Doom of the Griffiths - 4.5*
 - The Ghost in the Garden Room - 3.5*
 - The Grey Woman - 5*
 - Curious, if True - 4.5*
 - Disappearances - 4*
-

Patricio says

I seriously cannot finish this book.
Boring, torture, boring, torture, boring, torture, boring, torture, boring, torture...

Bill Kerwin says

I admire Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, a perceptive and compassionate account of the life of Manchester textile workers in the 1840's, and I was looking forward to this. I was disappointed.

In this substantial 120,000 word collection, there is not one first-rate tale, and the connection of most of these pieces with the mysterious and macabre is tangential at best, if not downright deceptive. (For example, "The Ghost in the Garden Room" has not a single ghost in it; however, a character in the frame story informs us that he heard the story narrated by a ghost!)

There are two effective short stories here--"The Nurse's' Story" and "The Squire's Story"--and only the

former is a true ghostly tale. To make matters worse, many of the least effective and most discursive fictions are the longest: The novella "The Poor Clare" (beginning with an Irish mother's curse and ending inexplicably among cloistered nuns, widespread famine and Antwerp) and the short novel "Lois the Witch," a melodramatic exploitation of the Salem Witch Trial with an eye to the American audience.

I don't mean to imply that these works completely lack merit, for Gaskell is a perceptive woman with many interesting things to say about sex, class and regional distinctions in mid-nineteenth century England. However, I don't think these gems are worth slogging through the entire 120,000 words. If you want my advice, read *Mary Barton* instead.

Sarah Dorra says

I expected more since I based the fact that Elizabeth Gaskell is my favourite gothic writer on my love for her short story, The Old Nurse's Story which I studied it back at university in short story class. Two or three years later as I read Gaskell's gothic short stories, The Old Nurse's Story remains my favourite. Most featured short stories don't have a clear moral message with the exception of this one.

Gaskell is a great classical writer but I don't think I could read this book again any time soon.

K. says

This book is so fun! From the cover, it looks like I'm reading some horridly nasty murderous modern sci/fi thriller (shiny dripping blood and all)--this book came from a wonderful Victorian author. Who knew Elizabeth Gaskell, one of my favorite Victorians, wrote ghost stories!! As a point of interest, many of them were commissioned by Dickens for his magazine.

Perfect for a fun October read!

Some stories fun, some more dark than I had expected. Not dark as in supernatural icky, but as in how despicable man can be.

Anyway, nice, light read for a cold afternoon or two.

Fran says

Maybe it's just that we live in a world where there's at least one serial killer on TV at any given point, fictional or otherwise, but the mystery and macabre in this book isn't at all mysterious or macabre. It seems that the scariest thing in Elizabeth Gaskell's world was a highwayman. There were several of those featured in the short stories. Or perhaps I just don't particularly like short stories of any kind. This collection hasn't exactly changed my mind about them.

I read *Wives and Daughters* and quite enjoyed it, so perhaps from now on, I'll stick to Gaskell's social commentaries.

Frazer Lee says

An eclectic collection that imbues the everyday with a sense of mystery, and of dread. Anyone currently hung up on perceived modern day 'witch hunts' should read 'Lois the Witch' and hang his head in shame. 'The Grey Woman' is a powerful survivor's story, with Gaskell's social realism giving the tale a gritty edge. Even the seemingly throwaway 'Disappearances' has deep emotional resonance once the editor's introduction is taken into account. Ponderous pacing, yes, but immerse yourself in this collection and you shall be richly rewarded.

Charlotte Craddock says

This book was dreadful and dull. The stories lack any development and real characters. It's filled with fluff and details that aren't important to the stories. It was a chore to try and read this book. I bought it on a whim at my local bookstore, but I just wasted \$5. I read another book in-between this one and then just skipped around the stories to see if there was any redeemable tale in this book. I understand that this was written in the Victorian Era, it shows so much the prejudice that this Era had towards independent and/or grieving women. That's the only interesting aspect was how the author depicted all the good women as the good little submissive church ladies they should behave as versus women who have doubts or troubles. This author definitely believed in these aspects of women in her time.

Melissa Jacobson says

So unfortunately this was a pretty big disappointment for me. For whatever reason none of the stories felt special or interesting to me. Certainly my least favorite Elizabeth Gaskell book. Not awful but pretty boring.

Kay Robart says

See my review here:

<http://whatmeread.wordpress.com/2016/...>
