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[Vuohelainen, M.](#) (2006). Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897): A Late-Victorian Popular Novel. *Working With English: medieval and modern language, literature and drama*, 2(1), pp. 89-100.

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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Marsh was particularly popular for his Gothic novels, with some of them outselling even Bram Stoker's Dracula which appeared the same year. Richard Marsh the Beetle. Richard Marsh Beetle – What other novels did he write? Apart from The Beetle, Marsh wrote several other horror novels that were immensely successful. The Goddess: A Demon written in 1990, narrated the story of an Indian sacrificial idol who comes to life with evil intent and once more, wrecks havoc in the lives of the people living in London. Most of Marsh's popular novels situate the figure from the East/Orient on the evil side portraying them as vengeful and murderous who appear in London to disturb the lives of innocent Englishmen. 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. Finally, the fourth leg of Marsh's book is an homage to the classic detective novel à la Sherlock Holmes.