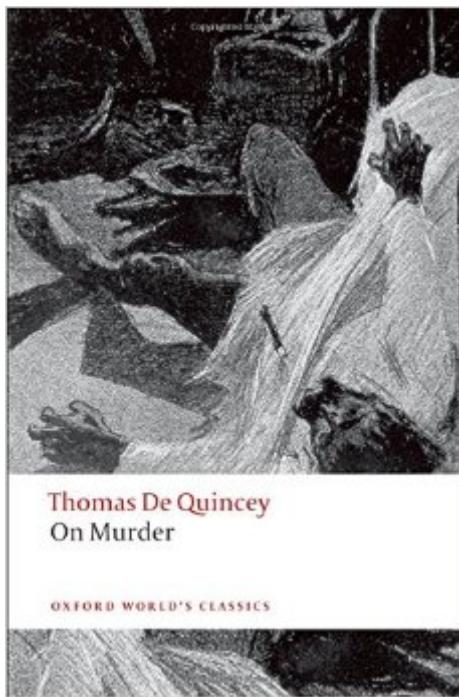


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On Murder (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

The titular essay in this volume of work by Thomas De Quincey centers on the notorious career of the murderer John Williams, who in 1811 brutally killed seven people in London's East End. De Quincey's response to Williams's attacks turns morality on its head, celebrating and coolly dissecting the art of murder and its perfections. This volume also contains De Quincey's best-known piece of literary criticism, "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth," and his finest tale of terror, "The Avenger," a disturbing exploration of violence, vigilantism, and religious persecution. Ranging from gruesomely vivid reportage and brilliantly funny satiric high jinks to penetrating literary and aesthetic criticism, these essays had a remarkable impact on crime, terror, and detective fiction. They are also a key contribution to the satiric tradition, as well as on the rise of nineteenth-century decadence. The bibliography is the most extensive available on critical responses to De Quincey's essays on murder and violence, and the essays included here have never been annotated so thoroughly before. They reveal--often for the first time--De Quincey's debts, remarkable erudition, and encyclopedic knowledge of contemporary crime. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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Customer Reviews

Robert Morrison's edition of de Quincey's various essays on murder is in keeping with the tradition of Oxford classics one of the best available - the text, as far as I can determine, is accurate and the footnotes informative. The major flaw is that Morrison, in his introductory materials as well as footnotes, consistently treats the guilt of John Williams in the Ratcliffe Highway murders and his "suicide" at Newgate as matters of proven fact. In their 1990 book "The Maul and the Pear Tree," the most recent historical look at the murders. P.D. James and T.A. Critchley make a strong case that Williams was in fact as much an innocent victim as those murdered and that his convenient "suicide" was a murder carried out by incompetent, corrupt local police (remember, this was well before the days of Scotland Yard) who were worried that if Williams got a chance in court to recuse the "confession" into which he had been bullied, public outrage over the murders would turn against them instead (James and Critchley suggest the real killer may have been "Long Billy" Amplas, a hulking merchant sailor of criminal habits and homicidal temper known to have been in the vicinity of both crimes, but admit that at this point the trail is too cold to be sure). Morrison was aware of "The Maul and the Peartree," since he quotes it in a footnote, but apparently ignored its carefully-reasoned conclusions, possibly because it would have been less compelling to present de Quincey's work while noting that it may have been based on a blatant miscarriage of justice.

Great

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