



The Flesh Market

Richard Wright

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"Doon the wynds an' up the streets,
Where revenants sought souls tae eat,
The Butcher called for twitching meat
An' Burke an' Hare did answer."
-anon. 1827.

A year after the Cadaver Riots tore the heart from Edinburgh. Fear still chokes the Old Town, for though the revenants were driven back with shot and steel, they still lurk in the city's shadowed closes. When night falls, they strike.

In dissecting rooms anatomists slice twitching flesh as they dream of cures and glory. For the greatest among them, Robert Knox, there is no price that cannot be met in the quest for knowledge. Behind closed doors he trades in walking death, dealing with devils to keep the flesh market supplied...

Set between the slums of 19th Century Edinburgh and the ivory towers of its academia, The Flesh Market is an almost true story of murder, mad science, obsession, and the restless dead.

The Flesh Market Details

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From Reader Review The Flesh Market for online ebook

Mark Wiliamson says

First off I must declare an interest :- Rick is a friend and an old flatmate of mine (we shared a flat, and a lot of beer, when he wrote his first book Cuckoo). Secondly I must note I don't really read much 'horror', which is kind of the genre that Rick writes in and wouldn't normally read a 'zombie' book

All that said - I loved this, I love the way it brought Edinburgh to life in the time of Burke and Hare and it had me scurrying off to research more about the time and place (always a good sign in a book to my mind).

Highly recommended

Ginger Nuts says

Just when you thought that a certain genre should be dead and buried, along comes an a writer who brings a unique, clever and downright interesting twist to one of the most overused of horror sub genres.

Richard Wright is one of these writers. His latest horror novel The Flesh Market was a revelation, a game changing novel that if stripped of its horror themes would still be a fascinating read. That's not to say that the horror themes feel tagged on, no they are an integral part of the narrative. Serving to add a growing sense on uneasiness, mounting tension, and a dark, dark, sense of foreboding terror.

Richard Wright, has created a masterful slow burner of a horror novel. As the story unfolds there is an almost tangible propagation of terror. Wright keeps a tight reign on this to a point where the reader is kept on tenterhooks for the whole length of this story.

Based around the almost mythical actions of Scotland's greatest pair of anti heroes Burke and Hare, The Flesh Market does the unthinkable and breathes new life into their mythology and the zombie genre in one masterpiece of writing.

One of the main strengths of this novel is Wright's brilliant characters, from Burke and Hare who are painted as real gritty, nasty pieces of work, devoid of any redeeming factors. These aren't the lovable rouges that popular culture has sadly turned them into. These are sort of men who would slit your throat for the loose change in your pocket. To the wonderfully arrogant, Robert Knox, whose quest to understand the source of the Cadaver Riots, makes him feel as though he is not only above the law of the land, but above judgement from God himself. Wright's portrayal of Knox is pitch perfect, an intense driven man, blind and impervious to anything except his own desires, imagine Peter Cushing as Baron Frankenstein, and you would be on the right tracks.

As mentioned this is a zombie novel, however unlike the majority of zombie novels, the zombies really don't feature heavily in the narrative, Rather than having them as an undead army laying waste to Auld Reekie, Wright uses them sparingly, but effectively to ramp up the tension, they are always in background, threatening to break out and shamle rampant through the story. with you the reader kept wondering right up to the finale as to whether or not the apocalypse will come.

Another strength of this novel is its setting and Wright's treatment of the Scotts. There are far too many books out there that get the whole Scottish thing just totally wrong. We as a nation don't all speak like we have just walked out of Brigadoon. Wright has imbued his characters with just the right amount of dialect quirks and phrases to make the book feel as though it is set in Edinburgh without ever straying over into comic effect.

The Flesh Market is a fantastic novel, even if like me you are tired of zombies, you need to read this book. It is probably the best non zombie, zombie novel out there.

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Jackie Blewett says

I've read a number of Richard Wright's books in the last couple of years and have come to look forward to and enjoy his work; despite the fact that horror is not a genre that I am usually drawn to. Wright himself describes his work as Dark Fiction which is a more fitting description. While this book is undoubtedly horrifying, it could never be described as simply horror genre. This book will appeal to many readers if they are not 'scared' off by the cover and title; particularly those who enjoy an historical novel, murder novel and possibly to some extent a mystery/detective novel.

The story is based on true events in Edinburgh during the 19th Century where corpses were sold for the advancement of medical science. As if the reason for these murders isn't horrifying enough, Wright adds some zombies to the mix; although for me the zombies really only play an incidental part. Not that that makes the concept in this situation any less terrifying. While there is horror in the murders, the zombies, the dissections; much of this is treated matter of factly. The truly terrifying nature of this story is in the very real human character flaws which allow the murders to unfold and to continue.

I was immersed in this book. It reads with real foreboding and the pace never weakens. Add to that the historical research behind the writing which gives considerable credence to the story and the characters (even offering some understanding as to their imperfect attributes) and you find a brilliant and thought provoking page turner.

Jessica says

It's no secret that I adore the way Richard Wright weaves his stories. Thy Fearful Symmetry, a story about the very brutal end of the world, shocked me. Craven Place, an unsettling ghost story, wooed me with its setting. I don't quite know what it is about Wright's writing, but I eat it up every single time. He has me in his grasp, and I'm perfectly okay with that.

The Flesh Market was no exception to this rule, and definitely my favorite so far. A stunning mixture of historical fiction and dark suspense, it focuses on the Burke & Hare murders of 1800's Edinburgh, Scotland. Fascinating stuff, that. A lack of medical cadavers means good money to those who deliver them in secret. A

person could get wealthy off of "finding" bodies for the doctors. Except, in Richard Wright's novel, sometimes delivering those bodies isn't as easy as it seems. Sometimes, the dead don't stay dead.

Ah, I loved this! Anything that can breathe new life into the zombie craze is my hero, but Wright does it with a flair all his own. At the forefront of this novel are our anti-heroes, Burke & Hare. One, a man who simply wanted a better life for his family. The other, already touched with the madness that would allow him to commit such atrocities. I watched as Burke slowly circled the drain, heading deeper into Hare's clutches. Even if the undead had been completely left out of this story, I would have been hooked. These two, and the darkness that creeps in around them, was terrifying in its own right. It's unnerving what two men can be reduced to.

That being said, the undead added an underlying tension to this story. Wright expertly used them as means to keep this sense of dread going throughout. They aren't the main facet of this story, but neither are they unnecessary. Their presence serves to remind the reader where it all began, and to highlight exactly why Burke, Hare and Knox are covered in darkness. Each character was perfectly placed, each event expertly crafted to allow optimum intrigue. It got to the point where I couldn't put this book down. Literally. I'd be reading with one hand while ironing with the other. There's a slow burn at the beginning, and it leads to something wonderful.

I'm not sure how else to say it. Read this. Especially if you're a fan of historical fiction. While this is definitely a dark story, it isn't over the top gory or violent. If you're not a big fan of horror, don't be put off by the title. This is well worth your time.

Riley says

A great book.

JJ Marsh says

826 and the dead are rising. The Cadaver Riots horrify the Old Town of Edinburgh as rotting corpses emerge from their graves, ravenous. All agree this must never happen again. The people choose violence, the police favour law and the scientists opt for investigation. But investigating requires raw material. Enter Bill and William, aka Burke and Hare.

In a brilliant twist on true crime, this book takes a grim reality and turns it several shades darker. The key players each have plausible motivations and the reader sides with each in turn, while constantly questioning the moral drive behind their reprehensible actions. Real imaginative skill goes into creating the individual justifications and personal delusions which push these characters to take those fatal steps.

The setting is absorbing and vivid, the period fascinating and the distant echoes of this factual case are compelling in themselves, but it is the characters who bring this story to life. For a tale so concerned with death, it's bursting with human vitality. In fact, as soon as I'd finished, I researched the real body-snatchers.

A scary story in the original, but this angle manages to create something both macabre and human. I wouldn't normally read anything labelled horror, so suggest we call this 'Intelligent Grim'.

Tabitha Morgan says

The flesh market

Excellent read, different story lines flowed well. I would highly recommend it to lovers of mystery, murder, science fiction, the macabre and lovers of historical fiction

Clarice says

The Cadaver Riots began in Edinburgh in the early 1800's. Why were they named so? Because of the mob of cadavers that swarmed the city, tearing at and eating people wherever they found them. Many were wounded and died from the attack. And many more were to have nightmares about that night replay over and over in their heads for a very long time. The poor population was what had been affected the most. No one knew where the bodies came from or why they came back to life. Dr. Knox is hell bent on finding the answers they need, although it is illegal to harbor a revenant (one of the undead). He teaches medical students about the anatomy of the body and must have cadavers on hand for practicing on. Some would say that his business was shady because he bought bodies that had passed on. At that time in history, it was looked down on, but robbing graves was much worse than buying the bodies. He and his few assistants begin taking in revenants and start cutting them up to find out why they are coming back to life. The answers seem to evade them and when revenants come in that they recognize, questions are raised about the ethics of what they were doing as well as where the bodies were coming from.

Bill and Nelly came to Edinburgh a year after the riots had happened and neither had ever seen one until they had moved here. A friend of theirs had offered cheap lodging for them, but because things were tight, Bill and Nelly felt like they needed to "help" Maggie, the friend and owner of their current lodgings. Maggie is willing to go to great lengths to get money, and her new (and very young) husband, William, is willing to go even further. There is evil surrounding him that everyone seems to sense. The selling of the revenant that came back to life in Maggie and William's lodge house to Dr. Knox is just the beginning of the slope Bill and William slip quickly down. It doesn't take long for them to start murdering people and waiting for them to turn. Funny thing is that they always do, and even in his almost constant drunken stupor, Bill starts to suspect that William knows how to turn them. Bill had long suspected William of being a very dangerous man, and the further into the story you get, the more you can see why.

Gruesome and fascinating. A true terrors-of-the-night type of thriller. Horror fans, this is the book for you! Although written in a somewhat older style, to match the times no doubt, it is very in depth and many issues and thoughts come from what is really right and wrong in situations such as this. How far would one go to find answers? And how far would others go for money? Bill Burke is pulled into William Hare's world of evil rather quickly. To douse his conscience, he stays drunk most of the time. He cannot handle what he is partaking of without it. And unfortunately, Bill feels stuck in his position. He knows William will come after he and Nelly. And he has to keep Nelly safe.

The most interesting thing about this novel is how it was based on real events. While the Cadaver Riots (and undead in general) were a fabricated part of the story, the Burke and Hare murders were not. It was very real. These two men did start murdering people and selling their corpses to a Dr. Knox. There were several victims of these two Irishmen.

J.F. Penn says

Burke & Hare & zombies - how fun is that?! This book stays true to the story of the Edinburgh mass murderers who sold corpses to the anatomists... But adds the spice that those bodies rise again ...

Robert Davies says

Richard Wright's latest novel is a brilliant mix of historical fiction, cerebral horror, and dark suspense. It cleverly weaves the murderous exploits of Burke and Hare with the macabre medical pursuits of the anatomist Robert Knox, who is driven to learn why the undead are rising in 19th century Scotland. What makes this novel exceptional is that Wright recognizes that the monster in the mirror is far more dreadful than anything born of the grave and he focuses not only on reanimated corpses but on the true monstrosities of human avarice and unchecked ambition. I highly recommend this book.

RachelvlehcaR says

This took me a long time to read and I had to restart it a few times making it more of a challenge. I found it slow moving even if the subject in the book seems interesting enough. There are interesting part and for sure I found the last fourth of the book to move quickly. This really isn't a horror book but more of a darker side of historical fiction.

Marie J says

It's quite an interesting take on the zombie genre, not truly horror though the 'revenants' are always lurking nearby.

The story which it truly a portrayal of Burke and Hare has a narrative flow through the multiple POVs though it does, sometimes, drag on perhaps needlessly. The historical aspect is truly impressive, I must say, and a delight to read especially since it was not so far off reality. No zombies though, that was all from the author. ;)

Kimberly says

2.5-3 stars.
