



Diaboliques: Six Tales of Decadence

Jules Barbey d'Aureville

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With its six trenchant tales of perverse love, *Diaboliques* proved so scandalous on its original appearance in 1874 that it was declared a danger to public morality and seized on the grounds of blasphemy and obscenity. More shocking in our day is how little known this masterpiece of French decadent fiction is, despite its singular brilliance and its profound influence on writers from Charles Baudelaire to Marcel Proust, Oscar Wilde, J. K. Huysmans, and Walter Benjamin. This new, finely calibrated translation—the first in nearly a century—returns Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's signature collection to its rightful place in the ranks of literary fiction that tests the bounds of culture.

Psychologically intense in substance and style, the stories of *Diaboliques* combine horror, comedy, and irony to explore the affairs and foibles of men and women whose aristocratic world offers neither comfort nor protection from romantic failure or sexual outrage. Conquest and seduction, adultery and revenge, prostitution and murder—all are within Barbey d'Aurevilly's purview as he penetrates the darker recesses of the human heart. Raymond N. MacKenzie, whose deft translation captures the complex expression of the original with its unique blend of the literary high and low, also includes an extensive introduction and notes, along with the first-ever translation of Barbey d'Aurevilly's late story "A Page from History" and the important preface to his novel *The Last Mistress*.

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