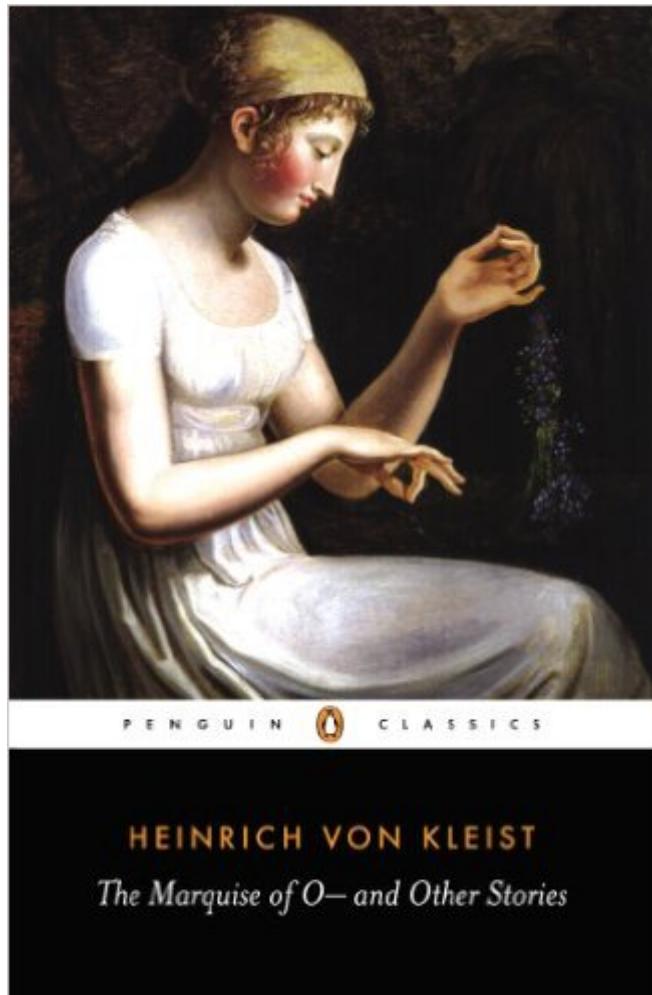


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The Marquise Of O And Other Stories (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

The late stories by an influential writer of singular talent. Between 1799, when he left the Prussian Army, and his suicide in 1811, Kleist developed into a writer of unprecedented and tragically isolated genius. This collection of works from the last period of his life also includes 'The Earthquake in Chile,' 'Michael Kohlhaas,' 'The Beggarwoman of Locarno,' 'St. Cecilia or The Power of Music,' 'The Betrothal in Santo Domingo,' 'The Foundling,' and 'The Duel.' For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

As a playwright, German classic Kleist sits on top of the Olymp, right up there with Goethe and Schiller. He also left a relatively small prose oeuvre behind when he died at 34 (in a suicide pact). An unpublished 2 volume novel is said to have disappeared. What we have is this bunch of stories and some journalism, and letters. He is a classic, but he was no classicist (hence no boredom like eg Goethe's Elective Affinities), and also no romantic. He belonged to no school but his own. His stories take us into worlds of madness. Passions and restrictive social norms collide and cause

endless havoc. A frequent motive is what we would call 'honor killings' nowadays: people, usually women, subjected to the extreme punishment for inappropriate relations. The title story itself (set in Napoleonic times in Italy) is not quite as extreme in this regard: the Marquise 'only' gets expelled from her parents' home and ostracized, because she does not know how she got pregnant. Hard to believe, admittedly. Hardship steels her character and she attacks: she publishes an ad asking for the father to step up, she would forgive him and marry him. When he turns up it is a man whom she had had a crush on, a Russian count and officer who had saved her from rapists during the war, and had found her fainted. Well, well. Since he had been her angel, now he becomes her devil. But all in all, this is a comparatively sane story, as far as the protagonists go. There is Kohlhaas, the horse trader who becomes a rebel and outlaw in protest against some junkers mistreating his horses and his servant. In a very German solution, he finds justice for the horses, but also for his crimes. Blind justice with her scale works both ways.

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