



## Swamp Foetus

*Poppy Z. Brite*

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## Swamp Foetus Poppy Z. Brite

The name of Poppy Z. Brite is well known to most horror fans. What some do not know, though, is that Brite hit the ground running as a fiction writer, and some of her best work so far is right here in this collection of a dozen tales (originally published as *Swamp Foetus*) she wrote between ages 18 and 24. The exigencies of long plot development and evolving characters that sometimes bog her down in the novels are absent from the short story form, where Brite's extraordinary talent for compressed, redolent imagery combines with her keen sense of narrative structure to create perfect little *objets d'art*. Stories like "His Mouth Will Taste of Wormwood," "Calcutta, Lord of Nerves," and my favorite, "The Sixth Sentinel," are too exquisite to be missed.

## Swamp Foetus Details

Date : Published February 23rd 1995 by Penguin UK (first published 1993)

ISBN : 9780140235067

Author : Poppy Z. Brite

Format : Paperback 190 pages

Genre : Horror, Short Stories, Fiction, Fantasy, Gothic, Anthologies

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## From Reader Review Swamp Foetus for online ebook

### Carrie says

This was my first Poppy Z Brite book and I loved it. It combined two of my favorite things, short stories and horror. I was sucked into each story within just a few sentences. Poppy's power of description is outstanding, I was always a bit bummed when a story ended; each story could easily go on as a novel. There was a mixture of ghosts, psychic darkness, zombies, gore, emotional darkness, voodoo, dystopia, and humans in situations and

with feelings so easy to relate to it's easy to imagine yourself there.

If you love horror then this is a fun book to read on a rainy day. It's a short book, only 223 pages and would be great for a plane ride or a day read.

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### Elizabeth says

One day I am going to go to New Orleans & see if the city truly is the witchy, pansexual, decadent place that everyone makes it out to be. But until then, here is another book under my belt by a NOLA writer. I appreciate Brite's unique voice & the love she has for her characters. This collection was a great way to kill an afternoon, but by the time I got to the last half of the book, I was already familiar with the characters & plot twists she had set up in the first half of the book. If I were younger & more impressionable, I would have been under the sway of this book. But I'm not, so I appreciate her contribution to the genre & I'm ready to move on.

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### J.w. Schnarr says

I rescued this book at the Calgary Horror Con because I couldn't stand to see it sitting there like an orphaned puppy, waiting for someone to pick it up. This kind of puppy, however, is for very special owners. It drinks human blood and shifts in and out of reality like a shadow in a strobe light.

For those who have not been exposed to Poppy's work, this is an excellent primer for what is to come. And, honestly, if you haven't read at least something by Poppy Z. Brite, your horror education is sorely lacking and your image of what horror was in the 1990s is a warped thing at best, missing so many chromosomes it's unable to survive on its own.

The book includes the story "Calcutta, Lord of Nerves", which, for my money, is one of the best zombie stories ever written. A collection of stories beautiful in their celebration of the dark.

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### Christy Stewart says

Poppy Z. Brite should re-write all the American classics and then I might be inclined to read one of them.

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### **Nancy says**

Gorgeous prose, unforgettable images. These stories are very dark, heartbreaking and visceral.

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### **Spencer Distraction says**

I actually have the original version of this, called 'Swamp Foetus'. Yes, I'm gloating.

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### **Adam Light says**

This was my first Poppy Z. Brite read.

There were some excellent stories here, my favorites being Calcutta, Lord of Nerves and The Sixth Sentinel. Great collection, and I'm glad I finally gave this author a read.

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### **Cindy says**

This wasn't the worst collection of short stories I've read, but they just did not appeal to me. I don't mind that they're dark and rather disturbing. No, it's more that they just did not seem to get to the point - the author's prose was descriptive and very apt to the subject matter. The anthology was published in the 90s but that does not hamper its style. There were a few bright spots - times when flashes of brilliance peeked through - I thought that 'Optional Music for Voice and Piano' was so tragic and 'The Sixth Sentinel' had a great ending. But overall it was just okay.

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### **S. says**

It's like living in a song by The Cure.

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### **Joshua Gross says**

Some of these stories I really enjoyed and some of them were just ok and some of just didn't do anything for me. On the other hand, I found the prologue by Dan Simmons highly entertaining. Dan Simmons showed that he was arrogant old kook, and I'm exceptionally curious as to why he has/had such a boner for Poppy Z. Brite...

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### **Shelley HW says**

I think Poppy Z. Brite is an excellent writer with amazing imagery in every sentence, but this was a little too gross for me. I enjoyed the poetic style but I didn't get much out of each story.

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## Robert Beveridge says

Poppy Z. Brite, Wormwood (Dell, 1994)

This relatively early collection of stories (her first collection, and third published work, previously known as Swamp Foetus), collects stories written between 1986 and 1992. Perhaps the most interesting thing about the book is watching the progression between the earlier and the later stories; you can tell before getting to the end (each is dated) which are which, after an example or two of each.

This isn't to say the earlier stories are bad, they're just raw. And raw is not a bad thing. In fact, it can be quite charming, especially when one encounters another two Steve and Ghost stories ("Angels" and "How to Get Ahead in New York"), which also happen to be two of the longest in the book. It's rather odd to have watched an author create her own shared world and remain its sole inhabitant.

Steve and Ghost aside, there's a lot of fun stuff here for the discriminating fan of viscerally atmospheric (if that makes sense) horror. Brite's tales are not for the squeamish, but she never treads into the realms of Robert Deveraux (or, for that matter, her own novel Exquisite Corpse). Even the zombie story, which is a genre that basically invites excess gore (especially since Peter Jackson's wonderful film Dead Alive), has more of a quiet, dignified air about it (albeit one with some language that may make some neophytes squirm a bit in a different way).

Very good stuff. It's easy to say in hindsight this is the beginning work of a very gifted author, so imagine I'm saying it in 1994 and have amazing powers of presentiment. \*\*\* ½

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## Venatici says

This was an easy page turner showcasing the then rising star of an author who has made a massive impact with Lost Souls and Drawing Blood, both novels featuring characters first seen here in the short fiction. I wish Poppy was a more prolific author as i am so eager to read more of her work. Be warned this is also published as Wormwood, same book different titles which really annoyed me when i bought both off of Amazon. Even so an excellent collection from a very dark fabalist.

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## NADIA says

Well to be honest, I have read all of the Poppy Z Brite Gothic horror novels and short stories. The Forward states that this is one of her first pieces of work..or something to that effect.

Ms Brite is one of my favorite writers - there are no boundaries with this woman, however I found these stories a little too cliché with the whole skinny, pale, thin, goth thing. It feels like she just started out when she wrote these stories and because I have read everything else by Poppy, it fell a little short for me. The stories lacked emotion but included incredible descriptions of the taste and smell of Calcutta zombies, death, suicide, lust etc etc

I would urge those who are disappointed with this book to buy her novels. I'm still searching for a Horror

Novelist like her and haven't managed to find one.

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### **Juushika says**

Twelve stories of artists cursed with dangerous talents and intimacies shared even after death and further tales of *Lost Souls*'s Steve and Ghost. In an otherwise useless introduction, Dan Simmons writes that Brite's "work may be described--perhaps even by her--as 'splatterpunk,' but it is not" (xxiv). Brite's (early) fiction is as lush as it is repulsive, often entrenched in the humid South, at its best taking the guts and gore of what might be splatterpunk to a level which is resonant and haunting. *Wormwood* has glimpses of that, but it's a particularly hit and miss collection.

"Angels" and "How to Get Ahead in New York" are indulgent, canonical *Lost Souls* fanfiction and among the best of the collection; "Calcutta, Lord of Nerves" is the only selection which truly stands out, and it is remarkable--*Wormwood*'s boldest and most vibrant, it's a unique take on zombies (and I say this as someone with no interest in them) with an intense sense of place. The rest of the collection is passable but immemorable. Stories too often feel like slaves to an idea or, worse, to a twist ending; those concepts can be ingenious, but the stories don't exceed them and the effect is limiting and exploitative. This isn't the best of Brite's early work, and it isn't as accessible or reliably good as Brite's long fiction; casual readers needn't seek it out. But as a fan and a collector it wasn't a waste of my time, and "Calcutta" alone makes the volume worthwhile.

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### **Milo? Dumbraci says**

An 8,5/10 collection of (rather) short stories, most with a Southern/cajun touch, about various things hiding in plain sight on the fringes of our ordinary world.

The good: highly original in ideas; very good expressive and descriptive (but not too much) writing; very believable and convincing "facts"; powerful story-telling (one feels sucked into the dread); King-like quality, but even creepier.

The bad: almost all the stories are about a couple of young emo male rockers, under different guises/names, most times gay, sometimes (maybe) just friends, which gets boring really fast. Also, sometimes the author overdoes the story, crossing the thin, but essential line between horror and excess gore.

If i will come over more of her books, I will definitely read more Poppy Z Brites.

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### **Lydia says**

The third book I read as part of my Poppy Z. Brite (now Billy Martin) phase years ago.

I do remember certain characters quite vividly and I really liked some of the stories. And some of the stories I just didn't connect with at all. I felt that some of the characters were a little bit flat -- it's hard to develop characters with a lot of depth in just a few short pages.

I think the missing element here was Martin's classic New Orleans atmosphere that he's so well-known for. Some of the stories had different settings, Calcutta in India or some awful motel in some unnamed part of America, so I really missed that element.

There's plenty of LGBT themes though and I'm so glad that I've read some works by a trans author. I was hungry for representation and I found it in his twisted, erotic, weird and wonderful writing.

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### **airspark says**

Poppy Z. Brite has a writing style that is hauntingly unique. Her brutal imagery adds to the overall atmosphere of every short story. My favourite story is second to last... "Calcutta, Lord of Nerves". Definitely a read for the open-minded who have a certain penchant for the macabre. Definitely a shining piece of work by one of the most brilliant writers of my time!

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### **Kristen says**

Every once in a while you stumble across an artist who is in the wrong time... Poppy is one of those authors, and artist who seems as if she was born too late to be happy. From reading her stories you can envision her walking with the likes of Lovecraft and Poe. I assume they would discuss language, the beauty of the written word and the terrors of their hearts. Brite has a style that harkens back to the 1800's when flowing language and beauty could be found in even the darkest of tales. This collection of short stories is dark, gothic, beautiful, flowing, engaging and sad. Though she is labeled as horror, I wouldn't quite put her in that category, at least in this book. True there are vampires, murderers, and the undead... but they are never frightening... Brite looks at them all as a beautiful and necessary addition to a dark and morose world.

Although her writing is beautiful, and her stories thrilling to read, this book will not be for everyone. Her characters are sexually ambiguous, often leaning closer to the homosexual side, and although she never becomes overly graphic, I don't know that I would advise my husband read this. Also her characters tend to be very thin, fine boned almost androgynous males with questionable morals, and a penchant for eye shadow and lace. The closest mainstream author I can think of to compare her with would be Anne Rice with a darker view of the world.

Personally, I really enjoyed reading these stories, I loved her use of language, her sense of atmosphere and the brooding nature of her characters. The theme that seems to run through the book is one of both love and death, though the love is darker and more horrifying and the death is beautiful and erotic. If you read this book be sure to read the introduction by Dan Simmons, one of my favorite authors. It is both hysterically funny, and also does a good job of setting your mind in the right mood to proceed into the stories.

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### **J.S. Bailey says**

I've been reading this collection of stories slowly over the past few weeks. I knew they were going to be gross due to what I know about the genre that Ms. Brite writes in, but some of them were downright icky. I only read this book because I wanted to try out something different for a change--and different is definitely what I got!

Aside from the ickiness contained therein, I thought that most of the stories in this collection were mediocre. Some of them could have been better developed than they were. Also something I noticed is that while appearances of things like scenery were described in detail, a lot of the characters came across as lacking

distinctive personalities. There was also quite a bit of head-hopping going on to the point where it wasn't clear whose point of view we were focusing on.

I did like a couple of the stories in here, but the rest dragged my star rating down to what it is.

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