



On Murder Considered As One of the Fine Arts: Being an Address Made to a Gentleman's Club Concerning its Aesthetic Appreciation.

Thomas de Quincey

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In this dispassionate analysis of the act of murder, De Quincey's innovative, idiosyncratic artistic vision found space for gruesome reportage, satire, literary criticism, and aesthetic judgments, in a work strewn with examples ranging from antiquity to his own time, including the urban serial-killer John Williams. In addition to this essay's Swiftian exercise in irony, he investigated the Williams case further in a postscript, resulting in a dramatic suspense-filled narrative that prefigures Capote's *In Cold Blood* and the modern true-crime genre. Specifically, *On Murder Considered As One of the Fine Arts* 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 act of murder as performance art; a perverse cause de celebration creeping out of the dank London fog.

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