



The Vampyre

John Polidori

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Author of Vampyre, possibly the first work of the vampire genre of fantasy fiction.

Polidori went in 1810 to Edinburgh University, where he received his degree as a doctor of medicine on August 1, 1815 at the age of 19. In 1816 he entered Lord Byron's service as his personal physician.

In 1816, Doctor Polidori accompanied Byron on a trip through Europe. In Geneva, Switzerland, the pair met with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, and their companion Clair Clairmont. One night in June, after the company had read aloud from a collection of horror tales, Byron suggested that they each write a ghost story. Mary Shelley worked on a tale that would later evolve into Frankenstein. Byron wrote (and quickly abandoned) a fragment of a story, which Polidori used later as inspiration for his own tale.

Rather than use the crude, bestial vampire of folklore as a basis for his story, Polidori based his character on Byron. Polidori named the character "Lord Ruthven" as a joke. The name was originally used in Lady Caroline Lamb's novel Glenarvon, in which a thinly-disguised Byron figure was also named Lord Ruthven. Polidori's Lord Ruthven was not only the first vampire in English fiction, but was the first fictional vampire in the form we recognize today - an aristocratic fiend who preyed among high society.

Polidori's story, *The Vampyre*, was published in the April 1819 issue of *New Monthly Magazine*. Much to both his and Byron's chagrin, *The Vampyre* was released as a new work by Byron. Byron even released his own *Fragment of a Novel* in an attempt to clear up the mess, but, for better or worse, *The Vampyre* continued to be attributed to him.

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