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The Vampyre and Ernestus Berchtold or The Modern Eedipus

John William Polidori

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In 1816, John William Polidori travelled to Geneva as Lord Byron's personal physician. There they met Mary Godwin (later Shelley) and her lover Percy Shelley and decided to while away a wet summer by writing ghost stories. The only two to complete their stories were Mary Shelley, who published *Frankenstein* in 1818, and Polidori, whose *The Vampyre* and *Ernestus Berchtold* were both published in 1819.

The Vampyre, based on a discarded idea of Byron's, is the first portrayal of the alluring vampire figure familiar to readers of Bram Stoker and Anne Rice. Ernestus Berchtold scandalously draws on the rumours of Byron's affair with his half-sister for a Faustian updating of the myth of Oedipus, which it combines with an account of the struggle of Swiss patriots against the Napoleonic invasion.

Along with Polidori's work, this edition also includes stories read and written by the travellers in the Genevan summer of 1816 and contemporary responses to *The Vampyre* and *Ernestus Berchtold*.

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