

The background of the cover is a deep red color with a glossy, wavy texture that resembles draped fabric or liquid. The light reflects off the curves, creating a sense of depth and movement.

John Polidori

The Vampyre

and Other Tales of the Macabre

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JOHN POLIDORI

The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

ROBERT MORRISON

and

CHRIS BALDICK

OXFORD
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THE VAMPYRE AND OTHER TALES OF THE MACABRE

JOHN WILLIAM POLIDORI (1795–1821) was the oldest son of a distinguished Italian scholar and translator. He was educated at Ampleforth, a Catholic college near York, and later at the University of Edinburgh, where he wrote a thesis on somnambulism and received his medical degree at the unusually early age of 19. In April 1816 Polidori became Lord Byron's personal physician and travelling companion, and was commissioned by Byron's publisher John Murray to keep a journal of his time with Byron that was later published as his *Diary* (1911). Polidori was present at the famous ghost story competition at the Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva that was the genesis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Byron's prose fragment 'Augustus Darvell' (1819), and his own tale, *The Vampyre*, which he based on Byron's fragment, and which he completed in late summer 1816, just before he and Byron parted company. Polidori travelled extensively in Italy before returning to England in spring 1817, where he settled in Norwich and established a medical practice. *The Vampyre* was first published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in April 1819, and later that same year Polidori published his only full-length novel, *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus. The Fall of the Angels: A Sacred Poem* appeared two years later, but by this time Polidori was in debt and deeply disappointed in his career as physician and writer. He committed suicide in his father's house in August 1821.

Thirteen other authors are represented in this volume as contributors to macabre magazine fiction in the period 1819–38. These include Edward Bulwer, James Hogg, Letitia Landon, and J. Sheridan Le Fanu. Details of their lives appear in the Biographical Notes.

ROBERT MORRISON is Associate Professor of English at Acadia University, Nova Scotia. He has co-edited, with Chris Baldick, *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* (1995), and is the editor of three volumes of *The Works of Thomas De Quincey* (forthcoming).

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INTRODUCTION

IN the autumn of 1818 the London *New Monthly Magazine* came into possession of a package of documents that was certain to cause a literary sensation. It contained not just a letter retailing a few precious nuggets of gossip about the exploits of Byron and Shelley during the sojourn by Lake Geneva in the summer of 1816, but also what appeared to be an original prose story composed by Lord Byron himself, at this time the most famous living writer in the world. Better still, this prose tale, entitled *The Vampyre*, seemed to follow the pattern of Byron's best-known poetical productions—*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–18) and *Manfred* (1817)—by incorporating a strong element of confessional self-portraiture, but this time treating the familiar figure of the accursed outlaw in even more lurid terms as a bloodsucking demon or 'vampyre' with the tell-tale name of Lord Ruthven—clearly an echo of another recent fictional portrayal of Byron as Clarence de Ruthven, Lord Glenarvon in the novel *Glenarvon* (1816) by Lady Caroline Lamb, Byron's cast-off mistress. The story seemed, then, to have Byron written all over it, lacking only the authentication of his signature.

To the *New Monthly's* proprietor, Henry Colburn, disappointed by sluggish sales of his magazine, and alarmed at the great success of its new Scottish rival, *Blackwood's Magazine*, the package from Geneva came as a godsend. He set his staff to work in preparation for the coming literary coup, commissioning an explanatory introduction that could illuminate for a readership still largely unfamiliar with vampire-lore the nature and literary lineage of the curious body of East European folk beliefs embodied in *The Vampyre*. The prefatory account of 'this singularly horrible superstition' was probably written by Colburn's sub-editor Alaric Watts, who also prepared an editorial statement to appear above the 'Letter from Geneva' and the other preliminary materials, noting cautiously that

The tale which accompanied the letter we also present to our readers, without pledging ourselves positively for its authenticity, as the production of Lord Byron. We may, however, observe, that it bears strong internal evidence of having been conceived by him; though from the occasional inaccuracies, probably the result of haste, which occur throughout the whole, we should suppose it to have been committed to paper rather from the recital of a third person, than under the immediate direction of its noble author.¹

Watts hereby discharged his journalistic duty with honour; but the less scrupulous Colburn, eager to seize the opportunity for greatly enlarged sales, was having none of this hesitation. He struck out the above passage, and saw to it that *The Vampyre* was announced forthrightly as 'A TALE BY LORD BYRON' when it appeared, appropriately, on April Fool's Day, 1819.

Colburn's commercial instincts were fully justified: *The Vampyre*, widely credited as Byron's latest masterpiece, not only launched a vampire craze that still shows no sign of subsiding, but also helped to put the *New Monthly* itself back on the road to success, making the natural repository of macabre short stories for the next twenty years. Alaric Watts, however, who resigned in protest at his employer's unprincipled interference, was proved right in his hunch that Byron had 'conceived' the story but not himself written it. Byron quickly let it be known that he was the author not of *The Vampyre* but of an unfinished tale called 'Augustus Darvell', which his publisher subsequently printed as an appendix to the poet's *Mazeppa* (1819) in order to illustrate the difference between his prose fragment and the piece published falsely under his name in the *New Monthly*. Meanwhile, the true author declared himself: it was John William Polidori, a young doctor who had, against his parents' advice, accompanied Byron in 1816 to Switzerland as his paid travelling companion, personal physician, and amanuensis, staying with him at the Villa Diodati at Cologny, near Geneva, before being dismissed from his lordship's service later in the year.

While Byron and Polidori were at the Villa Diodati, they were joined in June 1816 by a new party of sexual and literary outlaws, comprising Byron's most recent mistress, the 18-year-old Jane 'Claire' Clairmont, who had conceived a child by the poet (a daughter, Allegra was born in January 1817); her step-sister, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, also 18 years of age; the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who had abandoned his wife and child to elope with Mary two years earlier; and their illegitimate infant son William. The Shelley entourage took up residence at the nearby Maison Chappuis, but regularly interrupted Byron's composition of the third Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* by walking up to the Villa for literary, philosophical, and other entertainments, which other English tourists in the neighbourhood assumed to be diabolical orgies. As the *New Monthly's* 'Letter from Geneva' later disclosed—and it was the first public document to identify the persons involved—the five English tourists had amused themselves rather less strenuously by reading some German ghost stories and had then challenged each other to compose similar tales of supernatural terror. This legendary competition elicited from Byron himself the 'Augustus Darvell' fragment, in which a mysterious gentleman touring the ruins of Ephesus arranges for the fact of his impending death to be concealed by his travelling companion. Of the other competitors, Claire Clairmont and Percy Shelley defaulted, while Polidori began his only novel, *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus* (1819), and Mary Godwin—soon to become the second Mrs

Shelley after the suicide of the poet's first wife, Harriet, later in 1816—embarked upon the composition of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, which was published anonymously, and with only the vaguest reference to the ghost-story contest, in 1818. Mary Shelley's own fuller account of this competition did not appear until the third edition of *Frankenstein* was published in 1831, by which time Byron, Percy Shelley, and 'Poor Polidori', as she called him in the new Introduction to her novel, were all dead. As for *The Vampyre* itself, it was, as Polidori explained in a note attached to the Introduction of his *Ernestus Berchtold*, composed by him with some knowledge of Byron's intended conclusion of 'Augustus Darvell', and in response to a challenge from an unnamed lady who doubted that the fragment could be developed into a plausible story at all. Polidori seems to have left the manuscript of *The Vampyre* behind him when he left Switzerland in the autumn of 1816, and how it reached the offices of the *New Monthly* in London two years later remains a mystery. Behind it lies some unknown scavenger of Byroniana, whose unwholesome curiosity led him or her to interrogate the servants in and around the Villa Diodati, with momentous results.

The principal documents in this tangled case—the 'Letter from Geneva' with its accompanying editorial notes, Byron's 'Augustus Darvell' fragment, and Polidori's explanatory note from the Introduction to his novel—are provided here as appendices to the present volume.

Colburn's conveniently misleading attribution of *The Vampyre* to Byron was corrected, then, both by the imputed and by the true author; but by this time few readers were willing to bother about the exact details of the tale's composition. Whether or not the celebrated poet was willing to put his name to the piece, it was clearly 'Byronic' in conception, and could thus be greeted as a product of his genius, even as the greatest of his works—a critical view held by Goethe among others. After its magazine début, the story was published in book form, running through seven English printings in 1819 alone. It was quickly adapted for the stage, in J. R. Planché's *The Vampyre* (1820) and other versions; in France it was expanded into a two-volume novel by Cyprien Bérard as *Lord Ruthwen ou les vampires* (1820); and by 1830 it had been translated into German, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish. The story had made an indelible impression on the imagination of Europe, and Polidori had succeeded, however inadvertently, in founding the entire modern tradition of vampire fiction. Not only was his tale the first sustained fictional treatment of vampirism in English, it also completely recast the mythology upon which it drew.

There had indeed been earlier appearances of vampires in English literature, as the editorial commentary of the *New Monthly* helpfully acknowledged: Robert Southey's poem *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), Byron's own poem *The Giaour* (1813), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's more celebrated *Christabel* (1816) had all fleetingly introduced vampiric figures or direct references to vampiric folklore. These three poets, all of them champions of the new Romantic movement, were engaged, along with many other writers of their generation, in the imaginative exploitation of folk beliefs, rescuing them from the degraded category of 'vulgar superstitions' and finding in them depths of moral and psychological significance that lay beyond the grasp of conventional rationality. In their rediscovery of the popular imagination and its symbolic resources, the Romantic authors of the early nineteenth century often relied upon the humbler efforts of the previous century's antiquarians, bibliophiles, and folklorists—those numerous collectors of mythological curiosities, travellers' tales, medieval romances, popular ballads, forgotten legends, and unusual local customs. The figure of the vampire found its way into the repertoire of English Romanticism by a similar route. Following a series of vampire scares in remote villages of Serbia, Hungary, and Silesia in the early part of the eighteenth century, a respected French biblical scholar, Dom Augustin Calmet, had gathered an extensive anthology of reported vampire sightings and exhumations with related anecdotes and discussions of these phenomena, as *Dissertations sur les apparitions des anges, des démons & des esprits, et sur les revenans et vampires de Hongrie, de Bohême, de Moravie & de Silesie* (1746). The significance of Calmet's materials was in turn widely debated among some of the leading minds of the Enlightenment, usually as evidence of the limitless credulity of priest-ridden peasants. At the same time, the image of the vampire passed into the vocabulary of French and English satire as a vivid metaphor for such commonplace 'bloodsuckers' as landlords and governments. Eventually, Robert Southey at the turn of the century included a sample of Calmet's vampirology in the notes to his *Thalaba*, along with an earlier French account of vampire-hysteria on the Greek island of Myconos; and English readers at last had more than a snippet of this folklore to bite on.

As the basis of imaginative literature rather than of sick jokes, however, the folklore of vampires as represented in Calmet's accounts had some serious deficiencies: it was obscure, confused, and above all comically disgusting. According to the villagers of Serbia and Hungary, their vampires were bloated, shaggy, foul-smelling corpses who preyed on their immediate neighbours and relatives, or on nearby cattle (so that vampirism could be acquired

by eating contaminated meat). Popular remedies against vampires involved digging them up and smearing oneself with their blood, or pulling out their teeth and sucking their gums, as well as the more conclusive precautions of staking, decapitation, and incineration. Still more unappealing was the fact that the legions of the undead were composed entirely of peasants. Some readers of Calmet's anthology pointed out that there seemed, oddly, never to have been an urban vampire, nor an educated bourgeois vampire, let alone one of noble birth. The historical and mythological importance of Polidori's *The Vampyre* lies in its drastic correction of the folklore's shortcomings, and especially in his elevation of the *nosferatu* (undead) to the dignity of high social rank. By removing the bloodsucker from the village cowshed to the salons of high society and the resorts of international tourism, he set in motion the glorious career of the *aristocratic* vampire, a figure later incarnated as Sir Francis Varney, in J. M. Rymer's interminable *Varney the Vampire* (1847), as Countess Mircalla Karnstein in J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), and of course as Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the novel that has defined our conceptions of lordly vampirism for the last century and more. Polidori's tale has commonly been treated as a fairly simple projection of its author's passive subjection to Byron's dominating genius, in the form of Aubrey's hypnotic obedience to Ruthven. But, as Ken Gelder has pointed out, *The Vampyre* in fact takes a more actively ironic attitude to its Byronic villain, turning some of Byron's self-dramatizations against their originator.² Like Lady Caroline Lamb before him, Polidori knew himself to be an expendable amusement, and so inscribed the inevitable resentments of this position into his fictionalized Byron. And it is above all middle-class resentment against the sexual allure of the noble *roué* that sustains the modern vampire myth, at the same time absorbing it effortlessly into the conventions of melodrama.

Another volume in this series, *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* (Oxford, 1995), gathers some of the best short fiction from the early years of that pioneering magazine, including works by Samuel Warren, William Mudford, John Galt, William Maginn, and James Hogg. The aim of the present collection, however, is to exhibit the variety and vitality of the terror-tales and similarly macabre fiction published in the rival magazines of London and Dublin, in the two decades following the appearance of Polidori's tale; that is, the 1820s and 1830s. Most of the stories selected come from the *New Monthly* itself, but there are two stories from the *Dublin University Magazine*, with one apiece from *Fraser's*, the *Metropolitan*, and the *Dublin Literary Gazette*. More than any other single story, *The Vampyre* heralded a new

phase of modern British fiction in which the opportunist sensationalism of the monthly magazines assumed an unprecedented importance. When *The Vampyre* appeared in 1819, there were three major divisions of the periodical press: newspapers, magazines, and reviews. Daily newspapers like *The Times*, and weekly newspapers such as William Cobbett's *Political Register* and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, were devoted largely to politics. Magazines such as *Blackwood's* and the *New Monthly* appeared monthly and prided themselves on variety, instruction, and amusement, as well as on the regular publication of original fiction. Reviews like the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* were published every three months, and were sombre, substantial, and highly respectable: in 1818 William Hazlitt commented that 'to be an Edinburgh Reviewer is, I suspect, the highest rank in modern literary society'.³ But for many including Thomas De Quincey, magazines were 'entitled to ... precedency' over reviews because they were more intimately connected 'with the shifting passions of the day' and naturally became 'a general *depôt*... both for life and literature'.⁴ The magazines offered a broader and more sophisticated consideration of political events than the newspapers, and they possessed an immediacy and variety that the reviews could not match. They were the most exuberant and original of the periodicals, while their preoccupation with violence, scandal, and hysteria made them a natural outlet for terror fiction.

Magazines at this time were also one of the most dependably profitable commodities for publishers such as Henry Colburn, William Blackwood, and John Murray. Technological advances in papermaking and printing meant that more copy could be produced faster and at a cheaper rate, and a growing middle class combined increased wealth and leisure with a voracious appetite for the kind of information and amusement the magazines provided. 'WE ARE ABSOLUTELY COINING MONEY', cried John Wilson in *Blackwood's* in 1820, and two years later in the *London Magazine* P. G. Patmore wrote that magazines were 'emerging from the shell with which they were encrusted' and 'soaring aloft into higher spheres', chiefly because 'the very highest names in English literature' had become contributors.⁵ The days of Grub Street gave way to the patronage of the reading public, and magazines became powerful, lucrative enterprises, for both writers and publishers. In 1823 Mary Shelley was amazed to discover that Horace Smith was making '200 per ann ... clear, regularly, for writing ... for the *New Monthly*'.⁶

The rise of the magazines began with the founding of the *Monthly Magazine* in 1796, and was consolidated with the unprecedented success of *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1817 which,

along with the *New Monthly* (1814), dominated the magazine scene for over a decade, before being challenged in the early 1830s by powerful rivals such as *Fraser's*, the *Metropolitan*, and the *Dublin University*. In the 1820s and 1830s all the leading magazines published large amounts of fiction, partly in response to the enormous public demand for novels generated by recent publishing successes like the 'silver-fork novels' of high society made popular by Edward Bulwer and Catherine Gore, and cheap reprints such as Colburn and Bentley's Standard Novels series, founded in 1831. But there was a long tradition of serializing fiction in the magazines—Tobias Smollett's *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* had appeared in the *British Magazine* in 1760–1—and the idea received new life as early as 1820 when *Blackwood's* serialized John Galt's *Ayrshire Legatees*, and then followed up this success with David Macbeth Moir's *The Autobiography of Mansie Wauch*, Michael Scott's *Tom Cringle's Log*, and Samuel Warren's *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician*. Other magazines soon followed suit, and in the 1830s the *New Monthly* serialized Benjamin Disraeli's *The Infernal Marriage*, *Fraser's* ran Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and William Thackeray's *The Yellowplush Correspondence*, the *Dublin University* published William Carleton's *Fardorougha the Miser* and Charles Lever's immensely successful *The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer*, and the *Metropolitan's* great popularity was based almost exclusively on its serialization of the sea adventure novels of Frederick Marryat and Edward Howard.

Short fiction, too, was a long-established tradition in the magazines, dating back to the late seventeenth century, thriving in the eighteenth, and increasing in sophistication and influence in the nineteenth, when the leading magazines featured hundreds of tales of sentiment, humour, folklore, fantasy, burlesque, and much else. Gothic tales and fragments began appearing in the magazines shortly after the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, and were common after 1790, when the craze for the Gothic in Britain reached its height. Many of the Gothic tales that appeared in magazines between 1770 and 1820 were written by readers themselves, and were most often simply crude abbreviations or redactions of the novels of Walpole, Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and Charles Brockden Brown. What Robert Mayo has described as 'Gothic fragments', on the other hand, took as their model Anna Laetitia Aikin's 'Sir Bertrand' (1773), and while like the Gothic tales they employed natural terrors such as mouldering castles and subterranean vaults, they differed from the tales in that they typically began *in medias res*, revelled in the use of the supernatural and the unexplained, and broke off at a crucial moment.⁷ Tales and fragments in

these formats appeared continually in magazines such as the *Lady's*, the *General*, the *Monthly Mirror*, and a host of others, while magazines such as the *Marvellous* were devoted exclusively to this kind of fiction. But, as Mayo notes, as early as 1791 both the Gothic tale and fragments 'were well on the way to being stereotypes ... and during the succeeding decades imitators in the magazines were to ring endless changes on the old forms and motifs'.⁸ Not until about 1820 did sensation fiction begin to shed the trappings of the Radcliffean school of the Gothic as some of the most popular and influential authors of the day were drawn to the magazine tale of terror, and began to transform its range and potential.

The leading exponent of the newer kinds of terror fiction was *Blackwood's Magazine*, which turned away from the Gothic tradition and offered in its stead a fresh realism and concentration of sensational effect in its best tales. In such stories as John Galt's 'The Buried Alive' (1821), William Maginn's 'The Man in the Bell' (1821), and Henry Thomson's 'Le Revenant' (1827), a powerful new formula emerged for the modern tale of terror, in which the protagonist—usually the first-person narrator of the story—would record the extreme psychological effects of being trapped, incarcerated, or even entombed in unbearable conditions of confinement and panic. These fictional possibilities of claustrophobia were exploited to the full in William Mudford's *Blackwood's* tale 'The Iron Shroud' (1830), in which a prisoner discovers that his metallic cell is gradually shrinking and will thus certainly crush him to death. It was upon the basis of these works that Edgar Allan Poe soon developed the hysterical intensity of his most memorable stories, notably 'The Pit and the Pendulum' (1843), which is indebted directly to Mudford's tale. However, despite the influential prominence of these claustrophobic narratives, the terror fiction of *Blackwood's* transcended any predictable formulae, and included a range of material, from traditional Scottish ghost stories to narratives of murder, famine, and shipwreck. A second distinctive feature of its fictional fare was the exploitation of public curiosity about the grisly secrets of the medical profession: *Blackwood's* highly successful series of *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* (1830–7), written by the former Edinburgh medical student Samuel Warren, provided numerous lurid deathbed scenes along with startling pictures of lunacy, catalepsy, *delirium tremens*, amputation, and similar horrors, all presented in the form of 'inside' knowledge. In similar vein, other *Blackwood's* tales would recount, from the privileged point of view of a clergyman, the final confessions and ravings of madmen and murderers. In one way or another, the most powerful and characteristic effects of the *Blackwood's* tale of terror derive

from the impression of being ‘inside’—either an alarmingly enclosed space, or a secret realm of suffering. Neither the *New Monthly* nor its various competitors in London and Dublin ever evolved a distinctive formula for the tale of terror in the way that *Blackwood’s* had done, to the extent of attracting imitation and parody, in its early years; but they renewed and extended the possibilities of such fiction, most obviously in inaugurating the modern tradition of vampire stories, but also in adapting real-life incidents of terror to fictional forms, and in refreshing—as *Blackwood’s* had neglected to do—the mainstream of Gothic fiction itself. In general, although with some scope for exceptions, it may be said that where the hallmark of *Blackwood’s* terror fiction was a shrill intensity, the equivalent work of the London and Dublin monthlies was more composed, in both the psychological and the artistic senses of the word.

In the frantically competitive world of the magazines in the 1820s and 1830s, imitation was not just the sincerest form of flattery but the surest route to commercial survival. It should not, then, surprise us to find some echoes of the successful *Blackwood’s* tradition in the productions of its monthly rivals. For instance, two of the tales selected here could be mistaken easily enough for *Blackwood’s* material: ‘My Hobby,—Rather’, by the American author N. P. Willis, which describes the gruesome desecration of a corpse, is a short and violent excursion beyond the bounds of good taste, while Charles Lever’s ‘Post-Mortem Recollections of a Medical Lecturer’ uses the familiar device of the cataleptic trance which threatens the narrator with the fate of live burial. Each employs the convention of first-person testimony to suddenly overwhelming fright. On the other hand, many magazinists in Dublin and London diverged clearly from the school of Blackwood by developing more old-fashioned Gothic materials, either in the archaic mode of ‘Sir Guy Eveling’s Dream’ by Horace Smith, or in Letitia Landon’s elegant tale ‘The Bride of Lindorf’. The final story in this collection, Sheridan Le Fanu’s ‘Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess’, derives its plot from those founding texts of Gothic fiction, Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), while looking ahead to the high Victorian Gothic of Le Fanu’s own novel *Uncle Silas* (1864), which is in fact an expanded version of the same tale.

A more general and substantial feature which several of the tales collected here share with a good number of their counterparts in *Blackwood’s*, and indeed with fiction and theatrical melodrama outside the magazines, is their moral impetus, directed chiefly at the

thoughtlessness of the fashionable and dissolute young rake or libertine. As Samuel Warren and several other *Blackwood's* contributors presented their tales of terror either straightforwardly or disingenuously as 'moral tales' serving the function of *memento mori* to the idle young man-about-town, so the authors of macabre fiction in the rival magazines adopted the conventional figure of the rake, devising various means of warning readers against his example and his fate. In some versions, as in Smith's 'Sir Guy Eveling's Dream' and Allan Cunningham's 'The Master of Logan', the young firebrand utters a rash oath that conjures up demonic terrors to punish his sexual licence; in others, such as the anonymous 'Life in Death', a more calculating and jaded kind of debauchee attempts to recapture the sinful energies of his youth by unhallowed means. In this last-mentioned tale, the youthful protagonist lapses, while watching over his father's corpse and looking forward to squandering his inherited wealth, into an odd kind of reverie: 'Strange images of death and pleasures mingled together; now it was a glorious banquet, now the gloomy silence of a church-yard; now bright and beautiful faces seemed to fill the air, then by a sudden transition they became the cadaverous relics of the charnel-house.' A clue is given here to the admonitory ambitions and to the imaginative instabilities of the 'moral' tale of terror, which typically brings into harsh juxtaposition the dimly evoked realm of Vice (a world of brandy, actresses, and card-tables, always safely offstage) and the more starkly drawn images of mortality. Le Fanu's 'Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess' illustrates a further variation upon the stock figure of modern dissipation, in the character of Sir Arthur, a supposedly 'reformed rake' with his card-playing days behind him.

The recurrence of this *topos* in so many tales may serve to illuminate an often overlooked dimension of the lead story in this collection, Polidori's *The Vampyre*. For obvious reasons, it has been the connections of this work with previous vampiric lore and with subsequent literary and cinematic adaptations that have occupied most discussion of the tale. Yet the significance of Polidori's momentous transformation of the figure of the vampire from bestial ghoul to glamorous aristocrat cannot be grasped fully without recognizing that his Lord Ruthven is really the conventional rakehell or libertine with a few vampiric attributes grafted onto him. For Ruthven, at least, vampirism is merely a continuation of rakery by other means; and for Polidori, the 'vampire story' is conceived as a variant upon the moral tale, a tale designed principally as a *warning*—here, against the fascinating power of the libertinism represented by his employer Byron. The significance of this monitory motive, incidentally,

can be felt in the tale's strongest tension, which is between the hero's urgent need to warn his sister and others against Ruthven, and the even stronger force which prevents him from giving that warning utterance. The story is notably—and for some modern readers disappointingly—deficient in vampire-lore and its now customary paraphernalia, but this is because the figure of the vampire here has a restricted function, serving principally as a vivid metaphor for that kind of womanizer who may be said to 'prey upon' his victims, or to be, in a phrase that had recently come into use in Polidori's day, a 'lady-killer'. Polidori has received fairly earned credit for ennobling and glamorizing the vampire; but to look at the same transformation from this other side is to see that he just as certainly revamped (more precisely, vamped for the first time) the stock figure of the upper-class rake, which is perhaps the more significant mythic feat.

In the context of the broad range of macabre fiction, the vampire is merely one special version of the *revenant* or returner from the dead, who has numerous other guises. It is a noteworthy feature of the short fiction in the London magazines that it so frequently resorts to such figures, while the most characteristic *Blackwood's* tales usually avoided them. There are weaker and stronger variations upon this theme: at one end of the spectrum, a skeleton hand will resurface sixty years later in a scrap-metal shop, or a woman believed to have died years ago turns out to be alive in the deserted wing of a Gothic castle, or a man about to be buried will awaken from his coma and spring upright in his coffin; at the other end, full-blown supernaturalism asserts itself as the truly dead are summoned from their graves as ghosts or worse. In one of Hogg's 'Terrible Letters from Scotland', the narrator, after escaping premature burial, complains that his neighbours 'called me the man that was dead and risen again, and shunned me as a being scarcely of this earth'. To present his predicament in just those terms is, of course, to draw attention to the way in which the grim 'resurrections' of macabre fiction darkly travesty the central myth of Christian theology itself, inverting its heavenly promises into hellish curses. A pervasive theological gloom hangs over many of these stories, especially those of Scottish authors—Hogg, Cunningham, and (we must suppose) the anonymous author of 'The Curse'—whose historical memory is still overshadowed by the religious wars and persecutions of the seventeenth century. Darker still is the vision of the Irish writer William Carleton, who presents the murderous conspiracy in his 'Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman' as a satanic mass.

Carleton's tale exemplifies most powerfully an important tendency, almost inherent in the

miscellaneous and sensation-hungry nature of these magazines, to incorporate elements of the recent 'true crime' material into the tale of terror, eroding the boundaries between fact and fiction. His 'Confessions' revisit an actual massacre in County Louth that had taken place fourteen years before their publication. Similarly, Catherine Gore's 'The Red Man' starts with an account of an execution that had indeed taken place in Paris less than two years before she published the story. The anonymous tale 'The Victim' again draws upon readers' recent recollections of Edinburgh's most notorious murder case, the Burke and Hare trial of 1829, in which it emerged that a shortage of suitable corpses for anatomical dissection in the medical schools had been made good by the random abduction and suffocation of living victims. The extreme case of such ghoulish opportunism is reached in Hogg's 'Terrible Letters', which exploit the widespread anxieties about the spread of cholera, initially from Sunderland and Newcastle to Edinburgh and Glasgow in the winter of 1831/2. Placing these morbid little tales in the London *Metropolitan* was a particularly cruel stunt at a time—April 1832—when the English capital was daily expecting its own death toll (currently only six hundred) to escalate to unknown heights, and when the *Metropolitan* itself was providing monthly updates on the ravages of the epidemic in England, and deliberating on the vulnerability of the East End to a repetition of the Scottish disaster. In another way, the opportunistic exploitation of recent true-life marvels was also a feature of Colburn's use of Polidori's *The Vampyre*, which traded on the notoriety of Lord Byron.

These features of magazine fiction may appear scurrilous and reprehensibly commercial, remote from the higher possibilities of literary art. And yet it was upon the basis of such unwholesome traffic that the modern short story emerged as an internationally significant form in these decades—in the productions of Hoffman, Pushkin, Mérimée, Balzac, Hawthorne, and Poe. That the British and Irish writers from Polidori to Le Fanu could contribute to this process their own satisfyingly crafted works, the macabre tales that follow should demonstrate for themselves.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE fourteen tales reprinted in the main section of this volume were first published in a British or Irish magazine between 1819 and 1838, and in each instance the magazine text is the copy text. Details of dates and the magazine of publication appear in the explanatory notes, as does information regarding the various reprintings of specific tales. In the case of Polidori's *The Vampyre*, no manuscript has been discovered, and though the tale appeared in book form shortly after it was published in the *New Monthly Magazine*, both the magazine and the book text were almost certainly printed without Polidori's knowledge. In the text of *The Vampyre*, two obvious errors in tense have been corrected, and the punctuation has been altered in a small number of cases in order to improve the sense; this usually involves a comma being changed to either a semicolon or a full stop. In all other instances, the *New Monthly* text has been followed. For a full discussion of the textual history of *The Vampyre*, see Henry R. Viets, 'The London Editions of Polidori's *The Vampyre*' in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 63 (1969), 83–103, and *The Vampyre and Ernestus Berchtold* eds. D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Toronto, 1994), 21–6.

The text of all fourteen tales has been modernized in a number of ways: double quotation marks have been changed to single, a standard format has been adopted for the headings, and, where necessary, square brackets have been changed to round. In James Hogg's 'Some Terrible Letters from Scotland' the brief editorial introductions to the second and third letters have been taken out of square brackets and put into italics, and in the anonymous tale 'The Curse' rows of asterisks used as ellipses and to subdivide the text have been eliminated. In several of the tales obvious errors in spelling and punctuation have been silently corrected. Prefatory letters or statements have been omitted from the front of some of the tales and signatures have been removed from the end of the tales. Details of the signatures appear in the explanatory notes.

The copy text for the material reprinted in the three appendices to this volume is the first published version. The 'Preliminaries' for *The Vampyre* were first printed in the *New Monthly Magazine* immediately preceding the text of *The Vampyre*. The 'Note on *The Vampyre*' was first published as part of the Introduction to Polidori's only full-length novel, *Ernestus Berchtold* (1819); for details of the novel's publication, see Macdonald and Scherf, *The Vampyre and Ernestus Berchtold* (Toronto, 1994), 26–9. Byron's 'Augustus Darvell' originally appeared, without his permission, at the end of his poem *Mazeppa* (1819); for details of the tale's

textual history, see *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991), 329–34.

Like the texts of the fourteen tales, the texts of the appendices have been modernized in several ways: in particular, double quotation marks have been changed to single, asterisks have been eliminated, and a standard format has been adopted for the headings.

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