

FOREWORD: The Vampyre

"The Vampyre" was first published on 1 April 1819 by [Henry Colburn](#) in the *New Monthly Magazine* with the false attribution "A Tale by [Lord Byron](#)". The name of the work's protagonist, "[Lord Ruthven](#)", added to this assumption, for that name was originally used in [Lady Caroline Lamb](#)'s novel *Glenarvon* (from the same publisher), in which a thinly-disguised Byron figure was also named Lord Ruthven. Despite repeated denials by Byron and [Polidori](#), the authorship often went unclarified.

The tale was first published in book form by [Sherwood, Neely, and Jones](#) in London, Paternoster-Row, in 1819 in octavo as *The Vampyre; A Tale* in 84 pages. The notation on the cover noted that it was: "Entered at Stationers' Hall, March 27, 1819". Initially, the author was given as Lord Byron. Later printings removed Byron's name and added [Polidori](#)'s name to the title page.

The story was an immediate popular success, partly because of the Byron attribution and partly because it exploited the [gothic](#) horror predilections of the public. [Polidori](#) transformed the vampire from a character in [folklore](#) into the form that is recognized today—an aristocratic fiend who preys among high society.^[1]

The story has its genesis in the summer of 1816, the [Year Without a Summer](#), when Europe and parts of [North America](#) underwent a severe [climate](#) abnormality. [Lord Byron](#) and his young physician [John Polidori](#) were staying at the [Villa Diodati](#) by [Lake Geneva](#) and were visited by [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#), [Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley](#), and [Claire Clairmont](#). Kept indoors by the "incessant rain" of that "wet, ungenial summer",^[2] over three days in June the five turned to telling fantastical tales, and then writing their own. Fueled by ghost stories such as the *Fantasmagoriana*, [William Beckford](#)'s *Vathek* and quantities of [laudanum](#), [Mary Shelley](#), in collaboration with [Percy Bysshe](#)

Shelley,^[3] produced what would become *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*. Polidori was inspired by a fragmentary story of Byron's, *Fragment of a Novel* (1816), also known as "A Fragment" and "The Burial: A Fragment", and in "two or three idle mornings" produced "The Vampyre"

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NOTE: *Gothic* is a 1986 British horror film directed by Ken Russell, starring Gabriel Byrne as Lord Byron, Julian Sands as Percy Bysshe Shelley, Natasha Richardson as Mary Shelley, Myriam Cyr as Claire Clairmont - Mary Shelley's half-sister - and Timothy Spall as Dr John William Polidori. It features a soundtrack by Thomas Dolby, and marks Richardson's film debut.

The film is a fictionalized tale based on the Shelleys' visit with Lord Byron in Villa Diodati by Lake Geneva, shot in Gaddesden Place.^[2] It concerns the famous challenge to write a horror story, which ultimately led to Mary Shelley's writing *Frankenstein* and John Polidori's writing *The Vampyre*. The same event has also been portrayed in the films *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Haunted Summer* (1988), among others.

The film's poster motif is based on Henry Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare*, which is also referenced in the film.

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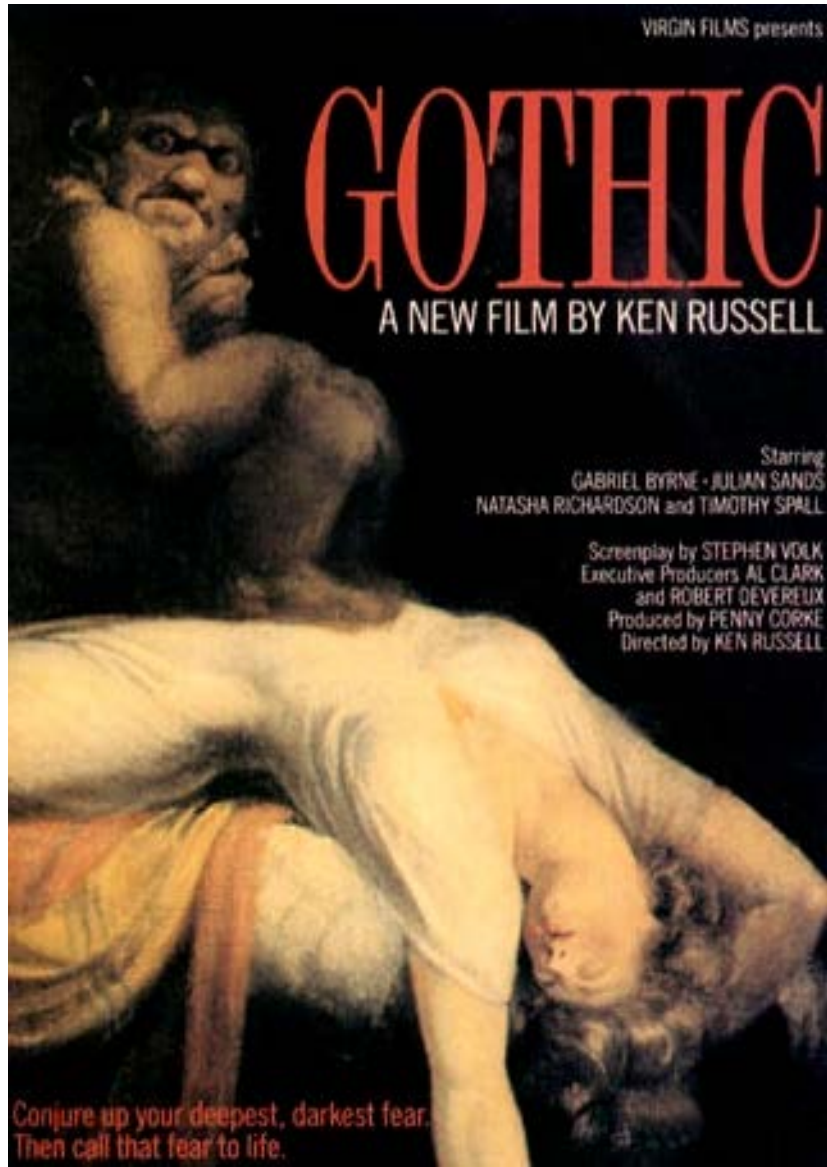
GOTHIC

A NEW FILM BY KEN RUSSELL

Starring
GABRIEL BYRNE - JULIAN SANDS
NATASHA RICHARDSON and TIMOTHY SPALL

Screenplay by STEPHEN VOLLK
Executive Producers AL CLARK
and ROBERT DEVEREUX
Produced by PENNY CORNE
Directed by KEN RUSSELL

Conjure up your deepest, darkest fear.
Then call that fear to life.



- Full title: 'Dreadful Weather on the Continent'
- Published: [24 July 1816](#) , London
- Formats: [Newspaper](#) , [Ephemera](#) , [Illustration](#) , [Image](#)
- Creator: [The Morning Post](#)

English

This newspaper article refers to the weather in the 'year without a summer' (1816), when clouds of dust and small volcanic glass particles issued from the eruption of Mount Tamboro in Indonesia in April 1815. This blotted out the sunshine, causing an increase in rainfall and a lowering of temperatures. Rainfall for July 1816 in Switzerland was around double the average. The flooding referred to here was particularly calamitous, causing the loss of crops in valley areas. Lakes Murten, Biel and Neuchatel, 30 kilometres to the northwest of Lake Geneva where Mary and Percy Shelley were staying, swelled to form a single body of water. The average temperature for July and August was below 15°C (about 3°C less than the current average), and the rye and grape harvests were more than a month late – the must harvest, the unfiltered grape juice that produces wine, was 1% of its usual level.

Mary Shelley writes about the 'almost perpetual rain' during this period. The gloomy weather kept her, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, John Polidori and Claire Clairmont indoors much of the time, during which they each wrote a ghost story. Mary Shelley would later develop her story into the novel *Frankenstein*.

DREADFUL WEATHER on the CONTINENT

PARIS, JULY 20.—We continue to receive the most melancholy news from Germany on the extraordinary weather which afflicts nearly the whole of Europe. The excessive abundance of rain has caused disasters almost every where. In Saxony, the Grand Duchy of Wurtzburgh, and in the fertile vallies of the Rhængeber, there is no longer any hope for agriculture. The snows of winter still cover the mountains. In Switzerland the Birs and the Birsig have broken their dykes, carried away their bridges, and inundated the country. The Canton of Basle has sustained dreadful injury. In the plains the corn and the potatoes are under water. The elevated grounds only afford some hope. This calamity appears almost general; all travellers assert that it is experienced in Turkey, Hungary, Italy, Germany, and throughout all the East of Europe. The Host is exposed in the Chapel of the Thuilleries for the prayers of forty hours. The Court will attend the celebration this evening.

Letters from Chaucey state, that such a quantity of rain has fallen in the environs of that town, that the rivers on which timber is floated have risen so high, that twenty-two rafts passed over a bridge on one of these rivers. The greater part of these rafts sustained more or less damage.
