

9-1-2013

History of the Duchess of C**** (1812) [supplemental material]

Jennifer Lunde
Marquette University

[Access transcript of full work.](#)

History of the Duchess of C**** (1812) by an unknown author.

Contents

MLA Citation	2
MLA Citation from the Gothic Archive.....	2
Full Title.....	2
Summary	2
Inspirations for this work.....	2
Works inspired by History of the Duchess of C****	2
Bibliography	3
Other Editions	3
Articles and Information	3
Keywords:.....	3
Purity.....	3
City	4
Bad-boy Byronic Heroes (The Duke of C****).....	4
The Missing Mother	5
Genealogy/Ethnicity.....	5
Letters	6
Haunted houses / Castles / Woods.....	6
The Romance Paradigm	7
Religion.....	7
Sleep.....	8
Visualization	9

History of the Duchess of C****

MLA Citation

*History of the Duchess of C*****. Baltimore, Md: Edward J. Coale, 1812. Print.

MLA Citation from the Gothic Archive

*History of the Duchess of C*****. Published 1812. . E-Publications Marquette. The Gothic Archive, Marquette University, Wisconsin.

http://epublications.marquette.edu/english_gothic/12/. Accessed 9/16/13. Web.

Full Title

*The Affecting History of the Duchess of C*** Who Was Confined Nine Years in a Horrid Dungeon, Under Ground, Where Light Never Entered, a Straw Bed being her only resting Place, and bread and water her only support, conveyed by means of a turning-box, by her Inhuman Husband; whom she saw but once during her long Imprisonment, though suffering by Hunger, Thirst, and Cold, the most severe Hardships, But Fortunately she was at last discovered, and released from the Dungeon, By her Parents.*

Summary

The narrative is given in the first person by the Duchess of C**** herself. She relates the circumstances of her easy, wealthy upbringing and tells of how she fell in with a dangerous friend, the Marchioness de Venuzi. While staying with her friend, she becomes enamored of the exiled Count de Belmire, but is instead forced into a marriage with his villainous uncle, the Duke of C****, by her parents. When the Duke discovers incriminating letters from the Duchess of C**** to Belmire at the Venuzi residence, he locks the Duchess of C**** in a castle dungeon and takes their infant daughter away from her until she tells him the name of her lover. She refuses to tell him, so the Duchess of C**** remains in an underground prison (presumed dead) until she is rescued by the Count of Belmire nine years later. The Duke of C**** dies shortly after the Duchess' escape, but she has no desire to wed again after her long captivity. When the Duchess' daughter comes of age, she marries the Count of Belmire.

Inspirations for this work

Fairy-tale traditions, Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis' *Adèle et Theodore* (published in French in 1782; translated to English in 1783).

Source: Hoeveler, Diane L. *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780-1820*. Columbus : Ohio State University Press, 2010. 219. Print.

Works inspired by History of the Duchess of C****

Anne Radcliffe's *Sicilian Romance* (1790), Eliza Parson's *Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), Sarah Wilkinson's *The Spectres: or, Lord and Lady Rosa* (1814), Ferdinando Paër's *Camilla, o sia Il sotterraneo* (opera seria, performed 1790).

History of the Duchess of C****

Source: Hoeveler, Diane L. *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780-1820*. Columbus : Ohio State University Press, 2010. 81, 219. Print.

Bibliography

Other Editions

Derby: Published by Thomas Richardson; and by Hurst, Chance & Co., London, n.d. Found in the British Library.

London: J. Bailey, n.d.

London: Dean and Munday, n.d.

London: T. Hughes, n.d.

London: Orlando Hodgson, n.d.

London: S. Fisher, 1799, 1800, 1803

Derby T. Richardson (1820)

New York: W. Borradaile, 1823

New York: S. King, 1828

Articles and Information

Dow, Gillian. "Northanger Abbey, French Fiction, and the Affecting History of the Duchess of C****." *Persuasions* vol. 32 (2010). 28-45. Print.

Mayo, Robert Donald. *English Novel in the Magazines*. Northwestern University Press, 1962. 493, 455. Print.

Schöwerling, Rainer. *Chapbooks*. Zur Literaturgeschichte des einfachen Lesers Frankfurt and Bern, and Cirencester: Peter D. Lang, 1980. 251. Print.

Source: Koch, A. "'The Absolute Horror of Horrors' Revised: A Bibliographical Checklist of Early-Nineteenth-Century Gothic Bluebooks." *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 9 (Dec 2002). Web: Internet (9/16/13): http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc09_n03.html.

Keywords:

Purity

Found on: Page 3, paragraph 2, page 7 paragraph 2

In Gothic literature, the issue of purity is commonly a source of anxiety, having religious, social, and even political significance. The anxiety begins very probably as a result of a Judeo-Christian religious heritage; because God is pure and cannot abide impurity, sinful man has to continually struggle between holy and earthly desires. This physically unbridgeable distance between God and man is further strained by the threat of rejection "...Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you" in 2 Corinthians 6:17, The Holy Bible (New International Version).

In all other associations, one may see the great concern with purity through the extent to which the idea of mixture, invasion and corruption play a part in gothic narratives such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In *History of the Duchess of C*****, the issue of purity takes on a more strongly moral significance; the title character initially repulses her lover's (Belmire's) advances when she believes he wishes too much of her, and she is ultimately shut up underground because her husband, the Duke of C****, suspects her (wrongly) of adultery.

Source: Linn, Tan Su. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2004. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

The Gothic City

Found in the text:

Rome—Page 3, Paragraph 3, page 23, paragraph 4, page 25 paragraph 3

Venice—page 5 paragraph 1

The Gothic city is a nightmarish space which threatens one's sense of self. It is replete with the problems of urbanity: rising crime, declining morality and the blurring of social boundaries. The city's architecture is monstrous and inherently paradoxical: it is constructed by man, and yet its labyrinthine alleys remain unknowable, thus giving rise to the uncanny. This is compounded by the city's ruins which symbolize moral decay; while the city is organic and constantly growing, the architectural ruins shadow it with a sense of death. The gothic city is thus causative and symbolic of the threats to the individual and his alienation in an urban setting. The city is used to confront the individual with the idea that evil is not externalized elsewhere, but rather exists within.

In *History of the Duchess of C*****, two cities are described (Rome and Venice), with Rome described as the more urban, and hence the more corrupt, of the two. The Duchess of C****'s corrupt friends, the Venuzis, live in Rome.

Source: Woodford, Erin. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Bad-boy Byronic Heroes (The Duke of C****)

Found on: page 4, paragraph 3, page 6, paragraph 1, page 7 paragraph 1, page 9 paragraph 3-page 10

At once seductive and repulsive, the hero/villain is a classic figure in Gothic fiction; certainly one of the most easily recognizable pieces of machinery in the grab bag of devices

that make up the Gothic convention. So intrinsic is he to gothic fiction that Leslie Fiedler has been led to claim, somewhat mistakenly, "that the hero-villain is indeed an invention of the Gothic form." With his roots in Milton's Satan, the sentimental hero of the eighteenth century and the Byronic hero, the hero/villain can be seen in the likes of Beckford's Vathek, Walpole's Manfred, Lewis' Ambrosio, Shelley's Frankenstein and Stevenson's Jekyll.

In *History of the Duchess of C*****, the Duke of C**** fills the Byronic hero role. He is considered attractive socially (if not by the heroine, then by everyone else); he is cultured, mannered and aristocratic, but he is also needlessly and heartlessly cruel to the Duchess of C**** and their child.

Lenden-Hitchcock, Yin Mei. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

The Missing Mother

Found on: Page 4, paragraph 3, pages 8-9, page 15 paragraph 2, page 16 paragraph 3, page 18 paragraph 3

The typical Gothic mother is absent or dead. If the mother is alive and well, such as Lucy's mother in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, she is associated with the incapacity to carry out her maternal duties. The typical Gothic mother has to be killed in order for the domestic instability that underpins the gothic text to flourish. Only the occasional evil or deviant mother (Olalla's mother in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Olalla" for example), is allowed to survive in the Gothic text. Even then, the evil and deviant mother figure (such as H.R. Haggard's titular character in *She*) has to be removed eventually for there to be some sort of closure to the Gothic text.

The repression of the mother allows the progression of the narrative in the Gothic mode. The missing mother also serves as a social commentary where her absence and silence highlight the repression of women within an overwhelming patriarchal regime.

In *History of the Duchess of C*****, there are multiple missing mothers; the heroine wishes, near the beginning of the story, that her own mother would have protected her from the betraying Venuzis, and later in the story her daughter is literally ripped from her arms. Ultimately, however, the Duchess is reunited with both her mother and daughter, remedying the problems that come of a character having a missing mother.

Source: Lin, Choo Li. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Genealogy/Ethnicity

Found on: pages 4-5

The significance of blood in Gothic literature can be illustrated in many aspects. At the elementary level, blood denotes genealogy, lineages and procreation. This denotation has historical significance for the gothic text to either construct or recall its origins. Extending genealogy to the family, what we often associate as "blood is thicker than water" is challenged in the Gothic texts that foreground certain anxieties within the family structure such as in the relationships between fathers and sons, husbands and wives.

What we know as "blue blood" reminds us at once of the aristocracy and nobility. The Gothic texts in the Victorian era were concerned with the rise of the bourgeois class, a liminal force itself that threatened to destabilize the ruling power of the former elite. Therefore, the Gothic treatment of blood sometimes focuses on the purity and taintedness of blood like in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to highlight then contemporary societal anxieties.

In *History of the Duchess of C*****, all the primary characters are aristocratic, though there are differences between them when it comes to wealth and power. The Duchess herself is a wealthy heiress, far more wealthy than Belmire, but the Duke of C**** is more powerful than either of them. Deprivation of freedom, will and children seem more important in this text than who comes from what family, though the Duchess' aristocratic status does play a role in her situation throughout the tale.

Source: Tan, James. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2004. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Letters

Found on: pages 5-6, page 16 paragraph 3, page 20 paragraph 2

Letters to a phantom sister, wills, transcript, journal entries, newspaper entries; Gothic narratives are punctuated with embedded writings in the form of letters and entries that are both a pastiche and fragmented, the sum total of which makes up the complete text. Letters while seemingly presenting objectivity on one level through the assumed tone of factuality, are also simultaneously open and subject to interpretation. Letters are linked to a reading of words as well as a misreading. However, as the paths of these letters are always dubious, it calls to attention its own in-authenticity and hence the potential for a misreading since we are never always sure if what we are reading is accurately represented. In other words, what has happened is always fragmented and there can be no complete reading of events. These fragments also call to attention the reliability of information in an age where information is becoming increasingly available. Some letters and entries, instead of being handwritten, are now type-written which displaces the personal touch of the writer from the reader and handwriting can no longer be a measure of authenticity. Anything, including words, can be reproduced.

In *History of the Duchess of C*****, as in many Gothic texts, letters are frequently sent, intercepted, and read by the wrong party. Information is not only incomplete, but dangerous to the safety and status of the heroine, whose imprudence in writing a mild love letter to Belmire puts her in prison for nine years.

Source: Chuan, Felicia. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Haunted houses / Castles / Woods

Found on: page 6 paragraph 3, page 10 paragraph 2, page 12 paragraph 2, page 14 paragraph 3-page 15, page 17 paragraph 2, page 18

Entrapment, a favorite horror device of the Gothic, means to be confined or to be trapped in such a way that there is no way out, typically in a castle, maze or wild natural environment. It is this sense of there being no escape that contributes to the claustrophobic psychology of Gothic space. The notion of claustrophobia is closely tied up with that of entrapment. Although it is most often regarded as a consequence of physical entrapment, it can also be more generally attributed to a character's sense of helplessness, or a feeling that one is caught up in some sinister plan or destiny over which one has no control. This is particularly so if the place where the character is confined is haunted by spirits.

In *History of the Duchess of C*****, the heroine is shut up in an underground room in a castle for nine years. Although the space is not haunted, the character is terrified about the consequences her entrapment will have upon her family, especially her young daughter.

Source: Leong, Esther. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2004. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

The Romance Paradigm

Found on: page 4 paragraphs 3-4, page 7 paragraph 2

The Gothic narrative very often is a mirror and subversion of the romance paradigm. The romance framework, given definition by Northrop Frye, involves a (relatively) young hero undergoing a transformative experience in overcoming the obstacles that stand in his way of attaining the heroine of his dreams, the *jeune fille* (French for "young girl"). The main obstacle usually takes the form of a *senex iratus* (Latin "angry old man"), often her father, who thwarts the fruition of his desires of a marital union with her. The hero is then sent into exile but he subsequently returns home to wed the *jeune fille*. The Gothic, however, while borrowing from the romance, is its perverse double. The Gothic typically ends not in marriage, but in the interruption of *coitus*, where the hero does not attain his desired union with the heroine. The marked absence of any possibility of a blissful union with a *jeune fille* negates the heterosexual love and courtship of the romance.

*History of the Duchess of C***** follows this paradigm, though the ending is quite happy by Gothic standards. The Duchess of C**** is prevented (by her parents) from marrying Count Belmire; once married, the Duke of C**** takes on the Duchess' parental role in keeping her away from her lover. Only later does the Duchess' daughter become a new *jeune fille* for Count Belmire to marry.

Source: Chia, Jacqueline. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Religion

Found on: page 8 paragraph 2, page 11 paragraph 1, page 12 paragraph 2, page 14 paragraph 1, page 15 paragraph 3-page 16, page 17, page 18 paragraph 2

Anti-Catholicism was a frequent and, for some critics, foundational feature of early Protestant gothic fiction. In this fiction Catholicism comes to be associated with forces of horrid repression, greedy corruption, and mysterious persecution, wrapped in the cloaks of

a Superstition that prevents scrutiny of authority. God seems strangely powerless in these Gothic narratives, never appearing (as the Devil frequently does) and the pious must depend on their own personal virtue, not their God, for success.

*History of the Duchess of C***** is not much concerned with anti-clerical rhetoric, but the Duchess frequently calls on God for deliverance or help, and God never does explicitly help her—she is more reliant on her family and her virtue. She is also shut up in a way similar to disobedient nuns in other Gothic texts (on pages 14-15), which reveals implicitly some of the abuses perpetrated on women by the Catholic church.

Source: Thomson, Douglas H. "A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms." <<http://personal.georgiasouthern.edu/~doug/goth.html#tra>>. Last Updated: 2013. Last Accessed: 9/16/2013. Web.

Sleep

Found on: page 11 paragraph 2, page 19 paragraph 2

Sleep is depicted in the Gothic text to be a process or an activity that forms a locus for perverted horrors to take shape and thrive in the most subtle and monstrous of ways. Instead of being rendered as a harmless pursuit that reinvigorates the body, soul and mind or a natural event that follows the exertions of the day, it manifests itself as a state of being that exposes the vulnerability of the individual to supernatural forces and macabre influences beyond the his/her consciousness or control. Sleep in the Gothic can only be restored to its original, positive, non-threatening condition paradoxically through death even though in its previous malevolent state it is inextricably tied to death.

In *History of the Duchess of C*****, the Duchess is given a sleeping potion meant to imitate the state of death. This is done so that her husband, the Duke of C****, can keep her at a distance from the world without any ill effects or judgment. By putting her to sleep, the Duke effectively kills his wife to the rest of the world, even while she remains very much alive.

Source: Lobo, Sherene. "Gothic Keywords." <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Visualization

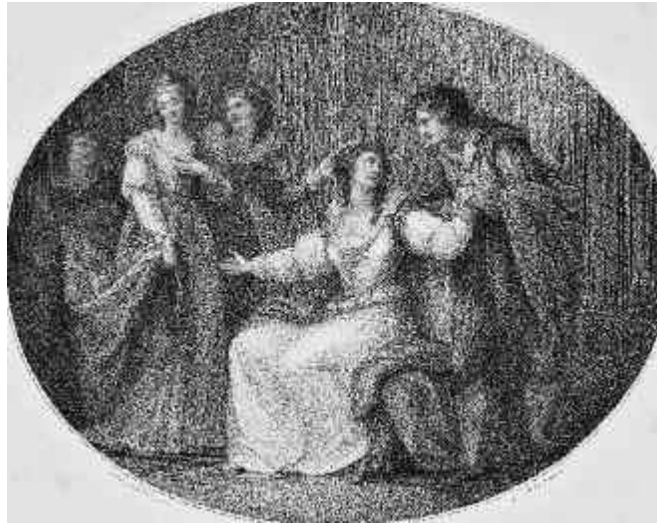


*The Duke of C*** taking the Duchess's daughter away, before the Duchess is imprisoned (date unknown). © Chawton House Library.*



History of the Duchess of C****

The Dutchess C . . . Deliverance, *by Pietro Bettelini after John Francis Rigaud (London, 1787).*
© Trustees of the British Museum.



The Dutchess of C giving her daughter to Count Belmire, *by Gaetano Testolini after John Francis Rigaud. London (1790).* © Trustees of the British Museum.

Source for images: Dow, Gillian. "Northanger Abbey, French Fiction, and the Affecting History of the Duchess of C****." *Persuasions* vol. 32 (2010). 28-45. Print.