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## Henrietta de Bellgrave [supplemental material]

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# Henrietta de Bellgrave, by an unknown author.

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## MLA Citation

*The True and Affecting History of Henrietta de Bellgrave; A Woman Born Only for Calamities. Being an Unhappy Daughter, Wretched Wife, and Unfortunate Mother; Containing a Series of the Most Uncommon Adventures that Ever Befel One Person by Sea and Land.* Birmingham, England: S. Martin, c. 1805.

## MLA Citation from the Gothic Archive

*The True and Affecting History of Henrietta de Bellgrave; A Woman Born Only for Calamities. Being an Unhappy Daughter, Wretched Wife, and Unfortunate Mother; Containing a Series of the Most Uncommon Adventures that Ever Befel One Person by Sea and Land.* Published 1805. E-Publications Marquette. The Gothic Archive, Marquette University, Wisconsin. [http://epublications.marquette.edu/english\\_gothic/24/](http://epublications.marquette.edu/english_gothic/24/). Accessed 9/16/13. Web.

## Full Title

*The True and Affecting History of Henrietta de Bellgrave; A Woman Born Only for Calamities. Being an Unhappy Daughter, Wretched Wife, and Unfortunate Mother; Containing a Series of the Most Uncommon Adventures that Ever Befel One Person by Sea and Land.*

## Summary

This narrative is comprised of a letter from Henrietta de Bellgrave to her daughter, Zoa. As Henrietta relates, she was born in France to the daughter of a Baron and the son of a Count. The two married in secret because Henrietta's mother was bound for a convent, which angered the Baron, who made their early marriage so uncomfortable that Henrietta's father was compelled to accept a position as the governor of Iranadad, a colony in the East Indies. On the voyage there, their boat is attacked by pirates, only nearly saved by an English ship bound for Bombay. After this, Henrietta's mother falls ill and perishes at sea. As India comes into view, a hurricane sinks the ship and Henrietta's father is lost at sea. Henrietta is saved by a French cook who attempts to rape her, and an English shipmate whom the cook murders for trying to prevent the rape. Henrietta is rescued just in time by a group of Indians, who take her to the house of "the banyan." After much reluctance, Henrietta marries the banyan in a pagan ceremony. Soon after, Henrietta gives birth to Zoa, and when the banyan catches her performing a Christian baptism, he forces Henrietta to promise that she will never introduce Zoa to her beliefs, a promise that she keeps until writing the letter. The purpose of this letter is for the ailing Henrietta to share her unfortunate story with her daughter, and to urge her toward the Christian faith.

## Constellation of Knowledge/Historical Context

Both this chapbook and its companion piece, *The History of Zoa*, come from a novel entitled *The Lady's Drawing Room*, which was first printed in London in 1743 (according to a record in *The Daily Advertiser*) and then reprinted in London, Dublin, and London again in 1744, 1746, and 1748, respectively. The full eighteenth century editions are rare today, but there was one final printing centuries later in 1974 by Garland Publishing, and the book is currently available via on-demand printing through Gale ECCO. The novel contains a pastiche of stories told by a group of titled ladies and gentlemen in an aristocrat's drawing room, and the Preface claims that the stories are meant to provide an accurate depiction of the world for the reader. These stories are relayed in assorted formats and told from various points of view—there are stories told from experience, hearsay, and read aloud

from chapbooks and letters. The story of Henrietta is told in the third chapter, and is meant as a continuation of the Zoa piece, which can also be found in this archive.

After enjoying relative success in the 1740s, the story of Henrietta was printed as a chapbook by Bailey's Printing Office on Leadenhall Street in 1750 (according to the records at the British Public Library). It was also printed in 1799, 1800, and 1805, according to available library records. The copy included in this archive is from the 1805 version, printed by S. Martin in Birmingham. The popularity of Henrietta's story is evident because of the multiple printings and various formats in which the tale is told.

Despite this popularity, the story of Henrietta has received very little critical attention, with only one article in print, Roxann Wheeler's "The Complexion of Desire: Racial Ideology and Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Novel," that analyzes it in any depth. The novel it came from, *The Lady's Drawing Room*, has also gone largely unnoticed by the scholarly community, with just one line dedicated to it in Jerry C. Beasley's *Novels of the 1740s*. Despite this seeming disinterest by scholars, the Henrietta story has much to offer any study of "interracial romance," or more particularly, "how much religious difference endangers marital happiness" (Wheeler 320). For Henrietta, the differences between herself and her husband are based on the ideologies of religion, and she is unable to ever establish a harmonious marital relationship with her pagan husband. Furthermore, as Wheeler points out, "Henrietta alludes to the Banyan's [her husband's] dark complexion as a barrier to her romantic attachment" but this issue of complexion is not necessarily an issue of race, but more of a "Difference in climates" (320-1). Despite, or perhaps because of, this ambivalence, the Henrietta story essentially becomes an illustration of "the problems that arise from uniting different religions and complexions" because Henrietta suffers greatly within the confines of her loveless marriage to the banyan (321). In its complex representation of religion, race, and marriage, the story of Henrietta is essential text for anyone considering how these topics are represented in popular 18<sup>th</sup> century literature.

## Key Words

### Banyan

Description forthcoming.

### Bombay/India

Description forthcoming.

### British Nationalism/English Nationalism

Description forthcoming.

### Christian

Christianity is both very much present and absent in Gothic literature. In *Dracula*, religion features prominently in the fight against the vampire – Van Helsing, Harker and Mina frequently invoke the name of God for supernatural and divine aid against the power of Dracula. Yet, there is also a disturbing sense that God is strangely absent, or at best, distant, within the novel. God's power seems limited – captured and contained within material

shapes and symbols such as the Host, Indulgences, and the Crucifix. The men who hunt down Dracula are dependent on the trappings of religion without true substance. Christianity thus becomes reduced to transferable property.

God is also sidelined in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. On one hand, while Biblical allusions to God as Creator abound in the novel, it is always in juxtaposition to the transgression of Victor Frankenstein as the mad scientist. Again, God is invoked only when an immediate threat is identified, as Victor laments and appeals to God to grant him the strength to defeat and destroy his monster. Christianity as the dominant religion in nineteenth century England was thoroughly interrogated and questioned, its beliefs in an Almighty God challenged as science and technology assumed prominence. Gothic authors, themselves questioning the relevance of religion, foregrounded these issues by presenting Christianity in a dubious light – present, but altogether powerless, shallow and somewhat deficient.

Source: Fong, Minghui. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

### Colonialism

Description forthcoming.

### East India Company

Description forthcoming.

### Eighteenth Century

Description forthcoming.

### Empire/Imperial

Description forthcoming.

### Interracial Marriage

Description forthcoming.

### Lady's Drawing Room

Description forthcoming.

### Pagan

Description forthcoming.

### Race

Description forthcoming.

### Rodomond

Description forthcoming.

### Zoa

Description forthcoming.

## Bibliography of Related Information

Beasley, Jerry C. *Novels of the 1740s*. U of Georgia P: Athens, GA. 1982.

"Classified Listings." *Daily Advertiser* [London, England] 2 Nov. 1743, Issue 3991. *17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century Burney Collection Newspapers*. Web. 20 November 2013.

Henrietta de Bellgrave

*The History of Zoa, the beautiful Indian, daughter of Henrietta de Bellgrave: And of Rodomond, whom Zoa releases from confinement, and with him makes her escape from her father, who was the occasion of Rodomond's imprisonment and dreadful sufferings. To which is added the memoirs of Lucy Harris, a foundling, who, at sixteen years of age, was discovered to be daughter to the countess of B— a true story.* Sabine & Son, Shoelane, Fleet Street: London, c. 1800.

*The Lady's Drawing Room. Being a Faithfull Picture of the Great World. In which the various Humours of both Sexes are display'd. Drawn from the Life and Interspers'd with entertaining and affecting Novels.* M. Cooper & A. Dodd, near Essex-street, in the Strand: London, c. 1744.

Wheeler, Roxann. "The Complexion of Desire: Racial Ideology and Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Novels." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32.3 (1999): 309-332.