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Rival Knights, The; or, the Fortunate Woodlander [supplemental material]

Bridget Kapler

The Rival Knights; or, the Fortunate Woodlander: A French Romance, by an unknown author.

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Full Title

The Rival Knights; or, the Fortunate Woodlander: A French Romance: Containing Amelia, or The Perfidious Husband.

Summary

The Rival Knights; or, the Fortunate Woodlander: A French Romance

Having won France peace, Pharamond returns home to his wife, Rosamond, and his oldest son, Clodio, lover of women, and his daughter, Felicia, server of the distressed. However, the cruel King Boort of Gandes did not want peace. He killed his daughter who had been seduced by Palamedes and gave birth to Bliomberis. King Boort wanted more power and urged his son Lionel to destroy the French, but Pharamond sent Clodio on his campaign and he could not defend France by himself and deserted his army. Lionel and Bliomberis claimed victory. The French returned; Pharamond quickly claimed victory, sent troops out to look for his missing son, took Bliomberis prisoner, but Lionel escaped. Upon returning home, Felicia and Bliomberis fall in love. When Felicia had to marry, Bliomberis was only a prisoner, so he looked for his father. On his journey, he finds Lionel who gives him a letter from his father; fights another knight to prove himself; saves Percival's lady, Blanchefleur; and befriends Percival who takes him to King Arthur's Round Table where Clodio tells how he was tended to by Celina. Bliomberis lets Clodio use his horse to return to Celina, but Clodio does not return. Bliomberis and Percival rescued Clodio and Celina; then they return back to Pharamond's court, two years after Bliomberis first left. Bliomberis does not return until the beginning of the tournament for Felicia's hand in marriage; he fights a stranger at the tournament, who turns out to be Bliomberis's father, Palamedes. Bliomberis and Felicia are married and everyone lives happily ever after.

Amelia, or, The Perfidious Husband

From the beginning, the beautiful and rich heiress, Amelia, was fated to ruin. She married well to Fabrico, but he began to stray from her as he spent the Carnival season in Venice, concealing the fact he was married. A rich, hospitable nobleman wanted to pair Fabrico with his enchanting daughter, Leonarda, and they soon fell in love and were engaged. Amelia wrote to her husband, begging him to come home, yet he responded kindly by saying that urgent business kept him there for at least another year. Amelia, besot by the news, began to question everyone who came her way from Venice about her husband, who had not even tried to keep his love for Leonarda secret. In a letter, Amelia threatened that if Fabrico did not return to her in ten days that she would expose him to Leonarda's family. Leonarda found the letter and tried to turn her heart against him, but it was to no avail. Even though she sincerely loved him, she confronted him and retired to a convent. Fabrico returned to Amelia, where she happily accepted him back. Fabrico was welcomed back and waited a while until he took his revenge by killing Amelia. He then went to the convent to see Leonarda, where she also rejected him. He flew to the countryside and attempted suicide, but could not bring himself to do it. Finally, he was assassinated by a troop of Miquelets, Spanish military who plundered travelers during peace time. (Note: Missing pages 36-37.)

Constellation of Knowledge/Historical Context

Chapbook: A condensed, convenient bluebook format of 36-72 pages, back to back, stripped of the epistemological pessimism of their antecedents. The notion of the

bluebooks as a Romantic narrative genre is as misleading here as that of the term “Romantic gothic novel,” which is a collective representative of a few standardized landscape descriptions and the routine appearances of a mundane ghost that are determined by the readers’ typical expectations and the desire “to be superficially tickled by the idea of a something beyond everyday experience, but at the same time to be reassured of the stability of their own concept of reality.”¹

Medieval Derivatives: Bliomberis’s quest into the forest to prove himself and his royal lineage mirrors Boethius’s wheel of fortune from *The Consolation of Philosophy*, written c. 524. The hero’s acceptance into the castle is followed by his need to go out of the castle in order to prove his worthiness of the castle’s protection. Thus, by going back out into the forest, the hero can prove himself worthy of the castle’s protection. This wheel of fortune is reminiscent of themes that have echoed throughout the Western canon: the female figure of wisdom that informs Dante, as well as his Beatrice who leads him home; the same female source of wisdom is represented by Milton’s Eve in *Paradise Lost*; and the reconciliation of opposing good and evil fortunes is significantly present in the Medieval Age in Chaucer’s “The Knight’s Tale,” *Troilus and Criseyde*, and, more naturally-oriented, as Lady Nature in *The Parliament of Fowles*, additionally, Italian sources like Giovanni Boccaccio’s “Il Filiostrato,” which is rumored to be Chaucer’s derivative text for *Troilus and Criseyde*. Compounded, these medieval texts encourage Romantic and Gothic readers to “read mediievally,” as the very nature of these chapbooks suggest.

Frontispiece:

“Stop,’ said he, ‘Whoever thou art, the fright that Lady is in, shews the violence thou intendest.’”

Epigraph:

“Love, and a Crown, no rivalship can bear;/All precious Things are all possess’d with Fear. –
” Dryden

Key Words

Fear

Found on: page 9, paragraph 2; page 9, paragraph 2; page 12, paragraph 2; page 13, paragraph 2; page 23, paragraph 3; and page 27, paragraph 2.

Fear in the gothic is predicated on the unknown. Whether the outcome is determined by fortune or nefarious forces at work in the gothic, there is a decided dread of what the unknown will bring. In addition to the fear that is created for the individual or in the

¹ Koch, Angela. “The Absolute Horror of Horrors’ Revised: A Bibliographical Checklist of Early Nineteenth-Century Gothic Bluebooks.” *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text*. Dec. 2002. Web. <http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc09_n03>.

individual's mind, a fear-inspiring atmosphere usually combines the landscape, weather, and aspects of the possibly terrible to indicate man's inability to understand the world around him. Fear usually displays itself through madness, insanity, misogyny, aversion to scientific knowledge, monsters among them or in the community (also considered "Other"-anxiety), and ultimately the sublime. The gothic sublime comes from Edmund Burke's 1757 work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, where he states that the things we find beautiful and attractive are formally caused by our passion for fear, especially the fear of death that would separate the gothic characters from their trope-driven plots.

Hero

Found on: page 7, paragraph 4; page 8, paragraph 2; page 8, paragraph 3; page 17, paragraph 4; page 22, paragraph 2, 3, 4 (2); page 23, paragraph 3; page 24, paragraph 3, 4; page 25, paragraph 2; page 26, paragraph 1; page 28, paragraph 4; and page 30, paragraph 1.

What sets most gothic fiction apart is a hero that is at once both a hero and a villain; however, *Rival Knights's* Bliomberis is truly honorable and enjoys wedded bliss with Felicia at the end. As the hero, he is also reunited with his father and their happiness brings joy to the whole kingdom. This is very much in line with the romance paradigm that is present throughout the gothic, yet is usually overshadowed by the darker elements that sway the hero toward a more villainous expression of his own inner character. This more traditional version of the hero sets *Rival Knights* apart from other gothic fiction and makes the hero/heroine relationship more plausible within the fairy tale structure of this chapbook.

Love

Found on: page 5, paragraph 2; page 6, paragraph 1; page 6, paragraph 2; page 10, paragraph 2 (2); page 11, paragraph 1; page 11, paragraph 2; page 11, paragraph 3; page 12, paragraph 1 (2); page 13, paragraph 1; page 13, paragraph 5; page 14, paragraph 1; page 14, paragraph 2; page 14, paragraph 4; page 15, paragraph 2 (5); page 17, paragraph 3; page 19, paragraph 2; page 19, paragraph 3; page 20, paragraph 4; and page 27, paragraph 2.

A characteristic of the gothic is also its predication on the necessity of love to drive the plotline. According to Northrop Frye, the plot is driven by the young hero's desire to marry his beloved and the obstacles that her father puts in their path, often through a transformative experience. The gothic also plays with the typical marriage plot by letting the couple engage in sexual intercourse before the marriage or without any implied marriage. As Richard Sha notes in his 2008 book *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832*, "With neglect of love comes the neglect of sexual disinterest, or a more purposive mode of apprehending eroticism."² This is also perverted through the homosexual sociality of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* where there is not even the possibility of a marital union with a young, female beloved.

² Sha, Richard. *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. 150.

Weather

Found on: page 34, paragraph 1; and page 25, paragraph 1.

While the landscape plays a strong role in the gothic, the shifting weather patterns play just as strong of a role in determining or foreshadowing the end of the adventure. Usually sympathetic to the characters' moods, the weather determines, magnifies, or alters the feelings of the characters throughout the work. Storms are harbingers of evil; and, into the readers' mind, they bring an uneasiness that conveys the dread and fear of what is riding with that storm into the story. This oversimplification of the world and its connection to the characters' needs or desires hearkens back to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Prospero's control over the weather; however, instead of the characters magically having the ability to control the weather, the weather seems to simply be a projection of the characters' mental state. Reading a work of gothic fiction based on its weather patterns alone helps to signal changes and the mood of the work, but it by no means tells the whole story.

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