



The Mysteries of Udolpho : a Romance (annotated) (Lexido Classic Texts Book 3)

Ann Radcliffe

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Ann Radcliffe grew in the space of eight years from an unknown author publishing her first novel anonymously, to becoming universally acknowledged as the leading exponent of the Gothic novel.

Her rise was meteoric, her fame and readership immense. Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), described her as "the first poetess of romantic fiction", a "mighty magician", and "the Great Enchantress".

Radcliffe transformed the Gothic novel from a mere vehicle for the depiction of terror into a subtle and insightful instrument capable of exploring the psychology of fear and suspense. Her emphasis on emotion, perception, and the relationship between atmosphere and sensibility proved a significant and lasting contribution to the Gothic and Romanticism in fiction, and to the development of the modern novel as a whole.

She made a huge impact on contemporary writers, including a large number of authors who imitated and/or revised Radcliffe's work, the most significant being: Isaac Crookenden, Catherine Cuthbertson, Mary Meeke, Mary Ann Radcliffe (!), Regina Maria Roche and Eleanor Sleath.

Furthermore, the appreciation of Radcliffe's style and of her mastery of the craft has resulted in her lasting influence being acknowledged by a succession of notable authors such as Sir Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, the Marquis de Sade, Alexandre Dumas, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft.

The *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), shows Radcliffe at the height of her powers. This novel was an outstanding success, establishing Radcliffe as one of the greatest writers of her time and ranks as one of the master works of the Gothic genre.

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