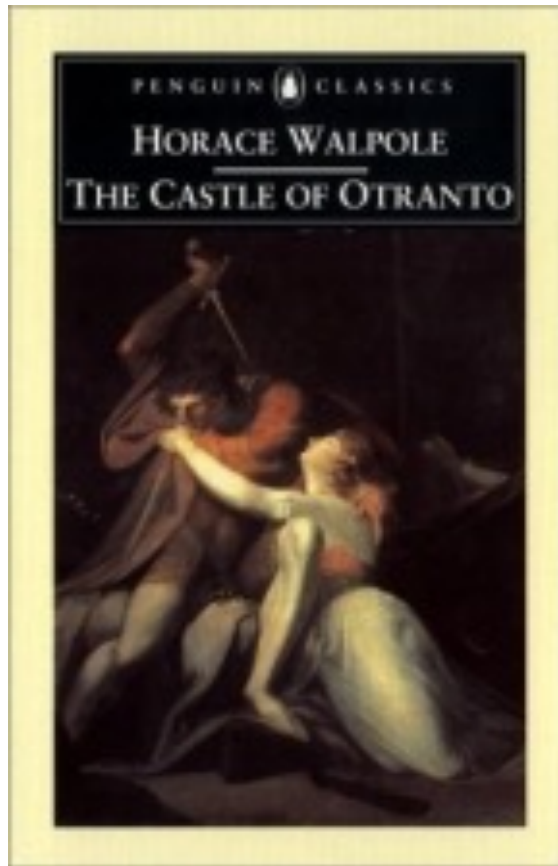


# Gothic Background



# Horace Walpole



- Considered the inventor of the gothic novel
- *Castle of Otranto* (1764)
- Tired of “strict adherence to common life” in Richardson and Fielding.

# Revival of Mysterious and Supernatural



- Looked back to the Middle Ages, 17<sup>th</sup> C French romances
- Yet, modern form (the novel)
- So, a combo of old and new

# Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823)

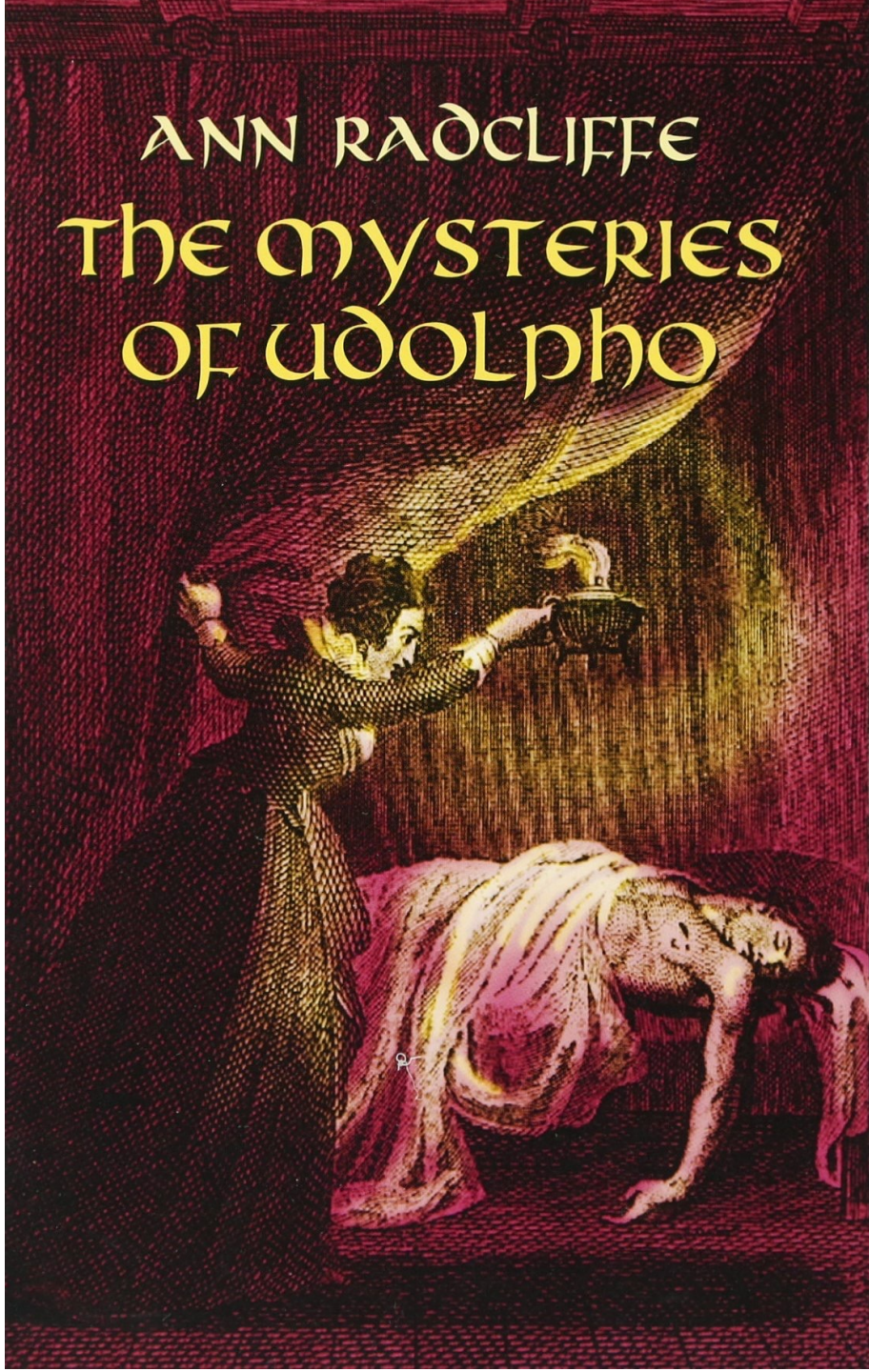




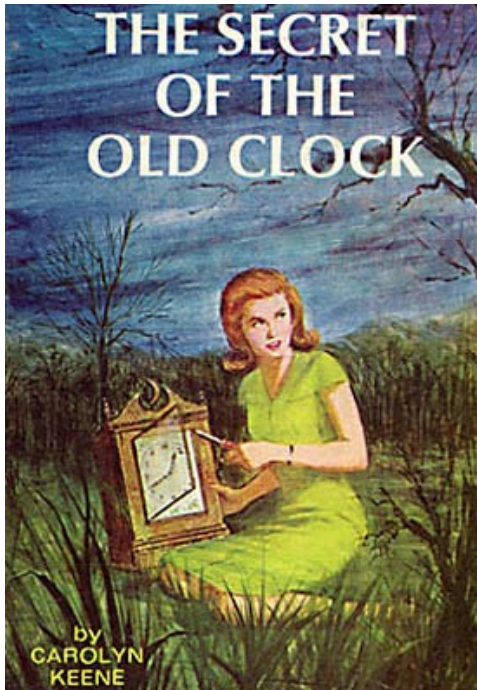
ANN RADCLIFFE  
THE MYSTERIES  
OF UDOLPHO

# Ann Radcliffe

- Wrote five gothic novels
- Bestselling one was *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)
- Radcliffe in fact, the best-selling novelist of the 18th century
- Paid very well



# Ann Radcliffe



- Rejected Walpole's supernatural
- Rationalized the mysteries, like modern day Nancy Drew or Scooby Doo



# Romantic Period



- Roughly, 1790-1850
- Celebrated the Gothic, because it suggested freedom, natural wilderness, mystery, awe, romance, the sublime

# The Sublime



- Inspires passion
- Suggests grand or elevated expression
- Inspires awe or reverence
- Associated with the infinite
- Able to evoke terror or exaltation, emotion beyond an individual's normal capacity



# Features of Gothic Fiction





- Confusion of actuality and fantasy by the main character

Unreliable or misguided, hence  
misleading characters





Emphasis on the psychological state of the characters.



What are thought to be ghosts, spirits,  
specters, phantoms





A woman  
in distress



# Impressionistic descriptions and images



# Byronic Hero



- Modeled after Byron's central figures in such works as:
  - *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818)
  - *Manfred* (1817)
  - *Cain* (1821)

# Sources of the Byronic Hero



- German *Sturm and Drang* literary movement
- Late 18th C Gothic novel villain/heroes
- Prometheus
- Goethe's Faust
- Milton's Satan



# William Blake & Milton's Satan



“Note. The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.”

--From *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (ca. 1790-93)

# Percy Shelley & Milton's Satan



“Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and although venial in a slave are not to be forgiven in a tyrant. . . Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God as one who perseveres in some purpose which has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed . . . As to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his Devil.

--From *A Defence of Poetry* (1821)

# Characteristics of Byronic Hero



- Rebellious
- Proudly defiant in attitude toward conventional social codes and religious beliefs
- Exile or outcast
- Searching for truth to give meaning to his life



# Characteristics of Byronic Hero, Continued



- Individualist w/extraordinary capacity for passion
- Suffers deeply from remorse
- Moral or spiritual transgression
- Solitary wanderings through awesome landscapes (attempt to purge himself of sin)
- Remains sympathetic despite his sin (not guilty of intentional cruelty)
- Nobility in grief
- Eloquence

# The Female Gothic



# Ellen Moers on the Gothic

- Fantasy predominates over reality
- The supernatural over the natural
- But mostly has to do with FEAR
- Author's intent is to scare
- Pleasure we take from fear?
- Genre arose when religious fears were on the wane; we needed new ways to scare ourselves



# Female Gothic as a journey



- Substitute for the picaresque (an episodic adventure story)
- A device to set maidens on distant and exciting journeys without offending the proprieties
- Heroines in Gothic could enjoy all the adventures and alarms that masculine heroes had long experienced from far home
- Yet, the Gothic castle still an indoor and freely female space



# Alison Millbank on the Gothic

- Does Gothic fiction provide a “safe site for female rebellion” or does it serve as “a drug to enforce social conformity:?”
- Division of Gothic into male and female traditions:
- Male: Masculine plots involving transgressions of social taboos by an excessive male will, and expression of the imagination’s battle against religion, law, and limits
- Female: Male transgressor becomes the villain whose authoritative reach as patriarch, abbot, or despot seeks to entrap the heroine, usurps the great house, and threatens death or rape.



# Not every work shares all these characteristics

