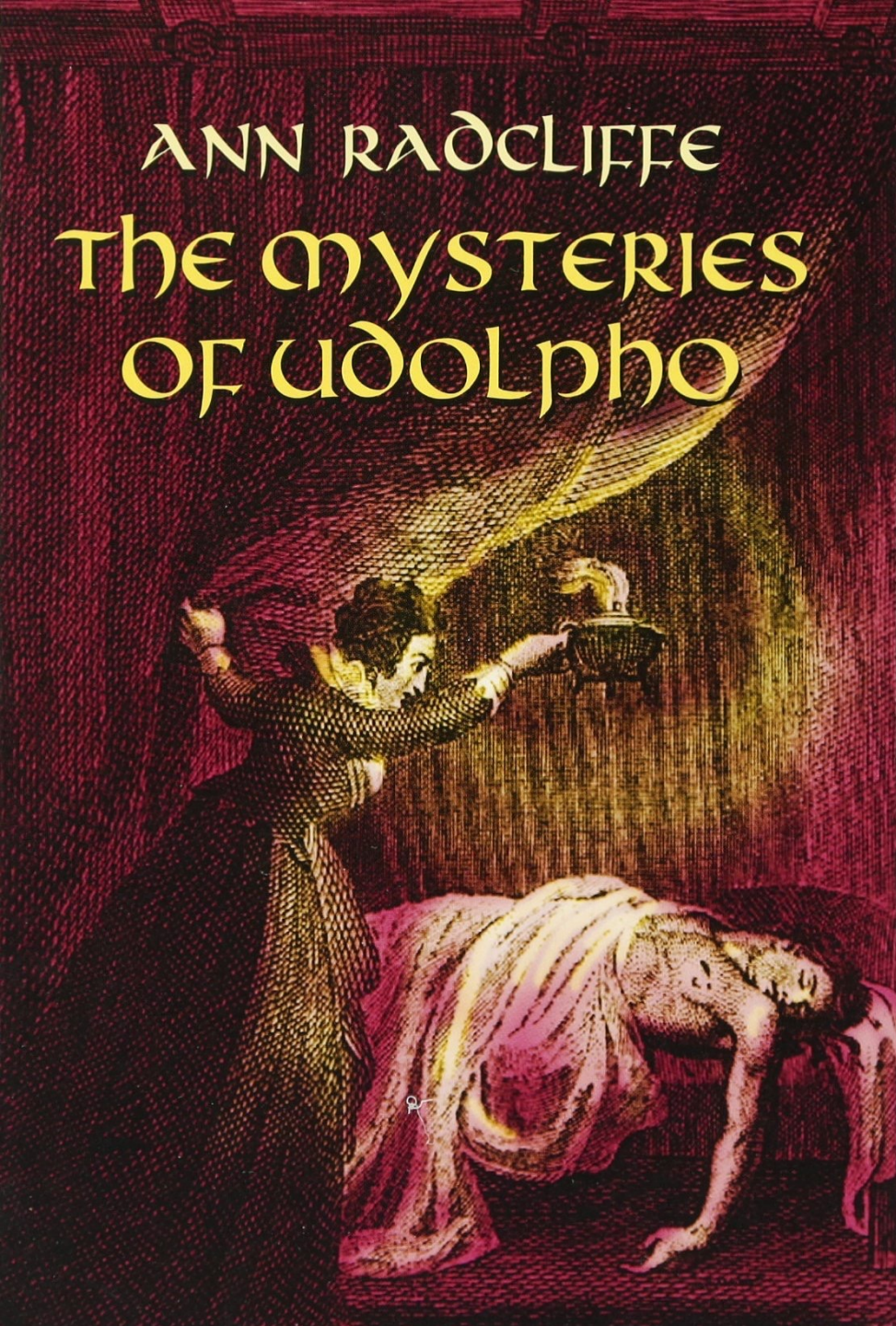


ANN RADCLIFFE
The MYSTERIES
OF UDOLPHO



TIME IN *UDOLPHO*

IDEAS FROM AN ARTICLE BY RICHARD ALBRIGHT, "NO
TIME LIKE THE PRESENT—*THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO*"

ATMOSPHERIC PAST

- Use of the past more atmospheric than historical
- While it's precisely set in 1584, it's also anachronistic
- No references to specific historical events
- Characters drink coffee and use dinner forks a century before they're introduced in Western Europe.





GOTHIC CUSP

- Novel set in “the Gothic cusp”—a moment of passage from a feudal to a modern world
- Radcliffe does this in order to “dramatize the tensions between the two periods and their respective world-views” (Robert Miles)

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

- This Gothic Cusp especially an 18th C concern.
- Written at the time of the French Revolution when the world was dramatically changing.
- *Udolpho* set in a sort of epic, timeless past, but concerned with 18th century issues—sensibility, taste, etc.





UNSEGMENTED PAST

Because the past is seen as continuous and unsegmented (rather than as being divided into specific eras, big events, etc.) almost no mention of usual time markers—days of the week, the month, seasons

Adds to the novel's dreamlike qualities

REPETITION

- Emily's journeys don't really mark time either since they resemble each other so much that they seem like a single journal, endlessly repeated.
- One critic says that Emily learns nothing at all that she didn't already know, thus novel not a journey at all, whether inward or outward:
 - "Since Emily learns nothing she does not already know from her experiences, there is no reason for them not to repeat themselves over and over.... Since nothing is happening in the novel, there is no reason for it ever to stop" (Albright 199).
- End of the novel is same as beginning—back to home in France, happy domestic scene—does this suggest nothing really did happen??



DREAM TIME

- Nightmare, dream time has nothing to do with the real world
- Nightmares represent the Gothic desire for the “random, the wild, and the unbounded.”
- Opposed to the Neo-Classical—which is orderly, contained, rational

RUINS

- Ruins themselves are physical manifestations of time passing
- Ordinary, regimented forms break down into chaos
- 18th C fascinated with the tension between the past and present, evidenced in a preoccupation with ruins in art, architecture, etc.





THE CASTLE

- Other critics see the castle as representing the body itself or as an enclosed, threatening patriarchal space
- But the castle also represents the continuance of its founder, the importance of generational succession, so a link to the past
- The structure is always decaying, though, bearing the scars of the family's survival

THE ENTRY

- Radcliffe's initial description of the castle shows nature battling human artifice—wild plants have taken root among the “mouldering stones,” (p. 210).
- When the doors are opened by an “ancient servant,” Emily enters into the past? Detailed slowly and excruciatingly.





DOUBLES

- Terry Castle observes that "characters in Udolpho mirror or blur into one another."
 - Montoni/Morano
 - Valancourt/Dupont
 - Blanche/Emily
 - Count de Villefort/St. Aubert
- These character doublings correspond in the temporal dimension to repetitions of narrated events.
 - Four excursions over the mountains in carriages: the Pyrenees with Emily's father; the Alps and later Apennines, with Montoni; and the Pyrenees again with the Count De Villefort.
 - Two shootings of Valancourt
 - Two attempts to kidnap Emily
 - Two trips to the castle (along with corresponding departures).
 - Even a double wedding at the end
- All of these repeated incidents mirror or blur into one another, just as the characters do. We perceive them as both similar—as repetitions—and as different. The tension between similarity and difference is sufficient to produce the uncanny effect, to render the incidents doppelgangers.
- Point of these doubles= repetition; time not working in an ordinary, progressive way



STRUCTURE ALSO REFLECTS STRANGE TIME

- Novel also has a structure of delay, interruptions preventing forward progress.
 - Stories told by the servants are constantly interrupted
 - Emily resolves to search the staircase 6 different times
 - Mysteries of the miniature and the burnt papers and the sentinel and the black veil are deferred

OTHER WAYS ORDINARY TIME SUSPENDED

- The belief that places can be invested with the spirit of people who were once there.
 - For instance, Valancourt's obsessive haunting of the places he and Emily conversed...
 - DuPont's obsession with the fishing cabin
- The sublime causes one to think of the eternal, "the great Author;" so takes one out of ordinary human time as well



CONCLUSION

- The alternative experience of time functions as an antidote to cultural fears relating to the French revolution—when changes become terrifying.
- The novel is written during the period when British views of the revolution change from early support to fear as the terror begins.
- "The temporality created in *Udolpho* is mythic and non-linear, not arbitrarily marked out into discrete segments, but whole, unbroken, un-dissociated, where time flows in circles of repetition, where the dead live again and surround the living, who not only commune with their spectralized presences but also become them, taking their forms, allowing them to exist simultaneously in multiple temporalities."