The Mysteries of Udolpho
Ann Radcliffe

The Mysteries of Udolpho

Considered a change agent in early Gothic romance; oft−referenced in later literary works or paid homage to by such authors as Jane Austen (influential novel ready by her heroine, Catherine Morland, in Northanger Abbey); Edgar Allen Poe (borrowed plot elements for the short story The Oval Portrait); and Sir Walter Scott.

In The Mysteries of Udolpho, one of the most famous and popular gothic novels of the eighteenth century, Ann Radcliffe took a new tack from her predecessors and portrayed her heroine's inner life, creating an atmosphere thick with fear, and providing a gripping plot that continues to thrill readers today. − The Mysteries of Udolpho, set in Europe in the year 1584, is the story of orphan Emily St. Aubert, who finds herself separated from the man she loves and confined within the medieval castle of her aunt's new husband, Montoni, after being forced to travel through France and Italy. Inside the castle, she must cope with an unwanted suitor, Montoni's threats, and the wild imaginings and terrors that threaten to overwhelm her.

The mysterious happenings in the story always have a natural and probable explanation because Radcliffe was a very rational person and did not believe in the supernatural. Radcliffe's strengths in writing were in describing scenery as well as suspense and terror. Many critics have called the work "dreamlike" and "suggestive of the cinematic technique of slow−motion."
(Summary by Wikipedia/Michelle Crandall)

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