



The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne

Ann Radcliffe

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Ann Radcliffe's first novel is set in the Middle Ages against the melancholy beauty of mountains and rugged coasts of the Scottish Highlands, tells the story of the warring clan chieftains of Athlin and Dunbayne. One of the earliest Gothic tales (1789), it recounts low-born Alleyn's quest for love and honour, and alternates scenes of passionate feeling with breakneck pursuits. The castle itself, in all its romantic sublimity, becomes the true focal point of the novel. Long out of print, this edition makes a little-known treasure available to modern readers.

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne Details

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Author : Ann Radcliffe

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Κωνσταντῖνος Τσουρῆκης says

Ἕνα ρομαντικῶ κεῖμενο. Θεματικῶ ἡ ἀγῶπη καὶ ἡ ἀνθρῶπινη συμπεριφορῶ τὴν ἐποχῶ τοῦ Ρομαντισμοῦ. Ἕχει στοιχεῶα γοτθικῶ τρῶμου στὶς περιγραφῶς τῶν στοῦν τῶν κῶστρων ὅ τῶν φυσικῶν φαινομῶνων τῆς Σκωτῶας. Ἐστιῶζει Ἕμως περισσῶτερο στὶς ἀνθρῶπινες σχῶσεις μελετῶντας ἀνθρῶπινα χαρακτηριστικῶ, τὴ βοῶληση ποὺ μπορεῶ νὰ δῶσει λῶσεις σὲ δῶσκολες καταστῶσεις, ἀλλῶ κυρῶως τὸ πεῶσμα ἐνσαρκῶμῶνο ἀπῶ τὸν Κῶμη τοῦ Ντῶνμπεῶν καὶ τὴν περηφῶνεια ἐνσαρκῶμῶνῆ ἀπῶ τὸν κῶμη τοῦ Ἕθλιν. Ἕταν χαριτωμῶνῆ ἱστορῶα χωρῶς ἀνατροπῶς με τὴ λῶση νὰ δῶνετε ἀπῶ πρῶξεις ποὺ ἐῶχαν ῶνῆει στὸ παρελθῶν.

Kailey (BooksforMKs) says

I do love Ann Radcliffe's books, but this first attempt of hers is sort of pathetic. It's amazing to think that she went on to write such examples of Gothic perfection like *Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Italian*, and *Romance of the Forest*.

If you are new to reading Radcliffe, I would NOT recommend starting with this book. There is next to no dialogue. The characters are not as developed as they could be. The plot twists are just a little TOO convenient. The story could have been fleshed out more and explained better.

But... there is this lovely little glimmer of the writer that she would eventually become, making it worth the read. The asides about human nature, the concise but pointed writing style, the suspenseful plot, the mysterious characters, the apparently supernatural events that turn out to be merely artifice - all these wonderful elements are still present, just waiting to blossom in her future novels.

Queuezle says

Definitely not as good as *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Very predictable and just a description of plot - in her *Udolpho* (the only other book by Radcliffe that I've read) book she has more character development (and dialogue).

Sotiris Karaikos says

Συνεῶζοντας τὴν ἐξερεῶνηση τοῦ φαινομῶνου Ann Radcliffe ῶφτασα ἀκριβῶς στὴν ἀρχῶ. Αὐτῶ εῶναι τὸ πρῶτο τῆς μυθιστῶρημα καὶ μῶσα σὲ αὐτῶ μπορῶμε νὰ βρῶμε πολλῶ στοιχεῶα ἀπῶ αὐτῶ ποὺ θὰ τὴ χαρακτηρῶσουν στὴ συνῶχεια. Ἡ ἱστορῶα τοῦ διαδραματῶζεται στὰ ῶγρια τοπῶα τῶν highlands τῆς Σκωτῶας τὴν ἐποχῶ τῆς ἀκμῶς τοῦς, Ἕνα ἰδιαῶτερα ρομαντικῶ σκηνικῶ δηλαδῶ. Ἡ κουλτῶρα τῶν highlands, βλῶπετε, ἀντιπροσῶπευε στὰ μῶτια τῶν ῶγγλων τῆς ἐποχῶς τὸ ἀποκορῶφωμα τοῦ ρομαντισμοῦ, ῶσχετὰ ἀν τὶς δεκαετῶες πρὶν τὴ συγγραφῶ αὐτῶ τοῦ βιβλῶου οἱ

ἴδιοι εἶχαν φροντίζει νὰ τὴν καταστρέψουν συστηματικῶς. Σὲ αὐτὸ το ρομαντικὸ σκηρικὸ λοιπὸν, διαδραματιζέται μὲ τυπικὴ Radcliffeικὴ ἱστορία ἡρωικῶν νεαρῶν, ἡμορφῶν ἐθραυστῶν κορασίδων, ἀνθρικῶν ἐχθρῶν καὶ σκοτεινῶν μυστικῶν πύσων ἀπὸ τοὺς τοῖχους ἀπὸρθητῶν κστρῶν. ἴσως ἴχι τῆ ποτα σπουδαῖο ἀλλῇ ἡ γράφῃ τῆς Ann Radcliffe, ἴσως ἐδὲ σὲ μὲ πιο πρωτῆλεια μορφῇ, ἴχει τὴν ἱκανότητα νὰ μεταμορφῶναι αὐτὴν τὴν ἀπλῆτητα σὲ κτὶ πραγματικὸ ὥραο. Ὅπτε το συμπῆρασμα εἶναι ἴτι αὐτὸ ἐδὲ το βιβλίο εἶναι μὲ καλὴ ἀρχὴ γιὰ νὰ προχωρῶσουμε στὰ ἐπόμενα ἔργα τῆς.

Evī Routoula says

Κυκλοφόρησε ἀνὸνυμα το 1789, θεωρεῖται το πρῶτο βιβλίο τῆς ἴνν Ρῶντκλιφ. Πρῆκειται γιὰ ἴνα γοθτικὸ μυθιστῆρημα ποὺ μοὺ θῆμισε τὸν Ἰβανῆ τοὺ Γοῶλτερ Σκοτ καὶ τὸν Φρανκεστῖν τῆς Σῶλλευ. Στὸν Μεσαῶνα στὴν Σκωτῶα κυριαρχοῦν δυο ἀριστοκρατικῆς οἰκογῆνιες ποὺ ζοῦνε ἀντῆστοιχα σὲ δῶο κστρά, στὸ κστρὸ τοὺ ἴθλιν καὶ τοὺ Ντῆνμπεϊ. Ὁ καλὸς κῆμης τοὺ ἴθλιν καὶ ὁ κακεντρεχὸς βαρῆνος τοὺ Ντῆνμπεϊ ἀντιμετωπῶζουν ὁ ἴνας τὸν ἴλλον. Φεουδαλισμῶς, ἱποτισμῶς, τῆξεις, ἴρωτας, πῆθη, μονομαχῶς, ἀποκαλῶψεις κρυμῶνων παιδιῶν. Αὐτὸ το μυθιστῆρημα ἴχει ἴλλα τα στοιχεῶα γιὰ νὰ συγκαταλῶγεται ἐπῆξια στῆς ἀγγλικῶς, γκῆθικ νοὺβῆλες τοὺ 18οὺ αἴῆνα. Γράμμῶνο μὲ ρομαντισμῶ, μεστῶ ἴμως, δὲν κουρῶζει μὲ ἀτελεῶωτες περιγραφῶς, προβλεπῶμενο σὲ μεγῶλο βαθμῶ, παρῶλα αὐτὸ σου ἀφῶνει τὸ συναῶσθημα τῆς ὀλοκῶρῶσης καὶ τῆς ἐξῆλῶωσης. Ἀναρωτῶμαι ἀν ἴχει γυρίστεῶ ποτῶ σὲ τηλεσειρῶ ἀπὸ το BBC ἴ το ITV, θῶ ἴταν καταπῆληκτικῶ νὰ το ἴβλεπε κανεῶς!

classic reverie says

This was Ann Radcliffe's first novel written in 1789. It is a story of two castles in Scotland who are enemies after the Dunbayne's Baron Malcolm kills the Earl of Athlin during a fight with both clans. Dunbayne is the victor & keeps fear in the Athlin Castles and all the occupants. Matilda raises her son & daughter after the Earl's death & tries to keep revenge of her husband at bay so her son will not be fallen too. Years later the son is not sure he should keep his promise to his mother not to seek justice for his father's death. Swooning, virtue & vice, sword fights, castles, dungeons & beautiful maidens are the main focus. I love this kind of book & it is fun to see how Radcliffe throws a few curves. Being familiar with her works I guessed right in on mystery but was still surprised. I enjoyed this story but it did not surpass her other novels. Worth the read for a lover of Gothic Romance

Adriano Giri says

"The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne" is Ann Radcliffe's first novel. Although I wouldn't consider this a 100% gothic novel, it clearly set the way for the following novels that Radcliffe would write. The story takes place in the Middle Ages, where two clans from two castles (Athlin and Dunbayne) have been fighting over a family feud since ancient times. The lord from Dunbayne, Baron Malcolm killed the lord from Athlin, and now the son of the latter, Osbert, wants to avenge his late father by killing Malcolm himself. All the notion of the dreary castles, the imprisonment of Osbert and his friend Alleyn, the battles between both clans, and the treachery actions that take place in this novel, contribute slightly to the idea of what a gothic novel

contains, even though, this time, there are no mysteries to resolve or "supernatural" occurrences. However, Radcliffe manages to succeed, as usual, by delivering us a story filled with suspense, action and drama, focusing the heroism on the man (Osbert or Alleyn) and mixing it with her love for romances. Alleyn is the clear example of a courtly lover, who wants to fight for her lady (Mary), just to protect her and see her happy, since he belongs to an inferior rank to hers. So, ladies in this novel are more passive and submissive to the men's actions. However, Osbert falls into the semiotic lots of time, when he constantly thinks of his mother and sister's welfare, thus obscuring his own emotions or "manliness". Nevertheless, women here are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their protectors, and their family, something which would change a bit later on, with Radcliffe's other novels, especially "Udolpho" or "The Romance of the Forest".

blake says

OK, you may not grant this four stars but I will. It's a delightful little book about an ill-considered attempt to avenge a murdered father, star-crossed lovers, dungeons, castles, treachery, ghostly sounds, and a lucky accident of birth.

I know how I have this book: As a young man, I read HP Lovecraft's "Horror and the Supernatural in Literature" and decided to read all the writing he mentioned. Mrs. Radcliffe featured prominently in this essay, and HPL always referred to her as "Mrs. Radcliffe". (Pre-Internet, so I had to literally go to a museum and look her up to find out her first name was "Ann".)

Anyway, the best way to think of Mrs. Radcliffe these days is the forebear of "Scooby Doo". Although predated by Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe basically created the Gothic horror/romance in its dominant form, with secret staircases, evil uncles, whistling winds that MIGHT BE GHOSTS! and other clichés that would become the "Old, Dark House" genre.

Now, keep in mind that the movie "Old, Dark House" came out in the '20s, and was sort of the bubble bursting for those particular horror tropes, which survive to this day and, as I said, are immortalized in the "Scooby Doo" cartoon series, and you get a sense of how profound an impact Mrs. Radcliffe (who was born in 1764!) had.

I do not know if this is her first book, but it's an early one, and a good starter to see if this is the sort of thing you'll like. Spoiler alert: You probably won't. She is very much a creature of her time and her prose is, well, not exactly florid, but lacking the spareness popular today on the one hand, and lacking (e.g.) the poetry of Mrs. Austen.

Northanger Abbey was Jane Austen's nod to Radcliffe, and it's probably better than any of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, or at least possessing of a neoclassic sensibility more suited to modern tastes.

(This paragraph coming up could be considered a little spoilery so maybe stop reading here if you aren't familiar with the tropes of the Gothic horror.)

But I love this stuff, and really enjoyed this book, even though I knew—and this should not be a spoiler to anyone who has read a book written between 1750-1925—for example, that the star-crossed lovers would be saved by a suddenly revealed accident of birth. (Edgar Rice Burroughs used this device *repeatedly* in the *Tarzan* series: You can't get married because you're not noble/not white! But wait! You secretly *are*!)

It's a fun window into how people used to think. All the swooning ladies and would-be heroes constantly having their characters tested. The dark castles with their secret dungeons and even more secret passages. The romantic tying of noblemen's characters to the fates of their kingdoms. Etc.

This edition has a glossary and some explanatory footnotes in the back, so if you're interested in dipping your toe in to the genre and period, this is not a bad start.

Wreade1872 says

I've previously read the *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and the main complaints people have against that are the overly detailed descriptions and its overall length.

Both of these factors are absent from this shorter work but unfortunately it's poorer for the loss.

Without all that rich description it feels a bit colourless and without the length you simply don't have time to get a grip on the characters. Events move at a brackeneck pace and Radcliffe's usual method of suspense is undermined by how quickly it then gets resolved.

It's by no means terrible, there's some interesting bits including a very 'Sofie's Choice' situation. However it manages to hit every cliché imaginable and has a number of elements very similar to those in *Udolpho*. And even if you haven't read any other Radcliffe this still manages to repeat itself on a couple of points despite its brevity. It's also very predictable.

If you want to read something like this you should probably just try *The Castle of Otranto* instead, which at least has some weird stuff to make things more interesting.

Erin H says

For a book with 100 and some odd pages a lot happened. After the Earl is killed by the rival clan leader Malcolm his son Osbert vows revenge. He vows revenge years later which I can see why since he was grown but then he got captured and that's when the story really took off. One of his warriors, Alleyn, escapes and plans to get his lord out of prison all while trying to stop himself from falling in love with Osbert's sister Mary, who is far above his station and could never actually marry him. Osbert also finds love while a prisoner with Malcolm's niece Laura. The real "Gothic" part of the story came with Matilda, Laura's mom and the hardship she went through after her husband died. I really enjoyed Matilda's story, it made the story so interesting to see how a woman like her survived living with her husband's family and her knowing she was only there so they could get her lands and wealth. There were parts that were a bit ridiculous. I didn't like Osbert's poetry if you will every time he saw Laura. I also thought it was a bit ridiculous about Alleyn and where he really came from, the author was very predictable with that turn of events. I enjoyed the ending because everyone got their due and the freeing of Osbert was quite successful!

M. says

To be honest I totally missed that this book was set in the middle ages. If this had been my first Radcliffe

novel I might be less harsh in my judgement. However, having read three previous novels (her masterwork *Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Romance in the Forest*, and *A Sicilian Romance*), I found this, Radcliffe's first novel to be the least sophisticated. Moreover, in looking back at my order in reading Radcliffe, each previous novel seems to be the author's testing ground. *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* include too many descriptive passages and poor timing. The scenes and suspense are interesting, however the pacing of the book is off. Radcliffe has some shining moments in this book, but again, it clearly wasn't her at her best.

If you are starting out with Radcliffe and only plan on reading one her books (everyone should read at least one) check out *The Romance in the Forest*. The length is not a huge commitment like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and the characters are developed and more complex.

Anna says

hidden castle passageways, fainting maidens, kidnapping and incest.

Grace Harwood says

This was a very enjoyable short novel by Ann Radcliffe (her first, I believe) relating a Highland Romance detailing a feud between two families (the Baron Malcolm and Osbert and his clan). The Baron, like all Radcliffe villains, is thoroughly nasty with lots of nefarious plans to inflict on any who dare to stand in his way. Osbert, like all Radcliffe heroes, is slightly ineffectual and ends up spending most of the action in prison. Poor old Mary (his sister) gets kidnapped twice before the ultimate (and utterly unsurprising) happy ending. Read it in around an hour and a half - and it wasn't a bad way to beguile the time away. Definitely recommend it.

Emma says

This novel by Ann Radcliffe sets the scene with beautiful and mysterious landscapes, dangerous yet serene forests and a perfect family whose peace and tranquility is shattered by the evil actions of a neighbouring tyrant. Though faced with unimaginable challenges and the pains of true love, each character shines with a virtue and steadfastness that reproaches our own corrupt 21st century. Though, short, this novel doesn't in any way lack the excitement and adventure of any other Gothic novel. It is full of danger, love and shocking surprises that keep us on the edge of our seats; including a perfect ending which adds to the novels overall charm. I, personally, love a solid, happy ending, and I certainly wasn't disappointed. Our heroes and heroines are finally repaid for all the heartache, abuse and torment they endured throughout their stories. This story is full of sword-fighting, daring escapes, a handsome set of heroes and beautiful heroines, it's a tale of loyalty and love, complete with our very own evil villain, all the while taking us on the adventure of a lifetime. Overall, I give this novel a 8/10. My only complaint is that it's too short!

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<http://beautyandthebookxxx.blogspot.c...>

Lee Foust says

For the completest, Ann Radcliffe's first slightly clunky attempt at a Gothic romance. In retrospect it's easy to see both the promise of better Gothics to come, and to isolate why her later work is so much more successful. Mainly it's the filigree that's enjoyable about Ms. Radcliffe's art. The plot here is serviceable, generally predictable, its complications and outcomes pretty much expected--using the two couples/double marriage at the end--with enough surprises and unexpected or secret complications--notably the killing off of the villain two chapters before the end--to keep a reader awake. Notably lacking here, however, are the Italian setting, the detailed landscape descriptions, and the faux supernatural elements that make *Romance of the Forest*, *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *The Italian* so much better. Funny, but when I annually teach *The Italian* in my Gothic Literature course students complain about the romance's length and about having to wade through so much description of the Italian landscape, castles, ruins, Naples, not to mention the dark dungeons of the inquisition in Rome. I think that *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, however, proves that without such visual fluff, a romance plot, no matter how artfully handled, after so many centuries of separated lovers struggling to get back together despite kidnapping, pirates, dragons, and miscreant noblemen and/or importunate aunts, just isn't enough to hold our interest. Thank goodness Ms. Radcliffe shifted the scene to Italy and began injecting those ghostly visitations and long, beautiful descriptions of the rocky Apennines, solidifying the Gothic romance we now know so well for all time.
