

Abigail Baumgartner (2019)

“The Lady’s Maid: Navigating *The Mysteries of Udolpho*”

In “The Lady’s Maid: Navigating *The Mysteries of Udolpho*,” I argue that, despite a lack of critical attention on the lady’s maid Annette in critical scholarship on Ann Radcliffe’s novel, Annette is, in truth, crucial for readers’ response to and involvement in the novel. While much scholarly work has examined *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, little has focused on Annette, and, as far as I could determine, none on her role as an ally to Emily or her positive influence on readers. Analyzing the novel through a feminist reader-response lens grounded in Wolfgang Iser, I found that through her creation of suspense, familiarity as a lady’s maid who conforms to eighteenth-century expectations, and her position as an ally for Emily, Annette pulls us into the text, making us participate in the creation of a world where we can see women’s need for cross-class relationships in gaining agency. The text, through Annette, helps us imagine a world where women can accomplish more when they work together than they could have apart.