

**The Mysteries of Udolpho**  
**Professor Dr. Divya A. Dohss**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture 10**

**Gothic and Travel, Marriage, Discussion Questions**

(Refer Slide Time: 0:11)



Week 2: The Mysteries of Udolpho


LECTURE 2E: GOTHIC AND TRAVEL, MARRIAGE, DISCUSSION QUESTIONS  
LECTURE BY DR DIVYA A

NPTEL

IMAGE SOURCE: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gothic\\_interior\\_of\\_Udolpho.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gothic_interior_of_Udolpho.jpg)

Hello and welcome to this week's lecture on The Mysteries of Udolpho, written by Ann Radcliffe. In this concluding lecture on the novel, I will be briefly discussing the concept of gothic in relation to travel and I will also be talking about ideas of marriage in the context, in the 18th century context. And we will be looking at two discussion questions related to this particular novel.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:43)




## Radcliffe

published the romantic novels *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and *The Sicilian Romance* (1790).

The publication of her third novel, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), established her reputation as a gothic novelist, and the more successful release of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) proved her mastery of "terror," earning her the epithet "Great Enchantress" of the gothic movement (coined by English writer [Thomas De Quincey](#)).


Source: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/mysteries-udolpho>



Radcliffe, we need to remember published romantic novels such as *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* published in 1789 and *The Sicilian Romance* in 1790. It is for the publication of her third novel, *The Romance of the Forest* published in 1791, which established her as a gothic novelist. So, I might want to point your attention to the fact that there is close affinity between romance and gothic, the transition between the two literary domains seem to happen seamlessly in the case of Radcliffe and with Radcliffe's most successful release *The Mysteries of Udolpho* published in 1794, she proved her mastery of terror, the concept of terror, which won her the epithet, the "Great Enchantress" of the gothic movement. And this epithet "Great Enchantress" was coined by the English writer Thomas De Quincey.

So you can see how she gradually migrates from writing romances to writing gothic fiction and impact of romance, the idea of adventure, the great travels involved in romance and the romance plot itself. The romance plot here referring to the courtship plot also being embedded in the gothic narratives, make it easy for such a transition.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:25)



## Travel and Gothic

"Travel books, particularly descriptions of Italy, made an important contribution to Ann Radcliffe's evocation of the exotic past" (Norton 73).



The "evocation of the exotic past" is a typical characteristic of the Gothic novel.

For instance, in *The Castle of Otranto* Walpole claims that the plot is based on a manuscript. In the preface to the first edition, he writes: "The following work was found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1579".

(Source: Van der Laan 15)

<https://www.ac.uk/whatand/wh/02905138.pdf>

Image source: <https://www.studiorchestrations.com/2012/11/28/walpole-ann-radcliffe-in-fantastic-novels-the-exotic-past/>

Now, travel books, particularly descriptions of Italy, made an important contribution to Ann Radcliffe's evocation of the exotic past. So this is a crucial idea, the relationship between gothic and travel and the idea of the past. If you remember the previous lecture, we were talking about the idea of the primitive and the idea of the pre-modern past, how the primitive seem to kind of indicate the pre-modern past of Great Britain. So an allocation of exotic past of countries such as Italy seem to kind of evoke the past of Great Britain itself. So that symbolic idea is made possible through this kind of exoticization of foreign countries.

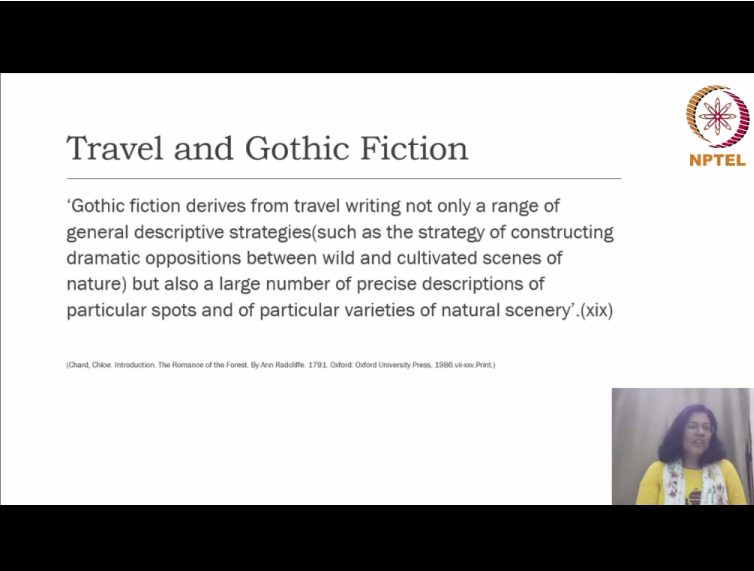
The evocation of exotic past is also a typical characteristic of the gothic novel. So it is an important motif. And we also should remember that the effect of the past on the present is also one of the discourse of the gothic novel. Now we have examples of this kind of relationship between the past and present.

For example, in the *Castle of Otranto* Walpole claims that the plot is based on a manuscript, which he kind of founded in the library of the ancient catholic family in the North of England. So you can see how that manuscript is being distanced in time and also physically in the north of England, it is not in the south. But there we have the city and where the financial centers are functioning.

So you can see how distancing has its own ramifications in terms of the hermeneutics. So apparently this book was printed in Naples in the black letter in the year 1579. So not printed in Great Britain and also not printed now in the contemporary time, but in the 16th century.

So distancing physically and temporarily has a particular significance in terms of the gothic novel and that seems to indicate both an exoticization on the part of the writer and also an evocation of the primitive past of Great Britain.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:55)



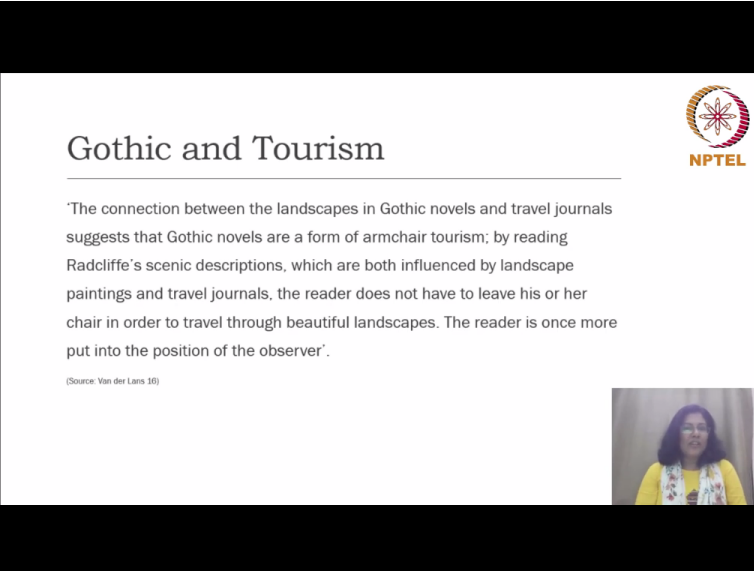
The slide features a title 'Travel and Gothic Fiction' in a serif font. To the right is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a stylized sun or starburst pattern and the text 'NPTEL' below it. The main text is a quote: 'Gothic fiction derives from travel writing not only a range of general descriptive strategies (such as the strategy of constructing dramatic oppositions between wild and cultivated scenes of nature) but also a large number of precise descriptions of particular spots and of particular varieties of natural scenery'. (xix)'. Below the quote is a small line of text: '(Cham, Chab, Introduction, The Romance of the Forest, By Ann Radcliffe, 1781, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986 vii-xxx Print.)'. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair wearing a yellow top, speaking.

Now, travel and gothic fiction. Gothic fiction derives from travel writing not only a range of general descriptive strategies, such as the strategy of constructing dramatic oppositions between wild and cultivated scenes of nature, but also a large number of precise descriptions of particular spots and of particular varieties of natural scenery.

So you can see how narratives about travel have an impact on the structure of gothic fiction. Travel narratives are useful. They are useful to gothic fiction because these narratives help gothic fiction make a differentiation between the wild, scenery and the cultivated scenes. There is of course a big difference between a garden and wild on the go that you can find surrounding ramp-down gothic castle.

So there is a distinction being made between the two and the language of this differentiation between the types of scenery can be drawn from travel narratives by the gothic writers. And this travel narrative also offers gothic writers a range of interesting scenery, which can be used in a particular novel, descriptions about Italy can be made use of in several gothic fiction. Say, for example, in Castle of Otranto and other fiction of the kind. So these are important narratives for gothic novels.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:40)



The slide features a title "Gothic and Tourism" in a serif font, followed by a horizontal line. Below the line is a quote: "The connection between the landscapes in Gothic novels and travel journals suggests that Gothic novels are a form of armchair tourism; by reading Radcliffe's scenic descriptions, which are both influenced by landscape paintings and travel journals, the reader does not have to leave his or her chair in order to travel through beautiful landscapes. The reader is once more put into the position of the observer'." Below the quote is a small attribution: "(Source: Van der Lans 16)". In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a stylized sun or starburst and the text "NPTEL" below it. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair wearing a yellow top.

Now, the connection between the landscapes and gothic novels and travel journals suggests that gothic novels are a form of armchair tourism, by reading Radcliffe's scenic descriptions, which are both influenced by landscape paintings and travel journals, the reader does not have to leave his or her chair in order to travel through beautiful landscapes. The reader is once more put into the position of the observer.

So this critical comment lays there, one of the immediate benefits to a reader of reading gothic fiction. So in addition to being scared by the novels, the reader can also kind of metaphorically visit all these places that are described, which are part of the narrative of gothic fiction. So there is a kind of an armchair tourism going on, on the pages of gothic fiction and armchair tourism enjoyed by the reader. So this critic also points out that Radcliffe's scene description are influenced not only by travel journals but also painting.

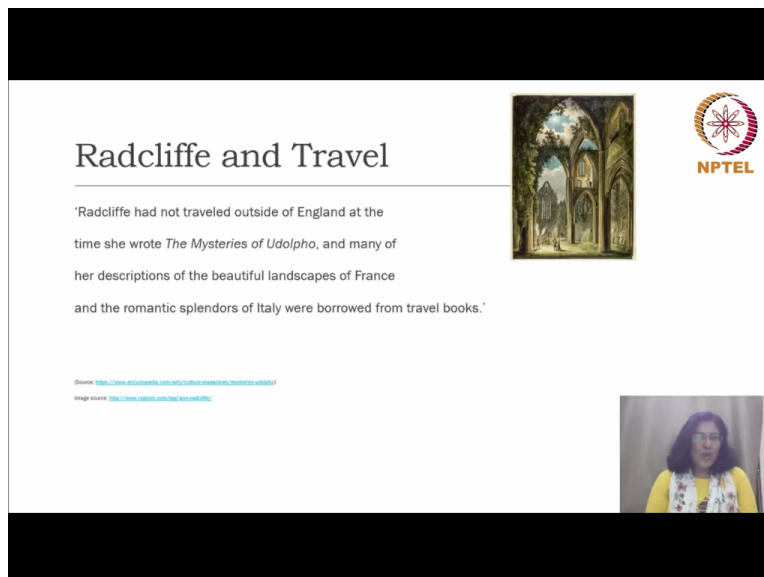
So, and the reader does get to enjoy all these descriptions, which are painted by words, by Ann Radcliffe. So we also get the sense that the reader is once more in the position of a viewer of a scenery. So it can be a painting of a particular scene in Naples, in Italy, in Geneva. So you can see rather immediate benefit of this kind of armchair tourism.

This is one of the point that I want to kind of bring up in a symbolic manner, which relates to the idea of how the set of travel narratives makes a distinction between the wild and the culture, wild and the kind of tamed nature. So the difference between the wild bushes and the really neatly pruned garden.

So there is a kind of a connection that you can meet with the different kinds of the necessities or the different kinds of characters. On one hand, we have all these terms who are evil in gothic fiction, on the other we have British characters, British women, British females heroines who are good and who are brought up and probably more genial ideal situation.

So there is a difference being made here between the good and the bad by pointing symbolically to the wild nature and the cultivated nature. So the English countryside is supposed to be ideal in the strange exotic places, which are found in foreign spots are symbolically evil. So that kind of distinction is also being brought out through this travel narrative, which are used in, travel narratives which are used in gothic fiction.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:35)



The slide features a title 'Radcliffe and Travel' on the left. To its right is a detailed illustration of a gothic cathedral interior with tall, pointed arches and stained glass windows. Further right is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a stylized red and white circular emblem above the text 'NPTEL'. Below the title, there is a block of text: 'Radcliffe had not traveled outside of England at the time she wrote *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and many of her descriptions of the beautiful landscapes of France and the romantic splendors of Italy were borrowed from travel books.'


Source: <https://www.oxfordjournals.com/doi/full/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199208113.013.0011>  
Image source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/1111111111>

In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair wearing a yellow top, speaking.

And it is also very interesting to note that Radcliffe had not traveled outside of England at the time she wrote *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and many of her descriptions of the beautiful landscapes of France and the romantic splendours of Italy were borrowed from travel books.


So you can see that Radcliffe had not traveled outside of the country, when she wrote this fantastic gothic fiction, but yet, we have vivid descriptions of the countryside of the foreign countries. And that really tells you the impact of all these travel books and illustrated editions of paintings and visual, other visual material have had on this kind of Gothic work.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:23)



## The Gothic Heroine

'You may find, perhaps, Signor' said Emily, with mild dignity, 'that the strength of my mind is equal to the justice of my cause; and that I can endure with fortitude, when it is in resistance of oppression.' 'You speak like a heroine,' said Montoni, contemptuously; 'we shall see whether you can suffer like one.'



Now let us turn our attention to the gothic heroine. I want to kind of bring your attention to this conversation between Emily, the heroine of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Count Montoni who is the villain of the piece. And Emily says with a lot of dignity, “You may find perhaps Signor, said Emily with mild dignity, that the strength of my mind is equal to the justice of my cause; and that I can endure with fortitude when it is in resistance of oppression.” “You speak like a heroine, said Montoni, contemptuously, we shall see whether you can suffer like one.”

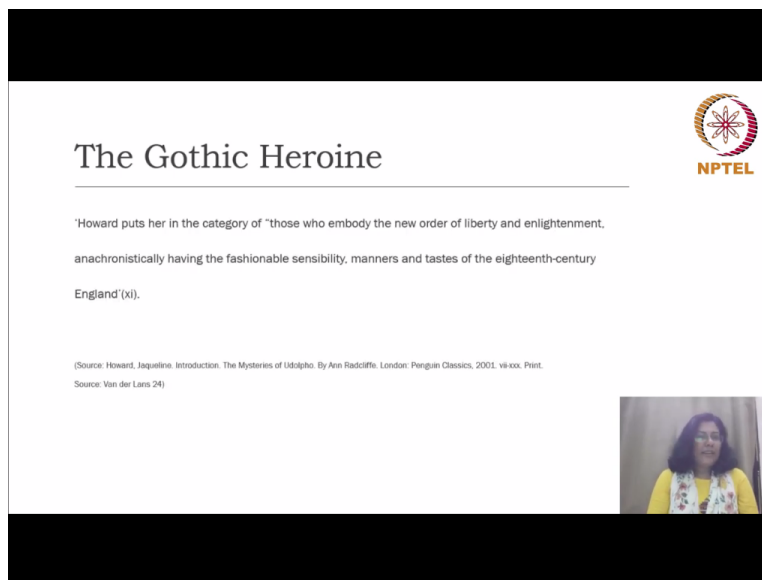
So Emily’s words are particularly interesting, because she talks about fortitude courage. She talks about resistance. She makes a reference to oppression. She talks about justice. And she says that if I am being treated unjustly, I will rise to the occasion and I will face the situation courageously with fortitude. And those terms, the terms of justice, fortitude makes Montoni react and state that, you speak like a heroine. It is a heroine, it has all these attributes, attributes of



courage and resistance and not just a heroine, heroes, male heroes also have this kind of set of attribute.

So you can, again, once again, think back to the I guess heroinism, which we find used in reference to the idea of female gothic and we ultimately that heroinism talks about the growth trajectory of the heroine just as the growth trajectory of the hero is matched in the Bildungsroman. And you can also see the very evil side of Montoni when he says that I will make you suffer like a heroine, the central female character in a piece of work. So there is a kind of a self consciousness, a narrative kind of feel going on here too.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:29)



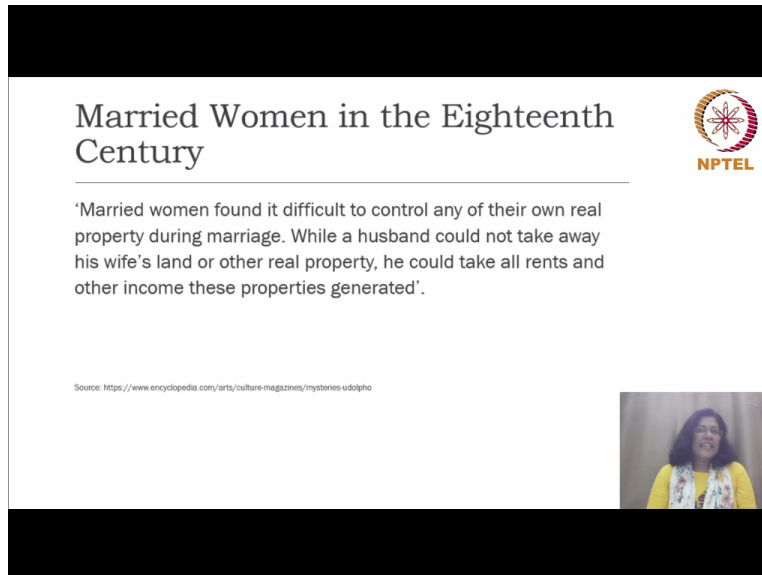
The slide features a title "The Gothic Heroine" in a serif font, followed by a horizontal line. Below the line is a quote: "Howard puts her in the category of 'those who embody the new order of liberty and enlightenment, anachronistically having the fashionable sensibility, manners and tastes of the eighteenth-century England' (xi)." The quote is in a smaller, sans-serif font. At the bottom left, there are two small source citations: "(Source: Howard, Jaqueline. Introduction. The Mysteries of Udolpho. By Ann Radcliffe. London: Penguin Classics, 2001. vii-xxx. Print." and "Source: Van der Lans 24)". In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a stylized flower or star inside, and the text "NPTEL" below it. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair wearing a yellow top, speaking.

The gothic heroine is somebody who is in the category, a category, which embodies or talks about the new order of liberty and enlightenment. And that happens in the case of The Mysteries of Udolpho's heroine, Emily St. Aubert, because she has anachronistically, she has fashionable sensibility, manners, and taste of the 18th century England.

So you can see how, she does not seem to belong to her age. But she seems to kind of belong to a different age, which we kind of discussed in previous lectures. The point is to create an ambiance rather than to kind of reproduce the actual time and age the point of novel is to kind of create this

idea of ancient quality to the novel to talk about oppression, which is reflected in the character of Count Montoni.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:23)




The slide features a title 'Married Women in the Eighteenth Century' in a serif font. Below the title is a quote: 'Married women found it difficult to control any of their own real property during marriage. While a husband could not take away his wife's land or other real property, he could take all rents and other income these properties generated'. The quote is enclosed in single quotes. Below the quote is a small source attribution: 'Source: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/mysteries-udolpho>'. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a starburst pattern and the text 'NPTEL' below it. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair wearing a yellow top and a patterned vest, speaking.

Now, let us quickly take a look at the status of married women in the 18th century. Married women found it very difficult to control any of their own property during marriage, while a husband could take away, could not take away his wife's land or other real property, he could take all the rents and other income these properties generated.

So these ideas tell you the kind of control that the husband had on the female. So, even though he could not really kind of snatch away the property, the proceeds from the property, the income from the property could be taken away by the husband.


(Refer Slide Time: 14:04)



## Women and Marriage

'By law, husbands had the right to physically punish their wives, and women had little recourse to escape bad marriages. Divorce by act of Parliament was enormously expensive and quite rare; from 1670 to 1857 only four women managed to obtain divorces this way'.

Source: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/mysteries-udolpho>




By law, husbands had the right to physically punish their wives and women had little recourse to escape bad marriages. So punishment is something which can be given to the wife by the husband and if you remember *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Count Mantoni kind of punishes the wife by imprisoning her in castle when she refuses to give her property. Divorce by act of Parliament was enormously expensive and quite rare and in fact from 1670 to 1857 only four women managed to obtain divorces this way.

So, you can see how very difficult it is to escape a very bad and unhappy and abusive marriage in those days and that was probably one of the release, one of the release for this causes.




(Refer Slide Time: 15:37)



## Discussion Question 1


Considering Montoni, what do you make of the trend in English literature to use Italians as mysterious, malevolent villains? You'll remember that this device was also later used by Wilkie Collins in his *The Woman in White* ...why do you think so many English authors turned to Italy for their villains?

(Source: <https://literarytransgressions.wordpress.com/2010/06/24/discussion-questions-the-mysteries-of-ado-pho/>)



Now I have a couple of discussion questions here. Some of the questions that you might think about when you are ruminating on this novel is something like this, considering Montoni, what do you make of the trend in English literature to use Italians as mysterious, malevolent villains? Why does English literature make use of Italians as villains? That is a good question to think about. You will remember that this device was also later used by Wilkie Collins in his *Women in White*, why do you think so many English authors turned to Italy for their villains? So why this foreign villain, why this particular nation's villain in many of English fiction in those period, in that period is a good starting point to talk about issues of othering, and how problematic issues are kind of transported to a different place, to different figures in order to kind of resolve them.


(Refer Slide Time: 16:35)



## Discussion Question 2

'Did you find Radcliffe's narrative style effective? She keeps a lot of things mysterious and doesn't reveal very much at all, leaving the reader and Emily to freak out more about the unknown than necessarily any proven evil occurring in the story. Was this a good move? Or do you think there is a way she could have made the story equally eerie without necessarily keeping the reader completely in the dark?'

Source: <https://literarytransgressions.wordpress.com/2010/06/24/discussion-questions-the-mysteries-of-udolpho/>



How did you find Radcliffe's narrative style? Do you find it effective? She keeps a lot of things mysterious and does not reveal very much at all, leaving the reader and Emily to freak out more about the unknown than necessarily any proven evil occurring in the story? So this question asks you to think about the idea of foreshadowing, the fears that the women have in the story, is this a good strategy, or do you think there is a different way in which Ann Radcliffe could have kept the reader hooked instead of kind of making it this kind of eerie?



So these are some of the questions you could think about in relation to the narrative style of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:20)

**Conclusion:**

'If the supernatural aspects of *Udolpho* now seem a little outmoded, Radcliffe's central concern with female rights and male power has lost none of its relevance. Located within the genre of 'female gothic', written and largely read by women, Radcliffe's novels explore issues of patriarchal control, women's property rights and the underlying threat of sexual violence, whether through forced marriage or rape.'

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/culture/series/100-years-of-radcliffe>  
Image source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/pressroom/2012-11-27/100-years-of-radcliffe-in-the-land-of-the-living-dead>



So in conclusion, what do you make of this novel? So “if the supernatural aspects of *Udolpho* now seem a little outmoded, Radcliffe’s central concern with female rights and male power has lost none of its relevance.”

So if you have read the novel, and if you think that the gothic feels a bit outdated. It does not scare you or it is not a really interesting part. You can think about the central concern of the novel, which is about female rights, the assertion of the individual will, especially Emily St. Aubert, her fight against the oppression of Count Montoni who symbolizes these concerns have lost none of its relevance or its potency. Located within the genre of female gothic written largely and read largely by women Radcliffe’s novels, explore issues of patriarchal control, women's property rights and the underlying threat of sexual violence, whether it is a false marriage or rape.

So this novel kind of discusses a lot of very, very interesting and significant such matter such as patriarchy, the idea of property rights for women and the violence, the underlying sexual violence inflicted on women in various forms on the pages of the novel. So these are some of the issues which make this novel very, very relevant and interesting.

Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next session.