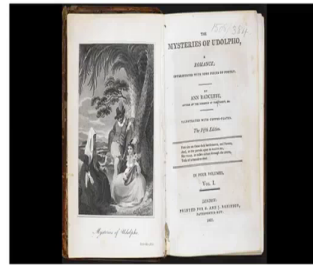


The Popular Gothic Novel
Professor Dr. Divya A
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Lecture 6

Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: The Castle of Motif

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WEEK 2 LECTURE 2A

ANN RADCLIFFE, *THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO*: THE CASTLE MOTIF



Hello, and welcome to this week's lecture. In this lecture I am going to talk about Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Before we start discussing the castle motif, which is going to be one of the key themes of this novel, I want to briefly remind you of some of the key gothic features and then introduce you to the plot quickly before taking you to an in depth discussion of the nature of the castle motif in this novel.

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Gothic Features

- Dilapidated castles
- Beautiful rural landscape
- Moral heroine
- Cruel villain
- Supernatural occurrences (with ultimately rational explanations)

Image source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b069kqg>



So what are some of the gothic features, to just jog your memory, because we have discussed these concepts quite extensively in the introductory lectures. The key gothic features are dilapidated castles, ruined structures and buildings, and we also sometimes have beautiful rural landscape, which is the case in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. We have a moral heroine, a very virtuous, virginal heroine, who is prosecuted by a cruel villain and there are supernatural occurrences either imagined or real. In the case of Mrs. Radcliffe, these supernatural occurrences have ultimately rational explanations.

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Female Gothic



'Absent mothers'
'Overbearing fathers'
'Suffering daughters'

Dysfunctional families

(JoEllen DeLucia, 2009, p.101)

Image source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b086kkn>



Now, the female gothic is a type of gothic in this genre and some of the key aspects of female gothic are absent mothers or mothers who quickly die or are killed off. So that idea of absent mothers is a common trope, a common phenomenon or aspect of gothic fiction and we do get variations of this motif in this particular novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

We have overbearing fathers usually and suffering daughters in the female gothic. And the female gothic, very interestingly, is a narrative in which we discuss or see dysfunctional families at play. So one of the plot propellers, an aspect which kind of pushes the plot into motion, is this idea of dysfunctional families, families break-up, parents perhaps die and the young heroine is left to defend for herself. And that is the case with *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, where we see Emily being left to defend for herself.

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Gothic Trauma

'gothic doppelgangers',
'repetitions', and
'lacunae'

symptoms of
psychological
trauma

(JoEllen DeLucia, 2009, p.101)



Gothic literature is about trauma. Trauma suffered by the central female character usually and we have gothic doppelgängers, by doppelgängers we mean doubles, two people resembling one another eerily, either physically or psychologically. So, there are similar figures proliferating in gothic fiction. So this proliferation also ties in with this idea of repetition and so things are repeated in, with slightly different variations.

If you look at *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, we see Emily St. Aubert kind of being present in different kinds of castles. *Udolpho* is not the only castle in this particular novel. We have other novels, some good and some not so good, which is the case of *Udolpho*. So these resemblances are pretty, pretty interesting, because we realize that, but for the grace of God, I would also be like this victim or like this cruel oppressor.

So that repetition is very significant thematically in gothic fiction and we have sometimes gaps, gaps in plot where some incidents are not neatly explained, it might sound mysterious, it might appear mysterious, but the explanations which come at the end of the tale are not perfect. So we do have pockets where it does not make sense in terms of our understanding of the plot. So, gothic trauma is a symptom of psychological trauma suffered by the victim.

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Fascination for Gothic Ruins



Bayer-Berenbaum:

'desire "for the random, the wild, and the unbounded.'

Source:(quoted in Albright, 2005,p. 53)

Image source: <https://journals.openedition.org/polysemes/4637>



So we do have a fascination for gothic ruins and that is the case with Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. And so why is this fascination and the critic Bayer-Berenbaum argues that it is the desire for the wild, the unbounded, it is the wild, the gothic castle in itself becomes, sort of a wild edifice and we are attracted to the wild, the endless expanse of something which is mysterious, something which contains a lot of unexplained questions. So, this desire is embedded in our fascination for the gothic.

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The Mysteries of Udolpho

- Ann Radcliffe
- 1794
- Gothic Novel
- Very popular in the 18th and 19th Centuries



Ann Radcliffe

- 'a publishing phenomenon'
- 'codify many of the characteristics that define the Gothic'
- the "Radcliffean Gothic" is almost a tautology.
(Albright, 2005, 49)



Now, Mrs. Radcliffe is very famous for her gothic fiction. In fact, as I pointed out earlier, she has, she was responsible for starting the school of the Radcliffe where her followers wrote fiction, which were modelled on her writings and she was very popular in the 18th and 19th century and we do not know much about her. *Mysteries of Udolpho* was published in 1794 and it was a publishing phenomenon that the work was hugely successful. And this work, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* has come to signify or come to represent what it means to be gothic for a text.

So it becomes the trendsetter. It is the model based on which other novels are written and the Radcliffean Gothic, the term Radcliffean Gothic is almost a tautology, is almost a repetition because Radcliffean means gothic and gothic means Radcliffean. So you can see the impact that Ann Radcliffe had on this particular genre.

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The Mysteries of Udolpho—Plot

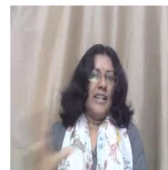
The Mysteries of Udolpho is set in France and Italy in the late 16th century.

The main character is Emily St. Aubert, a beautiful and virtuous young woman. When her father dies, the orphaned Emily goes to live with her aunt.

Her aunt's husband, an Italian nobleman called Montoni, tries to force Emily to marry his friend. Montoni is a typical Gothic villain. He is violent and cruel to his wife and Emily, and locks them in his castle.

Eventually Emily escapes, and the novel ends happily with Emily's marriage to the man she loves'.

Source: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-mysteries-of-udolpho>



Now, we need to look quickly at the nature of this plot. It is a very convoluted long drawn out novel. There is no easy summarization of this novel, the incidents are plentiful, and there are lots of disappearances, kidnappings, imprisonments, forced courtship, so it is a complex plot. But let us look at the bare bones of it right now here. So this novel is set in France and Italy in the late 16th century and the central character is Emily St. Aubert. She is a very beautiful and virtuous young woman. And when her father dies this orphaned Emily goes to live with her aunt. And the aunt's campus quite complex.

So, let us see, she is not somebody who is very, very benign and helpful. In fact, her marriage to Count Montoni kind of complicates the life of this young girl. So, the aunt's husband is this Italian nobleman called Montoni who tries to force Emily to marry his friend Moreno. So, Montoni is villain. He is the key villain of this novel. He is a typical gothic villain. He is extremely cruel, violent. He is cruel towards his own wife and towards Emily, her ward and he locks them up in his castle, the castle of Udolpho. Eventually Emily escapes and the novel ends happily with Emily marrying Valancourt, the man whom she loves. So this is in brief the plot of Udolpho.

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The Mysteries of Udolpho

'ruined castles, beautiful countryside,
a virtuous heroine
and a villain.
strange occurrences—seem to be supernatural,
revealed to have rational explanations.
a common theme in Gothic novels'

Source: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-mysteries-of-udolpho>

'Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* do feature the genuinely supernatural'.



What is it composed of, it has, as I said, ruined castles, beautiful rural landscape, which are described at length at several points in the story and the heroine is very, very morally good, and the villain is extremely evil. And there are occurrences in the plot which seem to be supernatural in tone, in nature, but ultimately they are explained by reason. So this is a common theme of Radcliffe's gothic fiction. So the spirit world is kind of explained away by rational means.

However, if I want you to remember that Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* do genuinely feature the supernatural. So we do not really have the spirit world explained a way reasonably through reason by the end of the novels.

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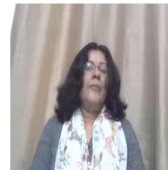
'Emily, the Gothic heroine'

Emily is a sentimental as well as gothic heroine.

"young, beautiful and persecuted," gifted with acute sensibility (as seen in her artistic ability), but prone to fainting, and fits of excessive weeping (N. Smith, 581).

However, Emily learns to overcome her "excess of sensibility," and adhere to the teachings of her father, St. Aubert.

Source: Smith, Nelson C. "Sense, Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 13.4 Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1973): 577-590. JSTOR. Nov. 4, 2011.



What kind of a figure is Emily, the gothic heroine? She is very sentimental. She is a sentimental heroine as well as a gothic heroine. A sentimental heroine has a particular meaning in that period, which means the heroine is acutely sensible, sensitive to the things that are happening around her.

So she is young, beautiful and persecuted, but she is also gifted with acute, very sharp sensibility. She is very impressionable. She is able to absorb the things around her, be it natural scenery or the character of the other people around her. So she feels everything in an intense manner. So she is, she has artistic ability which is seen as an outcome of her acute sensibility and she is also prone to fainting and fits of excessive weeping.

So, the critics are kind of divided about the nature of the gothic heroine. Some argue that gothic heroine are very, very prone to fainting. They easily faint. They are weak and they need to be rescued at every corner by a dashing hero. But some argue that, the gothic heroine is not just that, they are curious, they are also courageous, they can look after themselves, they also question the oppression of the central villain, they also wheel the language of rights, the equal rights for women too. So it is a complex picture we are getting in terms of how to perceive this gothic heroine.

However, in this novel she is taught to kind of overcome her excessive sensibility which is not really helpful, because it kind of prevents her from acting, it prevents her from getting that golden mean as to how to kind of play a role in this world and she kind of picks up from the teachings of her father who asks her advisor, advises her not to be extremely sensitive, not to be extremely impressionable.

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'Emily, the Gothic heroine'

Education involves "learning to find a middle course of balanced self-government, in which sentiment is not repressed into a cold, unfeeling stoicism but controlled by the higher faculty of reason" (Kilgour, 115).

the novel is not so much a record of her growth as a person, but a series of tests for her morality and sensibility (Murray, 133).

Source: Murray, E. B. Ann Radcliffe. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972

Source: Kilgour, Maggie. The Rise of the Gothic Novel. London: Routledge, 1995.

Source: <https://eighteenthcenturylit.wordpress.com/character-setting-and-story/>



Further on, Emily, the gothic heroine, in terms of her education, she learns, as I said, the middle course and how to reach a balanced self-government, how to conduct oneself in which sentiment is not repressed into do a cold, unfeeling stoicism, but controlled by the higher faculty of reason. So there is a mean, there is a moderate path in which she does not turn herself into a cold unfeeling character as a reaction to acute sensibility. On the other hand, she tries to modify her sensitivity with the help of reason. So that is the ideal golden mean, the middle path.

So your acute sensitivity is kind of being guided by reason. Your sentiment is kind of tweaked by reason. And the novel becomes a kind of a series of tests. It is not just recording her growth from a sentimental heroine to a mature one, it is also a series of tests for her morality and sensibility. So the gothic narrative is not just scary narrative, it

has its own purpose. It of course has a lot of bizarre incidents, but the subtext is that there is a growth that is being recorded of a central character, which talks to the reader about how to lead an ideal life in the real society.

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Valancourt, the Gothic hero

key 'characteristic is his sensibility.'

Impressed 'by awesome landscapes',

generous, and passionate about life in general.

Valancourt despairs at his separation from Emily, and throws himself in with bad companions.'

Source: <https://eighteenthcenturylit.wordpress.com/character-setting-and-story/>



Now, let us talk about the gothic hero of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Valancourt is the hero of this fiction, but we do not kind of see him throughout the novel as we see Emily St. Aubert and his key characteristic is his sensibility. He is impressed by awesome landscapes and he is as sentimental or even more sentimental than Emily St. Aubert. He is generous as a hero should be and he is also very passionate about life in general. When the aunt breaks up the engagement with Emily, he is quite depressed at his separation from his beloved and he throws himself into bad company.

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Valancourt, the Gothic hero

Thus, we have a standard *Bildungsroman*, (novel of education) in the figure of Valancourt, where "the innocent youth goes to the corrupt city and falls" (Kilgour, 136).

Valancourt is reclaimed though at the end of the novel, and reinstated as a hero worthy of Emily's love.'

Source: Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Source: <https://eighteenthcenturyfit.wordpress.com/character-setting-and-story/>



So we also have another *Bildungsroman* and this *Bildungsroman* is in connection with Valancourt. So just as we see Emily kind of growing up, we also see Valancourt growing up as well into a mature figure. So, quite close to that. So in the novel, through the figure of Valancourt, we see the innocent youth being corrupted by the city and he becomes morally fallen apparently. And then how his recovery is coincident with his reunion with Emily St. Aubert.

So, but at the end of the novel, we kind of are told that Valancourt is not as terrible as he seems to be. And he, in fact, did not really kind of contact with courtesans and other immoral figures. So he is reclaimed. So there was kind of a reclamation going on at the end of the novel and he is reinstated as a hero worthy of Emily St. Aubert's love. So we do have two growth trajectories, one of the heroine, one of the hero, and we, the similarity between the two is that they are equally very, very sensitive and sentimental.

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Count Montoni

'A man who marries Emily's aunt, Mme. Cheron, for her supposed money, Montoni is the quintessential Gothic villain.

These figures are powerful and "imperious, a law unto themselves, a danger to the young females (and males) around them, outfacing the supernatural with dangerously flashing eyes" (McEvoy, 24).

Source: <https://eighteenthcenturylit.wordpress.com/character-setting-and-story/>

Source: McEvoy, Emma. "Gothic and the Romantics." *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*. Ed. Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy. London: Routledge, 2007. 19-28.



Now, let us quickly look at the villain of this piece which is Count Montoni. So he is the man who marries Emily's aunt Madam Cheron for her money and Montoni is the quintessential gothic villain. He is very powerful and imperious, he is a law unto himself. There is no way he could be checked by any kind of authority really effectively because he isolates himself from society and he is, as you would know, if you read the novel, that he is a real danger to the women as well as to the men around him and he seems to kind of face the supernatural in a powerful way. He could handle the supernatural because he is evil himself. So he is a potent force. Montoni is a potent force in this novel.

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Count Montoni

'does not actually murder his wife, Montoni pressures her about her property, imprisoning her in the Castle of Udolpho until she eventually dies of neglect or starvation.

Because Montoni is isolated from the rest of society, (Kilgour, 120), he is more of a threat to Emily – a figure beyond the reach of the law.

However, Montoni eventually receives justice, dying in an obscure prison for his crimes as the head of a group of *Condottieri* (mercenary soldiers).

Source: Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Source: <https://eighteenthcenturyill.wordpress.com/character-setting-and-story/>



So, even though at the end of the novel, he did not actually murder his wife, the aunt of Emily, he does pressure herself. He does kind of force her to give up her property and when she refuses, he imprisons her in the Castle of Udolpho until she dies of neglect and/or starvation. So, though he has not literally killed her off, he is directly responsible for the death of his wife and Emily's aunt.

And because Montoni is isolated from the rest of society, he is easily able to affect figures, young female figures, such as Emily and woman such as Madam Cheron and he is also beyond the reach of law because of his isolation. However, he does get his comeuppance. He does get his justice because he dies in prison at the end of the day for the crimes he had committed as the head of a group of mercenary soldiers. So we do get a sense of poetic justice.

And if you look at the trajectory of Montoni, you realize that he is making his moves, all his evil moves, he is inflicting cruelty on others in order to gain property. So it is property that kind of drives greed that drives all his persecution. So it is a novel which kind of lays bare the moral compass. It becomes easy to distinguish between what is right and wrong in gothic fiction.

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Cruel and Sexist Villain: Count Montoni



'His high passions run without restraint, unregulated by the women surrounding him. He regards women as inferior - property to be abandoned in drafty turrets. At one point, he condemns the modern rule of women, calling his friend and Emily's admirer, Count Morano, "the slave of a petty tyrant" when he pleads for Emily's comfort'.

(JoEllen DeLucia, 2009, p.105)



So we can see further characteristic of this Count Montoni. He is not just cruel, he is sexist as well. So he has a very discriminatory attitude towards women. And this critic DeLucia argues that his passions, his high passions run without restraint, unregulated by the women surrounding him. He regards women as inferior property to be abandoned in drafty turrets. At one point, he condemns the modern rule of women, calling his friend and Emily's admirer, Count Morano, the slave of a petty tyrant, when he pleads for Emily's comfort.

So you can see the attitude of this villain towards the women. He just sees them as objects and he treats them as things that can be discarded if that thing fails to please him. And he thinks that it is kind of easy to put them in towers and that kind of physical punishment will make them give up what he wants. So, and you can see that Emily's aunt resists all these kinds of physical punishments. She refuses to give up the property to her husband. In fact, she transfers the property to Emily her ward and she refuses to give in to the pressures of Count Montoni. So Count Montoni's passions have no restraint, it is endless, it is unbounded.

And the word unbounded is very interesting, because when we associate, when we think back to all these castles, we associate these castles with kind of boundless expands of building. So it is massive just like the massive greed of the count who leads this or who is the master of such castles. So, at one point, he, at one point, the count condemns "the modern rule of women". It has to be put in quotes, the modern rule of women, because women are not ruling, but he calls it the modern rule of women in society and calls his friend Count Morano who is paying court to Emily and asks him not to be the slave of this petty tyrant and the petty tyrant being Emily St. Aubert. But we do understand, the readers do understand that it is not Emily who is the petty tyrant, but it is Count Montoni. So, women did not deserve any kind of comfort in the perspective of Count Montoni. So, they are seen as objects.

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The Castle

'The castle has received a great deal of attention by modern critics as a representation of the body or as an oppressive, enclosing, patriarchal space and yet relatively little attention has been paid to it as a trope of time. Such feminist and psychoanalytic readings are oriented spatially rather than temporally, and while illuminating, they obscure the fact that Radcliffe's contemporaries would have seen the crumbling old castle primarily as a figure of antiquity and sublimity'. (Albright, 2005, p. 53-54)



Let us look at the idea of the castle. The castle has received a lot of attention from critics, because the castle becomes a representation of several things. It becomes a representation of the body. It becomes a symbol of oppression. It becomes a patriarchal space. So it is a very, very interesting idea put forth by Albright. Let us look at it closely.

“The castle has received a great deal of attention by modern critics as a representation of the body or as an oppressive, enclosing, patriarchal space, yet relatively little attention has been paid to it as a trope of time. Such feminist and psychoanalytic readings are oriented spatially rather than temporally, and while illuminating, they obscure the fact that Radcliffe's contemporaries would have seen the crumbling old castle primarily as a figure of antiquity and sublimity.”

It is a very interesting quote which can be analyzed in detail to see its various points that it is raising, this comment is raising, the castle has a lot of implications. It can be a symbol for the human body. It can represent a particular figure. It can represent the patriarchal space itself, but a feminist and psychoanalytic reading does not give it a full concentration in Albright's view. Castles are seen as spatial entities, units of space rather than of time, such readings, feminist and psychoanalytic readings does not see the castle in its actual light, which is that the castle is a symbol of antiquity and sublimity. So that is the point Albright is driving home here.

Yes, it is a patriarchal space. Yes, it is a representation of a body. But it is primarily, it is most importantly an object of antiquity. It is an object which is from ancient time from the middle ages from previous time and this kind of castle prompts, provokes, evokes feelings of sublimity on the viewer. So it is a sublime edifice. So when you read a castle, when you see a castle, feelings of sublimity are evoked in the reader and viewer, and the key point that he is underlining is that the contemporaries of Radcliffe would have seen the castle in that manner as an object of ancient time and as an element of sublimity.

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The Castle

'Ian P. Watt discusses the late eighteenth century's fascination with the tension between past and present, as evidenced in its preoccupation with ruins in art, architecture, and landscape, and observes that "in the Gothic novel, the castle becomes connected with the family because it is essentially the material survivor of a powerful lineage, a symbol of the continuing life of its founder'

Source: ('Time and Family in the Gothic Novel', 183)



So, while Albright sees the castle as an object of past time and as an edifice that prompts feelings of all and he also tells us the feminist critics would see the castle as an embodiment of patriarchal space. Let us see what Ian P. Watt has to say about the fascination with the castle. So what discusses “the late 18th century’s fascination with the tension between past and present as evidenced in its preoccupation with ruins in art, architecture, and landscape, and observes that in the gothic novel, the castle becomes connected with the family, because it is essentially the material survivor of a powerful lineage, a symbol of the continuing life of its founder.”

So, this fascination of the gothic for the castle in Watt’s view kind of brings together the tension between the past and the present and we know that it is a constant motif. The fractures between the past and the present come to the fore in the gothic narrative. So we are familiar with this idea and this preoccupation with ruined structures, architecture, landscape that is kind of being destroyed. So, all these are connected with that idea of the tension between the past and the present. So that is one point that he brings up here.

But most importantly, the central idea that he is trying to figure out, point out here is that the castle becomes the symbol of the family. It represents the lineage, a powerful lineage, because only a powerful lineage can kind of bring to the fore can orchestrate or construct such a big castle. So the castle becomes a tangible, a concrete survivor of that lineage of

the very, very potent lineage and it becomes a symbol that is being passed on, a concrete symbol that is being passed on from one family member to another with the generation being kept alive. And so that importance of the family is also underpinned by the castle.

So that is something we need to keep in mind. So it becomes a continuation of that first primary progenitor, the first founder. So he is able to kind of pass on his symbolic life through his succeeding generations through this castle, which gets passed on through the heirs and descendants. So it is a very important point that we need to keep in mind.

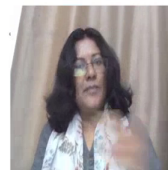
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Bhaktin

'The castle is the place where the lords of the feudal era lived (and consequently also the place of historical figures of the past); the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of its architecture, in furnishings, weapons, the ancestral portrait gallery, the family archives and in the particular human relationships involving dynastic primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights'.

Source: (The Dialogic Imagination, 246)



Now, let us see how Bhaktin perceives the idea of the castle. So what are his theoretical viewpoints in relation to the structure of the castle? "The castle is a place where the lords of the feudal era lived and consequently also the place of historical figures of the past, the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of its architecture, in furnishings, weapons, the ancestral portrait gallery, the family archives, and in the particular human relationships involving dynastic primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights."

So, Bhaktin kind of maps out how different generations are embedded in the space of the castle. So it is a place where the feudal lords lived. It is also the place of historical figures. The historical figures and feudal lords are overlapping figures. And this castle also has traces of various generations, various centuries, because all these, past time is codified, is concretized in the castle through furnishings. Different lords would have furnished it in different ways.

So, all these are present, it becomes a museum almost in the way the past is retained through all these material objects. So weapons are there, weapons from the past, weapons across time and the portrait gallery, of course, and the portraits are of past figures, the

ancestors of the present lord. So the portrait gallery is very, very significant because it kind of, through the portraits, it offers a kind of rundown of the times of the various times which this castle has seen and we have the family archives as well in the castle through the various property documents and deeds.

So this castle becomes a way, a map, a structural map which kind of captures the passing of time and it continues to kind of map itself through human relationships, which are about dynastic primacy as to who is going to succeed and things like that and the transfer of hereditary rights. So it is a very, very crucial structure, edifice, because of the way it relates to the passing of time and the way it kind of captures time through different means.

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