Chapter Three

The Source of Women’s Power: The Virtuous Sensibility

This chapter concentrates on the most important theme of this novel—the virtuous sensibility. According to Sydy MacMillen Conger’s *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Language of Sensibility*, the virtuous sensibility is a capacity for understanding, and it is also associated with the following ideas: philanthropy, generosity, sensitivity, responsiveness and aesthetic pleasure. Conger explains that many women believe that the virtuous sensibility suggests “the possibility of new commonalities between men and themselves” (101). In the meantime, many women intellects expect that the virtuous sensibility could establish “some measure of approximation in the ethical ideals and emotional sensitiveness of the two sexes” (Tompkins 97). As a woman writer, Radcliffe indicates that the ethical and emotional inclinations of the virtuous sensibility not only create a common ground for both sexes but also help women to achieve the maturity of their characteristics. She explains that the virtuous sensibility develops women’s reason and leads women’s feeling to altruism. Through the virtuous sensibility, women reverse their unequal social status in society, because the virtuous sensibility turns them into respected members of their families. Radcliffe uses her plots to point out that the virtuous sensibility shapes the characteristic of the protagonist in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Under the influence of the virtuous sensibility, the protagonist forms her morality, reason and perseverance. In this novel, the three aspects of the virtuous sensibility
are: education, benevolence and reason. Thus, this chapter is divided into three sections.

I Education

Radcliffe thinks that education is the only way to change the social inequality of women. In the episode of La Vallée, she uses Rousseau’s idea of education to cultivate the protagonist’s feeling and good taste. She believes that there is no difference between the nature of men and women; therefore, it is essential to give women formal education. Once women receive the same education as men, they will equal men in intellect and morality. Hence, women are able to form their independent judgment.

The beginning of this novel concentrates on the importance of education. To Radcliffe, education is the most powerful means to reverse the inferior social position of women. The influence of education is immense. Elizabeth Inchbald calls education “a second nature” (173) in her *A Simple Story*. Why does Inchabold describe education as a second nature? According to Gaten, Rousseau’s “theme of double birth” (12) influences the eighteenth-century intellects’ attitude to education. In his *Émile*, Rousseau contends that human beings are born twice: “born into existence, and born into life” (172).¹ Rousseau declares that “born into existence” means to be “born into nature” (13). Human beings are innocent and ignorant, because they have no capacities for understanding. Rousseau later explains that “born into life” means “the birth into culture” (Gaten 12). He indicates that human

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¹ For a detailed explanation of this aspect see Gaten’s *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality*. 12-15
beings are not completely civilized until they gain knowledge. Thus, “the birth into culture” means to receive education, because education shapes the nature of a person. Education not only improves our moral sense but also disciplines ourselves. Education is “a supplement to our nature and, at the same time, a guarantee of its integrity” (Jacobus 246). Radcliffe proves that the social inferiority of women is culturally determined; therefore, she uses education to release the protagonist from social subordination in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

In Radcliffe’s time, upper middle-class men have to study Latin, literature and science. In the episode of La Vallée, Radcliffe points out the necessity of the reform of women’s education. Emily’s father, St. Aubert, makes the effort to cultivate her understanding. “He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets” (6). In the meantime, the education of Emily is a “field of disciplined subjectivity” (Kelly 53), because her education forms her independent thought and enables her to resist the wickedness of society.

In this novel, St. Aubert’s words testify to the value of education, and he says:

A well informed mind . . . is the best security against the contagion of folly and vice. The vacant mind is ever on the watch of relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness. Store it with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking; and the temptations of the world

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2 For this aspect see Jone’s *Women in the Eighteenth Century*. 
without, will be counteracted by the gratifications derived from the world within. (6)

Using St. Aubert’s words as an example, Radcliffe shows that intellectual environment has significant influence on the mental development of a person. She believes that knowledge is the source of woman’s power, because “knowledge is the just object of life” (Alexander 50). By taking the same education as men, Emily is able to distinguish right from wrong: therefore, she is an enlightened young woman.

In the episode of La Vallée, Radcliffe also describes nature as the most important theme of Emily’s education. In addition, Radcliffe’s emphasis on the connection between nature and education reflects the eighteenth-century intellects’ perspective on nature. According to Frye, “Neoclassical thought of the eighteenth century saw nature as fully ordered, according to a plan not in all ways accessible to human beings . . . ROMANTICISM at the end of the eighteenth century . . . broke with this view by emphasizing the lack of order in wildness, in nature” (308). Fry points out that both views are fundamentally different, but in the century the idea of nature all depends on “one’s understanding of the place of a divine being or beings with reference to the world” (308). In other words, our ability to recognize the grand scale of nature also means our ability to sense the infinity of God. Thus, nature not only elevates our soul but also cultivates our thought. In Émile, Rousseau shows that a child should be “allowed full scope for individual development in natural surroundings, shielded from the harmful influences of civilization, in order to form an independent judgment and a stable character” (Drabble and Stringer 505). Like
Rousseau and the Romantics, Radcliffe admires the power of nature. She considers nature to be the source of moral improvement and spiritual elevation. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, she depicts nature’s influence on the heroine.

In the beginning of this novel, Emily’s hometown La Vallée is a beautiful and isolated place. Like Rousseau’s Émile, Emily lives happily in La Vallée. She has never been to Paris and knows nothing about city life. Since she is a child, Emily is taught to appreciate the beauty of nature; therefore, she learns “the capacity of nature to intimate the divine” (Voller 7). In La Vallée, Emily’s pleasure is to “ramble among the scenes of nature” (6). She thinks that nature lifts her thoughts to “the GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH” (6). Under such circumstances Emily experiences the infinite power of God.

One’s feeling about nature and God is an important issue in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. For the eighteenth-century intellects, nature is synonymous with God. As Todd writes, “Nature itself, first the vastness of space and then the sublimity of earth, becomes an expression of God through which finite people could approach the infinite and understand both beauty and morality” (23). Nature is the source of our spiritual power, because nature helps us to transcend our limited selves. In other words, we feel God’s mercy and love and recognize the insignificance of our lives through our appreciation of the beauty and the grandeur of nature. Jack. G. Voller defines this remarkable encounter with God and nature as “the religious sublime” (7). In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily’s experience stands as an example of Voller’s idea:
From the consideration of His works, her mind arose to the adoration of the Deity, in His goodness and power; wherever, she turned her view, whether on the sleeping earth, or to the vast regions of space, glowing with worlds beyond the reach of human thought, the sublimity of God, and the majesty of His presence appeared. Her eyes were filled with tears of awful love and admiration; and she felt that pure devotion, superior to all the distinctions of human system, which lifts the soul above this world and seems to expand into a nobler nature; such devotion as can perhaps, only be experienced, when the mind rescued, for a moment, from the humbleness of earthly considerations, aspires to contemplate His power in the sublimity of His works, and His goodness in the infinity of His blessings. (47-48)

Through nature, Emily identifies herself with the immense greatness of God, and Emily’s love for nature and God functions as the root of her mental stability. Thus, she is able to guard herself against adversities without losing her optimism. In this novel, Emily’s attitude to impending poverty testifies to the power of nature. When his business fails, St. Aubert is in distress. He thinks that his daughter is going to be very poor. However, Emily says:

My dear sir . . . poverty cannot deprive us of intellectual delights . . . . It cannot deaden our taste for the grand, and the beautiful, or deny us the means of indulging it; for the scenes of nature—those sublime spectacles, so infinitely superior to all artificial luxuries! are open for the enjoyment of the poor, as well as of the rich. (59-60)
By emphasizing the connection between nature and education, Radcliffe points out that a virtuous person is responsive to God and nature.

In the episode of La Vallée, Emily’s education is a striking contrast to the education in girls’ boarding schools. According to Vivien Jones’s *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, the education of girls’ boarding schools is centered on the following issues: “moderation, decorative accomplishments, the fear of overloading the delicate mind” (99-100). Jones indicates that the eighteenth-century women are afraid of transgressing their allotted roles; therefore, “the ‘male’ subjects—the classics, science, religious controversy” (100) are called forbidden knowledge. Meanwhile, Jones shows that “the satiric stereotype of the sexually unattractive learned woman remains powerfully influential” (99). Thus, the education in girls’ boarding schools is shallow. The improper education of women intensifies the assumption of women’s natural inferiority. The words of Wollstonecraft echo women’s subordination in educational sphere. She writes, “The education of women has, of late, been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex, and ridiculed or pitied by the writers who endeavour by satire or instruction to improve them” (10).

Education is an ideological apparatus, because it shapes the way of women’s thinking and makes what women are. In the episode of La Vallée, Radcliffe explains that education forms Emily’s integrity, innocence and virtue. Emily accepts good education in her youth; therefore, she turns out to be a virtuous, sensitive and intelligent woman. Using Emily as an example, Radcliffe proves that women’s
nature should not be associated with ignorance, irrationality and weakness. She believes that the root of women’s inferiority is their education. Radcliffe concludes that women must take the same education as men, because the fundamental change of women’s education is the only means to release women from social inferiority.

II Benevolence

Benevolence is the second stress of the virtuous sensibility. Radcliffe argues that the harmony of human society is based on benevolence, because benevolence develops our “social consciousness and a sense of communal responsibility” (Abrams 190). She also indicates that benevolence is the most valuable part of humanity. Through benevolence, our hearts are full of love and happiness; therefore, our souls are elevated. Our society thus becomes a wonderful place.

During the mid-seventeenth century and eighteenth century, philosophers like Thomas Hobbes and Bernard de Mandeville assume that human beings are innately selfish. However, the Earl of Shaftesbury opposes the idea of Hobbes and Mandeville. In his Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, Shaftesbury argues that there is an inborn moral sense in humanity, and our conscience “heads humanity toward benevolence and friendliness, away from the egoism and self-interest of Hobbes and Mandeville” (Todd 25). Shaftesbury contends that the capacity for feeling the sufferings of others is a virtue. Thus, he points out that the duty of man is “to learn what is just in Society, and beautiful in Nature, and the Order of the World” (403). In other words, “virtue is held to be its own reward, because

3 For the detailed explanation of this aspect see, Todd’s Sensibility. 23-25.
generous behavior automatically returns to aesthetic pleasure” (Poovey 312). Many philosophers modify the thought of Shaftesbury. According to Todd, the thought of Shaftesbury and his followers is called “the sentimental philosophy of the moral sense school” (24). Among Shaftesbury’s followers, Francis Hutcheson, David Hume and Adam Smith are the most notable. They all believe that benevolence is “the whole of virtue in human affairs” (Todd 26). As an advocate of the moral sense school, Radcliffe propagates the value of benevolence. She uses her characters and plots to express the importance of benevolence in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. She shows that benevolence not only reveals the best side of humanity but also brings happiness to society and individual.

In the first volume of this novel, Radcliffe depicts the benevolence of Emily’s lover, Valancourt. Through the episode of Valancourt’s philanthropy, Radcliffe conveys Shaftesbury’s idea of benevolence. According to Shaftesbury, there is no difference between ethics and aesthetics because “beauty and good are recognized by the same faculty” (Sambrook 102). The faculty is the goodness of humanity—benevolence. Thus, Valancourt’s benevolence stands as an example of Shaftesbury’s idea.

Radcliffe describes Valancourt as a kind, sensitive young man. In this novel, Valancourt accompanies St. Aubert and Emily on the trip to In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe vividly describes the majesty of Pyrenees, the violent storm of the Mediterranean, the breathtaking views of Gascony, the horrible, dark deeds that happen in castles and the adventures of the protagonist. To the 1790s readers, this
novel provides them all sources of ‘Gothic’ delight. They not only read this novel but also enjoy it very much. The popularity of Radcliffe and The Mysteries of Udolpho does not cease until the 1840s. However, Radcliffe’s achievement is not merely to leave some exciting Gothic novels to readers. As a woman novelist, she concerns with the oppressed social status of women. Hence, she describes the social and cultural oppression of women in her novel.

On their way to Rousillon, they lose their way in the wilds of Pyrenées. Finally, they see a small cottage and meet a distressed woman with two little children. The woman weeps; therefore, St. Aubert asks her the cause of her sorrow. The woman says that her husband is a shepherd, who keeps a flock of sheep for his master. Unfortunately, his flocks get lost in the mountain. The shepherd only finds a few sheep from the gypsies and he has to make up for the loss of his master. Nevertheless, he has no money to compensate for the loss of his master. Hence, the poor man is going to lose his job and the family is going to be destitute. Considering her impending difficulties, the woman is weeping. The misfortune of the family arouses the travelers’ sympathy. Emily and St. Aubert give some money to the woman, they comfort her and decide to continue their journey. However, Valancourt lingers at the cottage and asks the woman how much money the shepherd needs to pay his master. The woman tells Valancourt the sum of money that the shepherd needs, but Valancourt is very confused. Valancourt thinks that he has enough money to pay the shepherd’s debt and makes this family “completely happy” (52). However, he thinks that he cannot “contrive to reach home with little money that will remain”
Suddenly, the shepherd himself appears, and the “forlorn and melancholy look” (52) of the man affirms Valancourt’s determination to help this family. He only keeps “a very few louis” (52) for himself, but he feels very happy. He “had seldom felt his heart so light as at this moment; his gay spirits danced with pleasure; every object around him appeared more interesting, or beautiful than before” (53). Hence, he says, “O what a lovely day . . . how brightly the sun shines, how pure is this air, what enchanting scenery! . . . .What pity that the wealthy, who can command such sunshine, should ever pass their day in gloom—in cold shade of selfishness!” (53)

Valancourt’s “uncommon vivacity” (53) reflects the power of benevolence, because “virtue is enjoyable as a spectacle in self and in others” (Todd 26). In this respect, the happiness of Valancourt “results from the consciousness of having done a beneficent action, and which disposes it to receive pleasure from every surrounding object” (15).

To the eighteenth-century upper and middle class, benevolence is a “social virtue” (Todd 26). This utilitarian view of benevolence is under the influence of David Hume. According to Todd, Hume assumes that “the good would be defined as anything leading to the greater happiness of many” (26). As a middle-class intellect, Radcliffe advocates the utilitarian view of benevolence. Hence, in the beginning of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe describes La Vallée as a peaceful, happy community, and the peace of La Vallée relys on the benevolence of St. Aubert. Though as the master of La Vallée, St. Aubert is very kind and humble, because he never despises those who are “wretched by poverty and misfortune” (204). He often
visits his “old pensioners” and gives them their “weekly stipends” (15). In the meantime, St. Aubert also listens to their complaints patiently and soothes their discontents “by the look of sympathy and the smile of benevolence” (15). Thus, the happiness of St. Aubert is “derived only from goodness, knowledge and charity” (204).

Using St. Aubert as an example, Radcliffe shows that the harmony of society depends on benevolence, because benevolence is a “combination of self and other through sympathy and tenderness that elide individual differences” (Todd 27). As Hume says in *Treatise of Human Nature* that the formation of harmonious society is “a tendency to public good, and to promoting of peace, harmony, and order in society does always, by affecting the benevolent principles of our frame, engage us on the side of social virtues” (231).

By conveying the moral sense school’s idea of benevolence, Radcliffe thinks that human society must get rid of self-interest. She contends that the upper middle class have the obligation to help those who are miserable. To Radcliffe, people of good breeding should not discriminate the lower class. Virtuous persons never judge others by their rank and their wealth because they know the sufferings of the poor. Using St. Aubert and Valancourt as examples, Radcliffe concludes that benevolence elevates an individual’s moral worth and identifies one’s happiness with altruism and aesthetic delight.

III  Reason

Radcliffe assumes that a mature person has to possess the capacity for reason,
because reason overcomes our difficulties and rejects the corruption of society.
Radcliffe uses her literary strategy—the explained supernatural to intensify the
protagonist’s reason in *The Mysteries of Udolpho.*\(^4\) At the end of this novel, a series
of rational explanations solve the protagonist’s doubts about the supernatural events,
her identity and the degeneration of her lover. The protagonist learns the importance
of reason. She gains her maturity, and finds her proper place in society without
being corrupted.

In her *The Contested Castle,* Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that Radcliffe uses two
themes to develop Emily’s capacity for reason in *The Mysteries of Udolpho.* Ellis
writes, “The first is the polarities of innocence and knowledge, youthful sensibility
and mature judgment . . . The second, related to it, is the necessity of leaving our first
Eden and the danger of so doing” (102). Ellis also explains that both themes are
correlative, because the protagonist’s maturity of characteristic depends on “the
necessity of gaining the second without losing the first” (102). In La Vallée, St.
Aubert emphasizes Emily’s moral discipline and intellectual improvement. Though
Emily is a virtuous and learned girl, she is still socially inexperienced. Hence,
Radcliffe describes the world outside La Vallée as a society “full of confusing
relatives, mysterious conspiracies and hidden dangers” (Kelly 51). However, the
world outside La Vallée functions as “a test for the moral and intellectual character of
the heroine” (Kelly 51). For Emily, her prior task is to reinforce her reason, because
reason is the power to conquer the evil of society. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho,*

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\(^4\) See the term ‘explained supernatural’ in Botting’s *Gothic.* 71-75
Emily’s task takes place in “two specific locations, the two ‘haunted’ houses of Udolpho and Chateau-le-Blanc” (Voller 54). In both places, Emily is suffering from her “undisciplined imagination” (Poovey 319). Her imagination is the cause of her fear for supernatural events and her anxieties for the threat of death and her disappointment at the corruption of her beloved Valancourt.

In Udolpho Emily is completely helpless, because Montoni not only oppresses her but also imprisons her. During her confinement, Emily hears a strange rumor of Laurentini’s disappearance. The servant Annette reports that Laurentini, the former mistress of Udolpho, is dead and the castle is haunted. Gossip about the occurrence of Laurentini’s ghost terrifies Annette and the old servants in Udolpho. Though Emily rejects superstition, she is still under the influence of great fear. Finally, she decides to detect the real cause of Laurentini’s disappearance and she starts her adventure by her exploration of Udolpho. Passing many dark corridors and stairways, Emily discovers a chamber. In the interior of the chamber, there hangs a black veil; therefore, the unusual circumstance arouses Emily’s curiosity. At that moment, She thought that there was a picture behind the black veil. Hence, she lifted the veil, but she was immediately “overwhelmed . . . with horror” (662). She saw a very terrible scene. There was “a recess of the wall, a human figure of ghastly paleness, stretched at its length, and dressed in habiliments of the grave” (662). In the meantime, the face of the corpse “appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms, which were visible on the features and hands” (662). Perceiving this horrible object, Emily assumes that it is the decayed body of Laurentini. She
suspects that Montoni murders Laurentini in order to take over Udolpho. Since that day, Emily is tortured by the horrible death of Laurentini. Every night, the image of Laurentini’s dead body disturbs her peaceful mind, because she is afraid that Montoni will use the same way to murder her. Thus, her imagination “had made her spirits peculiarly sensible to terror, and liable to be affected by the illusions of superstition” (330).

At last, Emily escapes from Udolpho, and she returns to France. With the help of the Count De Villefort, she lives in Chateau-le-Blanc with the Count’s family. Although the inhabitants of Chateau-le-Blanc are her friends, their house is as haunted as the castle of Udolpho. The Marchioness De Villeroi was the former mistress of Chateau-le-Blanc, who died many years ago. Soon after the Marchioness’s death, the servants see her ghost appear in her chamber every night. Hence, the Marchioness’s ghost scares the servants away. Only Dorothée and her husband stay in the chateau. Out of curiosity, Emily entreats Dorothée to tell her the story of the Marchioness. Dorothée thus narrates the miserable life of her former mistress, and she also shows the Marchioness’s portrait to Emily. When Emily stands in front of the Marchioness’s portrait, Dorothée exclaims that Emily’s countenance bears “a strong resemblance” (533) to the Marchioness. Dorothée also says that the Marchioness falls in love with an amiable gentleman before her marriage to the Marquis De Villeroi. It occurs to Emily that one month after the death of her mother, she has seen her father took the Marchioness’s portrait from a small case. Meanwhile, her father “gazed earnestly and tenderly upon this portrait, put it to his
lips, and then to his heart, and sighed with a convulsive force” (26). Emily suspects that she is the love child of St. Aubert and the Marchioness. In addition, Emily is disappointed to hear Valancourt’s degenerating behavior in Paris. The Count’s son Henri reports that gambling and debauchery have corrupted Valancourt. Thus, in Chateau-le-Blanc, the Marchioness’s ghost, St. Aubert’s illicit affection and Valancourt’s degeneration generate Emily’s anxieties. Emily’s experiences of “supernatural tenor” (Voller 55) do not cease until all mysterious events have been explained.

The decayed corpse that Emily discovers in Udolpho is not Laurentini. It is a waxy mannequin, which functions as an object of religious repentance, because a “member of the house of Udolpho, having committed some offence against the prerogative of the church” (662). Laurentini’s ghost is only a rumor because Laurentini has never been murdered. She goes to France secretly because she wants to revenge herself on her lover, the Marquis De Villeroi. The Marchioness’s ghost in Chateau-le-Blanc is the manipulation of human agents. A group of pirates store their trophy in the vault of the chateau. In order to distract the servants’ attention, the pirates play the Marchioness’s ghost in turns. St. Aubert is not the Marchioness’s lover but her beloved brother. The death of the Marchioness grieves St. Aubert very much; therefore, he always caresses the portrait of his beloved sister affectionately. In order to protect Emily, St. Aubert conceals the miserable story of the Marchioness.

As for Valancourt, he has never been addicted to gambling and debauchery. He is still the sensitive, good-natured young man that Emily loves.
Through the protagonist’s adventures in Udolpho and Chateau-le-Blanc, Radcliffe shows that all supernatural phenomena and mysteries will be explained. Thus, the rational explanation of mysterious event is Radcliffe’s narrative strategy—“the explained supernatural or terror narratives” (Botting 71). The explained supernatural derives from Edmund Burke’s aesthetic theory, and Radcliffe uses this literary strategy to elevate the taste of the Gothic novel. Burke’s theory establishes a distinction between terror and horror. According to Voller, Burke describes horror as “all sorts of terrific and horrific monsters and hobgoblins” (16), and he thinks that these disgusting objects are “a flood of bad taste . . . which has been imposed on the world ” (15). Nevertheless, terror is completely different from horror. Burke thinks that it is “the ruling principle of the sublime” (58). In his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Burke writes:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.

(38)

In other words, “terror activates the mind and the imagination . . . transcend even, its fears and doubts, enabling the subject to move from a state of passivity to activity ” (Botting 74-75). Thus, terror assists us to detect what lies beneath our fear. By discovering the root of our fear, we intensify our reason and the power of reason turns
us into mentally stable persons.

In this novel, Radcliffe uses the explained supernatural to emphasize the importance of reason. Suffering from emotional and social traumas, Emily could “experience intimations of the supernatural without having to engage it, allowing the author to reject supernaturalism while drawing both narrative and didactic benefit from its false presence” (Voller 16). In other words, Emily has to realize that the cause of her fear is her imagination. The supernatural phenomena are her “misapprehensions of reality” (Voller 59). In the first volume of this novel, Emily lapses into superstitious belief in her late father’s study room. However, her superstition turns out to be an acute embarrassment:

Through the dusk she thought she perceived something move. The subject she had been considering, and present tone of her spirits, which made her imagination respond to every impression of her senses, gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural . . . she had heard one of those unaccountable noises, which sometimes occur in old houses.

The same sound, however, returned; and, distinguishing something moving towards her, and in the next instant press beside her into the chair, she shrieked; but her fleeting senses were instantly recalled, on perceiving that it was Manchon [her dog] who sat by her, and who now licked her hands affectionately. (95-96)

Thus, superstition is proved to be false and Emily learns that she must use reason to discipline her excessive imagination.
By emphasizing the importance of the virtuous sensibility, Radcliffe indicates that the virtuous sensibility is the source of women’s power. Emily receives good education; therefore, she has the ability to distinguish right from wrong, and to develop her mental strength through nature. Through the philanthropy of St. Aubert and Valancourt, Emily realizes the happiness and the necessity of benevolence. Not long afterward, Emily undergoes a series of supernatural events in Udolpho and Chateau-le-Blanc. In both places, Emily experiences the tumult of love, separation from her lover, belief in his subsequent moral degradation, loss of her relative, loss of her estate and wealth, and the threat of death. Nevertheless, she passes these tests and learns to use her reason. In other words, the virtuous sensibility helps Emily to fulfill her “self-governance” (Mackenize 45). Emily begins her adventure as an innocent child and ends it as a rational woman. At the end of this novel, Emily returns to La Vallée and becomes the mistress of the community. And “the value of affection, reciprocity, and love for human” (Mackenize 45) are the principles of her life. Like her father, Emily is kind to her servants. She marries Valancourt and lives happily in her hometown:

O! how joyful it is to tell of happiness, such as that of Valancourt and Emily . . . to the beloved landscapes of their native country—to the securest felicity of this life, that of aspiring to moral and labouring for intellectual improvement—to the pleasure of enlightened society, and to the exercise of the benevolence, which had always animated their hearts, while the bowers of La Vallée became once more the retreat of goodness, wisdom and
domestic blessedness! (672)

From the perspective of Radcliffe, Emily’s process of maturity is a “fully realized sense of self and social place” (Voller 58). By possessing the virtuous sensibility, Emily overcomes her difficulties, matures her thinking and finds her own happiness in the male dominating society.