Chapter Three
GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN SHELLEY’S WORKS

P.B. Shelley’s attraction to the supernatural may be traced back to the early years of his childhood. From time to time he would regale his sisters with stories of the monsters of Sussex legend, the Great Tortoise that lived in Warnham Pond, near Field Place. Then there were the accounts given by Hellen Shelley to Hogg Iong, “we dressed ourselves in strange costumes to personate spirits or fiends, and Bysshe would take a fire-shovel and fill it with some inflamnable liquid and carry it flaming into the kitchen and to the back doors.” Thornton Hunt too remembered:

after forty-six years, how, in 1817, Shelley would delight him and his brothers and sisters by his impersonations of a fiend, screwing up his long hair into the appearance of a horn, assuming a terrifying expression and advancing with rampant paws and frightful gestures.

Supernatural inventions of the kind are common enough among all children but few children were ever so given to them as Shelley. In the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* (1817), Shelley writes “While yet a boy I sought for ghosts […]” (49) and goes on till how his imagination turned from fantasy towards philosophy. At Eton, Shelley pursued his study of the occult. He even endeavoured albeit by magic spells, unsuccessfully, to raise a ghost. No doubt the fashionable romances of Gothic gloom and horror helped to shape his belief. The more he read about the universe, belief in strange deities and demons increased, till they became for him something more than a mere medium and expression of fantasy.

P.B. Shelley’s interest in contemporary Gothic writing is very much evident in his works. The influence of Lewis, Godwin and Charlotte Daere shows clearly in the two short Gothic romances, *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St Irvyne* (1811) which he wrote in his youth. He was also very influenced by Schiller and the German Gothic. For instance in *The Revolt of Islam* (1817) and *The Cenci* (1819) Mary Shelley writes that “he was a lover of the wonderful and
wild in literature; but had not fostered these tastes at their genuine sources — the romances of chivalry of the middle ages; but in the perusal of such German works as were current in those days. However, according to David Punter:

Shelley found in the Germans a sanction for the portrayal of extreme, 'wild', violent situations, particularly in The Cenci; but what he also found was a political content which aroused his admiration. A crucial text here was Robber, in which Gothic, melodramatic apparatus is used to teach the directly political lesson that individual violence is the product of social injustice. Queen Mab, The Cenci, The Revolt of Islam all hinge on this argument; the outlaw becomes justifiable when is seen to be responding to an unjustifiable society.

In March 1810, Shelley published a horror novel- Zastrozzi. In the same period he wrote a narrative poem The Wandering Jew (1809) which contains a scene from the lost horror novel The Nightmare; and a second Gothic tale St Irvyne, or The Rosicrucian. In a letter to William Godwin in 1812, Shelley wrote:

[...] I was haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances. Ancient books of Chemistry and Magic were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder, almost amounting to belief [...]. From a reader, I became a writer of romances; before the age of seventeen I had published two, St Irvyne and Zastrozzi.

It is however, important to recognize that the Gothic novel was an established literary genre in the early nineteenth century. Shelley was writing in a tradition that had attracted some of the most talented writers of the age. The main conventions and devices of the genre had been established in the first important specimen- Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto (See Ch. I, pp. 21-26). But the most popular Gothic novel in Shelley's day was Matthew George Lewis's The Monk (See Ch. I, pp. 49-55). It was Lewis and his school that taught Shelley the art of Gothic writing.

Lewis was in fact, the most important single influence upon him. In the Monk we have the essence of Lewis methodology, which much impressed young Shelley. The more 'genteel horrors' of Mrs. Radcliffe's works (Lewis' main rival) failed to attract Shelley's interest. Although he made full use of
Lewis methodology, he could not achieve the height of sadistic horror scaled by him.

Shelley’s Gothic novel *Zastrozzi* published in 1810, is about Zastrozzi, a villain (in the Gothic tradition), pursuing the unfortunate Verezzi, whose father long ago had wronged Zastrozzi’s mother; at the same time Verezzi is also being pursued (though for a different purpose) by the shameless Matilda. Verezzi rebuffs Matilda’s advances because he is in love with the gentle Julia. Matilda and Zastrozzi join forces and collaborate on a plan; Zastrozzi is to find Verezzi for Matilda and murder Julia. However, Zastrozzi intends (all the time), to murder Verezzi when he does get him (in order to fulfil his mother’s will) “revenge my wrongs – revenge them on the perjured Verezzi- revenge them on his progeny for ever!” but he does not tell Matilda that. He does not succeed in murdering Julia, but Matilda falsely informs Verezzi that Julia is dead and gets Verezzi to marry her. When Julia shows up one night, Verezzi is stricken with horror at the thought of his marriage to Matilda and commits suicide. Matilda in a fit of rage murders Julia; Matilda and Zastrozzi are taken before the Inquisition and executed.

The climatic scene of Julia’s gruesome murder is surcharged with feelings of horror and revulsion. The beastiality of Matilda’s action against the defenceless and innocent Julia is wonderfully Gothic in detail and description:

She advanced towards her victim who lay bereft of sense on the floor; she shook her rudely, and grasping a handful of her dishevelled hair, raised her from the earth.

“Knowest thou me?” exclaimed Matilda, in frantic passion – “knowest thou the injured Laurentini? Behold this dagger, reeking with my husband’s blood – behold that pale corpse, in whose now cold breast thy accursed image reveling, impelled to commit the deed which deprives me of happiness forever.”

Julia’s senses, roused by Matilda’s violence, returned. She cast her eyes upwards, with a timid expression of apprehension, and beheld the infuriate Matilda convulsed by fiercest passion, and a blood-stained dagger raised a loft, threatening instant death.
“Die! detested wretch” exclaimed Matilda, in a paroxysm of rage, [...] the ferocious Matilda seized Julia’s floating hair, and holding her back with fiend - like strength, stabbed her in a thousand places.

Shelley’s second novel, *St Irvyne or The Rosicrucian* (1811) is a more complicated work as it deals with two plots:

1. The pursuit of the hero, Wolfstein by the sorcerer Ginotti;
2. The misadventure of Eloise de St Irvyne.

The novel opens with Wolfstein standing on a high precipice contemplating suicide but is prevented by the entry of a band of monks. The monks are attacked by bandits and Wolfstein is taken away by them. Later he becomes one of them. One day the bandits capture the beautiful Megalena, who immediately provokes a sexual rivalry between the bandit-chief Cavigni and Wolfstein, both of whom are powerfully attracted to her. However, Megalena herself is drawn only to the latter.

Wolfstein resolves to murder Cavigni who plans to have Megalena for himself. He poisons Cavigni’s wine but just as he is about to drink, “Ginotti, one of the robbers, who sat next to him, upreared his arm, and dashed the cup of destruction to the earth.” Later that night, Wolfstein succeeds in poisoning Cavigni’s wine thus killing him.

Ginotti, who is aware of Wolfstein’s intention, this time deliberately, averts his gaze so as to give him opportunity for the murder. In this way Ginotti colludes with Wolfstein and sanctions this sexually motivated violence. Later he intervenes and persuades the bandits to let Wolfstein go. Wolfstein and Megalena escape together. One night they are confronted by Ginotti who makes Wolfstein swear that, when requested, he will listen to his life’s story and give him proper rites of burial. The reason for this strange oath (not immediately apparent), becomes explicable later when it is learnt that Ginotti is a Rosicrucian. This aspect adds a Gothic refrain to the plot. As a Rosicrucian, Ginotti has learned the secret of eternal life, but like the Rosicrucian in Godwin’s novel *St Leon* 1799 (from where Shelley took the idea), and the hero
of Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), he has grown tired of eternal life. In accordance with Rosicrucian rules and regulations, he cannot die unless he finds someone to whom he can pass on the secret.

Having given the oath, Wolfstein and Megalena travel on to Genoa, where they become lovers. A month after their arrival, Wolfstein notices at a party “the gaze of one of the crowd fixed upon him”\textsuperscript{10}. He immediately recognizes the stranger as Ginotti and later that night reflects on the latter’s mysterious reappearance:

> The strange gaze of Ginotti, and the consciousness that he was completely in the power of so indefinable a being; the consciousness that, wheresoever he might go, Ginotti would still follow him, pressed upon Wolfstein’s heart. Ignorant of what connection they could have with this mysterious observer of his action, his crimes recurred in hideous and disgustful array to the bewildered mind of Wolfstein.\textsuperscript{11}

At this juncture in the novel appears the young, beautiful and unrestrained Olympia, who conceives a “violent and unconquerable passion for Wolfstein”\textsuperscript{12}. One evening in a state of maniac wildness, she blurts out her love for him. Wolfstein’s loyalty to Megalena makes him reject Olympia’s affection. In distress she faints; and Wolfstein’s act of help—(lifting her in his arms)—is witnessed and misconstrued as an amorous embrace by Megalena. On regaining consciousness Olympia rushes out, leaving Wolfstein to justify his innocence. Unconvinced by his protestations, Megalena demands as proof of his continuing love and fidelity, “the death of Olympia”\textsuperscript{13}. Strangely aroused he agrees to fulfil Megalena’s cruel demand:

> the unquenchable ardour of his love for Megalena stimulated him to the wildest pitch of fury: he raised high the dagger, and, drawing aside the covering which veiled her alabaster bosom, paused an instant, to decide in what place it were most instantaneously destructive to strike.\textsuperscript{14}

However, at the very last moment the image of the sleeping Olympia distracts him and he is unable to conclude his mission. Olympia on learning
that he does not love her, plunges the dagger into her bosom and falls "weltering in purple gore"\(^{15}\).

The second plot of the novel introduces Eloise St. Irvyne as returning to the castle of St. Irvyne after six years, having undergone a series of misfortunes - the death of her mother in Geneva; her seduction by the villainous Nempere; being handed over by Nempere as a gambling debt to an Englishman named Mountfort, who in turn, handed her over to an Irishman named Fitzeustace, who eventually marries her and settles in England. The interweaving of the second plot in the novel is an added dimension on part of Shelley to align the work with the literary trend of his times. As well his choice of name for his sentimental heroine as Eloise St. Irvyn, is a deliberate one. It echoes the name of Emily St. Aubert (Radcliffe’s heroine in her most famous and commercially successful work, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*):

It is significant that Shelley uses the name of his new female protagonist pointedly to allude now to the Radcliffean female Gothic largely eschewed in the Gothic plot proper of the Wolfstein – Megalena narrative, which as we have seen utilizes the predominantly - male’ – will-to-power Gothic of the fleshy school. Unlike the latter, however, Radcliffean Gothic was from its beginning intimately linked to the literature of sensibility itself, deploying a modesty, restrained sentimentalism as a crucial ideological counter to the ‘worldly’ system of patriarchal power-relations from which many of its central Gothic anxieties sprung.\(^ {16}\)

The end of the novel when Ginotti comes to demand the fulfillment of his bargain is in true Gothic style and full of drama and suspense. The final transference of this evil patrimony of power-knowledge, this Rosicrucian secret is to take place at "the ruined abbey near the castle of St. Irvyne, in France"\(^ {17}\). At the appointed time at St. Irvyne, Ginotti appears before Wolfstein "wasted almost to a skeleton"\(^ {18}\) yet "still from his eye emanated that indefinable expression which ever made Wolfstein shrink appalled"\(^ {19}\). To Ginotti’s demand of, "Wolfstein, dost thou deny thy Creator?"\(^ {20}\), the latter despite his earlier yearning replies, "Never […]. Anything but that"\(^ {21}\).
Thus, at the last moment, Wolfstein shies away from the demonic bargain which would have granted him supernatural power at the expense of his soul. Satan himself now appears before them, sending Ginotti’s soul to eternal damnation and his body “blackened in terrible convulsions” 22. Significantly, it is Ginotti’s burning gaze which is the last part of him to fade; his “frame smouldered into a gigantic skeleton, yet two pale and ghastly flames glared in his eyeless sockets” 23. Wolfstein’s own soul on the other hand is saved, having refused to surrender himself to fill Ginotti’s place.

The opening scene of Wolfstein on the precipice contains a certain Gothic luridness that would rank with some of the better passages in Lewis or Mrs. Radcliffe or Maturin. The character of Ginotti has a compelling mysteriousness, which Zastrozzi lacks. In St. Irvyne there is an increased attempt at the exploitation of voluptuous sensationalism. In Zastrozzi there is only one case of seduction that of Matilda by Verezzi; in St. Irvyne there are three: of Megalena by Wolfstein, of Eloise by Nempere, of Eloise by Fitzrurstace, as well as an attempt at seduction of Wolfstein by Olympia. That Shelley is following the Monk Lewis tradition is absolutely evident in the present novel.

Not only Shelley’s novels are an excellent study in Gothic tradition but his poetry as well is wonderfully illustrative of the Gothic influence on him. The wonder and curiosity, which marked the romantic temper, manifested itself in the poet’s ardent desire to probe and perceive the mysteries of nature and the hidden secrets of the world. This curiosity impelled Shelley to haunt ruins and graveyards and invoke ghosts and spirits in order to learn about the world from them.

In St Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian, Shelley has made use of poems to create spine-chilling Gothic atmosphere. The poem Victoria begins with:

'Twas dead of the night, when I sat in my dwelling;
One glimmering lamps was expiring and low;
Around the dark tide of the tempest was swelling,
Along the wild mountains night-ravens were yelling,-
They bodingly presaged destruction and woe.

(I. 1-5)

The poet’s horror on seeing the ghost of the murdered Victoria is expressed thus:

'Twas then that her form on the whirlwind upholding,
The ghost of the murdered Victoria strode;
In her right hand, a shadowy shroud she was holding
She swiftly advanced to my lonesome abode.
[..............................]
I wildly then called on the tempest to bear me.

(IV. 14-17, V. 18)

Again, in the second poem On the Dark Height of Jura the horror elements are evident:

GHOSTS of the dead! Have I not heard your yelling
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the blast,
When o’er the dark ether the tempest is swelling
And on eddying whirlwind the thunder-peal passed?

(I.1-4)

Shelley in stanza IV describes the ghost of the narrator’s sire thus:

On the wing of the whirlwind which roars o’er the mountain
Perhaps rides the ghost of my sire who is dead;
On the mist of the tempest which hangs o’er the fountain,
Whilst a wreath of dark vapour encircles his head.

(IV. 13-16).

In the third poem Sister Rosa: A Ballad, Shelley begins on the note of “The death-bell heats! -/ The mountain repeats” (I. 1-2). Stanza XV is replete with Gothic imagery; of all that is horrific, terrifying and macabre:

And laughed, in joy, the fiendish throng,
Mixed with ghosts of the mouldering dead:
And their grisly wings, as they floated along,
Whistled in murmurs dread.

(XV. 82-85)

From the beginning Shelley was attracted to the sensational type of German literature and its imitations. His novels Zastrozzi and St Irvyne are influenced directly or indirectly by the Schauerromane. For the origination of the figure of the ‘Wandering Jew’ in Shelley’s mind we must look to M.G.
Lewis's *Monk*, where the unfortunate Wanderer makes his appearance. Taking into consideration Shelley's tastes in literature at this time as revealed by his own literary endeavours, and the notoriety of Lewis's *Schauerroman*, we can hardly doubt that Shelley had read it. Dobell, the editor of *The Wandering Jew*, considers that several of the circumstances of Shelley's poem are derived from Lewis's romance.

Shelley's admiration and interest in 'Faust' is expressed in his letter to Gisborne of April 10, 1822, thus:

> I have been reading over and over again *Faust*, and always with sensations which no other composition excites. It deepens the gloom and augments the rapidity of ideas, and would therefore seem to me an unfit study for any person who is a prey to the reproaches of memory, and the delusions of an imagination not to be restrained. And yet the pleasure of sympathizing with emotions known only to few, although they derive their sole charm from despair, and the scorn of the narrow good we can attain in our present state, seems more than to ease the pain which belongs to them. Perhaps all discontent with the less (to use a platonic sophism) supposes a sense of a just claim to the greater, and that we admirers of *Faust* are on the right road to Paradise.\(^{24}\)

Like most of his contemporaries, Shelley succumbed to the spell of Burger's *Lenore*. Dowden discloses that one Christmas Eve, Shelley entertained a little guest by narrating the *Lenore*-story, "Working up the horror to such a height of fearful interest that Polly quite expected to see Wilhelm walk into the drawing-room"? It is possible that *Lenore* may have influenced the ballad *Sister Rosa* in *St Irvyne*. Shelley's taste for the grotesque and fantastic in literature, which seems to have dominated his boyhood years, remained with him even in his mature years. In 1816 at Byron's villa (beside Lake Geneva), Byron and the Shelleys had read aloud a French translation of German ghost stories.

The influence of German literature on Shelley is to be not only found in his earliest works (*The Wandering Jew* (1809), *Original Poetry of Victor and Cazire* (1810), *Queen Mab* (1813), but also in the delightful prose-fragment *The Assassins* (1814), *Alastor* (1815), and *Hellas* (1821)).
The *Irishman's Song* in the *Original Poetry of Victor and Cazire*, exhibits a sympathy with the dead heroes of Ireland whose “yelling ghosts ride on the blast” crying, “my countrymen! Vengeance!”(15-16). The verses of *Victor and Cazire* display obviously enough the influence of the German Gothic school domesticated by Scott and Monk Lewis. In *Revenge* the ghost of the injured Conrad snatches the fair Agnes from the arms of Adolphus:

Now Adolphus I’ll seize thy best loved in my arms,  
I’ll drag her to Hades all blooming in charms,  
On the black Whirlwinds thundering pinion I’ll ride,  
And fierce yelling fiends shall exult o’er thy bride –  
He spoke, and extending his ghostly arms wide,  
Majestic advances with a swift noiseless stride,  
He clasped the fair Agnes – he raised her on high,  
And cleaving the roof sped his way to the sky –  
All was now silent, - and over the tomb,  
Thicker, deeper, was swiftly extended a gloom,  
Adolphus in horror sank down on the stone,  
And his fleeting soul fled with a harrowing groan.

(53-64)

In *Ghasta or The Avenging Demon (1810)*, Shelley mentions the owlet generally regarded as a symbol of despair and death to create the Gothic atmosphere:

Hark! The owlet flaps her wing,  
In the pathless dell beneath,  
Hark! Night ravens loudly sing,  
Tidings of despair and death –

(1-4)

In the following two stanzas, he makes use of the darker aspects of nature to create the ominous and eerie environment of approaching death:

Horror covers all the sky,  
Clouds of darkness blot the moon,  
Prepare! For mortal thou must die,  
Prepare! To yield thy soul up soon –

Fierce the tempest raves around,  
Fierce the volleyed lightning fly,  
Crashing thunder shakes the ground,  
Fire and tumult fill the sky

(5-12)
In *Ghasta or The Avenging Demon*, amid tumults of the tempest a Warrior, a Stranger and a Phantom engage in a somewhat obscure colloquy. It concludes with the phantom being hurried back to hell and the warrior expiring at the command of the stranger, who bears a burning cross upon his forehead; evidently he is the Wandering Jew:

Phantom
That fire is scorching! Oh! I came
From the caverned depth of Hell

Stranger
Thou that heardst the trackless dead,
In the mouldering tomb must lie,
Mortal! Look upon my head,
Mortal! Mortal! Thou must die.

The warrior follows the stranger’s command and dies:

The warrior upwards turned his eyes,
Gazed upon the cross of fire,
There sat horror and surprise,
There sat God’s eternal ire —
A shivering through the Warrior flew,
Colder than the nighty blast,
Colder than the evening dew,
When the hour of twilights past —
Thunder shakes th’ expansive sky,
Shakes the bosom of the heath,
Mortal! Mortal! thou must die,
The warrior sank convulsed in death.

*The Wandering Jew* (1809-1810) falls into four cantos. Canto I reveals a mysterious horseman approaching a convent in which four nuns are dragging a novice to the altar in a scene slightly reminiscent of *The Monk*. The novice escapes their clutches and is seized by the mysterious horseman who gallops off with her to a mountainous castle, promising eternal love as they go.

In Canto II, Paulo and his bride Rosa are joined in the castle by Paulo’s friend Victoria. Paulo is moody but is soothed by the music of Rosa, who sings him a mournful ballad of the spectre of a betrayed girl who committed suicide. He then announces that he will tell his life story. Canto III deals with this story.
Paulo, it turns out is in reality the Wandering Jew. Sixteen hundred years before he had cursed Christ and was condemned by God to wander endlessly on the earth. Shelley narrates the tale in verse form. The following lines express the wandering Jew’s anguish and wish for death:

I have cast myself from the mountain’s height,
Above was day – below was night;
The substantial clouds that lower’d beneath
Bore my detested form;
They whirl’d it above the volcanic breath,
And the meteors of the storm; [...] 
Oh! Would that I had waked no more
Vain wish I lived again to feel
Torments more fierce than those of hell!

But still he cannot die, for he is “doomed by fate to stand a monument to the Eternal’s ire”. He has a vision of an angelic form (really the devil) that tempts him to sell his soul to Satan but he refuses (a scene paralleled in St. Irvyne and perhaps suggested by The Monk).

In Canto IV, the poem ends rather obscurely. Victoria has fallen in love with Rosa and to save her from the Wandering Jew, visits a monstrous witch. The witch summons up Satan who gives Victoria a “Potent drug” presumably to use on the Wandering Jew. But in the end, it is Rosa who dies and Victoria curses the “futile power of the false fiend”. This confusion and motif finds a parallel in the ending of St Irvyne.

Shelley’s Queen Mab (1813) relates the descent of Queen Mab – Queen of the Fairies to the bedside of a sleeping girl, Ianth. The fairy – Queen Mab, carries off in her celestial chariot the spirit of the maiden Ianth, and shows her the past history of the world and expounds to her the causes of its miserable state:

Spirit, come!
This is thine high reward:- The past shall rise;
Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
The secrets of the future
The spirit, seeing the horror of death and widespread desolation trembles for the inequity of man; but the fairy explains that not man but the dictatorial state is responsible for it:

Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, cowards who crouch, set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement.

(IV. 76-82)

The text of the poem becomes the medium of Shelley's diatribe against both religion and monarchy. He makes expressive use of Gothic elements and imagery to put across his ideas. David Punter comments:

Part of the argument here is simply that Phantoms, skeletons, the old anatomies serve to mock the things of this earth, as the graveyard poets had insisted; but Shelley goes farther than this in showing these phantoms as specifically attracted to those in power. Kings and priests rule through terror, and in this sense their power is identical with the power of the spectre. The connection between this and conventional notions of the Gothic is made in, for instance, Queen Mab

Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung;
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal!
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.
A thousand mourners decked the pomp of death
Today, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life: tomorrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey

(IX. 103-113)

The power-seeking priests and the concept of a revengeful anthropomorphic God all come in for a virulent attack from Shelley. The power-seeking churchmen pay lip-service to the Christian ideals. They are found busy in perverting the church into a machine for grinding down the poor
and preserving the established order. The priests suck human blood in the name of religion:

   Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
   Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
   Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house

(VII. 43-48)

He goes on to expose scathingly the tyranny of the king, who sits secure in his palace and enjoys every luxury, while the starving masses endure the king's misrule because of the unconquered powers of precedent and custom. Shelley goes on to account that the desolating horrors of war and domestic oppression arise from the evils of the age, monarch and aristocracy: "Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze / That flashes desolation, strong the arm / That scatters multitudes" (III. 144-146). War, we are told, results not from the evil of men in general, but from the intrigues of kings and others who have a vested interest in war: "War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight, / The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade" (IV. 168-169).

_Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude (1816)_ is an allegory in which the idealist is depicted as happy in contemplation. Presently he seeks reality - the counterpart of his dreams. He meets with frustration and is plunged into despair and dies. The poem is a condemnation of self-created idealism. According to Shelley's preface, concentration upon high and lofty ideals may bring with it an avenging fury, which makes the actual world seem dark and dead to those who have pursued perfection too far.

Shelley's preoccupation with death is so noticeable as to have suggested a belief that his whole art was really dominated by it. Its sources can be sought more securely in a blend of Gothic romance, metaphysical speculation, and graveyard poetry. He had at least planned, as he claimed in _Alastor_ to make his bed: "In charnels and on coffins, where black death / Keeps record [...]" (24-25).
The most enigmatic of Shelley's admittedly different poems, *Alastor* deals with a visionary poet's search through an increasingly nightmarish landscape for the veiled maid erotically encountered in a dream. As the story of a Romantic solitary in search of his ideal, Shelley uses wild, mountainous and stormy settings to present an external image of the alienated wanderer. Failing to find this ideal in life, he descends "to an untimely grave" (50) hoping perhaps to find in death what he could not find in life. Maggie Kilgour writes:

> The journey of the poet in *Alastor* begins when he must leave "His cold fireside and alienated home/To see strange truths in undiscovered lands" (76-77). For the poet, whose calling is creation, home is the place where the true artist is not in fact at home. The Romantic artist seeks foreign places, sublime and bleak landscapes, apocalyptic worlds of fire and ice in which extreme spots he, like Walton, hopes to find an image for himself. Like the Gothic villain, the Romantic poet is only at home when in exile; alienation in his 'natural' state. It is poetically just, if nothing else, that Keats, Shelley, and Byron all died abroad.

Shelley shrouds the poet's existence in a most gloomy and dismal light:

> There was a poet whose untimely tomb
> No human hands with pious reverence reared;
> But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
> Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
> Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness;
> A lovely youth no mourning maiden decked
> With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
> The love couch of his everlasting sleep;
> Gentle and brave, and generous—no lorn bard
> Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh;
> He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude

(50-60)

Thus the young poet of *Alastor* nurtured "By Solemn vision and bright silver dream" (67), sought "the fountains of divine philosophy" (71), and left an "alienated home" (76) as a mere youth to pursue knowledge to its utmost bounds. The Gothic atmosphere is evident through Shelley's description of mystery, death and demons in gloomy ruined temples:

> Among the ruined temples there,
> Stupendous columns, and wild images
> Of more than man, where marble daemons watch
The Zodiac’s brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world’s youth

(116-122)

His wanderings in his search were more those of Shelley’s, but the beauty of the scenery derives from the poet’s own impressions of the Alps, the Rhine, the Thames, and Windsor Forest. His ruin starts when in a dream he beheld a vision of a veiled maid whose “voice was like the voice of his own soul” (153). The poet becomes so obsessed with the apparition in his dream, that in the rest of the poem he is seen roaming about in different places searching for her. Soon he is reduced to a haggard – almost spectral figure. In portraying him Shelley again harks back to his favourite image of the Wandering Jew.

Awakening from his dream vision, the poet is confronted by an alien world:

Roused by the shock he started from his trance –
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation?

(192-200)

The poet himself finds in a landscape antithetical to the empty scene to which he had awakened the morning after his dream vision. Here in the midst of an earthly paradise, Shelley makes use of Gothic elements in his description of the spirit that stands beside the poet.

[...] A spirit seemed
To stand beside him – clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;
[………………………………………………………]
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him

It is a desolate and blasted scene through which the poet pursues his course until he discovers "tranquil spot [...] even in the lap of horror" (577-578). Here on the brink "of that obscures tchasm" (637) — symbolic of death — the poet breathes his last. "The spirit of the poet departs — / [...] and many worms / And beasts and men live on" (691-693). To those who survive is left no: "Passionate tumult of a clinging hope; / But pale despair and cold tranquillity" (717-718).

In the Revolt of Islam (1817), Shelley presents the problem of his age in a new and yet another guise. Aware of — and indeed fearful of — the government's antiradical actions he composed Laon and Cythna that eventually was revised and published as The Revolt of Islam. The poem is an expression of Shelley's revolutionary political vision to a popular reading audience. It tells the story of a polarized society in which monarchy and organized religion violently suppress the radical Laon and his converts.

The preface contains Shelley's most direct statement of purpose in The Revolt of Islam. The tone throughout is that of a temporarily defeated leader rallying his troops "in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality" in order to be "kindling [...] a virtuous enthusiasm". He describes the action of the poem in terms whose details apply equally well to the unfolding of the Revolution of the Golden City and to contemporary events in Europe: the failure of the French Revolution and the current triumph of the restored monarchies.

In the next section of the preface, Shelley addresses the future of the French Revolution whereas the initial gloom must be replaced by hope for future. In the dedication, Shelley addresses Mary as both his inspiration and his ideal audience.

In Canto I the poet trying to recover from the failure of the French Revolution climbs a mountain to watch the sunrise over the ocean and watches instead the aerial battle of the snake and the eagle. His attention is arrested by a "monstrous sight! / For in the air do I behold indeed / An Eagle and a Serpent
wreathed in fight” (I. viii, 191-193), this battle is a recapitulation of the eternal struggle between the forces of good and evil, freedom and tyranny. The emphasis in Canto I shifts from the speaker to the mysterious Woman on the sea-shore who rescues the fallen snake, explains the meaning of the battle, and then tells her own story. From immemorial time a contest has been waged: “Two powers o’er mortal things dominion hold, / Ruling the world with a divided lot, / Immortal, all-pervading, manifold” (I. xxv, 347-349).

These two powers symbolized as “A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star” (I. xxvi, 356) are the visible forms of Evil and Good. In the contest between these twin powers, the Good, personified in the Morning Star, was worsted and transformed “to a dire snake” (I, xxviii, 369) whereupon the spirit of Evil ruled the world, his power being: “Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread / Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead” (I. xxix, 326-327). But the spirit of Good, the snake “renewed the doubtful war” (I.xxxi, 402). Thrones were shaken and “Greece arose” to whose “bards and sages”/In dream the golden-pinioned Genii came” (I. Xxiii, 406-407). Thereafter the contest of Good and Evil was at various times renewed “When round pure hearts a host of hope assemble, / The snake and Eagle meet – the world’s foundations trouble!” (I. xxxiii, 422-423).

The woman’s tale contains once more Gothic elements of loneliness, wildness and the domination of tyranny and injustice that are present in the accounts of the education of the poet in the preface and dedication: a solitary youth spent in natural surroundings, a devotion to learning, and a compassion for the sufferings of others coupled with a resolve to fight injustice. In childhood she lived alone, a happy orphan, “By the sea-shore in a deep mountain glen” (444) where she roamed “through the forest’s wild” (445). She became aware of the wisdom of the past through an encounter with a dying poet. She is inspired by her visionary lover, the radiant youth who is at once the embodiment of the Morning Star and the snake of the aerial combat. She has travelled in other lands, witnessing the effects of tyranny and injustice. She is
forced to come to terms with the failure of the French Revolution, which she too had greeted with such hopes. She is sustained and restored by her spirit-lover and the healing powers of nature.

The mysterious portrait of the woman is evident from the following passage:

[...] as the woman came
Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit’s name
And fell; and vanished slowly from the sight,
Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting its sphered stars with supernatural night.

(I. lv, 616-621)

The final section of Canto I recounts the sea voyage of the speaker, the woman, and the snake. The voyagers reach the temple where the senate of noble spirits has gathered, in the midst of which is a throne of a pyramid, soon occupied by the snake transformed into the woman’s lover, the Morning Star. The speaker is told to prepare to hear a tale, which will bring hope to the world, and the narrative of Laon and Cythna begins.

The visionary frame thus opened in Canto I reappears at the end of the poem but in a curiously partial way; the frame is never truly closed. After the deaths of Laon and Cythna, the lovers undertake a journey, which parallels that of the poet, the woman, and the snake in Canto I, a journey which joins a human pair with a transformed supernatural being. Laon continuing as narrator, describes a second magical boat carrying a winged child rather than a snake, which turns out to be the true child of Laon and Cythna:

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical air
Along the waves which sung and sparked under
Its rapid keel - a winged shape sate there,
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
[..................................................]
While veering to the wind her plumes the bark did guide.

(XII.xx, 4621-4629)

The lovers journey is a longer one than that of the poet and the woman. Loan and Cythna travel for three days and nights through an extended version
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom were drowned

(III.xiv, 1225-1229)

In his anguish Laon has two more visions. The visions are rich in Gothic suggestiveness — are macabre and horrifying. The second turns out to be prophetic and merges into reality (his rescue by the hermit). The first is his delusion that he has eaten of Cythna’s corpse. Cythna too knows madness and dreams of eating Laon’s flesh. She too has a second dream, which turns out to be true, namely that she has borne a child which is taken from her.

The boat journey introduced in Canto III, which bears Cythna away is balanced by the boat in which Laon is rescued by the hermit, which is in turn paralleled by the boat in which Cythna is rescued. In the poem’s final voyage, Laon and Cythna are borne together to the Temple as the visionary frame concludes.

Cantos V-VI, recall not only Shelley’s own revolutionary philosophy but also the purpose of the preface with its emphasis on love and its repudiation of bloodshed (as Laon leads his troops to bloodless victory). The sixth canto is a negative counterpart of the fifth: where Laon is saved by Cythna, who takes him to a “marble ruin” (VI.xxii, 2530) to mourn the failure of their revolutionary hopes, but refusing to despair.

The focus of the narration in Cantos VII-IX moves from Laon to Cythna as she recounts her experiences after parting from Laon at the beginning of the third Canto.

Foul as in dream’s most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead – that night
All torture, fear, or horror made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy from the sight
Where like a spirit in fleshy chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away

(VII.vi, 2877-2883)

These stanzas are wonderfully depictive of the Gothic atmosphere:

The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
of the magical landscape of Canto I, arriving finally at the same destination, the Temple of the Spirit.

Cythna’s childhood is a mirror of Laon’s, shaped by an early delight in nature and an innate sense of justice, which causes her to join him in deploring the world’s miseries. This early dedication of Laon and Cythna to the cause of revolution is the first step in the training of a revolutionary idealist. In fact, the major part of the narrative, Loan’s (III-V) then Cythna’s (VII-IX) recount the events of their separate trials. The two protagonists face the same experiences: both know imprisonment, madness, delusive dreams, rescue by sea, and renewed dedication to the cause.

The importance of the visionary dream in Romantic works is commonplace, and *The Revolt of Islam* has its share. Canto III opens with Laon’s prophetic dream of his violent separation from Cythna, and like Keats’s Adam he awakes to find its truth:

> [...] the vision of a dream
> Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
> Of mind, a boundless chaos wild and vast,
> Whose limits yet were never memory’s theme:
> And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds passed,
> Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

*(III.i, 1111-1116)*

He is chained to a column on a hill from where he sees Cythna carried away by sea. Shelley’s interest in Gothic conventions becomes evident in the description of Laon’s capture by the tyrants:

> They bore me to a cavern in the hill
> Beneath that column, and unbound me there:
> And one did strip me stark;
> [..............................]
> A lighted torch, and four with friendless care
> Guided my steps the cavern-paths along,

*(III.xiii, 1216-1218, 1220-1221)*

With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound:
The grate, as they departed to repass
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping,
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend, who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food! Thus all things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom’s core

(VII.xv, 2956-2964)

David Punter writes:

The Gothic for Shelley is a point of access to history: cathedral and castle ruins both remind us of the days of ‘Faith and slavery’, and assure us of the transience of these forms of domination. In *The Revolt of Islam* there are passages very similar to some in Lewis, but serving a very different purpose. They remind us of the horror of famine and war.

She led, and over many a corpse;-- at length
We came to a lone hut, where on the earth
Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
Among the dead-round which she set in state
A ring of cold, stiff babes; silent and stark they sate

(VI.li.2785-2793)

In Canto VIII, the captain of the mariners, dreams that they are pursued by ghosts:

‘Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts: a Phantom of the Dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that’!

(VIII. ii, 3210-3213)

The Gothic atmosphere as a result of war is evident death is a dominant picture in canto X. The entire canto is shrouded in Gothic imagery to capture the terror and horror of war. “Sometimes the living by the dead were hid / Near the great fountain in the public square, / Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid” (X.xxiii, 3991-3993). The horrible picture of burning children is
described by Shelley: "[...] a mother dragged three children then, / To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head" (X.xlvii, 4207-4208).

In Canto X, the plague foreshadowed by the appearance of a mad woman, has come, and the people in their misery turn to religion in its most negative and idolatrous form, represented by the Iberian Priest. He orders a pyre built for the rebels Laon and Cythna; “Let Laon and Laone on that pyre, / Linked tight with burning brass, perish!” (X.xxxix, 4135-4136). Laon appears, ready to die if Cythna will be spared. His brief speech restates once more the key Shelleyan themes of the evils of tyranny, the inevitable future triumph of love, and the immortality of the revolutionary spirit.

However, Laon and Cythna are defeated and burned under the tyrant’s eye, but death came as another life. The dead child of Cythna is the plumed Seraph who steers a new and yet lovelier boat towards them; a new voyage of enchantment brings them to the temple of the spirit. “Then the bright child, the plumed Seraph, came / And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine. / And said, “I was disturbed by tremulous shame” (XII.xxiv. 4657-4659).

Incest in particular, both in Gothic and for the later Romantics, suggests an abnormal and extreme desire (a violation of natural familial ties) that is antithetical to and subversive of social requirements. The theme has been closely associated with Romantic poets. They did not reintroduce it; for they found it in the novels that they had devoured as boys; what they did was to make it painfully real. Incest was a fashionable theme when Shelley began work on The Revolt of Islam. In the consummation of Laon’s love for his sister Cythna, Shelley can represent such a love as achieved in the perfect blending of “two restless frames in one reposing soul” (VI.xxxvi. 2658). However, in the re-issue of the poem Shelley dropped one circumstance intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life; his hero and heroine in the revised version ceased to be brother and sister.

Shelley’s poems Hymn to Intellectual Beauty (1817) and Mont Blanc (1817) show autobiographically, his poetic development from the Gothic
indulgences of his youth to the philosophical verse of 1816. As a boy he had read all the Gothic novels on which he could get his hands on. The condensed versions of Gothic novels were his constant companions while growing up. The impact of these novels is evident in Shelley’s landscape, especially in Mont Blanc, which accentuates the ruggedness of nature in relation to the individual mind. In the Hymn, Shelley supports the Gothic tendencies of his poetry by referring to his youthful fascination. In Stanza V of The Hymn Shelley writes:

While yet a boy I sought for ghost, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.

(V. 49-52)

Although the Gothic influence upon Shelley is noticeable, the political and philosophical movements of his days were soon to capture his mind. What he had discovered in Gothic idealism, he found it lacking in a world less sentimental and far more unforgiving. What he had sought for he “saw [...] not” (V.54). As Shelley’s poetical skills and political views developed, he fell under the influence of a book (Gothic novel) that had a profound effect upon the young idealist. “Sudden, thy shadow fell on me; / I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!” (V.59-60). In the Hymn, this moment ends the stanza in which we see his entire development. It gives strength to the other stanzas by supporting the development of the author. It also exhibits the new strength of his poetry. The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty is about progression of the mind in revealing certain truths. By addressing Beauty, Shelley addresses the development of intellect-the mind. All forces named or otherwise inferred in stanza V, represent ideas or influences upon Shelley that were directly related to his own intellectual development.

The influence of Ann Radcliffe’s technique of word-painting on P.B. Shelley is evident in his poems. Compare the following lines from Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho with those in Mont Blanc respectively:

Emily, often as she travelled among the clouds, watched in silent awe their billowy surges rolling below; sometimes,
wholly closing upon the scene, they appeared like a world of chaos, and, at others, spreading thinly, they opened and admitted partial catches of the landscape — the torrent, whose astounding roar had never failed, tumbling down the rocky chasm, huge cliffs white with snow, or the dark summits of pine forests, that stretched mid-way down the mountains. 

In Mont Blanc:

Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky
Mont Blanc appears, - still, snowy, and serene —
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps

(III. 60-66)

The description of the mountain in Mont Blanc is realistic. It stresses the desolation, the ruin, the destructive force evident in the harsh scene before him. Did fire or earthquake create this “desert peopled by the storms alone”? (III. 67).

The wilderness has a mysterious tongue.
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith, with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

(III. 76-83)

The images in Mont Blanc are certainly vital, primitive, and frozen, and make Shelley call up unchristian gods such as “Power in the Likeness of Arve” (II.16) and “the old Earthquake-daemon” (III. 72). In the poem he depicts the terrifying power of nature held by the mountain and marvels at man’s impotence in taming that power:

[...] the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaimed.

(IV. 111-114)
Frances Ferguson comments:

Edmund Burke had identified as Sublime not only the experience of contemplating enormous heights and depths but also, and most particularly, the experience of being isolated from other humans. From one perspective, Shelley seems to provide a textbook example of how to experience the sublimity of *Mont Blanc* as he registers his consciousness of the mountain's force while appearing to speak from a condition of isolation (where no human aid can intervene between him and the mountains power). It is from this perspective unremarkable that Shelley's account of the mountain continually recurs to the subject of its wildness, of its being a wilderness remote from all that civilization involves.\(^3\)

The sublimity of Shelley's *Mont Blanc* is revealed through the following lines:

```
Dizzy Ravine! And when I gaze on thee
I seem as in trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receive fast influencing.
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(II. 34-38)

With the first words 'Dizzy Ravine' Shelley reinforces the stature of the mountain as enormous, powerful, and awe-inspiring. The word 'dizzy' implies the emotions of awe. He is struck by the immensity of power and potential of destruction held by this mountain: "[...] is this the scene / Where the old Earthquake daemon taught her young / Ruin? Were these her toys?" (III. 71-73).

Percy Bysshe Shelley's quasi-Gothic play of incest and revenge *The Cenci* (1819) has a recognizably fearful and monstrous Gothic framework in its themes of parental wickedness and filial suffering. In *The Cenci*, Shelley turned to the Gothic and its Jacobean precursors to offer a comprehensive assault upon patriarchal power within the family, state, and religion.

Set in late 1500s Italy, the play centres around the lives of the noble house of Cenci, which is daily terrorized by Francesco Cenci, head of the household. He is moulded in the style of other Gothic villains, such as Radcliffe's Montoni and Walpole's Manfred, and yet manages to stand apart
from them. Cenci is, in both word and deed, more insistently evil than either of the aforementioned figures. Cenci's purpose, unlike the other two, is not to increase his wealth, or secure his lineage, but instead to bring both to ruin. From the beginning of the play, Cenci seeks to eliminate his entire family. He firmly believes that his curses are 'heard and enacted' simply because he is the authority figure in his home.

Beatrice-Cenci's daughter and Lucretia (her step-mother) live in a state of constant apprehension and fear of Cenci. Beatrice is the tragic heroine of Shelley's play. Whose beauty, apparent intelligence, and strong will, make her fully aware of the injustices of her father, and the law of the land.

Cenci is a criminal whose actions are sanctioned by the Church. Cardinal Camillo laments at the beginning that though Cenci is "Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes / Yet I have ever hoped you would amend, / And in that hope have saved your life three times." (I. i, 54-56). In fact, Cenci has actually purchased the reticence of the Papal anger and seems to revel in having done so, since:

[...] No doubt Pope Clement
And his most charitable nephews pray
That the Apostle Peter and the Saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue

(I. i, 27-33)

In killing his own sons, Cenci does not choose to rely on human means, but rather asks. "I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!" (I.i. 134). After the accomplishment of his wish, Cenci calls for a banquet to celebrate as "it is accomplished, he should then rejoice, / And call his friends, and kinsmen to a feast." (I.iii. 30-31). When he jovially declares that the banquet is to celebrate the accidental deaths of his two sons, the guests are shocked into protest. Cenci declares that "I speak the sober truth" that "Providence was shown / Even in the manner of their deaths" (I.iii. 567-58). For one son was crushed when a church collapsed as he was at the mass, and
the other son was killed during the same hour of the night. Cenci’s audacity leads him to propose a very revolting toast at the banquet. Holding up a glass of wine he says, “Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood, / Then would I taste thee like a sacrament” (I.iii. 81-82).

Cenci has essentially made a monster out of himself, turning fatherhood into tyranny. Though he has been motivated by money in the persecution of his sons, his resolution to rape his daughter Beatrice, shows that he believes his tyranny to be taking a supernatural turn “A deed which shall confound both night and day” (II.i, 183).

At the opening of the third act, Beatrice staggers wildly on stage towards her mother having been violated for the first time by her father:

How comes this hair undone?  
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,  
And yet I tied it fast. – O, horrible!  
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls  
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there  
[.................................]  
Slide giddily as the world reels [...] My God!  
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!

(III.i.6-10, 12-13)

By the fifth act, when the persecution of her father condoned and extended by the authorities of state and church has run its full course, the figure of violation recurs, but now as an image of desolation and terror enveloping the universe:

If there should be  
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world,  
The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!  
If all things then should be [...] my father’s spirit,  
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me  
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!

(V.iv.57-62)

Giacomo laments that “We are left, as scorpions ringed with fire. / What should we but strike ourselves to death?” (II.ii.70-71). The image suggests that the only escape from such tyranny is through suicide.

Cenci’s murder and the following action have strong resemblance to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. While the murderers as they go in to do the deed,
Beatrice and Lucretia remain below, listening intently like Lady Macbeth. Just as Beatrice is rewarding the murderers with a bag of gold, a trumpet sounds and the drawbridge is lowered, as if to parallel the knocking in *Macbeth*. The visitor is the Papal legate Savella with a warrant for Cenci's arrest, and like Macduff he arrives to stumble on murder. As she awaits the hue and cry Beatrice remains unwaveringly defiant, convinced that the revenge was just.

The echoes from *Macbeth* continue:

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Beatrice. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's center. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock —
But shakes it not
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* (IV.iv, 46-52)

In Beatrice's trial the judges vote for the procedure then usual in this most Christian of courts — "Let tortures strain the truth till it be white / As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind" (V.ii, 169-170). Beatrice endures the tortures, having convinced herself that she has nothing to confess; the others admit their guilt. Camillo intercedes for the prisoners, only to be told by the Pope why the death sentences on Beatrice, Lucretia and Giacomo must be confirmed:

```
Parricide grows so rife
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital
```

* (V.iii, 20-24)

Incest as the main theme of Shelley's tragedy *The Cenci* occurs also in Shelley's *Rosalind and Helen* (1818) and in *The Revolt of Islam*, (discussed earlier). Shelley himself wrote in a letter to Maria Gisborne, 16 November 1819:

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Incest is like many other incorrect things a very poetical circumstance. It may be the excess of love or hate. It may be the defiance of everything for the sake of another which clothes itself in the glory of the highest heroism, or it may be that cynical rage which, confounding the good and the bad in
existing opinions, breaks through them for the purpose of rioting in selfishness and antipathy.  

The Gothic flavour is obvious enough in Shelley's play *The Cenci*. It reverberates with echoes from earlier Gothic novels for example, the name of the ghostly bleeding nun in *The Monk* was Beatrice; the trial in front of the Inquisition court which appeared in Lewis's *The Monk* and Radcliffe's *The Italian* reappears in Shelley's *The Cenci*. Terror, horror, incest, revenge and torture as dominant themes in Gothic fiction find place in Shelley's *The Cenci*.

The poem *Mask of Anarchy* (1819) which Shelley composed as a directive to his countrymen to resist oppression bespeaks of his democratic spirit and hatred of despotism. *The Mask* opens with a flaming light on different types of tyrants. Having created a magnificent pageantry of the Anarchs riding with their skeleton commander through England to Westminster, Shelley turns his attention to the other side -the slaves whose half-starved drudgery and enforced darkness of mind were the basis of the privileges of the upper orders. "Men of England, heirs of Glory" (XXXVII.147) he called them, and he bade them:

Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you  
Ye are many – they are few  

(XXXVIII)

The poem has Gothic horror running through it; Shelley depicts the horror, terror and destruction that the pageantry wrought in its wake:

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,  
Passed the Pageant swift and free,  
Tearing up, and trampling down;  
Till they came to London town.  

Hearing the tempestuous cry  
Of the triumph of Anarchy.  

Clothed in arms like blood and flame,  
The hired murderers, who did sing  
"Thou art God, and Law, and King."
We have waited, weak and lone
For thy coming Mighty one!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Gives glory, and blood, and gold

(XVI.62-65)

The Ode to the West Wind (1819) is a poem of great beauty and vitality. Its ideas are much inspired by Gothic imagery: the dead leaves are compared to "ghosts from an enchanter fleeing" (I.3) and "The winged seeds" are "like a corpse within its grave" (I.7-8). Stanza II is also remarkable for its Gothic imagery:

Though dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst:

(II.23-28)

In 1820 Shelley conceived the idea of a new poem The Witch of Atlas (1820), and wrote it in three days. Mrs Shelley in a note to the poem writes: "wildly fanciful, full of brilliant imagery, and discarding human interest and passion, to revel in the fantastic ideas that his imagination suggested". Shelley begins the poem by introducing the witch’s mother as one of the Atlantides, whose beauty captivated the Sun and made him change her into a vapour, then a cloud, then a meteor, and finally into "one of those mysterious stars / Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars" (III. 71-72).

The Witch lives in a cave among the Atlas Mountains. She is so gentle, lovely and powerful that beasts of every kind, from the sly serpent to the brindled lioness, as well as men, come to be cured of their vicious habits. "The magic circle of her voice and eyes / All savage natures did imparadise" (VII. 103-104). The mythic creatures that come to admire her in the opening stanzas are so tamed by her beauty that forever afterwards, they pine for her remembered loveliness and the paradise that they drank from her eyes:

No thought of living spirit could abide –
Which to her looks had been betrayed,
On any subject in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

(XII 140-144)

Historically, the witch is associated with the ancient fertility goddesses, as their priestess and celebrant. Her ‘witchcraft’ very often involved the use of herbs, plants and medicines, an esoteric knowledge possibly passed down in the worship of such deities. Shelley stresses upon this aspect of the witch’s use of liquors and herbs.

But beyond this, the witch also shows the terrible side of the Mother, the archetype who very often appears in children’s dreams, fantasies and play of the evil; the witch who is omnipotent, transformative and yet often alluringly and entrancing. The transformative powers of the *Witch of Atlas* are obvious. She cannot really be called evil, but her ‘pranks’ pass beyond mischief to become more malicious. For example, she creates a child, but makes it a ‘sexless thing’. She acts like a succubus to the mortals with “beautiful souls” (Stanzas LXVI-LXIX). When she realizes her power to enchant them, she works to draw them further into a trance; “Which when the lady knew she took her spindle / [...] / And with these threads a subtle veil she wove / A shadow for the splendour of her love” (975-104). Then she truly begins to play mischief creating her potions and magic.

*Prometheus Unbound* (1820) a lyrical drama by Shelley, adapts the myth of Prometheus from the Greek play of Aeschylus - *Prometheus Bound*. However, he made radical changes and recreated the old myth in light of his philosophy of the golden age. At the same time he introduced a new supernatural machinery and supplied a body of supernatural beings as witnesses to the action. The setting is characterised by Gothic features – “this wall of eagle baffling mountain / Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured (I.20-21). The pain and torture, the reference to the “winged hound” (I.34) with poisoned beak that tears the heart of Prometheus, are all illustrative of the Gothic elements in the poem.
The very first line of the poem takes us into the supernatural region of: "Monarch of Gods and Daemons and all spirits" (I.1). Prometheus chained to a rock of Mt. Caucasus for thousands of years has "Torture and Solitude, Scorn and despair" as his "empire" (I.14-15). His anguish is brought out forcibly in images alive with the pain of cutting, tearing, splitting reinforced by cold: "The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears / Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains / Eat with their burning cold into my bones" (I.31-33). The cry of woe which arises from his agonised heart pierces the whole universe and the echo of misery resounds from every part of it. The statement of the Earth is echoed by the spirits of the elements, and the third voice caps the climax:

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven;
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood

(I.99-102)

Act I of Prometheus Unbound is of crucial importance because it reveals the process of spiritual change which the Titan has undergone through the suffering heaped upon him by Jupiter for three thousand years. In this Act, the Furies symbol of death and despair are introduced as a new instrument of torture to blast the hope of Prometheus about the efficacy of the forces of good in their struggle with those of evil. The first Fury informs Prometheus that they are "the ministers of pain, and fear, / And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate, / And clinging crime" (I.452-454). Like hunting dogs, they pursue the living, the weeping, and the miserable. The third Fury tells Prometheus that they would not torture him physically, but mentally:

That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony?

(I.488-491)

Zahida Zadi writes:

the Furies who are ministers of "[...] pain and fear, / [...] mistrust and hate" (I.452-453) are surrealistic creatures evolved by Shelley not only to present a spectacle of horror,
pain and torture in its extremity, but also to probe into the
dark recesses of human psyche.\textsuperscript{35}

The two visions shown by the Furies to the ‘bound’ Prometheus are full
of Gothic intensity. The first vision of the French revolution rises with the
slogan of liberty, equality, fraternity, truth, love and justice, but degenerates
into a reign of blood and terror, where in the end, tyrants rush into divide the
spoil:

First Fury:
Yours call was as winged car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapped us from red gulfs of war.
Second Fury:
From wide cities, famine-wasted;
Third Fury: Groans half heard, and blood untested;
Fourth Fury:
Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

(I.525-531)

The second vision relates to Christ nailed to the cross with blood running down
from his wounds “A woeful sight: a youth/with patient looks nailed to a
crucifix” (I.584-585). The lines addressed by the Titan to the vision of Christ
have a haunting rhythm of profound pathos, like a half-suppressed sob of the
heart:

Thy name I will not speak
It hath became a curse, I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee.

(I.603-606)

The horrible picture of human death and its cause as described by
Panthea are again reflective of the Gothic atmosphere:

The heaven around, the earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles:
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth; those groans are grief enough.

(I.586-593)
For Prometheus the grave has become a place of peace:

Ah woe! Alas! Pain, pain ever, forever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumed mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good.

(I.635-639)

The setting of the first act and the details of the torture given in the long speech of the bound Titan provide ample proof of the fact, that Shelley like Ann Radcliffe was interested in that beauty of nature which has terror in it. The tameless energy of nature attracted him because of its capacity for making changes:

[...] a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines [...]  
Hark! The rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! Whose mass,
Thrice shifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after Flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round!
Shaken to their roots, as do mountains now

(II. iii, 33-42)

Or

[...] like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought’s stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing

(IV. 376-381)

The opening scene of Act III deals with the conflict between the forces of tyranny and liberation. The act opens by showing Jupiter in his glory, boasting about his omnipotence. But this situation ends in a way which is an anti-climax in the worse sense of the term. The car of Demogorgon reaches there and Jupiter is surprised but remains defiant at sight of the dreadful image of darkness:

Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shore less sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire.

(III. i, 70-75)

Shelley creates the Gothic atmosphere of pain and woe when Jupiter realizes his impotency and with cries of ‘woe, woe’ he goes down and down into the gulf of darkness:

Ai! Ai!
The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, forever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

(III. i, 80-83)

The last act of the lyrical drama reflects Shelley’s interest in Gothic conventions. He has in mind an idea about the various spiritual forces which govern life. The role of spirits is crucial in Act IV in the first scene of this Act a burst of spirits’ song is heard in the air. The voices of unseen spirits announce the advent of dawn, herald of the sun who is gradually rising up, so that pale stars in their glittering army are fleeing from the blue pain of the sky. They call upon some unseen spirits and in response a train of dark forms and shadows pass by singing confusedly, that they are carrying the bier of time, father of the past hours, going to bury time in its tomb:

Here; oh, here;
We bear the bier
Of the father of many a cancelled year
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

(IV. 9-14)

Panthea’s description of the second vision is of a sphere, made as if of many thousand spheres. A near view reveals ten thousand orbs “involving and involved” (IV. 241) of different colours, and every space between them peopled with unimaginable shapes which visit the ghosts in their dreams: “Sphere within sphere; and every space between / Peopled with unimaginable shapes, / Such as ghosts dream” (IV. 243-245). Panthea continues that from a
star upon the forehead of the spirit are issuing “Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel” (IV. 274). The flashes of the beam reveal cycles of old civilizations in the shape of primitive tools and implements which were swallowed by devouring destruction. Beside them lie the ruins of vast cities peopled with uncivilized mortals with their uncouth skeletons, rude homes and temples:

ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons

(IV. 295-299)

Prometheus Unbound clearly evidences Shelley’s affinity with the Gothic writers and the influence of this genre on him:

And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags.

(IV. 305-308)

A Vision of the Sea (1820) is a Gothic nightmare-fantasy. It is a poem evidently inspired by Coleridge’s The Rime of the Ancient Mariner which was one of Shelley’s favourite poems. Captivated by its supernatural element, he frequently recited it, according to Mary Shelley with “wild energy”. It has at its heart a question that Shelley poses with admirable directness and clarity: “Alas! What is life, what is death, what are we, / That when the ship sinks we no longer may be?”(82-83).

Shelley adopted from Coleridge’s poem not only the governing Gothic aesthetics and the ocean setting but particular images and plot details – a pestilent sea, the grisly death of the crew, a fearful and desperate solitude. In the early stages of Shelley’s poem, echoes and adaptations of Coleridge’s language are especially pervasive. Attracted to Coleridge’s mesmerizing language and supernatural setting as Shelley was, however, his greater interest was in the tormenting crisis faced by the Mariner in his solitary confrontation with death and approaching divine judgement. The terror and horror of the
tempest grips the reader right from the beginning. “Tis the terror of tempest. The rags of the sail / Are flickering in ribbons within the fierce gale: / From the stark night of vapours the dim rain is driven” (1-3).

Shelley goes on to describe the horrific destruction of the ship as “The chinks suck destruction. The heavy dead hulk / On the living sea rolls an inanimate bulk […]” (31-32). Shelley creates a mechanistic cacophony of elemental powers run amok, including a ship pummeled by “black trunks of water-spouts” (5), “intense thunder balls [...] raining from heaven” (29), and “death-flames, like whirlpool of fire-flowing iron” (19) that fill the horizon. A pestilence “Crept, like blight through the ears of a thick field of corn, / O’er the populous vessel” (51-52).

* A Vision of the Sea is a masterful blend of the fantastic and the grotesque. It is a tale of dead crews, tigers breaking loose from the ship’s hold, a woman of heavenly beauty aboard the wreck and a bright child on her bosom, a combat of tiger with a sea-snake, a blue raving shark attacks the tiger, and a sudden boat with marksmen levelling at the other tiger:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Death, Fear} \\
\text{Love, Beauty are mixed in the atmosphere,} \\
\text{Which trembles and burns with fervour of dread} \\
\text{Around her wild eyes, her bright hand, and her head} \\
\text{Like meteor of light o’er the waters! Her child} \\
\text{Is yet smiling, and playing, and murmuring}
\end{align*}
\]

(161-166)

Shelley depicts the terrible manner of the tigers as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The tigers leap up when them feel the slow brine} \\
\text{Crawling inch by inch on then; hair, ears, limbs and eyne} \\
\text{Stand rigid with horror; aloud, long, hoarse cry} \\
\text{Bursts at once from their vitals tremendously.}
\end{align*}
\]

(92-95)

At another place in the poem Shelley depicts the horror of the twin tigers living aboard the ship. He is compelling the reader to acknowledge the brutal finality of their struggle for survival. The tiger’s eyes are a “radiance of fear” (73); they “Stand rigid with horror” while “aloud, long, hoarse cry / Bursts at once from their vitals tremendously” (94-95). Eventually one tiger is “mingled in ghostly
affray/with a sea-snake” (137-138) and Shelley charts its fate with language that shrouds anatomical exactness in lurid sensationalism:

Of solid bones crushed by the infinite stress
Of the snake’s adamantine voluminousness;
And the hum of the hot blood that spouts and rains
Where the gripe of the tiger has wounded the veins

(140-143)

The scene reminds us of the “water-snakes” of Coleridge’s poem that probably gave Shelley his organizing image here.

The tone of the poem *The Sensitive Plant* (1820) suggests that Shelley is recounting a horror story and is piling on the ghastly details to get the desired effect. This may be seen in small but incongruous touches. As the dead Lady decays, her body “slowly changed, till it grew a heap / To make men tremble who never weep” (III. 20-21). Weeds appear “till the dead wind sank”. Fungi spring up, “at whose names the verse feels loath” (III. 57-58). All the other flowers in their turn die horrible death as the fungi appear to choke them and the chilling rains, noxious gases and “blights” (III. 81) wither them. The Lady and the flowers thus literally are filled with poisons. Only mimosa watches all this as her tears turn to “Frozen glue” (III.81). The “ocean of dreams without a sound” (1.103) in which the “beasts, and the birds, and the insects were drowned” (1.102) turns into the extended nightmare of Part Three.

*Adonais* (1821) is an elegy written on the death of John Keats. It abounds with Gothic suggestions. Shelley refers bluntly to “the corpse” of Adonais and “the coming bulk of death” (I.17-18). Stanzas III, VII, VIII depict the horror of death. “Death feeds on his mute voice” (III. 27). “Death / Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay” (VII. 55-56) under the Italian “chameli-roof” (VII.60) and “white Death” and “Invisible corruption” (VIII.66-67). While describing the mourners, Shelley presents himself as a gloomy and sad figure:

Midst others of less note, came one frail form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell.  

(XXXI. 271-274)

Gothic elements of death, dream, visions, phantoms and corpses are evident in the following passage:

Peace, Peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep  
He hath awakened from the dream of life  
‘Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep  
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,  
And in mad trance strife with our spirit’s knife  
Invulnerable nothings -- we decay  
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief  
Convulse us and consume us day by day,  
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay

(XXXIX. 343-351)

Towards the close of Adonais the picture of the poet’s bark passing through the storm is painted in a vein of pathos and despair:

[...] my spirit’s bark is driven  
Far from the shore far from the trembling throng  
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;  
The many earth and sphered skies are riven!  
I am borne darkly, fearfully, a far,

(LV. 488-492)

Shelley in the poem Lines on hearing of the Death of Napoleon Bonaparte (1821) expresses his fears, that even after the death of the arch-tyrant there were millions to follow in his wake, their greedy ambitions moulding the ruinous torrent of revolution and anarchy:

Aye, alive and still bold, muttered Earth,  
Napoleon’s fierce spirit rolled,  
In terror and blood and gold  
A torrent of ruin to death from his birth  
Leave the millions who follow to mould  
The metal before it be cold;  
And weave into his shame, which like the dead,  
Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory fled,

(33-40)

His feelings about him are in the same key when he mentions Napoleon in The Triumph of Life:

Fallen, as Napoleon fell – I felt my cheek  
Alter, to see the shadow pass away,
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak
That every pigmy kicked it as it lay;
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day,
And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good.

According to David Punter, in Shelley: “the conjunction of Gothic vocabulary and political thinking can be seen at its strongest in a passage from The Triumph of Life (1824)”:

The earth was gray with phantoms, and the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers
‘A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, […]
[…] just were
‘Phantoms diffused around; and some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them; […]
The old anatomies
Sate hatching their bare broods under the shade
‘Of demon wings and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power,
Arrayed in which those worms did monarchize,
‘Who made this earth their charnel

However, this brings us to the main point, which is the final question of the poem The Triumph of Life, - if life is just a fierce, triumphal procession, bearing away captive all those who were powerful in their day, then what is real, lasting and effectual? Is life mere mutability, after all? If not “Then, what is life? I cried” (543).

In Ginevra (1821) Shelley sets his scene with great dramatic effect suggestive of Gothic possibilities; there at once is the bride “Wild, pale and wonder-stricken […]” (1). Ginevra Almieri, a Florentine girl of good family, was in love with one Antonio Rondinelli but was forced by her father to marry Francesco Agolanti. Antonio was heart-broken and so was Ginevra whose decline of health after her marriage culminates in a swoon so deep that she is taken for dead:
She is still, she is cold
On the bridal couch
One step to the white deathbed,
And one to the bier,
And one to the charnel—and one, oh where?
The dark arrow fled
In the noon

Later her body is conveyed to the family vault in the cemetery of Duomo. Awakening at night from her swoon, Ginevra manages to emerge from the vault and takes the shortest way back to the house of her husband. Believing her to be a ghost, he refuses her admission. Being similarly repulsed at the houses of her father and uncle, she in despair turns to her faithful Antonio who duly takes her in. In a few days she is restored to health. Later, in spite of the fact that her husband is still living, the ecclesiastical court proclaims that by reason of her own ‘death’ the marriage has been dissolved.

Shelley’s poem *The Fugitives* (1821) has an even stronger Gothic tang. It is about an unwilling bride who manages to escape with her lover in a small boat leaving her father and bridegroom thwarted on shore. Facing a stormy sea in a boat made for lakes, the lovers are undismayed to find:

Our boat has one sail,
And the helmsman is pale;
A bold pilot I trow
Who should follow us now—
Shouted he

Adding to the horror and suspense of the poem is the poet’s description of the father: “On the topmost watch-turret, / As a death-boding spirit, / Stands the gray tyrant father” (51-53).

It would be grave injustice to Shelley, if his contribution to Mary Shelley’s great Gothic novel *Frankenstein* is not acknowledged. He had paid considerable attention to the correction of style as necessary to enhance the Gothic atmosphere of the tale as pointed by E.B. Murray. The researcher hereby takes the liberty to quote at length from E.B. Murray’s paper:
There is first of all a relatively small group of marginal, interlinear, and verbal additions which enhance the Gothic atmosphere of the tale. Shelley's eye for the Gothic had been creatively focussed, if only in the most conventional direction, with his *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*, the clichéd rhetoric of which appears in some of his more perfunctory expansions or heightenings of Mary's phrasing — e.g., her merely informative 'the moon arose, and shone... upon the daemon who fled' is Gothicized as 'upon *his* ghastly and distorted shape, as he fled with more than moral speed' (175R, 203J). At other times, Shelley follows up Mary's suggestions with more imaginative renditions of their Gothic potential. Mary notes, for example, that the monster supplied wood to the De Laceys without their knowledge. A bit later Shelley adds to Mary's statement that Felix De Lacey 'brought the wood from the outhouse' 'where to his perpetual astonishment he found his store always replenished by an invisible hand' (21R, 113J). Shelley elsewhere adds to the ghostly character of the monster when he has Frankenstein tell Walton, 'I knew the vessel in which he was concealed and he escaped I know not how' (175R, 203J). Mary here, as at times elsewhere, attempts to improve on the Shelleyan effect when in the fair copy she asks for a further suspension of disbelief by changing Shelley's addition to 'I took my passage in the same ship but he escaped I know not how' (135F). Shelley expands, clarifies, and, in the process, heightens with concrete Gothic epithet Mary's rather understated conditional rendering of Frankenstein's fears that if the monster suspected that I delayed it [the marriage with Elizabeth] on his account he would certainly revenge himself some other way'. Shelley's marginal change, one of his longest, reads: 'My destruction might indeed arrive a few months sooner but if my torturer suspected that I postponed my marriage on account of his menaces he would surely find other, and perhaps more dreadful means of revenge' [155R, 189J slightly changed]. The Gothic heightening is sometimes merely rhetorical, sometimes descriptive, with the following a mixture of both, concluding with the monster balancing his period with a flourish which marks him as a creature of his times: 'Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it... is given, in language which painted your own horrors, and has rendered mine ineffaceable' [66R, 130J slightly changed]. Shelley's Gothic, metaphysical, psychological, and even poetic associations combine in a characteristic phrase when he interests a ghost into the 'mechanical impulse' inspiring Frankenstein's quest by deriving it from
Shelley perhaps dubiously refused to allow a single Gothic verb to do double service when he changed Mary's 'and do you not feel your blood congeal with horror, like mine often did' to the received 'like that which even now curdles mine' (184R, 209J). Paradise Lost is an indirect source of quasi-Gothic allusion and sublime association for both Mary and Shelley, as a single illustration may serve to demonstrate: Mary had written 'as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandaemonium appeared to the dominions [daemons, 1818] of hell' and Shelley added 'after their suffocation [sufferings, 1818] in the lake of fire (7R, 106J). Finally, one of Shelley's happier Gothic touches appears in the word 'bridal' he inserts before 'bier' to turn the screw yet a notch tighter on the palpable mental and emotional anguish Frankenstein experiences on discovering Elizabeth slain by the monster on their wedding night (165R, 195J).

Shelley's possible direct and indirect influence on the eighteen-year old Mary, itself conditioned by what they read and experienced in common, is evident throughout Frankenstein and has been often commented on.38

Shelley's taste for the grotesque and fantastic remained throughout his life, a distinguishing characteristic. His later infatuation with neo-platonism and the wonders of science were a natural development to his boyish infatuation for ghosts and alchemists and the incredible and sentimental romances of the imitators of Mrs. Radcliffe. The supernatural had ever for him an unusual fascination and it colours his poetry and philosophy as evidenced from the above analysis. Infact Shelley's political interests found in the Gothic apparatus a most powerful means of expression for his abhorrence of the evils of tyranny - monarchy, aristocracy and religion.
NOTES:
(All quotations from Shelley's poetry are from *Shelley's Poetical Works*, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1904).


4. Ibid.


7. Ibid. p. 89.

8. Ibid. p. 120.


11. Ibid. p. 137.

12. Ibid. p. 144.

13. Ibid. p. 149.


15. Ibid. p. 152.

16. For *The Monk* as a patriarchal transvaluation of the sentimentalist Gothic of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, countered by Radcliffe in turn in *The Italian*, which can be seen as an increasingly adamant defense of sensibility. See Syndy M. Conger, *Sensibility Restored: Radcliffe's Answer to Lewis’ The Monk* in *Gothic Fiction Prohibition* /

17. Ingpen and Peck, op.cit. p. 185.
18. Ibid. p. 198.
20. Ibid. p. 199.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
29. Shelley’s preface to The Revolt of Islam, p. 32.
34. Mrs. Shelley’s note on The Which of Atlas, Hutchinson op.cit. p. 388.


(R) is a symbol of (the rough draft)

(J) is a symbol of (M.K. Joseph’s edition of the 1831 revision of the novel).